

Will war in Africa's Great Lakes be Clinton's Vietnam quagmire?

by Linda de Hoyos

On Feb. 7, 1997, American statesman Lyndon LaRouche warned that President Bill Clinton's "second term could be virtually sunk in an Africa quagmire that is shaping up fast to become even worse than the Johnson administration's Vietnam debacle." LaRouche underlined that Washington did not initiate the genocide that was then ongoing in eastern Zaire—the British Privy Council and British Commonwealth did. Nevertheless, "unless President Clinton intervenes against 'our ever-loving British imperialist ally,' soon, to force a halt in the British Privy Council's invasions of Zaire and Sudan, the Clinton administration, not the British Commonwealth, will be set up to take the blame for what will become within months, or even weeks, the worst genocide of the Twentieth Century, raging throughout sub-Saharan Africa."

Now, almost a year later, LaRouche's warning has been borne out. Not only that, the drive, now in the final stages of preparation, for a military option to "bring down the Khartoum government" of Sudan—as demanded by Baroness Caroline Cox, deputy speaker of the British House of Lords—threatens to bring about a quagmire of unending death in the Horn of Africa region. And, the United States has already been nicely set up to take the blame.

Just before LaRouche's warning in the *EIR*, the *Times* of London's correspondent Sam Kiley on Jan. 17, 1997 unveiled the existence of London's "new leadership" for East Africa, as a coherent "anglophone conspiracy": "President Museveni of Uganda . . . is at the center of the initiative [wars], which is based on friendships between African guerrillas-turning-politicians, forged in conflict." The gang members included Museveni, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, John Garang of the secessionist Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, Laurent Désiré Kabila of Congo-Zaire, Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, and Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia.

This "new leadership" has since been hailed by Clare Short, the Labour Party Minister of International Development, along with such minions of British imperial policy in the United States as Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee on Refugees.

One year later, and what has this "new leadership"

wrought, with its wars of aggression carried out in 1996-97 against the populations of Burundi, Zaire, and Sudan? The answer: more war, thousands of senseless killings each month throughout the Great Lakes region; hundreds of thousands of civilians herded into concentration camps in Uganda and Burundi; thousands of others displaced in refugee camps; emergence of new insurgencies in Congo-Zaire, Uganda, and Rwanda; disrupted agricultural production and resulting famine in Uganda and Rwanda; billions of dollars drained from national economies for the purposes of waging useless and un-ending wars; and now, cholera epidemics in three countries along with the re-emergence of such deadly hemorrhagic diseases such as Rift Valley Fever.

Not a splendid record.

Expanding war zones

Seven months after Laurent Kabila completed his drive for power in Kinshasa on the backs of an invasion force of Ugandan, Rwandan, Eritrean, and Burundian troops paid for by British Commonwealth mining interests, instead of peace, the war zones have widened.

As of this writing, it can be conservatively estimated that in the five countries of Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo-Zaire, there are 225,000 square miles of land in which wars are currently being fought—nearly a quarter of a million square miles.

These areas include:

- the regions of southern and southeastern Sudan in which Garang's SPLA continues to wage its 14-year-long losing battle against the government of Khartoum and the territorial integrity of Sudan;
- nearly one-third of Uganda, where insurgencies in the north, and now west and east, have been mounted, which dictator Museveni's Ugandan Popular Defense Forces are singularly unable to cope with, especially in the north where the war between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army has lasted more than 11 years;
- about one-third of Rwanda, particularly the central and northwest;
- 60% of Burundi, where the National Council for the

Defense of Democracy has begun to establish parallel administration throughout the countryside; and,

- the provinces of North and South Kivu in Congo-Zaire along the border with Rwanda and Uganda, where the Mai-Mai and other indigenous groups are determined to force the expulsion of the Rwandan-Tutsi occupation of eastern Zaire.

Sudan: 'Fools rush in'

Now on the agenda, is the expansion of this widening war zone, with the launching of London's full-scale invasion of Sudan, and expected insurgencies in Kenya, sponsored by London through its chief warlord in the region Yoweri Museveni.

The Sudan front poses the threat of a Vietnam debacle to the Clinton administration in the starkest possible terms. As Ugandan and Eritrean forces are known to be preparing for an offensive into southern and eastern Sudan, with the aid of Israeli military mentors and assistance, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, the Jan. 1 London *Guardian* reported, suffered a rout Dec. 30-31, in its defeated bid to take the southern city of Torit. More than 1,787 SPLA soldiers surrendered to Sudan government forces between Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. According to the Sudan News Agency, 687 SPLA soldiers, including seven officers, turned themselves in on Dec. 31, and 1,100, of whom 13 were officers, on the following day. According to Sudanese officials, the SPLA forces left behind masses of military equipment, including artillery and anti-aircraft missiles. There were many casualties on the SPLA side, in addition to those who surrendered.

The blow dealt Garang was given not by Sudan government forces, but by southern forces led by Maj.-Gen. Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, formerly a rebel leader in the South, who signed the April 21, 1997 peace accord with the government of Sudan.

On Jan. 6, leaders of the six southern factions who have made their peace with the Khartoum government announced that they had formed a unified command under the South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF). According to a press statement released by Riah Machar, chairman of the South Sudan Coordination Council, the decision for the unified command came as a result of a seven-hour meeting with military and political chiefs from the South, and representatives of the government and Armed Forces.

Now, hard on the heels of the Torit defeat, there are reports of defections, as people from those areas controlled by the SPLA go over to the government. According to Agence France Presse, another 150 SPLA troops surrendered to the government in west Kordofan province. Meanwhile in Bahr el Ghazel, 7,000 civilians have made their exodus from areas under Garang's control, and sought aid from the government. An air bridge is now being organized by the Sudan government to ensure delivery of food, medicine, and clothing to

those who have emerged from Garang territory. According to reliable sources, many more such defections are to be expected, since the increasing view of the Dinka population under Garang is that the war cannot be won, and that there is little, if anything, to be lost by joining the government for peace.

Nevertheless, Uganda and Eritrea are preparing an offensive against Sudan, according to *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* of Jan. 7, a report corroborated by numerous Ugandan sources. The Eritrean army and the forces of the British-created opposition Sudanese National Democratic Alliance are continuing their buildup in the northwest of Eritrea. NDA military leader Abdul Aziz Khalid announced that the NDA had carried out two major armed attacks from its bases in Eritrea on Sudanese army camps in Jabal Alshaeikh, 45 kilometers to the southeast of Kassala, and another attack on Abu Shendi, 40 kilometers southeast of the strategic Roseires town, where the largest power generation station in Sudan is located. These attacks followed a meeting of the NDA's military leaders in Asmara in late December.

Brigadier Mohammad Abdullah Awaidhe, chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Sudanese parliament, has reported that Sudan authorities had arrested a number of Sudanese Communist Party activists who were planning violent riots in Khartoum and Um Durman to coincide with the military invasion.

If the local forces of Garang's SPLA cannot win the war—as the South Vietnamese army had proven its incapability by 1962—then how can it be expected that regular troops of the Ugandan and Eritrean armed forces, with Israeli backing, will be able to achieve victory, as they enter southern Sudan as foreign invaders? What's more to the point, even Egypt—one of the alleged foremost victims of Sudan's alleged terrorism—has openly repudiated its past attacks on Sudan for terrorism—instead blaming the true culprit, London—and is loudly proclaiming its commitment to Sudan's national territorial integrity.

If the Ugandan-Eritrean invasion were to succeed, it would only lead to civil wars in the north and south of Sudan, or more likely into a regionwide conflagration, which threatens to split the United States from its primary and strategic Arab allies.

If the Ugandan-Eritrean force fails, it will suffer humiliation and numerous casualties. Then the blame will turn not only to Museveni, but to the United States, given U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's early December visit to Uganda, where she encouraged military operations against Sudan.

Who will remember to blame the instigators, Caroline Cox and the British Privy Council? Not too many.

Rwanda's endless killing fields

In the case of Rwanda and Zaire, the United States has

already largely taken the blame worldwide for the atrocities that have occurred there—despite the fact that the Clinton administration is the only Western power to have attempted to constrain Kabila during and after the war. Now, the International Monetary Fund has put its seal of approval on Rwanda, with a \$12 million credit to the regime of Defense Minister Paul Kagame, citing the government's successful repatriation of Rwandan refugees and its cooperation with the Fund and the World Bank, and its commitment to pay all the back debt of the former Habyarimana government.

The idea that Rwanda is now peaceful, has the same relation to reality, as the notion that Museveni's Uganda is an economic success story.

Take the following incidents recorded over the course of Jan. 6-7, according to Western news broadcasts: Fourteen people were killed in rebel attacks in Gitarama prefecture, and at least another 40 were slain the following day. At least 32 government soldiers were killed in an ambush in Shyarangi, Kigali prefecture, also on Jan. 7.

The rebellion in Rwanda is largely "home-grown," with rebels making up in numbers what they lack in equipment, using machetes and whatever else is at hand. The uprising now extends over the entirety of Ruhengeri, Gisenye, and Kibuye prefectures, and over parts of Gitarama and Kigali rural prefectures in the north and central areas of the country.

Although Rwandan commanders and officers remain in eastern Zaire, most of the Rwandan troops have been pulled out of Zaire over the course of the last month to deal with the insurgency at home, according to reliable sources. Rwandan troops have also reportedly been pulled out of Uganda, where they were originally projected to participate in the invasion of Sudan.

The Hutu insurgency against the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front follows upon merciless killing of civilians in the afflicted areas by the army throughout the period of October and November. Among incidents listed by a Dec. 19 Amnesty International report are: "On Nov. 21, RPA soldiers killed at least 539 civilians and possibly many more in Jendu, Nkuli, and Ruhengeri. On Nov. 16 and 23, military helicopters reportedly fired on several areas in Gisenyi. Many houses were burned. Civilian casualties are unknown. On Nov. 9, RPA soldiers indiscriminately fired in Gashyusha, in Kabilira, and Gisenyi. At least 150 people were killed. Many bodies were buried in mass graves, and others thrown into the river."

In the face of insurgencies and serious divisions within its own ranks, the Rwandan government has put out a call to "fellow countrymen" and Rwanda's "friends" in the international community, to come to its aid. The RPF statement of Dec. 21 called upon "all Rwandans wherever they are found to continue lending no ear or support to these hard criminals [Hutu rebels] now behaving like deadly beasts . . .

Show all their hideouts, leave them no quarters, spare them no food or room, because whoever is found in league with those killers is to be treated likewise. . . . The Rwandan government calls on all people in the country to remain calm and be assured that it is with them while furthering its correct policy of reconciling the Rwandan people. . . . Please maintain your cooperation with the Armed Forces."

On New Year's Day, Kagame, visiting the Ruhengeri prefecture, threatened the Hutu population that they would bear the consequences if they persisted in aiding the rebels: "The first consequence is the lack of subsistence for life. You no longer cultivate food. You will have nothing to eat. Decide for yourselves. Otherwise, the consequences will come upon you. The government has decided to finish off the militants during this year that begins now." Since there is famine in the region, this is a pledge to stop all food flows into the northern and northwest regions.

There are no international aid agencies operating in any of the afflicted areas of Rwanda.

Debate in Uganda

Even on the eve of the London-directed invasion of Sudan, the policy debate in Uganda on whether the country should continue to play the role of London's marcher-lord is heightening. It is widely suspected that the reshuffles announced by Museveni of his military high command and defense ministry are reflective of such debate. Not only is there trepidation about the move into Sudan—where many Ugandan soldiers already paid with their lives in October 1995 and January-March 1997—but there opposition is mounting within the political-civilian layers and also within the military itself to Museveni's insistence on years of no-win wars with insurgency. Demands for Museveni to come to the negotiating table are mounting.

The invasion of Sudan is no more in Ugandan national interests, than it is in the interests of the United States. In a New Year's press conference, Paul Ssemogerere, leader of the Democratic Party of Uganda, took issue with the warlord role that Uganda has been forced to play under current dictator Yoweri Museveni. Ssemogerere said that there are more men and women under arms at the war front than before Museveni took power in 1986. He said that the Ugandan Popular Defense Forces is bigger than its predecessor, and more resources have been diverted to acquiring more sophisticated and expensive arms under Museveni's rule than under the past regimes. "This is not a success story. Uganda is at war with Sudan and Ugandans have died. We had difficulties with Sudan in the past but not to the scale of the current hostilities." (See last week's *EIR* for Ssemogerere's speech to a Schiller Institute conference in December.)

Uganda's involvement in the fighting in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo, he also pointedly noted, "has cost us friendship of millions of people, the victims of the war in Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo."