

Iraq War: Goodbye to African Development

by David Cherry

When South Africa's ambassador to the UN corrected the U.S. ambassador, in a Security Council debate on war against Iraq on Jan. 27, it was a high point in South Africa's intense campaign to prevent the war—a war that South Africa says, correctly, will do incalculable harm to the continent and the world.

U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte had insisted to the UN Security Council that Iraq must follow the South African model of disarmament—referring to its voluntary dismantling of its nuclear weapons program under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision, beginning in 1989. But South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo spoke next, and pointed out that South Africa's case proves what Negroponte's government denies: that it takes time for the inspectors to do their work—it took two years in South Africa's case. The inspectors in Iraq, Kumalo said, must have the time they need. South African President Thabo Mbeki echoed the point to the press the next day in Pretoria.

The Security Council meeting that day was unprecedented in not being held behind closed doors. It was, again, South Africa's Dumisani who had urged—on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, which South Africa currently chairs—that UN arms inspectors release their findings at a Security Council meeting open to all ambassadors. The result was that about 100 countries spoke out, and the proposal for war took a pounding.

General African Opposition

African governments—including ones with strong U.S. ties—have made clear their opposition to the war plans imposed on Washington by the cabal of Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and others of the Utopian faction. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, in an interview published Jan. 31, said that any military intervention into Iraq should only come with UN approval.

The same week, *New Vision*, the government-owned newspaper in Uganda, ran an editorial noting that “the cost of the Iraq war will be high.” And for what? “The United States will have set a very dangerous precedent for the future . . . that powerful nations can invade weaker ones that they dislike even if they present no real threat.”

Months earlier, Assistant Secretary of State Walter Kansteiner made a stopover in Conakry to offer the government of Guinea a “new partnership for economic develop-

ment” in exchange for Guinea taking a hard line—as a rotating member of the UN Security Council—against Iraq. Guinea has had good relations with the United States. But a source close to Guinean President Lansana Conté told Agence France-Presse that this was not likely to work. Guineans would have difficulty understanding why their country should have anything to do with a U.S.-led war on Iraq, the source said. Most Guineans are Muslims. So are many others in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The case against the war, as presented by South Africa, rests on three pillars: the lack of any justification, first and foremost; the economic consequences; and the proliferation of terrorism worldwide that would result. President Mbeki said at the Feb. 3 summit of the African Union (AU), of which he is currently chairman, that the war would “set back development and progress years, and perhaps decades.” He recalled the quadrupling of the oil price at the time of the Arab-Israeli War in October 1973. “That is the origin of this African debt which cannot be paid now. You have seen what is happening now as regards oil and the financial markets generally; the uncertainty which has arisen around this, has pushed up the price. . . . It is clear if we get back to that situation of high prices of oil, the same thing will happen again. And so all of these things we are talking about, African development, Nepad [New Partnership for Africa’s Development], and so on, we would have to say goodbye to those as a direct consequence.”

“Very frankly,” Mbeki continued, “we don’t see what positive results can be achieved out of this in a situation in which, as far as the [African] Union is concerned, it is possible to resolve the matter of weapons of mass destruction without resort to war.”

Thanks in part to the long South African campaign, the AU summit of heads of state—through the AU Central Organ for handling conflict—said no to the war, declaring on Feb. 3 that “a military confrontation in Iraq would be a destabilizing factor for the whole region and would have far-reaching economic and security consequences for all the countries of the world and, particularly, for those in Africa. . . . The territorial integrity of Iraq should be respected and . . . any new decision on the matter should emanate from the UN Security Council.”

Mandela Goes After Bush

Mbeki has been backed up by former South African President Nelson Mandela, who caught the world’s attention on Jan. 30 with his angry remarks to the International Women’s Forum in Johannesburg. “What I am condemning,” he said to great applause, “is that one power, with a President who has no foresight, who cannot think properly, is now wanting to plunge the world into a holocaust.” Citing the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, he asked, “Who are they now to pretend that they are the policemen of the world?” Mandela ridiculed British Prime Minister Tony Blair, calling him the American “foreign minister” for his supporting role in the

war drive.

Naturally, there were some in the press who branded Mandela an ingrate. Hadn’t President Bush, in his State of the Union Message on Jan. 29, promised a large increase in spending in the fight against AIDS in Africa? As if the promised increased spending would mean anything if African economies are crushed by a massive oil price hike—adequate nutrition is the most important “medication” for preventing and treating AIDS. Thus, Bush has no policy against AIDS. In fact, *EIR* was reliably informed that Bush’s AIDS proposal was swotted up in the few hours between Lyndon LaRouche’s State of the Union Message and Bush’s, because people in the White House were eager to steal some of LaRouche’s fire.

Another major figure in the South African campaign is Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad, who is charged with strengthening South Africa’s ties with all Middle Eastern countries. As a result of his work, a group of South African businessmen participated in the 2002 Baghdad International Trade Fair. When a visit to Iraq by Mbeki was under consideration in November 2002, Pahad was accused of “hobnobbing” with Iraq by Joe Seremane, deputy leader of South Africa’s British-oriented Democratic Alliance, who said such a visit would jeopardize benefits from the U.S. Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. Pahad answered that the government would not cower under pressure from people outside the country who want to “control us.” “We have relations with all countries in the world. And if the same principle [of guilt by association] is applied fairly, we will then have no relations with anyone.”

Counterattacks on South Africa

South Africa’s effectiveness in leading the opposition to the war can be seen in two scurrilous counterattacks by the British and U.S. press. In Fall 2002, the British *Spectator* and the U.S. *Insight on the News* charged that “Mr. Mandela’s country” was selling aluminum tubes for uranium centrifuges to Iraq. The South African Department of Foreign Affairs responded on Oct. 10, “These allegations . . . are not only factually incorrect, but may prove to be libellous. These futile attempts are aimed at discrediting the South African government and former President Nelson Mandela.” Mandela offered his own uncomplicated response to the charges telling *Newsweek*, that the United States, not Saddam, threatened world peace. The accusations disappeared.

A new smear popped up in the *Wall Street Journal* on Jan. 31. “U.S. and British officials and non-proliferation experts, are alarmed by mounting evidence that germs and other substances . . . are still being stored—and possibly transferred out of the country—in violation of South Africa’s treaty obligations,” the *Journal* huffed. These substances, it went on, should not even exist! (Except at Fort Detrick, Maryland, Porton Downs, U.K., and Nes Ziona, Israel.) The sketchy story seemed to be based on a sting against a South African scientist whose main interest is in developing an antidote

to anthrax.

An earlier attack came from the British-steered South African Institute of International Affairs in late June 2002. Its Deputy Director, Moeletsi Mbeki, told the Foreign Correspondents Association of South Africa, “The weakness of South Africa’s foreign policy is that it often does not address the concerns of the country’s major constituencies, but rather what the government thinks is important in the world.” It’s a false dichotomy, but as for the government addressing what it thinks is important in the world, South Africa is guilty as charged!