
'Carlos' Extradition

France seeks Sudan tie to calm Algeria

The central motive for France in strengthening relations with Sudan is to prevent a full bloody collapse in Algeria, the French daily *Libération* stressed on Aug. 17, writing on the background to the extradition of terrorist "Carlos" (Ilyich Ramirez Sanchez) from Sudan to France. "Carlos" was arrested in Sudan traveling on a false passport. On Aug. 15, French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua announced at a press conference that Carlos will be tried on 83 counts of terrorism.

Libération writes that the "growing cooperation" between France and Sudan is based on "mutual and well-known national interests." The first and foremost French concern is Algeria. "France has no greater foreign policy priority, than to prevent Algeria from falling into bloody chaos, which would precipitate a mass of refugees to French shores, fleeing the civil war and/or a fanatical Islamic regime. This would destabilize the French political map. This priority is all the greater, given that the coming months will be dominated by the presidential campaign."

Hassan al-Turabi, the mentor of the Khartoum regime, has old ties to Abassi Madani, the imprisoned head of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of Algeria. Turabi has mediated meetings of the FIS and French representatives in Khartoum, as well as meetings between French officials and the FIS's spokesman abroad, Rabah Kebir. Turabi has urged the FIS and its armed branch not to "burn the bridges" to Algerian President Liamine Zeroual.

Beyond this, Sudanese security people have proposed to France that it sponsor a "Sudan solution" for Algeria, namely that the Algerian military stay in power, while the Islamists are accorded control over much of society and are officially associated with the power structure, as is the case with Turabi's National Islamic Front in Sudan. French officials are privately "interested" in this solution, but only after France's May 1995 presidential elections. "While waiting, the Sudanese would reportedly have been asked to calm things down, as much as possible, in Algeria."

Sudan has also reportedly reached an agreement with France, to help contain the fanatical "Islamist contagion," in the "field" of French operations in Central Africa, including in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and especially

Chad. In exchange for the French allowing Sudan to use these territories for military operations against the southern Sudanese rebels, the Sudanese authorities would have agreed to "not carry the religious war into the center of Africa."

The reputedly pro-French Turabi is eager to promote Sudan as a model for an Islamic "Third Way," distanced from both the Sunni Muslim "medieval monarchies" of the Persian Gulf, and the "too rigid, violent and anti-western" Shiite Iran. For all these reasons, France is not following the American line of putting Sudan on the list of "pariahs accused of supporting international terrorism," the Paris daily wrote.

Pasqua, Khartoum, and Algiers

In a background article published Aug. 16, *Libération* reported that Interior Minister Charles Pasqua had been knitting close ties with Khartoum, mediated through a "former" very senior agent of the French DGSE foreign intelligence service, Jean-Claude Martion, who was stationed in Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, until June 1993. Bangui became a "pivot" for French strategy in parts of Africa, extending into Sudan and the Horn of Africa. After "retiring" from the DGSE, Martion worked for his Sudanese "friends," arranging repeated visits by Sudanese security chiefs to Paris, the most recent visit eight weeks ago. While appearing to be a DGSE operation, this was all coordinated out of the Interior Ministry, *Libération* says.

Pasqua used Sudan to "maintain open channels of communication" with the Algerian FIS; albeit publicly and for electoral reasons in France, Pasqua affects total intransigence toward the FIS. Also, Paris accorded Sudan military "rights of passage" through the Central African Republic, in order to get at the southern Sudanese rebels groups "from the rear." Khartoum was given "satellite photos" on the details of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) camps. Paris thereby contributed to the Sudanese government's recent gains against the rebels.

Libération sees all this in a broader context. The courting of Khartoum has enabled the French to counter activities coming out of Uganda, which is the staging base for support for the southern Sudanese rebels, and the base of operations of the Rwanda Popular Front. When Rwandan President Habyarimana, who had been close to France, died when his plane was shot down on April 6, France stepped up the diplomacy.

Libération alleges that France is offsetting moves by the United States to use Uganda as a base for sending arms and missiles to the southern Sudanese rebels. The British operations in Uganda, and British activities more generally in these parts of Africa, are curiously never mentioned in the article.

Libération is traditionally close to the French Socialists, and usually portrays the geopolitical conflict in Africa as between France and the United States, omitting the British role. For the record, Interior Minister Pasqua denied all of these reports.