

London's 'Rice war' against Sudan—again

by Linda de Hoyos

With John Prendergast of the U.S. National Security Council and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice apparently running the show, the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Uganda was a major disappointment to those in the region seeking to end London's bloody wars there. In statements to the press in Kampala and in the northern Ugandan city of Gulu, Albright gave backing to continued Ugandan support for Sudanese secessionist John Garang, head of the British-sponsored Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA).

During her visit, Albright again appeared to signal U.S. support for Garang, meeting with him in Kampala.

In September, Prendergast was on the podium of a conference of the U.S. Institute for Peace, along with Ted Dagne of the Congressional Research Service and Roger Winters of the U.S. Committee on Refugees; he called for a U.S. policy of direct and total confrontation with Sudan. He cited Susan Rice as one of the "team" that could be counted on to ram this policy through the Clinton administration. The total war to "bring down the Khartoum regime" was demanded by Dagne and Winter, even though, as Winter himself said, "it will cause a humanitarian catastrophe in the region."

Soon thereafter, Britain's Caroline Cox, deputy speaker of the House of Lords and head of Christian Solidarity International, which is leading the crusade against Sudan, arrived in Washington, to prime the pumps for London's war against Sudan. If the U.S. accedes to a full-scale war against Sudan, Lyndon LaRouche has said, that will lead to a firestorm of violence throughout the Horn of Africa region, for which the United States—not London—will be blamed (see "Sudan, Target of Rice War," *EIR*, Sept. 26, 1997).

Peace talks held in Nairobi between Sudan and Garang's SPLA, under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, a consortium of East African countries including Uganda and Sudan, collapsed under the pressure of Garang's escalated demand for a "confederation" to be formed, dividing Sudan in two, and the Clinton administration's imposition of economic sanctions on Sudan. A confederation, Sudan said, would mean the creation of two separate states, which is unacceptable to the Khartoum government and also to Egypt. Garang is the only southern factional leader to refuse to sign the April 21, 1997 peace accords that were negotiated between the Sudan government and southern leaders.

Preparations are in place for an offensive against Sudan to be launched from Uganda and Eritrea, with the threat of an Israeli provision of a concentration of 750 troops, including Rwandan, Eritrean, Ugandan, and Congolese forces and white advisers, as seen in the region of Soroti, Uganda, at the beginning of December, according to Ugandan sources. It is now believed that this force has moved northward into Kidepo National Wildlife Park, on the border with Sudan, as two-thirds of the park has now been designated by Yoweri Museveni's government as "off limits." In addition, there are 1,000 Congolese forces in the Karuma Falls area, and Congolese forces are fighting with Ugandan troops against the Allied Democratic Front in western Uganda.

Not all in agreement

Uganda's press registered nearly unanimous disappointment in the signals coming from the U.S. team in Kampala. "Many war-weary Ugandans had hoped for a softer approach [to Sudan] that would, hopefully, encourage a peaceful and quick resolution of the conflict," said the *Monitor*, in its editorial on Dec. 12.

Paul Ssemogerere, president of the opposition Democratic Party, told a conference of the Schiller Institute in Germany on Dec. 13 that it was imperative to bring peace to Uganda and Sudan, to halt the "tragedy of Africa." Ssemogerere challenged Museveni in Presidential elections in 1996. Countering claims in the Western press that Uganda is a model of economic development, Ssemogerere noted that in the villages, where 90% of Ugandans live, conditions are worse than they were 20 years ago; life expectancy is plummeting. "We are a poor nation," he said. "We do not have the resources to wage war against Sudan."

Even aside from Khartoum and Kampala, there is also widespread dissension in Washington over the war-tack taken by the Anglophiles like Rice and Prendergast. At a seminar of the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies on Dec. 11, two former U.S. ambassadors to Sudan, William Kontos and Don Peterson, noted that current U.S. policy toward Sudan appears to be "all stick and no carrot." After returning from a recent fact-finding mission in the region, they called for a different policy approach: The U.S. ambassador should return to Khartoum; the U.S. government should help negotiate a peace settlement of the civil war, within the framework of the regional Inter-Government Authority on Development; and the United States should send a highly respected international figure, such as Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, or James Baker, to help mediate the talks.

Sudan wants American help to end the war, Ambassador Kontos affirmed. The alternative to negotiations—military action—Kontos said, does not function, as it appears "that neither side has the power or the ability to force its will upon the other. Therefore, both sides must get down to serious talks."