

Sudan is the target of foreign invasion, U.S. delegation finds

by Muriel Mirak Weissbach

Since Jan. 12, when Sudan was invaded by a combined force of Ethiopian and Eritrean regulars, and rebels from the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), the international media have provided precious cover for the aggressors, by masking their identity and promoting their military strategy. The gist of press reports has been, that the SPLA rebels had mounted the invasion alone, and secured four positions within two days. Thereafter, the formidable rebel force, according to the press, began its march on the strategic site of Damazin, capital of the Blue Nile State, and location of the Rosieres dam, which provides the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, with 80% of its water and electricity supply. The rebels' advance was reported almost daily by the press, which, in only one or two cases, admitted that "no independent confirmation was available."

Virtually all such press reports, which have been predicting the imminent destruction of the Rosieres dam, and the subsequent insurrection in Khartoum against the government, have been filed from Cairo, Adis Abeba, Asmara, or Nairobi. Most notable was a feature on Cable News Network on Feb. 21, which included lengthy interviews with Baroness Caroline Cox, deputy speaker of the British House of Lords; Francis Deng, a leading Sudanese opposition figure now in the United States; and Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma political party which is working with the rebel SPLA, under Cox's direction, to overthrow the Khartoum government. The CNN feature, after retailing slanders of alleged support for slavery and terrorism by Sudan, hammered away at the message that the advance of the rebels was inexorable, and that the central government's days were numbered. The broadcast called for a mobilization of international "humanitarian" organizations, to aid the insurgents.

During Feb. 17-26, a group of Americans travelled to Damazin, to get a first-hand view of the situation, and saw that reality was quite far from what the newspapers of record or British intelligence, through Cox et al., had been saying. The American delegation, organized by the Schiller Institute, was composed of Theo Mitchell, former state senator of South Carolina, and former candidate for governor; Rep. Harold James, head of the Black Caucus of the Pennsylvania State Legislature; James Barnett, president of the Coalition

of Black Trade Unionists for Northwest Alabama; and María Elena Milton, former candidate for Congress from Arizona. The delegates were accompanied by Lawrence Freeman and Muriel Mirak Weissbach of the Schiller Institute.

The delegation was able to determine not only that the press reports on the military situation there, were false, but also that the foreign aggressors had committed grave violations of human rights, which were systematically blacked out by the same media.

The delegation was received by, among others, representatives of the government, the National Assembly (parliament), the Khartoum state assembly (legislature), the Supreme Council for Peace, the International Peoples Friendship Council, the Attorney General, the Committee to Investigate Allegations of Slavery and Involuntary Disappearances, the National Congress, the Minister of Social Planning, the Minister of Construction, the Board of the Gezira Scheme development project, the State Minister for External Relations, the Sudanese Council of Churches, and a large group of Sudanese intellectuals from the South.

'The first casualty is the truth'

The American political and civil leaders travelled to the militarily strategic center of the Blue Nile State, on Feb. 23, and visited both El Rosieres, the site of the dam on the Blue Nile, and Damazin, the urban headquarters of the government and military. The group was received by the governor of the Blue Nile State, Dr. Babiker Jaber Kabalo, who briefed them on the social and economic effects of the invasion. Dr. Babiker stressed that the action had been a direct aggression from behind Ethiopian borders, prepared by massive Ethiopian artillery attacks. He said that civilians had been arrested, killed, or abducted. Asked about the presence of foreign press or observers, he said that only Reuters (the British intelligence media outlet), the Saudi MBC TV, and a Jordanian journalist had visited the area. "The first casualty in Sudan," he said, "is the truth," referring to the massive press lies and the absolute silence regarding human rights violations related to the Ethiopian invasion. "We are being governed by proxy," he said, commenting on CNN's feature program broadcast just days earlier. Dr. Babiker confirmed

that no civilian or government representatives from the United States had visited the area.

Contrary to the media reports, which have portrayed Damazin as a town under siege, its population in panic, as John Garang and his forces hover outside the city limits, the situation which the American political figures found there was quiet. The presence of military units, protecting the town and the dam, was to be expected, and was significant. In addition, there were volunteers to be seen everywhere. Not only the local political figures, but also legions of students had donned military uniforms to defend their country. This contrasted sharply with the media lies, according to which the government is isolated. Economic and civil life was normal in Damazin. Civilians were going about their normal activities, without any expression of fear, and were mobilized to provide food and other supplies to the troops.

The Schiller Institute delegates visited the military headquarters in Damazin, where they received an extensive background briefing by the commander of the Sudanese Army in the state. He reported that the invasion had been utterly unexpected and massive. It began on Jan. 12 before sunrise, with the Ethiopian units attacking four Sudanese towns (Menze, Yaradda, Qeissan, and Kurmuk) simultaneously, first with artillery, and then with tanks and troops. The largest Sudanese unit of normal border garrisons deployed at any one of the four towns, was 250 soldiers. The Sudanese troops resisted until ammunition was exhausted, then withdrew. On Jan. 13, the Ethiopian forces entered Sudanese territory and occupied the towns, which are between 15 and 50 kilometers from the Ethiopian border. One town occupied, Menza, is only 95 kilometers from the Damazin dam, which the Ethiopian and rebel SPLA forces hoped to attack and destroy.

The commander said, that two-thirds of the troops were Ethiopian, and only one-third SPLA. He emphasized the fact that this was no "rebel offensive," and said, "If there is any neutral committee that wants to come and see, they will see the Ethiopian tanks and troops." He also underlined the gravity of the human rights violations, which included the execution of town leaders, the rape of women and girls, and the disappearance (abduction) of thousands of civilians. He pointed out that the occupying forces are holding 10,000 civilians in Qeissan and Kurmuk hostage, forbidding them to leave; this has greatly hampered Sudanese military operations to liberate the towns, because they do not want to endanger the lives of the civilian population.

Following the military briefing, the delegates visited the military hospital of Damazin, where, according to medical personnel there, 150-200 of the more serious cases of soldiers wounded in the invasion and subsequent fighting, are treated. Through an interpreter, they were able to talk to the wounded, including one soldier who had walked 20 hours to reach the hospital. The delegates also went to a camp for persons displaced by the invasion. They were received by the commissioner of the province, Ali Mohamed Mageit,

and the Minister of Health, Mohamed al Hassan, who briefed them on the displacement of civilians from eight villages in the Rosieres province, after the invasion. The group then went to one camp an hour's drive away, where 4,300 civilians are being given basic shelter and food. There, they saw that the only humanitarian organization helping is an Arab agency, "Birr International" (Birr means "water well"), which has six people there. Food is provided by the Sudanese government, by trucks, weekly, and minimal medical attention is provided. But the Red Cross, and other international agencies, have not been to the area at all. Needless to say, the so-called Christian Solidarity International of Baroness Cox, which claims to be a humanitarian agency especially concerned about Christians in Sudan, will have nothing to do with these displaced persons.

The victims of the invasion whom the Schiller Institute delegation saw, in the camp and hospital, were in a certain sense the privileged ones. Those civilians who could not flee the invading armies are still trapped in the occupied towns, if they have not been abducted or killed. Serious investigations have been conducted by the Sudanese, to ascertain the fate of these civilians, while the international community has turned a blind eye.

While in Khartoum, the Schiller Institute delegation was received by the Chief Justice of Sudan, H.E. Obeid Hag Ali,

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and a panel of judges who had been assigned to investigate the violations of human rights related to the January invasion. The three Supreme Court justices, Hussein Awad Abu El Gassim, Hashim Hamza Abdul Majid, and Mustafa Muhammed Bashar, released the report of their findings to the Schiller Institute delegation, as well as the testimony of witnesses interviewed during the eight-day investigation, and five videotapes. The report documents how the Ethiopian forces invaded, targetted civilian populations, left rotting corpses lying in streets, seized property and persons, and slaughtered, tortured, looted, and raped civilians. Five thousand people, for example, were taken from Kurmuk to Birka, where they were forced to sit on the ground for three days, and were denied the right to move, even to urinate or defecate. All personal effects were confiscated. Men and students suspected of being members of the National Defense Force were executed. Detailed accounts of individual cases of murder and rape, are documented. About 600 civilians were killed, their corpses left for days to be eaten by wild animals.

Appeals to end the aggression ignored

Thus far, all the appeals by the Sudanese government, to the United Nations, for example, to stop the aggression, have fallen on deaf ears. Although the wildest allegations of supposed human rights violations by the Sudanese government have immediately prompted international intervention and interference—indeed, been the basis for the call by the British for sanctions against the country—there has been not a peep out of the human rights activists, about the Sudanese civilian victims of Garang and his Ethiopian backers. Instead, the push for sanctions, which Baroness Cox has been pursuing for over two years, has been accelerated. The British are demanding that the Sudanese civilian airline, Sudan Air, be grounded, in hopes that an aviation ban will debilitate the government, and pave the way for a rebel offensive against the capital. While in Sudan, the Schiller Institute representatives received the text of an appeal issued by the Sudanese Mothers and Children Association, which calls for action against any air embargo: “As Sudan Airways is the only carrier of . . . food for infants, vital drugs and vaccines for all Sudanese, an unnecessary impending human disaster is in the making at the turn of this enlightened century.”

Members of the American delegation, who returned to the United States on Feb. 26, will bring the truth about the military, political, and humanitarian situation in Sudan, to the attention of the public, and of those politicians who boast their concern for the well-being of Africa. One member of the delegation, Senator Mitchell, himself a lawyer, will present the report on violation of human rights related to the invasion, to government bodies of the nations participating in the aggression (Ethiopia and Eritrea), and to the Congress of the United States. The truth will be heard.

New British terror offensive unleashed throughout Mideast

by Omar Abdul-Aziz

A fresh British strategic offensive in the Middle East began in February, typified by London's officially allowing two support organizations for known Islamic terrorist groups to set up offices in London. The wave of terrorist activity that immediately followed is part of British geopolitical aims in the region: to sabotage the new American administration's review of its Middle East policy, especially in the Persian Gulf area; to destabilize the security of Middle East governments; and to maintain British political and financial control of the tiny oil states in the Gulf.

Two Egyptian Islamist terrorist groups, Islamic Jihad and Islamic Group al-Jihad al-Islami and al-Gamaa al-Islamia, were granted permission by the British authorities to open offices for media and fundraising activities in London in February. There is no mistaking the nature of business of these offices. The Islamic Group, for example, declared on Feb. 12 that “all American interests are legitimate targets to be attacked by its members.” These two new offices, the Islamic Media Observatory and the Bureau for the Defense of the Egyptian People, will increase the efficiency of the two parent terrorist groups to plan, communicate, raise funds for, and execute armed attacks on Egyptian and Western targets in Egypt and the Middle East.

On the day the Islamic Group's office opened in London, its members killed 10 Copts (Egyptian Christians) gathered outside a church in the Alminia province of Egypt, and 3 others at a farm in the same town. A spokesman for the terrorist group, who contacted the international Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* on Feb. 16, claimed responsibility for the attack and did not deny that the orders could have come from the faction of the group based in London.

Target: the Clinton administration

The terror attacks and threats, carried out by groups under Britain's protective geopolitical umbrella, began at the same time that the list of proposed meetings between President Bill Clinton and Middle East leaders was made public.

Between Feb. 25 and the end of March, President Clinton is expected to meet Saudi Defense Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz; Egyptian President