

Congo's dictator Laurent Kabila is sitting on a time-bomb

by Linda de Hoyos

As of Sept. 26, the United Nations investigating team into the massacres of Rwandan and Burundian refugees in eastern Zaire over the months of October 1996 through May 17, 1997, has been sitting in Kinshasa for more than a month, unable to proceed with its work. While the United Nations, led by Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson, has bent over backwards to organize a team acceptable to the Democratic Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila, the investigation is now snagged on the team's insistence that it visit the western port city of Mbandaka, where Rwandan refugees were reportedly slaughtered on May 14; the Kabila government says the team must restrict its work to eastern Zaire.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has so far not granted the UN team authorization to leave Congo, but time is running out. The United States, now followed by Belgium and other members of the European Community which had earlier declared their desire to aid the Kabila government, has made any aid to the Congo government contingent on the UN investigating team's unhampered ability to carry out its work.

There are good reasons for patience, however, for those who want to avert renewed war in Congo.

The London *Times* of Sept. 21, already assuming that any UN probe will be called off, threatened that unless Kabila is given aid, willy-nilly of the UN investigating team, the country will disintegrate. "The dilemma facing the West is whether to turn a blind eye to the murder of refugees and give aid to Kabila, or stick to principles it did not show when for decades it gave uncritical support to Mobutu, who was propped up as a bastion against communism. Denying such aid could intensify popular discontent and even bring military rebellion, leading to the destabilization of the heart of Africa."

In reality, the London *Times* is covering up the major determining factor in the situation: The Democratic Republic of Congo is an occupied country. There are today in Congo up to 15,000 foreign troops from Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, with another 1,000 from Eritrea, which constitute an army of occupation. These troops are deployed as follows: 5,000 in the mineral-rich southeastern province of Shaba; 5,000 in Kinshasa; and the rest in Kisangani and in the eastern provinces of Kivu.

The London-organized combine of Ugandan-Rwandan-Burundian troops that brought Laurent Kabila to power, does

not intend to leave. Thus, Kabila, who was brought in by Ugandan dictator Yoweri Museveni in November 1996 to serve as the nominal head of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire, finds himself between a rock and a hard place.

The London-sponsored foreign force carried out the majority of massacres of the Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees, as Rwandan Defense Minister and Vice President Paul Kagame admitted to the *Washington Post's* John Pomfret on July 9. Kagame declared that the first goal of the Rwandan invasion of Zaire was "to dismantle the camps." The massacre of the refugees was an integral part of the invaders' military plan. Up to 500,000 refugees, out of a total of 1.4 million in Zaire in October 1996, have been killed by the Rwandan-Ugandan forces; it is estimated that 85% of the highly publicized Rwandan Hutu militias have been killed.

Now, Kabila is saddled with this invasion force, which constitutes the major pressure to prevent any UN investigation.

On the other side, Kabila faces the Congolese people, who may have hated the late President Mobutu Sese Seko, but are becoming increasingly angry at the prospect that they traded Mobutu only to be ruled by a foreign Tutsi minority. Not only the Congolese general population, but the anti-Mobutu opposition parties, and numbers of Congolese within the Kabila cabinet, are demanding that Kabila rid Congo of the foreign troops.

On Sept. 7, Kabila travelled to the Rwandan capital of Kigali to meet Defense Minister Kagame and request the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from Congo. The reply was immediate. The governor of the Rwandan province of Ruhengeri called for tighter security along the border with Congo, and the Rwandan military was amassed along the border at Gisenyi-Goma.

Despite the total destruction of Congo's national sovereignty and Kabila's proven impotence to send the foreign troops back home, the international community is pretending that Kabila has control over his government and country. Not one peep has been uttered so far from any governments, to the effect that the foreign occupation force must leave Congo. To the contrary, the Tutsi force is regarded by London and other oligarchical centers as the trusted mercenary protectors of the British Commonwealth mining companies that fol-

lowed in the wake of the Rwandan-Ugandan-Kabila march across Zaire.

Atrocities continue

Meanwhile, the Congolese people continue to suffer the horrors of an undeclared war inside their country.

Within Congo, all political activity has been banned. According to the Sept. 18 *Christian Science Monitor*, more than 60 former ministers, bank directors, and businessmen have been arrested by the Kabila government and confined without charge in various unsanitary and degraded locations in Kinshasa. In addition, the opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) charged on Sept. 9 that its leader Joseph Olengakoy was also arrested without charge in Kinshasa.

A campaign of annihilation has been taking place against the elite Presidential Guard (DSP) of ousted President Mobutu. Although members of the 15,000-strong guard have scattered to Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Chad, and other countries, up to 10,000 of the elite troops are incarcerated in Kitona military encampment in western Congo. According to the *London Times*—and corroborated by Congolese sources—10 to 12 DSP soldiers are dying daily from hunger and disease. “The soldiers . . . were sent to the camp ostensibly to be retrained for integration into a new Congolese army. Instead, according to well-informed sources who have debriefed one or two escapees, they are being subjected to a slow and painful process of extermination by being fed a small can of uncooked rice and beans every four days.” “Yes, they are being slowly killed,” a Congolese source told *EIR*.

International agencies have no access to the undetermined other “rehabilitation” camps scattered throughout the country.

Terror against refugees also continues. As reported on Sept. 8 by Refugees International, “In a pre-dawn raid on Sept. 4, ADFL soliders surrounded a [refugee] transit center in Kisangani. The soldiers blocked international aid workers access to the facility and, after sealing off the route from the transit center to the airport, forcibly expelled refugees. The transit center housed 336 Rwandans and 353 Burundians. . . . The refugees were flown to the Rwandan capital of Kigali, from where initial reports indicate that the Rwandan refugees will be returned to their communes of origin. Such returns undoubtedly put many of these individuals at risk. . . . [Refugee International] believes that repatriation to Burundi is, at this time, inappropriate.” Seventy-one of the repatriated Rwandans were detained in Kigali.

The action was defended by Congo Foreign Minister Bizima Karaha, widely believed to be a Rwandan Tutsi, who claimed that “these refugees have been used by different people for different purposes. We have very strong reports that they are being trained to be used against us.”

The forced expulsion of the refugees set off howls of protest from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, although the UNHCR uttered no such protest when Kabila et al. militarily stormed the Mugungu refugee camp on

Nov. 15, 1996, forcing 500,000 to return to Rwanda at gunpoint. The UNHCR took further action by suspending all its operations in Congo, with other aid organizations expected to follow suit. But such action is not expected to assist the few refugees who remain alive inside Congo.

Facing civil war

The departure of a thwarted UN investigating team from Kinshasa, signalling Kabila’s complete capture by his foreign military supporters, could well be the signal for a general

London’s concentration camps in East Africa

There are more than 1 million human beings today in East Africa who are being incarcerated in what could only be termed “Nazi concentration camps,” where hundreds are dying daily of disease and starvation. The enforcers of this policy are the British-backed warlord force organized around Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

- Uganda, 200,000 people: In northern Uganda, the government has followed a policy of forcing the local Acholi residents, victims of the war between the Museveni regime and the Lord’s Resistance Army, into so-called “protective villages.” According to the United Nations, the herded peasants have no means of subsistence in these camps, and death rates have increased. Protests by Acholi leaders against this policy have gone unheeded.

- Rwanda, 100,000+ people: The Rwandan dictatorship of Paul Kagame has incarcerated at least 100,000 people in so-called prisons, which are so crowded that prisoners have no room on the ground to sleep, with dozens dying daily. The figure of 100,000 is extremely conservative; the prisoners are held on charges of being “genocidalists.” Only one witness is required to force an individual’s arrest and indefinite incarceration.

- Burundi, 800,000 people: Beginning last November, the Burundi military dictatorship instituted a policy of mass herding of Burundi’s rural Hutu population into so-called protected villages. This spring, thousands died in the camps of the biggest outbreak of typhoid since World War II, according to the World Health Organization.

- Congo, 10,000+: The remnants of Mobutu’s Presidential Guard are reportedly being slowly starved to death in a military encampment in Kitoma. It is unknown how many Zaireans are incarcerated in so-called “re-education camps” in Kabila’s Zaire.

uprising throughout Congo against the Rwandan-Ugandan occupying force, beginning a new civil war that would likely last far longer than the seven-month campaign of Kabila et al. against Mobutu.

In the east, there is rising resentment against the Rwandan Tutsi army, because the Tutsis have been installed in the local administration and are resettling on farmland. "We are not racists," stated Heri Njila, spokesman in Brussels for the National Resistance and Liberation Council of eastern Zaire. "We accept that Rwandans live in Kivu, just as we accepted that before when we welcomed Tutsi, then Hutu refugees. But we reject the occupation of Kivu by the Rwandan Army."

There is now escalating warfare against the Rwandan-Ugandan forces in eastern Zaire. According to a report of the Zairean Association for Human Rights, nearly 2,000 people have been killed in fighting between the RPA and locals near Goma since July, with more than 50 villages burned down. In the first week of September, Congolese forces took over the town of Bunyakiri, 80 kilometers north of Bukavu, and there were further attacks on the towns of Sake and Minova. On Sept. 4-5, armed forces attacked the airport at Bukavu, killing its military commander, who was

an officer in the Rwandan Patriotic Army.

In the second week of September, more than 100 people were killed in new fighting in the Masisi region of Congo.

Kagame has reacted by sending more Rwandan Tutsi troops into eastern Congo—a region which the Rwandan Tutsi elite considers its own. According to the Groot-Bijgaarden De Standard of Sept. 24, thousands of fresh Rwandan troops have arrived in Kivu, including 3,000 troops to guard the Kavumu airport.

The tensions are spreading to Shaba province to the south, according to late reports, and to Kinshasa on Sept. 21, where resentment of Kabila's 51st Battalion, dominated by Rwandan Tutsis, is on the rise.

So far, the former soldiers of the Zairean regular army—who for the most part did not resist the invaders' march across Zaire—have remained out of the fray. However, sources project, that if Kabila is not soon able to permit the UN investigating team to do its job, and not soon able to organize a broader coalition government with Congolese political parties, Congo-Zaire will devolve into full-scale war, with participation of the Zairean Army. The consequences of that war for Congo-Zaire and for countries around it, are incalculable.

Children describe mass murder of refugees

The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund is finding that abandoned children of Rwandan Hutu refugees are critical witnesses of the crimes perpetrated against the refugees by the Rwandan Patriotic Army and Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL). According to a report in the Aug. 8 issue of *La Libre Belgique*, the children confirm the stories of massacres that have been steadily seeping out of eastern Zaire since November 1996.

The Belgian paper reports: "The 12-year-old boy B., a refugee in the [Rwandan Hutu] Biaro camp south of Kisangani, explained that 'when the people had crammed together, they opened fire on them. There was one soldier who gestured to us to get out of there. They were Kabila's men. We heard them talking Kinyarwanda.' B. went so far as to compare this to the Rwandan genocide of 1994: 'In Rwanda it was worse because I saw machetes. . . . You can be killed by a rifle shot without knowing it, without seeing it. But you can see a machete coming to get you, and that's scary.' Another girl thought Zaire was worse. 'It was worse in the camps, because in Rwanda the killing was done very quickly. Here the Zaireans cut people down with machetes, and they died very slowly.'"

It is interesting that both these Hutu refugees indicate that they and their families were victims of the slaughter in 1994 in Rwanda, giving the lie to the claim that only Tutsis were killed in Rwanda in 1994.

"The massacres did not just take place in the refugee camps," *La Libre Belgique* continues. "The AFDL men caught up with the refugees as they fled or in the forests. F., 17, said: 'In Lubutu the refugees had congregated on a bridge. Everyone wanted to escape, but it was narrow. The troops took advantage of this bottleneck to open fire on us.' Another witness, J., 14 years old, said: 'The soldiers fired on us in the forest, three days after we had left the camps. The others who were with me were all killed. I was wounded, but the soldiers thought I was dead too. That was after 52 kilometers. I spent the night alone and then made for the main road.' Another witness spoke of the massacre in Mbandaka, which certain Hutu refugees had reached after a West-East crossing of the former Zaire. C. tells how 'on the way, we ate raw manioc. Wherever the refugees went they were attacked. Even in Mbandaka. We entered there on 13 May at around 1100 [hours]. We found them [Kabila's troops] waiting for us. They were waiting to finish us off. That same day at least 500 people were killed. The refugees who tried to get into the boat to flee to Congo were caught unawares by the troops who threw them one by one into the river.'"

The Kabila government has denied the Mbandaka killings and denied the United Nations investigating team access to the site.