

U.S. puts on pressure for Sudan peace

by Linda de Hoyos

The government of Sudan and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), which have been at war since 1983, signed a joint communiqué on Sept. 22 announcing the commencement of negotiations between the two parties to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, beginning on Oct. 28. It is the first time in three years that the Sudan government and the SPLA headed by John Garang will meet face to face.

The talks will take place under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which is comprised of the countries Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, and Somalia. The communiqué specified that each side will send a lead negotiator with a team of not more than six people. In addition, each government of IGAD will have a Presidential envoy present at the negotiations.

The agreement was forged under pressure from the United States, which has been urging Garang, who has been backed by London through Uganda, to come to the peace table ever since the Sudan government signed a peace accord with six groups from the south that had been at war against Khartoum. The April 21 accords, which established a Southern States Coordinating Council, included provisions for freedom of religion; a federalist system giving greater autonomy to the states; distribution of national resources that would address the large disparity between development in the north and extreme poverty in the south, not to mention the ravages of the 14-year war on the south; and a pledge that, in four years, the south could hold a referendum on whether to remain part of Sudan or secede.

Can the war-mongers be kept at bay?

The Sept. 22 announcement of peace talks should put a brake on the war-mongering exhibited in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 16-17 at the U.S. Institute for Peace, led by Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee on Refugees, Ted Dagne of the Congressional Research Service, and John Prendergast of the U.S. National Security Council, among others. With Prendergast cheerleading, Dagne and Winter demanded an open war policy to “eliminate” the Khartoum government—with full knowledge, as Winter put it, that this would cause a “humanitarian catastrophe.”

In late September, Caroline Cox, a deputy speaker of the British House of Lords, testified before the U.S. Congress in her other hat, as leader of Christian Solidarity International, to heighten the din for war.

London’s demands are being supported by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to sources, which wants an “Iraq II” against Sudan.

Also demanding war against Sudan are former officials of the State Department from the administration of Sir George Bush.

Such a war would bring cataclysm to East Africa, as Lyndon LaRouche stated in last week’s *EIR*, “Sudan: Target of New Rice War.” As there is no national institution to replace the Khartoum government, the country would be thrown into civil war, as Dagne happily predicted in October 1995. The destruction of Sudan would further bring about the decimation of Egypt, the toppling of Kenya, and promise chaos for Uganda. Placed in the context of the unreconciled Somalia, increased tensions in Ethiopia, and the strong possibility of full-scale civil war in Zaire-Congo, a U.S.-backed war against Sudan would bring about the unstoppable destruction of the African continent at the hands of the British marcher-lord force organized around Ugandan dictator Yoweri Museveni, Rwanda’s Paul Kagame, and Congo’s Laurent Kabila.

In the eyes of the world, it is the United States that would be held to account for this catastrophe—as London has always planned.

Conversely, the talks between Sudan and Garang could be the beginning of a process of stabilization in East Africa, including into Uganda. But only the Clinton administration has the power to enforce a peace process against the many British-sponsored provocations that will undoubtedly be hurled in the way. The return of U.S. diplomats to Khartoum, after an 18-month hiatus, will aid Washington in enforcing the peace.

The people of the region are war-weary, having suffered for the duration of nearly a generation terrible famine, disease, and killing. In Sudan, the war is believed to have resulted in the deaths of 1 million people; in northern Uganda, the 11-year mirror-war between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Museveni regime, has resulted in the death of 300,000 people, or nearly half the northern Acholi population of the war districts of Kitgum and Gulu.

There is motivation and momentum for peace. On Sept. 20, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM-United) faction of the SPLA signed the April 21 accord with the Sudan government in a ceremony in Fashoda. The accord was mediated by His Majesty, Reth Dowango Ak Padiet, the Reth of the Shuluk group. The SPLM-United also signed an accord with Dr. Riak Machar, the head of the south’s Coordination Council.

And in another sign that the war may be coming to an end, Manut Bol, the famous millionaire basketball player in the United States who has been a long-standing supporter of Garang, first went to Kampala on Sept. 7, and then met Machar in Nairobi on Sept. 8, to declare his support for the peace process “as epitomized by the Sudan Peace Agreement of April 21, 1997.” Manut Bol joined Machar’s United Democratic Salvation Front.