

government officials are alarmed, because of growing evidence that military offensives are being geared up from Uganda and from the Eritrea.

The U.S. 'Africa experts'

In this context, a report carried by the Arabic daily *Al Hayat* on April 3, raises disconcerting questions about the intentions of the "Africa experts" in the State Department, vis-à-vis Sudan. *Al Hayat* reported on a U.S. security and military delegation to Asmara, the seat of the NDA. The delegation included a noted enemy of Sudan, John Prendergast of the National Security Council (NSC); the assistant on African affairs to Defense Secretary William Cohen, Dennis Kern; Philip-Michael Gary, the East African affairs director of AID; Robert Hodeck, former U.S. Ambassador to Addis Abeba and Asmara; Don Tittlebaum, chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum; and Gail Smith of the AID office in Nairobi. The leader of the group was David Dunn, director of the Office of East African Affairs at the State Department.

According to the report, the American delegation met with top leaders of the Sudanese opposition, the NDA, including Mubarak al-Fadl, Abdel Rahman Said, Farouk Ahmed Adem, Sherif Hariri, Abdel Aziz Nafallah, and official SPLA spokesman Mansur Khaled. The delegation later held a separate two-hour meeting with Khaled.

The reported subject of the talks was U.S. policy in the area, and the situation in Sudan. A source close to the meeting told *Al Hayat* that they had discussed topics similar to those broached by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright during her December visit to Uganda, when she met with NDA personnel. They talked about how to build a "new Sudan," and the importance of forging unity among the Sudanese opposition, in order to be able to replace the ruling government in Khartoum. According to *Al Hayat*, the delegation said it was going to report to President Clinton, on their return to Washington.

If the *Al Hayat* account is true, it is urgent to bring out into the public realm, what the content and aims of the sinister delegation was. It is documented, that there are serious, principled, and factional differences among those in the State Department, NSC, and elsewhere, on U.S. policy toward Sudan. Whereas the President has sent repeated signals of willingness to establish a dialogue with the Khartoum government, rogue elements attached to the British intelligence operations, typified by Prendergast, have openly challenged Clinton, and presented as U.S. policy, open support for insurgents against a sovereign government — for example, at a conference of the U.S. Institute of Peace last year (see *EIR*, Sept. 29, "Sudan, Target of Rice War").

Now, in the wake of the President's Africa tour, it would be most opportune to seek out direct contact with the majority leaders of southern Sudan, i.e., those former rebel leaders and former opposition figures who have opted for peace, and are now engaged in the task of creating democratic institutions of self-government for Sudan.

Interview: Babiker Ali Eltom

Sudan's people are looking to the future

Mr. Eltom is the chairman of the state legislative council in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. He was interviewed by EIR correspondents on Feb. 21.

EIR: We have seen a number of construction sites and new bridges being built in Khartoum. Could you tell what the most important projects are which have come on line?

Eltom: The revenues of Khartoum state have increased from 123 billion Sudanese pounds last year to 182 billion this year. This indicates that there is more money coming in to the government for expenditures, mainly for roads, for the rehabilitation of new and existing agricultural facilities, and for hospitals. Two weeks ago, we had an operation for open heart surgery. We started this in early 1983, but we stopped, because the hospitals were not in good order; but now, they have been rehabilitated. We have put more surgical instruments, staff and logistics, cars, ambulances into the new hospitals. More hospitals have been built in the territories. I am more concerned about the rural areas. About 85% of the people live in rural areas. So, there are more schools, there are more roads, there are more water supply facilities. There are more things like veterinary centers, recreation centers, and the beautification of Khartoum itself. So, there is a lot of effort taking place in Khartoum, just to make it a real city, like a capital. We are taking care of it.

EIR: Is this typical for the country as a whole, or mostly Khartoum?

Eltom: No, Khartoum is just part of it. The same, for example, is taking place in Kadario. There are production schemes, according to the speciality of each state. For example, water and electricity problems in North Kordofan. This is one of the main problems impeding the progress of that area. Water drillings, water projects have been rehabilitated. In the North, we have more expansion in wheat. In the Gezira, we are revising the relationship between the government and the tenants. Canals are being cleaned, areas of agricultural expansion are taking place in the Gezira scheme. So, there are a lot of infrastructure improvements taking place, all enhancing to the welfare of the people. Although they are suffering some hardships because of the disintegration of the economy, they still hope that in the near future, they are going to harvest what they have lost in previous years.

EIR: How are these projects financed?

Eltom: From the government, from self-help—just from inside the country. We do not have any grants or foreign aid from anywhere.

Each state has its own body and they finance their projects. Some states get grants from the richer states. There are states that cannot support themselves, and have a budget deficit. But there is a foundation to help those states which have less financial potential.

EIR: Do you expect this to happen in the southern states as well?

Eltom: Yes, we will concentrate more and more on the development of the south, once peace is achieved. In all walks of life, because the South needs everything.

EIR: All this construction activity must have had a positive impact on the employment situation.

Eltom: Yes. That is why it is no wonder that some people are coming back to Sudan from the oil-producing countries. They are coming back, especially architects, engineers, technicians, laborers. They have gained important experience abroad.

EIR: The last time we were here, we met with the Commissioner for Housing of Khartoum. And he told us of the tremendous housing difficulties for people coming in, such as refugees from the South. Have you been able to alleviate those problems somewhat?

Eltom: Especially in areas where there is stability and peace, we are asking these people voluntarily to go back to their homes.

EIR: The second National Congress has just taken place. Could you summarize what you see as the political and historical significance of this Congress for Sudan?

Eltom: What struck me the most is that there used to be more friction, . . . whereas at this Congress, everything was cordial, harmonious, very well tuned. At the last Congress there were 4,500 people; this time, 6,500. That is a good indication, for people outside or those who are just sitting on the platform and waiting: It is better to come and join, because there is a place for you. . . . People were relieved, the citizens. Because some people had said this would never take place, it would collapse. Now, you can definitely ascertain that people were relieved, and they said, this regime has to be supported, and people should participate. And as a result of this, [Mohammad Othman] al-Mirghani [an opposition political leader from the South, currently in exile] has said that he is coming back. And that is the feeling of all citizens, whether they were taking part in the system or were hostile to the system before. And 80% of those who were previously “anti,” became neutral, if they did not become participants.

Pope in Nigeria makes overture to Muslims

Pope John Paul II visited Nigeria on March 21-23. The official occasion was the beatification of Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi; but, the significance and impact of the Pope’s message go beyond this. Particularly in his speeches to the leaders of the two main religious communities in Nigeria, the Muslims and the Catholics, the Pontiff presented the principles on which reconciliation among different faiths can be reached, and conflict, in the name of religious creeds, can be avoided. This message is not only crucial for Nigeria, but for many countries in Africa, whose populations are divided among Christian, Muslim, and traditional African religions. We publish here excerpts from two of his speeches.

Meeting with Muslim leaders

This speech was given in Abuja on March 22.

1. Although my stay in Nigeria is rather brief, I did not want it to go by without such an important meeting with the highest representatives of Islam in this country. Allow me to express my gratitude to you for having accepted the invitation to come here this evening; I deeply appreciate this opportunity of greeting through you the entire Muslim community in Nigeria. I thank His Royal Highness for his kind words, and in turn I salute you with a greeting of Peace, the peace which has its true source in God, among whose Beautiful Names, according to your tradition, is *al-Salam*, Peace. As you are aware, the reason for my visit has been to proclaim solemnly the holiness of a son of this country, Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi. He has been declared a model of a religious man who loved others and sacrificed himself for them. The example of people who live holy lives teaches us not only to practise mutual respect and understanding, but to be ourselves models of goodness, reconciliation and collaboration, across ethnic and religious boundaries, for the good of the whole country and for the greater glory of God.

2. As Christians and Muslims, we share belief in the one, merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day (*Lumen Gentium*, 16). Though we differ in the way we understand this One God, we are nevertheless akin in our efforts to know and follow his will. That religious aspiration itself constitutes a spiritual bond between Christians and Muslims, a bond which can provide a firm and broad-ranging basis for cooperation in many fields. This is important wherever Christians and Muslims live together. It is particularly important in Nigeria,