

Who will stop the impending holocaust in Burundi?

by Linda de Hoyos

Amidst all the recriminations tossed in the pages of the press for the alleged failure of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to prevent the holocaust in Rwanda in spring-summer 1994, not a word has been said about the holocaust that is building *right now* in the neighboring country of Burundi. Multiple sources report that rumors are rife of a military intervention directed by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni into Burundi in the near future—either through Rwanda or through Tanzania, which military deployment is expected to cause the same kind of mayhem in Burundi that resulted in the deaths of upwards of 1 million people in Rwanda in 1994.

In a press conference on March 30, U.S. Lt. Col. Nancy Burt stated that “the Defense Department has no firm plans for moving rapidly into Rwanda or Burundi should genocidal killings occur,” according to UPI. Burt noted that “Burundi is considered a tinderbox by many Africa observers.”

On the ground in the Great Lakes region, the forces and interests at play in Burundi, a tiny nation of 5 million people, are complicated and conflicting. But the route to stopping the holocaust is not: The United States must seek an effective and forceful peace process for Burundi, which finally recognizes the legitimacy of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD), which is composed of survivors of the overthrown elected government of murdered President Melchior Ndayaye. Organized around the principles of a democracy rather than ethnicity, the CNDD is the most viable institution in Burundi if the country is to be brought to peace. Attempts to relegate the CNDD to the status of “Hutu rebels,” or to disrupt and destroy it, *can be guaranteed* to bring Burundi to a state of political seizure, causing many deaths.

The road taken to mayhem

It is the failure of the international community to uphold the results of the June 1993 national elections which has already hurled Burundi into civil war, and brought about the dire crisis now pending. Since the murder of Prince Louis Ragsore in 1962, Burundi has been ruled by a military junta composed exclusively of Tutsis who carried out slaughters of Hutus, particularly male children, at the slightest hint of rebellion.

In 1993, this pattern was broken by national elections—carried out with the aid of the United States—which brought

to the Presidency Melchior Ndadaye, the founding leader of the Burundi Democratic Front Party (Frodebu). The Frodebu had a large base in the Hutu population, but also included a minority of Tutsis who rejected the class-centered Tutsi military dictatorship.

In October 1993, when no U.S. ambassador was even posted to Burundi and when the U.S. deputy chief of mission was out of the country, the defeated candidate in the elections, former military dictator Pierre Buyoya, attempted a military coup against Ndadaye. In the ensuing melee, Ndadaye was brutally murdered, and the civilian elected government remaining came under the increasing threat from the Tutsi military. The event was a major contributing factor to the bloodletting to follow in Rwanda within the year.

Between October 1993 and July 26, 1996, when Buyoya officially seized power with a military coup, the Tutsi military carried out the ethnic cleansing of the capital city of Bujumbura, turning it into a “Tutsi” city; murdered half the provincial governors in the country; killed or forced into exile 16 cabinet ministers; and assassinated 10 members of the National Assembly. Especially targetted were Tutsis who were committed to democracy (see “British Complete Their Coup in Burundi,” *EIR*, March 8, 1996). Also, as reported by then-U.S. Ambassador to Burundi Robert Krueger, the military carried out systematic slaughters against Hutu civilians in the countryside.

In March 1994, Leonard Nyangoma, Interior Minister in the Ndayaye government and organizer of Frodebu’s 1993 election campaign, went into exile and organized the National Council for the Defense of Democracy, as the remaining Frodebu civilian government watched impotently while its power and ability to protect itself and the Burundian populace were snatched away.

Buyoya’s seizure of power in July 1996 was a precondition to the September invasion of eastern Zaire by a combined force directed by Ugandan President Museveni, composed of Ugandan, Rwandan, and Burundian troops. Buyoya’s Tutsi troops swept into Uvira and environs, gunning down the Frodebu-CNDD leadership there. (Many Frodebu parliamentarians went to the National Assembly in Bujumbura during the day, but kept their families in Uvira and returned there each night, for reasons of security.)

Meanwhile, within the country, civil war escalated with

the armed wing of the CNDD, the Forces for Democracy (FDD), making major inroads in the southern and western sections of the country. In response, the Buyoya regime launched a resettlement policy, placing 800,000 people in the equivalent of concentration camps. In 1997, the camps were hit by the biggest typhoid epidemic since World War II.

Efforts by the United States and the Saint Egidio order in Rome to begin negotiations between Buyoya and the CNDD failed, in light of the recalcitrance of Buyoya to even consider the CNDD as a partner.

Complicating matters

The mass violence now looming on the horizon in Burundi, however, stems from complicating factors, coming from Tanzania and Uganda. Both countries stand in opposition to Buyoya, and in opposition to the CNDD, while Buyoya has found some support in France.

Former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere has intervened to assert his own ambitions over Burundi. In 1996, he was the central organizer of a proposed “peacekeeping force” of the Organization of African Unity to enter Burundi to restore peace — an option rejected by both Buyoya and his opponents. Nyerere stated point-blank that Burundi and Rwanda would find peace only if combined to form a “Greater Tanzania.” That proposal sparked the Buyoya coup in July 1996.

Meanwhile, Nyerere has asserted his role as the top mediator in the Burundi conflict, seeking to insinuate himself with the various opposition organizations to the Tutsi military, including the CNDD, the remaining Frodebu, and the ethnically based Palipehutu and Frolina. Tensions between Buyoya’s military and Tanzania on the borders where the Burundian refugee camps sit, have risen to the point of episodic military clashes.

Not to be outdone, Ugandan President Museveni, a progeny of Nyerere’s “kindergarten” at Dar es Salaam University, has also taken a position against Buyoya. In Museveni’s peculiar perceptions, the power in Burundi should not be in the hands of Buyoya, but in the hands of Buyoya’s cousin, Jean Baptiste Bagaza, whom Buyoya had overthrown in 1987.

Bagaza, who spent his exile until 1993 in Libya, is cut from the same Maoist cloth as Museveni. During his regime (1976-87), the Hutus, 85% of the population, faced a relentless campaign of cultural oppression led by Emile Mworoha, the general secretary of the Tutsi Uprona party. Schooled in France under anthropologist Jean-Pierre Chrétien, Mworoha put Burundi through de-schooling. First, the government eradicated French from all lower-grade schools, leaving that language only to the Tutsi elites (most of the Hutu elites had been killed in the massacre of 1972). Bagaza also went on a rampage against the Catholic Church, permitting it to operate only for one mass on Sundays. Catholic schools, the only place many poor Hutu children could obtain an education, were shut down.

Since his return in 1993, Bagaza has been a major orga-

nizer of the Tutsi youth militias who carried out the ethnic cleansing of Bujumbura.

But for Museveni, Bagaza’s main credentials are the alliance between them. Bagaza was a major contributor to Museveni’s campaign in the bush in the early 1980s to come to power in Uganda. Now Bagaza may be calling in his chits, but for Museveni the goal is to attach Rwanda (already achieved), and now Burundi, to a “Greater Uganda.”

On the ground, it might appear as if Nyerere and Museveni are operating on the basis of conflicting interests. However, at the higher levels of British intelligence — where the architects of the bloody geopolitics of the Great Lakes region reside — any differences that might exist between them are irrelevant. The objective is to crush the republican CNDD forces between the two — first politically, then physically.

That is the prescription for genocide now on the agenda.

How it will happen

Reports are now rife that soon an African invasion force will be entering Burundi. Its immediate goal will be the military destruction of the CNDD’s Forces for Democracy. The force is necessitated by the FDD’s encroachment on Bujumbura itself, beginning on Jan. 1 of this year, with a major FDD attack on the Bujumbura airport and neighboring Army barracks.

According to sources based in Tanzania, the force entering to put the Burundi house in order will come from Tanzania. Other sources report that it is more likely that Ugandan and Rwandan troops will do the job, coming through southern Uganda, passing through Tanzania into Burundi.

Either way, the invasion places all civilian populations at high risk.

In Rwanda in spring 1994, the bloodletting was triggered by two cataclysmic events: the shooting down of the plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6, and the military blitzkrieg across Rwanda of the Museveni-backed Rwandan Patriotic Front within 24 hours of Habyarimana’s death.

Under conditions in which Hutu populations are already terrorized, and in which, according to State Department officials, the “fear level of the Tutsis in Bujumbura is rising,” any event with a major destabilizing impact on Burundi is likely to trigger mass slaughters and counter-slaughters, as the population goes into a general panic. This is precisely what occurred in Rwanda — as opposed to the RPF myths created about 1994.

As of this writing, this is the operation set to go in Burundi. The operation does not originate in the United States, but so far, the Clinton administration is not taking effective action to halt it. It is not difficult to freeze the plan, if the United States is willing to drop its British-designed geopolitical alliance with warlord Museveni, whose expansionist empire-building in East Africa at the behest of the British Commonwealth has already cost millions of lives since the Ugandan invasion of Rwanda in 1990.