

Africa Report by Mary Lalevée

The disastrous Chad withdrawal

It will mean the political destabilization of at least three countries, and for Chad itself, genocide.

The agreement signed by French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson and Libya's Ali Triki on Sept. 17 in Tripoli, calling for the withdrawal of troops from Chad, began to be implemented on Sept. 25, with French troops evacuating their two most northern positions in the country, at Salal and Arada. The Libyan evacuation was held up for a few days, according to the Libyan authorities, due to "fuel shortages"!

Despite the delay, it does seem likely that the Libyan troops will withdraw from all of Chad except the Aouzou strip, which they have occupied for more than 10 years. Colonel Qaddafi no doubt intends to prove to his critics that he can be trusted. But France is unlikely to be trusted by many in Africa, with a diplomat from West Africa in Rome saying, "How can we go to France with our security problems now that France is working with Qaddafi, who is trying to destabilize our country?"

A source in France pointed out that Africa is the first continent to undergo the "New Yalta" treatment: "Africa is going to be a test case for the New Yalta. It's easier [than in Europe] to shift spheres of influence in Africa back and forth."

There will be two immediate effects of the withdrawal of the 3,000 French troops from Chad. One is the political destabilization of not only Chad, but the Central African Republic and Sudan. The other is genocide.

Chad's tiny army faces rebellion not only in the north where the GUNT

rebels led by Goukouni Oueddei have been fighting Habre's forces, but also in the south, where black separatists, especially the Sara tribal group, are stepping up their rebellion. The rebels in both locations are supplied with arms and ammunition by the Libyans, with one report in the French newsletter *Lettre d'Afrique* saying that black members of Qaddafi's Islamic Legion are bringing in supplies via southern Sudan. This dates back at least a year, according to the report, and was "reactivated" by "advisers" from Eastern Europe posted in Tripoli and Addis Ababa. The target is not only Chad, but the Central African Republic and Sudan.

The former "Emperor" of the Central African Republic, Bokassa, overthrown in 1979, has remained on good terms with Qaddafi. He recently gave a widely publicized press conference near Paris, and it is no secret that Qaddafi would like to put him back in power. Libya has trained pro-Bokassa rebels now operating inside the country.

There are reports that the sudden decision by Sudan's President Julius Numeiry to end the imposition of Islamic law, and permit southern Sudan to become an autonomous region, thus hoping to quell rebellion, was imposed on him by the United States, which hopes that a stabilization of the situation would prevent the area being used for the transshipment of arms to the rebels in Chad and Central Africa. It is almost certainly too late for such steps to lead to any major change: the

rebels in the south are well organized, trained, and armed by Ethiopia.

The French withdrawal, as the French newspaper *Liberation* wrote, will also be a "disaster" for the Chad economy. Chad has the lowest GNP per capita in the world—only \$80, compared to \$120 in Ethiopia, for example. Average life expectancy is only 48 years. "The pocket money alone of the 3,000 soldiers corresponds to about one third of the Chadian budget, without counting the local purchases of the force (two tons of meat per month, for example). The men receive 100,000 CFA (about \$250) per month for their local expenses, as well as their salary which is paid in France, which is more than the GNP per capita in Chad. Altogether they inject about 3.5 billion CFA (about \$8 million) a month into the economy. . . ."

The French forces have provided basic equipment for transporting food and medical aid to the increasing number of starving people in Chad; they have distributed 4,000 tons of food aid, helped repair pumps, organized freight transport, etc. Food supplies have been drastically reduced, due both to drought and to the IMF's recommendation that Chad produce more cotton for export. The cotton crop this year was the highest in years, producing 160,000 tons in 1984, compared to 70,000 and 100,000 the two previous years. The concentration on cotton has meant that the traditional crop for local consumption, sorghum, has been neglected.

Latest reports say that 200,000 people have taken refuge in the capital, N'djamena, and are totally dependent on food aid. The government fears that as many as 2 million of Chad's 6 million population could arrive in N'djamena in search of food. There are already reports of starvation deaths in various parts of the country.