

British geopolitics stokes fire of African holocaust

by Uwe Friesecke

The war in eastern Zaire, which was started during the third week of October by invading forces from Burundi and Rwanda, has all the potential to engulf the entire region of Africa's Great Lakes in genocidal war. Besides Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi, the conflict could involve Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and southern Sudan. What most of the press tried to portray as yet another "tribal war" in Africa, in reality is the calculated aggression of an alliance among the rulers of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, against Zaire.

The conflict exploded, because they were playing the ethnic card of "Tutsi against Hutu." The Tutsi groups of these three governments are using the instability in Zaire, whose President, Mobutu Sese Seko, is presumably deathly ill in a hospital in Geneva, Switzerland, to further their ambitions for the establishment of a "Tutsi Empire." In this endeavor, they are supported by the geopolitically motivated British government and by parts of the American government. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Oct. 11 gave a virtual go-ahead to the Rwandan government, when he declared that it would be safe for Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire to return home. Only two weeks earlier, U.S. Deputy Commander in Chief for Europe Gen. James Jamerson held talks with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Kampala, Uganda, on the need for increased military cooperation between the United States and Uganda.

The aggressors

The Rwandan government continued to lie, saying that it had nothing to do with the conflict and was only giving moral support to the oppressed Banyamulenge people. But the fact is that, starting around Oct. 20, more than 2,000 Rwandan Army troops backed up the so-called rebels invading Zaire. In previous weeks, other well-equipped rebel commandoes had already infiltrated Kivu province from Rwanda, Burundi,

and Uganda, stirring up tensions between the Banyamulenge (who are regarded as belonging to the Tutsi grouping), and both the Zairean authorities and the Hutu refugees from Burundi and Rwanda, about 1 million of whom were living in camps near Uvira, Bukavu, and Goma. The attacks immediately forced more than 250,000 people to flee. Some reached the camps near the provincial capital of Bukavu, only to be uprooted once more, when Rwandan troops took the town one week later. In the meantime, by Nov. 1, after attacks on Goma, Zaire, up to 1 million refugees were in flight, in a desperate search for shelter, food, water, and safety.

The archbishop of Bukavu, Zaire, Mwene Ngabo, only one week before he was to be murdered, gave the following account of the nature of the war on Oct. 22: "In fact, this war that the mass media ascribed to the Banyamulenge, is an invasion coming from Uganda. The invaders' army is composed of Ugandese, Rwandese, and Burundese soldiers and other mercenaries. Compared to the Zairean Army, they are super-equipped. This invasion was carefully prepared over a long period of time in order to occupy part of Zaire. The soldiers who are here speak English, although the Zaireans, including the Banyamulenge, speak French. They can be seen settling into strategic places and digging up weapons hidden underground a long time ago, in villages inhabited by Banyamulenge."

The military leaders in Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, who directed those attacks, knew full well that the refugees had no chance of surviving in the hills and forests, where they were cut off from all supplies. Those who attacked the refugee camps, cold-bloodedly took into account, that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians might die in eastern Zaire. Therefore, their argument, that they were chasing after "Hutu genocidalists," stands exposed as a cynical fraud. Although it is true that some people guilty of crimes during the genocide

of 1994 in Rwanda were among those in the camps, still, more than 80% of the camps' residents were elderly people, women, and children, and there can be no justification for holding them hostage for the others.

The greater 'Tutsi Empire'

In preparation for the war, the Ugandan and Rwandan secret services created a Banyamulenge People's Democratic Alliance, whose spokesman, Muller Ruhimbika, declared openly that the aim of the war was to take over Kivu province. Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu explained that the Banyamulenge would be quite welcome in Rwanda, but they would have to bring their land with them! In other words, Kivu should be annexed. Bizimungu even called for a second Berlin Conference, to redraw the region's map in the tradition of the 1885 Berlin Conference, at which the imperial powers divided up Africa.

Most of the military and political initiatives for the region come from the circles of President Museveni of Uganda. He took power in 1986 by breaking an agreement for a government of national unity. His power was based on his guerrilla army, comprised mostly of Tutsi refugees, who had fled Rwanda after the 1959 Hutu uprisings. For a long time, Uganda's opposition has accused Museveni of plotting to establish a Tutsi Empire, having promised to bring the refugees and their children back to power. Museveni regards himself as belonging to the Hima group of Tutsi—like Paul Kagame, the strongman of Rwanda, and Pierre Buyoya, the dictator of Burundi.

Museveni had created the military force which invaded Rwanda in 1990, out of the cadre of his former guerrilla army. They called themselves the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and set into motion a process which ultimately destroyed the state and government of Rwanda, and which, by 1994, gave them power over Rwanda. As criminal as was the genocide committed in the summer of 1994, by elements of the Habyarimana regime against Tutsi and Hutu opposition people, it cannot possibly justify the dictatorial regime that Museveni's friends of the RPF established in Rwanda afterwards.

In Burundi, Museveni supported a "creeping coup" organized by a Tutsi group that had controlled the Army since 1993. The coup began by killing the first democratically elected Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye, in October of that year. There can be no doubt that Maj. Pierre Buyoya, who had been the military dictator of Burundi until June 1993, was involved in the plot. In the last two years, Museveni's Tutsi allies have managed to paralyze the Burundian state and parliament—of whose 81 members, only 31 are left in the country, while 22 were killed, and the rest were forced to flee for their lives—all to prepare the ground for the Buyoya coup this July. This eliminated all opposition from power in Bujumbura, and prepared the ground for the war against Zaire.

The triple alliance among Museveni, Kagame, and Buyoya is faced with a dilemma. The war in Zaire is further

proof, that they are not interested in finding peaceful solutions for the conflicts of the region, but only in promoting their own power. For this purpose, however, they adopted a strategy of playing the ethnic card of racial "superiority" of Tutsi over Hutu. The more they do this, as they are currently doing in Zaire, the more they will provoke hatred and the desire for revenge among the people who are their victims. Thus, in the long run, their strategy is suicidal. For them, the way out is to crush all potential opposition militarily. In this war in Zaire, they are trying to destroy the base of the Burundian opposition within the National Council for the Defense of Democracy, whose military arm now controls most of the Burundian countryside. For Rwanda, the aim is to destroy all political and potential military opposition among the refugees outside the country.

London's policy

As so often in recent years in Africa, governments of the NATO countries and the United Nations have simply looked on, while a human catastrophe is in the making. Two weeks after the first 250,000 refugees left their camps, 1 million people were in motion, and the head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, had nothing but cynical remarks for the desperate refugees. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has not even tried to push for an initiative in the UN Security Council to bring relief to the area. And the Western governments have offered only excuses, why they would not commit forces to help save human lives in Zaire. We may very well experience the same thing we did in Somalia in 1990 and in Rwanda in 1994, when governments and the UN did nothing to stop the deaths of hundreds of thousands—or even millions—of Africans. What is the motivation?

The British government and its Minister of Overseas Affairs Lynda Chalker have the closest relations to President Museveni of Uganda. Besides Britain, the U.S. Pentagon has military advisers in Uganda and Rwanda. Paul Kagame was trained by the U.S. military, and Pierre Buyoya is the darling of the World Bank. The German government has significant influence in Kampala (Uganda), Kigali (Rwanda), and Bujumbura (Burundi). Why was nothing done to prevent the war? Why could the governments in Kigali and Kampala buy the weapons to wage war, with such impunity?

It is colonial policy coming out of London. Those forces that continue in the tradition of the British Empire have openly declared, that they want to recolonize Africa. For this, they want African rulers, who implement International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programs without mercy, such as in Uganda, and who, through privatization, open up the region to even more shameless looting of raw materials. That is the significance of the Banyamulenge rebels announcing that rebels from Zaire's rich Shaba province—formerly Katanga—have joined them. Further, from the British standpoint, the manipulated ethnic conflicts are regarded as a useful instrument for population reduction.

Rwandans appeal to UN: Help refugees in Zaire

The statement excerpted here was addressed to the president of the UN General Assembly on Oct. 22, by the Group for the Return of Refugees and for Democracy in Rwanda, in the name of Claver Kanyarushoki, vice president.

Mr. President:

The Group for the Return of Refugees and for Democracy in Rwanda (RDR), an organization representing millions of refugees and voiceless people in Rwanda, wishes to appeal to you to urgently intervene on behalf of more than 1 million Rwandan refugees who are victims of the war developing in East Zaire.

Since last weekend, more than one quarter of a million Rwandan and Burundian refugees were forced to leave their camps to try and flee from the combat zone. They left everything behind them.

They left, not only to get away from the combat zone of the so-called Banyamulenge war, but also because they were dying of hunger, since they had not received food aid for more than two weeks, as the HCR [UN High Commission for Refugees] itself has acknowledged. Therefore, they left in too weak a condition, and hundreds if not thousands will probably die on the road from starvation.

These hundreds of thousands of refugees may, unfortunately, never find rest, if the international community does not quickly oblige the aggressor to end this war.

In fact, as the RDR has repeatedly pointed out and denounced, the war in East Zaire is not the Banyamulenge war that some claim it to be, but a much more far-ranging war, that aims at destabilizing all of East Zaire, from south to north. We warned about preparations for this war in our memorandum drawn up for the Round Table of Rwanda's creditors, organized in Geneva on June 20-21, 1996, and again in the memorandum addressed to the OAU heads of state and of government during their 32nd Summit in Youande in July 1996.

At that time (in the latter memo), we warned the international community of the Rwandan regime's intention to internationalize the Rwandan conflict, in the following terms: "The FPR regime, together with its regional and overseas allies, have been waging for some time a vigorous campaign to destabilize Rwandan refugees and to internationalize the conflict. In this way, they try to implicate Rwandan refugees in every incident that breaks out anywhere in the Great Lake

region, especially in Rwanda, Burundi, or Zaire. They have even been accused of taking part in attacks on Ugandan territory!"

The Rwandan refugee has become an easy, ideal scapegoat, whom minority regimes in the region blame for their internal problems, rather than seeking courageous solutions that must involve serious and prompt negotiations with their adversaries, if they truly wish to cut short the suffering of innocent populations, which has lasted so long.

The international community should examine in detail how its aid has been used by the Kigali regime. It is said that this regime takes a good part of the aid to maintain and over-arm its abundant army, which many estimate to be made up of more than 50,000 men. . . .

Unsatisfied with the massacres done in Rwanda, the FPR regularly sends commandos to massacre people in refugee camps in Burundi and Zaire.

Moreover, information persistently received indicates that the Kigali regime and its allies are preparing a coordinated invasion of all of East Zaire in order to spread death and desolation in the camps containing over 1 million refugees. The international community is thus informed, and should increase protection for these populations.

The RDR claims that this plan has become operational because the war fomented and coordinated out of Kigali is not limited to the sole region of Uvia. It is not the Banyamulenge who bombed the city of Bukavu from Cyangugu last month.

Infiltration of armed men coming from Rwanda into this region, has also been going on for months in North Kivu, and there have been countless attacks from infiltrated men, on refugee camps and on humanitarian convoys. The latest was carried out on Oct. 21, 1996 against the Katale refugee camp, north of Goma. The only supply route remaining for the refugee camps, in North Kivu, is regularly under attack, especially at the Ugandan-Zairean border point of Bunagana.

In addition to the reasons given by the Zairean government, especially in the Declaration of the vice prime minister and interior and decentralization minister of the Zaire Republic, during the 47th Session of the HCR's Executive Committee, the Kigali regime wants to destroy and displace the refugee camps through force. The worst is that this regime does not seek to repatriate the refugees, but rather that they be massacred and Zaire destabilized. The attacks in this whole region are also aimed at blocking supplies to the refugee camps and at spreading panic among humanitarian organizations, to get them to withdraw their staff and, in that way, starve the refugees.

Given all that has gone before, the RDR, in the name of Rwandan refugees, asks you to urgently place this question on the agenda of the Security Council, in order that measures be taken to stop the war, to condemn the Kigali regime, and to protect the physical integrity and other basic rights of refugees recognized by the relevant international Conventions.