
Interview: Jacques Bacamurwanko



East Africa's 'ethnic war' is really Britain's doing

Former Burundian Ambassador Jacques Bacamurwanko cleared the cobwebs from the media's racist obfuscation of the genocide in Africa's Great Lakes region, in an interview with the "LaRouche Connection" cable broadcast on Nov. 19. Bacamurwanko has been unable to return to his country since Burundi's first democratically elected government, whose late President Melchior Ndadaye was also the country's first Hutu head of state, was overthrown by the Tutsi-dominated military in 1995. Jacques Bacamurwanko was appointed ambassador to the United States by Ndadaye and was, as he described it, "abruptly dismissed" by the junta, headed by Pierre Buyoya. Bacamurwanko, currently the North American coordinator of the National Council for Defense of Democracy (CNDD) in Burundi, has been speaking in the United States as part of the Schiller Institute's mobilization to defend the sovereignty of Zaire and stop the genocide in the region.

The ambassador described the CNDD as "a liberation movement" that was started by the majority party in order to restore the democratic process after Ndadaye had been assassinated. "Shortly after the assassination," he said, "the democratic forces and the remainder of the decimated elected government did make appeals to the international community to get some help, to put some pressure on the military, to surrender and give the power back to the democratically elected institutions. We waited, and we waited, and we didn't get any help.

"We were asking for a peacekeeping force," he said, "whose mandate was, among other things, to help restructure the military institution in Burundi, which has always been monopolized by a tiny minority of Tutsi, which makes up only 15% of the entire Burundi population, but which is represented in the military army by over 99%. . . . The international community didn't want to come to the rescue of the democratic process that had just been killed. . . . So we decided to start this movement under the leadership of the former interior minister, and also member of the Burundi National Assembly, Mr. Leonard Nyangoma, who lives in exile, just like most of the CNDD leadership."

Bacamurwanko confirmed that the CNDD represents both Hutu and Tutsi Burundians. "We are speaking in terms of restoration of democracy," he stressed. "We're not speaking

in terms of ethnic affiliation. You can see it from the leadership at the top, all the way down—including even in the armed branch of our movement—we do have, indeed, elements from the two major ethnic groups." CNDD's platform is to restore national unity, national reconciliation, and to end the country's tragic division.

Bacamurwanko described the events that led up to the current genocide facing over 1 million refugees in eastern Zaire, where that country borders Rwanda and Burundi. The crisis began in 1994, when the plane carrying the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down as it landed in Kigali. He said that although it will probably never be investigated, the evidence points to Belgians among the peacekeeping forces as being responsible for shooting down the Presidents' plane. Belgium is the former colonial power of these three countries, which used to comprise the Belgian Congo.

He refuted the media lies that the Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire were caught in a "cross-fire" between Rwandan Army forces and "Hutu militias," as well as "Zairean Tutsi rebels," who are holding the refugees hostage. "We have a humanitarian tragedy of millions of Hutu refugees," he said, "who are threatened by lack of food, lack of water, by lack of medicines, and for whom the international community has no sympathy," and which concocts myths to justify its non-intervention.

The head of the mythical "Zairean rebels," Bacamurwanko continued, is one Laurent Kabila, who, far from being a Zairean, is a longtime mercenary who has been operating around Zaire's southern border with Angola, using several aliases, and is now being paid to head up a synthetic "Tutsi rebel" movement in Zaire. Bacamurwanko agreed, when host Webster Tarpley's described Kabila's mercenaries as a "sort of mixed bag of British Special Air Services mercenaries, who had been notorious for their involvement in all the conflicts that have plagued this part of Africa since the so-called independence period of 1960."

Tarpley asked the ambassador to clarify the question of the Hutu death squads, known as the Interahamwe. "In the aftermath of the genocide that occurred in Rwanda, in 1994," said Bacamurwanko, "there were young Hutus who were involved in killing massive numbers of Tutsis. This did happen. And these young male Hutus, who were engaged in these genocidal acts, called themselves Interahamwe, which means

'those who attack together.' " When the Rwandan Army was routed by the Ugandan-Rwandan invaders in 1994, these killers fled to Zaire along with the flood of innocent Hutu refugees, and are "still very much part of that population." But, he added, "we don't know the extent to which the Interahamwe continue to harass their fellow Rwandan citizens in the camps in Zaire."

Lady Chalker's hidden agenda

The international community and the on-site non-governmental organizations have raised an international outcry that the problem is to return the Rwandan Hutus to Rwanda to stabilize the region, said the ambassador. "But, the real problem—which we are not told—is that there is an agenda behind this call; which is engineered, and manipulated, and implemented on the ground, designed, of course, in London through the good offices of Uganda's President [Yoweri] Museveni—the aggressor, who pulls the strings on the puppet Tutsi governments in the region—so they can bring about the agenda set by London and by other Western powers. . . .

"The genocidal policy designed by the British Foreign Office, by the notorious Lady Lynda Chalker and Baroness Cox there, is, to put it very simply: The leaders who should rule Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi should be minority Tutsis; and, secondly, that these countries are much too populated, and, therefore, one of the priorities is to implement population control—which is nothing other than population reduction, killing people, genocide. The third thing is, once you've killed people and put in place people who are subservient to you, they will give you access to whatever resources are there. And we know that mineral resources abound in that region and the ultimate aim, therefore, is the looting of the riches that abound there by Britain." Tarpley remarked that the mineral wealth of the areas such as Zaire's Shaba province, included some of the most important deposits of copper, cobalt, diamonds; Burundi has very significant nickel deposits, plus copper, cobalt, vanadium, tin, tungsten; Rwanda has tin and tungsten. The last two countries, although small, he added, have very high population densities which are, nevertheless, food-exporting areas.

There is nothing ethnic about this war, Bacamurwanko told Tarpley: "It's really a weird game that's being played, whose pieces are put together out there in London and in the agencies that London finances, in the multilateral organizations, or NGOs, on the ground there. It's definitely not a home-grown problem, because we know that the Hutus and the Tutsis have always lived together very peacefully, next to one another in villages for centuries, from the 15th century to today! Even today, as the crisis goes on, we do see quite a few instances of possibilities for the Tutsis and the Hutus to continue living together, and to control their destiny together—were it not, of course, for the continuous game that the destabilizers and the genocidal policymakers, and their puppet governments continue to implement on the ground,

through these very characters: Museveni of Uganda, [Paul] Kagame of Rwanda, and Buyoya of Burundi."

Prospects for peace

Bacamurwanko described the peace efforts that have been undertaken by African leaders to stop the British project for a "Tutsi-Hima empire" under London control. Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko is "a figure who has been able, since the days of independence, to keep the huge territory of Zaire together. I mentioned earlier, Zaire has more than 400 tribes. In Burundi and Rwanda, we don't have any ethnic groups, so to speak, because people speak the same language, they have the same culture—but in Zaire, there are different tribes, with different cultures and traditions. But, Mobutu was able, in spite of the colonial game that was set up to rip up Zaire in the days of Moïse Tshombe, and Lumumba—this hero who was killed by the colonial masters because he wanted Zaire to remain united—Mobutu has been able to keep Zaire united.

"Now, what we see in the background of this humanitarian tragedy, is that they want to set up Mobutu as an impotent leader today, who should give up his post to some other leader, most likely from the Tutsi-Hima, so the empire can grow even larger.

"But, as we know, Mobutu is capable of bringing things together, and what he needs, is for Zaire's capacities, in terms of its government, its military equipment and operations, to be bolstered and strengthened, so that he can deal with this invasion; and that's what the international community should be emphasizing, that the Zairean territory has been clearly invaded, and that Zaire should be given every possible means to deal with this invasion—and then other problems can be taken up from there."

He added that "most of the leaders in the region—in Kenya, Tanzania, in Ethiopia—have realized how dangerous this Hima-Tutsi virus can be. So, as a result, they have developed a regional mechanism for consulting with each other on a regular basis, partly in order to prevent genocide from ripping up Burundi, and having a worst-case catastrophe erupting there, the way things were in Rwanda two years ago. So, they've put their efforts together, and the former Tanzanian President [Julius] Nyerere has been leading these efforts, particularly to mediate the conflict that is evolving in Burundi and Rwanda. Another very dynamic figure is the Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, who has been playing an extremely vigorous role, as has the current Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa.

"These are leaders whom Africa should look to, whom the Organization of African Unity should utilize to help stabilize the region, and Mobutu should definitely be counted on with this process." Tarpley remarked that some of these leaders have pointed out the absurdity of proposals for Canada to take the lead in resolving the situation, excluding the countries in Africa from participating in reaching a peaceful solution.