

The Kigali-Kampala bloody annexation of east Congo-Zaire

by Linda de Hoyos

The Clinton administration announced on Oct. 14 that it is sending a three-man team to the Democratic Republic of Congo in a new attempt to force President Laurent Kabila to open up his country to United Nations investigators, who are probing the murder of up to 200,000 refugees in Congo-Zaire during the Zaire war. Heading the team will be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson, who will be joined by Howard Wolpe, current U.S. special envoy to Burundi and former chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa; and Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.). "A failure to allow that [UN] mission is the kind of behavior that only the most outcast kind of states have taken," State Department spokesman James Rubin emphasized, in announcing the U.S. mission.

But a report of the Physicians for Human Rights, issued in August 1997, gives evidence that Kabila *cannot* permit a UN probe into eastern Congo now, not only because his government wants to destroy evidence of the murders of refugees during the October 1996-May 1997 Zaire war, but because it wants to hide the fact that *massive killing continues to be carried out in the areas of North and South Kivu to this day*. The killings described in the report, "Investigations in Eastern Congo and Western Rwanda," were reportedly carried out by soldiers speaking English, Kinyarwanda, and/or Swahili with a Rwandan accent. The PHR findings corroborate continuing reports coming into *EIR* of atrocities and seizures of property and land in eastern Zaire by the Rwandan-Ugandan army.

Partners of London

This violence represents well-planned military operations designed to pave the way for the full annexation of eastern Congo-Zaire by the nexus of Kampala-Kigali, under the aegis of the British Commonwealth.

The new British Minister of International Development Clare Short, honing to the policies of her predecessor Baroness Lynda Chalker, was in Kigali and Kampala in the first week of October to place London's imprimatur on the entire gameplan. Extolling Ugandan dictator Yoweri Museveni as a "very fine man," Short declared in Kampala on Oct. 8 that Britain will accept the dictatorship of Museveni's National Resistance Movement, and will not press for multiparty reforms in Uganda. "Our relationship with Uganda is precious," Short explained. "I do not think it is necessarily right for

Uganda to have the same kind of political system like Britain."

The day after Short left, Museveni complained bitterly to the United Nations that it must deal with *him* on the stalled UN investigation. "On the question of refugees in Rwanda and Congo, I would really like to advise our brother Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, that it is good if he liaises closely with us. Because it is us who organized his election as UN secretary general to liaise with us. The problem of refugees in eastern Congo and Rwanda is a complicated one." Museveni's bid was rebuffed by the UN.

Meanwhile, in Kigali, Short announced that the British government will donate another \$10 million shortly to the Rwandan regime of Vice President Paul Kagame, and said: "Britain will continue to work in partnership with the Rwandan government to rebuild the country."

Then, hinting directly at Rwanda's takeover of eastern Congo, Short boldly said: "This will also benefit many beyond its borders—economic and political stability in East Africa go hand in hand."

This strenuous backing from the British is why there is little attempt on the part of the Rwandan Tutsis and their Ugandan allies to hide their aims. "These are the final spasms of a fatally wounded horse," is how Rwandan businessman George Rubagumya described the devastation of eastern Congo to Belgian correspondent Colette Braeckmann on Sept. 12. "They will not last, everything will be normal again." Confirming that North Kivu is in a state of war, he reported: "Every night you hear gunfire, the road to Sake is blocked. In July, Masisi was devastated and the last herds of cows were decimated and eaten. This time it is the end of the cattle farmers down there."

Rubagumya was in Goma, Congo, in order to set up the "National Development Bank." A Rwandan Tutsi, he was the editor of the Rwandan Tutsi diaspora magazine *Impruza*, from Texas, where he was based. In all this, Rubagumya noted in *Impruza*, his major supporter in the United States has been Roger Winter, of the U.S. Committee on Refugees, who remains Museveni's most fervent supporter in the United States. After the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front came to power in Kigali in 1994, Rubagumya returned to the region—but to Uganda where he served as the head of the Ugandan Development Authority, until hints of scandal forced him to leave that post. Now, he is overseeing the financial annexation of eastern

Congo on behalf of both Kampala and Kigali. The project for a road between Goma and Kisangani into Uganda, he said, will open up the Great Lakes region: "Soon, we will be able to circulate freely in the entire Great Lakes region."

But, as the pattern of military assault on civilians demonstrates, this "free circulation" is not to be achieved by diplomacy, but by war and murder of native populations. "They are trying to seize our land," said one native of Kivu. It is already the case, he said, that Rwandan Tutsis have all the major administrative posts in eastern Congo-Zaire.

The Ugandan-Rwandan annexation of eastern Congo also extends southward into Shaba province—which the British have coveted since the colonial heydays of the 19th century. The Rwandan leadership of the so-called Congolese army in Shaba has turned on the Katangan Gendarmes, who had fought *with* the Rwandans and Ugandans during the Zaire war. The Rwandans have put Gen. Delphin Mulanda of the Katangan Gendarmes in prison, along with seven other generals of the Katangan force, five colonels, two lieutenants, one sub-lieutenant, seven majors, two captains, and 400 enlisted soldiers. The reason for the incarcerations is the protests coming from the Katangan Gendarmes that former Zairean dictator Mobutu has been replaced by a new dictatorship dominated by the foreign powers of Rwanda and Uganda.

The war on eastern Congo has provoked a counter-reaction by locally organized fighters, and alleged remnants of the former Rwandan government army (FAR). The Rwandan military has been moved into place along the entire Rwanda-Congo border.

This war has also spread to northwestern Rwanda, where Rwandan Defense Minister Paul Kagame has had to personally take charge of military operations. Here too, a pattern of murders had sparked a counter-reaction among the population, the Physicians for Human Rights indicates, stating that even as of July, 2-3,000 civilians had been killed by the RPF in fighting in the area. When Kagame personally protested this number, in an interview with PHR, he stated: "The only thing we plan is to kill more of those who cause problems. They have arms and they use to kill our people. Sometimes it is easy to identify who is armed and who is not. Sometimes it is difficult."

The PHR report stated as its finding in July: "Pervasive insecurity and widespread atrocities and human rights abuses currently characterize the entire region of eastern Congo and western Rwanda."

PHR findings

The PHR report gives a summary of precisely the situation that is being hidden from the UN investigating team. On eastern Congo, the report stated:

"PHR received reliable reports that Rwandan military have committed, and continue to commit, widespread atrocities against civilian populations in eastern Congo. Reports of robberies, rape, and attacks committed by English- and

Kinyarwanda-speaking soldiers are numerous within North and South Kivu. It is reported that the soldiers are exacting a bounty from the area before returning to Rwanda. Both local residents and international NGO [non-governmental organization] staff have been victims of these incidents. The UN has imposed a curfew of 9 p.m. for all UN staff in Goma town, and locals generally adhere to a self-imposed curfew as well. It is acknowledged that people living in homes on the eastern edge of Goma, closest to the Rwandan border, are most at risk of attack.

"The PHR team received reports and eyewitness accounts of killings of unarmed Rwandan Hutu refugees and local Congolese noncombatants throughout eastern Congo by soldiers identified as Rwandan military. These killings appear to be systematic attacks to eliminate the Interahamwe threat, to annihilate remaining refugees, and to punish villagers in eastern Congo alleged to have harbored or sheltered Rwandan Hutu refugees. PHR also learned that the Alliance and Rwandan forces are attacking civilian villagers in North Kivu who did harbor or assist Rwandan refugees. According to several testimonies, villagers in these instances were attacked merely because of their Hutu ethnicity. International humanitarian organizations, local human rights groups, and individuals have all supplied the international press and their European and North American headquarters with reports of these killings, termed 'massacres' by the local population.

"PHR interviewed staff from the international humanitarian agencies and from local human rights groups, many of who were first-hand witnesses to killings and saw signs of mass graves. PHR also interviewed individual villagers who were surviving victims of attacks. These reports came from diverse sources who were not likely to have communicated with each other, were marked by internal consistency regarding site and pattern of attack, description of perpetrators, and number of victims. They also withstood specific intrusive, and repetitive questioning from the three members of the PHR team.

"Attacks on refugee clusters apparently occur as refugees pass through the forest to designated and announced UNHCR [UN High Commission on Refugees—since expelled from Congo] collection points. Few survivors of these refugee attacks have been found; refugees either emerge unscathed as witnesses or die outright or slowly from their injuries before reaching medical attention. Attacks on villages occur without warning, as groups of armed soldiers invade (even at mid-day) and begin firing rifles at groups of men, women, and children. Houses may be burned, with occupants forced to remain in them; bodies are buried in mass graves or piled into latrine pits. Many surviving witnesses of these attacks on villages can be found.

"Credible reports now exist of attacks on refugees and villages numbering in the scores of hundreds; the numbers killed in each attack are difficult to validate, but are reported as ranging in the tens of hundreds in each instance."