
Burundi

Where's the Peace?

by Linda de Hoyos

August 28 will be the day, and Arusha, Tanzania, the place, for the signing of the Draft Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of Burundi, the chief mediator, former South African President Nelson Mandela, announced in July. President Bill Clinton, along with the heads of state of Kenya, Botswana, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda were all committed to attend the signing, which, it had been hoped, would end the seven-year civil war that has taken hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced nearly 1 million of Burundi's 5 million people. The signing ceremony was to culminate two years of negotiations in Arusha orchestrated first by Tanzanian elder statesman Julius Nyerere, and, after his death in 1999, by Mandela.

Despite Mandela's heavy-handed attempt to bring extreme pressure to bear on all parties to the conflict, beginning with the presence of the American President, as of Aug. 24, the big question remains: Where's the peace?

Caught in the cauldron of Great Lakes wars, Burundi is a victim of extreme bitterness between the largely Hutu population and a mono-ethnic Tutsi military, which has ruled Burundi with an iron hand since 1965, with only a brief interlude of democratic rule from June to October 1993 under the leadership of the first elected and first Hutu President, Melchior Ndayaye. From October 1993 until July 1996, Burundi was ruled by a "coalition government" imposed by the United Nations and donor community, while the military carried out massacres against Hutu civilians and an assassination campaign against ministers, members of Parliament, and governors, who were either Hutu, or worse still, from the standpoint of the military, Tutsis who disagreed with the Tutsi military monopoly. The Tutsi murder campaigns produced a full-scale civil war, as Hutus were forced to take up arms in self-defense. In July 1996, former military dictator Pierre Buyoya (who had lost the 1993 elections) "pulled the plug" on the hapless coalition government, as the military returned to power and also began its long-standing deployment into Zaire/Congo with its allies Rwanda and Uganda.

Manipulated Negotiations

The negotiations in Arusha were constructed by Nyerere and by various Western diplomats, including U.S. special

envoy to the Great Lakes, Howard Wolpe, to protect the Tutsi military, bring the Hutus to bay, and re-create the political fig leaf of a "coalition government."

A plethora of Hutu and Tutsi parties were brought into the negotiations to nullify the primary standings of the Tutsi military on the one side, and the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD), led by Ndadaye's Interior Minister, Leonard Nyangoma, on the other. The CNDD was further split by intrigues involving Wolpe and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Nyangoma was further personally threatened in June, when his brother, a medical doctor who remained in camps in Tanzania to treat Burundian refugees, was brutally murdered along with his wife and children. Two of the major fighting forces on the Hutu side—the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), which split from the CNDD, and the Palipehutu-FLN—boycotted the talks, but were in discussions in the third week of August with Mandela in South Africa.

With only four days before the date Mandela had projected for the signing of the peace agreement, the following issues remain outstanding:

- Who will be President during the 30-month transition period?
- What are the provisions of a cease-fire?
- How will an ethnic balance be created in the military?
- What security guarantees will the Tutsi population have if they lose their monopoly grip on military power?

In a statement released on Aug. 20, the CNDD's Nyangoma noted that on the issue of armed forces reform, "The future army will be a fusion of the current army and forces fighting against it." The CNDD and the other six Hutu parties at the negotiations are now calling for an international peace-keeping force to oversee such a transition.

War on the Ground

This is bitterly opposed by Tutsi forces. Police in the capital city of Bujumbura broke up demonstrations of Tutsis opposed to the draft agreement organized into the Amaskanya ("The Power of Self-Defense"). Charles Mukani, leader of the radical wing of Buyoya's own Uprona Party, declared in July that the draft peace agreement is a "bad document that the people of Burundi must immediately tear up without further ado." Buyoya emerged on Aug. 21 from four days of discussions with Mandela in Durban, South Africa, to say that Aug. 28 was too soon to sign the agreement, and that he and Mandela had not even discussed issues of the transition period. Buyoya, who would likely be replaced as President in the transition, further said on Aug. 22 that there were "no solid grounds for peace"—in obvious recognition that even if he were to accept a peace, a settlement would be unacceptable to his military and political base.

There is no peace agreement coming out of Arusha that can be translated into peace on the ground. The rural province of Bujumbura, which surrounds the capital, has been the

scene of bitter military fighting. Artillery assaults have forced the population to flee back to the camps they were released from earlier in August. On Aug. 23, a grenade attack on a marketplace in Bujumbura left at least 11 dead and 25 critically injured.

In short, there is no cease-fire, there is no agreement, there is no peace. Nevertheless, under the cover of such prolonged negotiations, the international community has placed pressure on the democratic Hutu forces (already operating without international support) and sat idly by in silence as the Tutsi military:

- escalated its illegal military rule;
- incarcerated 850,000 Hutu civilians in concentration camps with no means of subsistence;
- carried out massacres against Hutu civilians as their primary military rebuttal to any rebel attack; and
- deployed its troops illegally in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in alliance with British-backed Uganda and Rwanda, in pursuit of that country's gold and diamonds.

The Problems Are Straightforward

The issues put forward by the warring parties, fraught with distrust, bitterness, and hatred, are difficult in the extreme. But, they are at least straightforward. It is the mediators, the facilitators, and "donors to the peace process" who are neck-deep in double-talk, saying they want peace, even claiming that there is peace, as they pursue their real agenda for continued conflagration—and death of Africans—in the mineral-drenched Great Lakes region. Witness the Aug. 23 interview of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice with AllAfrica.com, downgrading the purpose of President Clinton's visit to Arusha to one of "supporting the peace process" for Burundi: "The negotiations have been ongoing for years and they continue as we speak," Rice intoned. "In the short time he [President Clinton] is there he won't be able to get involved deeply with the substance of the issues with the parties, but I don't think that was the reason for which he was invited by President Mandela. He was invited to show yet again, as we've been working on this since 1996, that the United States is committed to supporting a lasting peace; that we will make the necessary investments along with others in the international community should there be a comprehensive and solid peace achieved."

However, Rice is the chief enforcer for the policy of U.S. backing to the invasion and continuing occupation of the Congo by the allied forces of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Until that support is decisively withdrawn, peace in Burundi is highly unlikely, as any foreign service officer would know. Under the current framework of U.S. policy in the Great Lakes region, a peace settlement is likely to be a re-run of the disastrous September 1994 coalition government imposed on Burundi, which will only result in continuing assassinations of Hutus and Tutsis opposed to the Tutsi military, and the slaughter of innocent civilians.

Pope Mobilizes Youth To Change the World

by Claudio Celani

If only a fraction of the immense crowd of young people who gathered in Rome for the World Youth Day, were to accept the challenge thrown out to them by Pope John Paul II, it was worth the effort. It was less a "demonstration of strength" of the Catholic Church, as some commentators wrote, than a meeting of as many young Christians (there were also non-Catholics) as possible with the Pope. Not an abstract idea of Christianity, but its embodiment in the figure of the Pope, is the reason why so many young people poured into Rome in the week that culminated in the meetings of Aug. 19-20, where more than 2 million gathered. John Paul II once again proved to be the most charismatic leader of the world, which he has shown through the greatness by which he interprets his mission as the Vicar of Christ on Earth.

Even if many of the youth could only see the Pope as a white dot in the distance, or, coming from all over the world, could not understand a word he said (the Pope spoke in Italian) and will have to read the translation when they return home, coming here was worth it for them to contribute to the success of such a gathering. Whereas 1 million were expected, more than 2 million came. The logistical effort was comparable to a war mobilization. More than 2 million people had to be fed, lodged, and transported daily from one side of the city to the other, many of them for an entire week. And, to the final meeting on Saturday, Aug. 19, everybody converged on the Tor Vergata campus outside of Rome—which meant a walk of up to 20 kilometers, with temperatures sometimes reaching 40°C. At the campus, there was enough space for everyone spread out a sleeping bag. The next day, after the Sunday celebration, the immense crowd returned to the city as a body, mostly to leave Rome by train or by plane.

The gathering was therefore already a logistical success, beyond expectations. The Rome authorities in charge of the logistics, managed to supply the crowd with enough water, food, toilets, and medical assistance. About 2,000 people were medically treated, mostly for sun stroke, and almost all of them were immediately released. (All this will increase the chances of the Mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli, to become the next Prime Minister, but that is another story.)

A New Image of Youth

For once, 2 million young people projected an image of themselves antithetical to what the usual rock concerts, "love parades," and so on, give of a young generation corrupted by