

Intimidation Will Only Make Sudan Into a New 'Iraq'



Mr. Ukec is the ambassador from Sudan to Washington, D.C. He comes from Southern Sudan, and has spent many years in the United States, including studying in Iowa. Lawrence Freeman interviewed him on Feb. 20, 2007.

Freeman: Before we go into a discussion of the obvious areas of concern to our readers, in Darfur and Southern Sudan, would you say a few words about yourself?

Ukec: I'm having a good time meeting with you again, and touching base on intellectual discourse. That's what I like about you: Your deep thoughts reflect the importance of LaRouche as the thinker for the modern world.

I was born in Aweil, the largest, most thickly populated part of Southern Sudan, what used to be Bahr al-Ghazal Province; now it is considered Northern Bahr al-Ghazal state, current jurisdiction. My parents were missionaries, and I grew up in a tribal area which was very different from mine, among the Dinkas. I speak the Dinka language.

All these are very important ingredients that made me successful during the first phase of war, which I joined in 1964. I was the youngest to become a lieutenant by then. I did a lot of things, went to Congo—what is now the D.R.C.—and Central Africa, buying arms for our freedom fighters. I learned many languages, the languages of Central Africa, of the D.R.C., and East Africa. I was sent to train all over the world. In accordance with the Addis Ababa agreement, I was absorbed into the Sudanese Army, as a captain.

So the current President of Sudan is my colleague, and [the late Sudan People's Liberation Movement leader] John Garang was also my colleague—although I am more professional military than they, due to the training I have had, and that my career was in military training of officers.

After coming back from the movement, I went back to the University of Juba, to the commanding combat training center, and at the same time going to school. I earned my bachelor's degree, and also my master's degree in military science, in Sudan, under the auspices of British affiliates. When I went back to the University of Juba, I was at the top of the class, and was awarded a scholarship that brought me to the United States.

I hadn't been there long, when the war restarted, and I decided to remain in the United States. In the United States, I helped Sudanese both in the United States and Canada: refu-

gees, organizing them, and protesting the war in the South. I testified before Congress quite a bit.

Then, when the peace agreement came along again, I was asked to come to help my people in Sudan, and that is where my appointment came, to become the Ambassador to the United States.

Freeman: I understand you were studying economics at Iowa University for a few years.

Ukec: Yes, I studied at Iowa State, getting a masters in political science, and then a masters in economics. I worked hard to get a PhD in economics. . . .

Freeman: Darfur is the number one issue put out by the media in the United States. The United States falsely accused the war in Darfur as being one of genocide, and there have been many attacks on the government of Sudan for carrying out this alleged policy of genocide. I think it is more complicated than that, a much larger regional conflict. What is your view of the situation, and the solution to the Darfur crisis?

Ukec: Darfur just sprang up in 2003. That's when we were on the verge of reaching the peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army].

The anger and frustration in Darfur are attributed to governments which did not care about the population of Sudan. Immediately after what they call independence, the people in Darfur definitely found themselves marginalized, and when they found out that the South was going to get some of their rights because of their movement and their struggle, they decided that it was better for them to start a struggle too.

In terms of allegations of what the conflict has become, which I don't like to comment about that—I am not an expert at determining whether the situation there was genocide, or not genocide. That is beyond my ability. But I do know that they were marginalized. They picked up arms as freedom fighters so that they could get their rights.

Violence Is No Solution

With the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Agreement] signed, and the majority of the people of the South and Southern Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains, and Abyei in peace, I believe that there is an opportunity that all those who are

marginalized, whether in the East, the West, the South, or the Center—there is an opportunity for us to get together now, and, using the CPA to reorganize the country called Sudan, and put it on a track that is democratic.

Those oligarchies that ruled Sudan prior to reaching the CPA, will be a minority, if our people in Western Sudan, in the East, and those in the South, together establish a participatory democracy, with meaningful human rights, as well as freedom of speech, and all of the civil liberty requirements that put Sudanese on an equal basis.

The solution to the Darfur crisis, is for the Sudanese, ourselves, to sit together and realize that fighting among ourselves will not take us anywhere. It is actually putting us down in the eyes of the other countries that want to dominate our country, through the back door.

So I really think that our brothers who have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement, because of some inequities which they feel are not covered by the DPA, should air their grievances in the context of further negotiations, and come in to an agreement that would end violence in Western Sudan, particularly the entire area of Darfur.

I don't believe in intimidation, intimidating the current government of national unity, by saying if we do not do this, and if we do not do that, then a [UN peacekeeping] force is going to be sent to Darfur. I think arms and more soldiers are not the solution. I fear that if that happens, then retaliation will one day divide the Sudanese people who are in Darfur of Arab origin and of African origin. This is going to make a big mess, not different from what is going on in Iraq. Because those who feel that Arabs are being killed, will come in with men, and those who think Africans are being killed, will come on with their men, and the turmoil will be perpetual, out of control.

The only solution is to convince both parties to come to the table, negotiate, air their grievances, and come out with a feasible solution, so that our civilians in the [refugee] camps can go back home, and cultivate their land, take care of their children, open the schools, hospitals, roads—these are the things that should be done.

There are a number of things that are lacking in world opinion about Darfur. They are talking about a “no-fly zone,” about sanctions. If they do those things, they are going to harm the CPA. Darfur has been taken so seriously that they have forgotten about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which brought the war of 50 years to a halt. And force, no-fly zones, sanctions will not even solve the problem of Darfur. It will make it worse.

The leader of the government of South Sudan, Lt. Gen. Salfa Kiir Mayardit, along with our partners in the government of national unity, the National Congress Party—we know what is at stake. Also, pressure all rebels who have refused to sign the Darfur peace agreement, which was established by the help of the international community, including the United States, which has spent \$1.3 billion in taxpayers'

money. As I am talking with you, the President has left for Tripoli, Libya, because Muammar Qaddafi, the President of Libya, has brought the opposing parties together. I hope they come out with some solutions, but I think we should reinforce the negotiations rather than threatening with sanctions, and no-fly zones, and intervention of a UN peacekeeping force.

I believe the African peacekeeping force is the most effective one, because they know the culture, they know the land, they know the language. Their only inequities are logistics, transportation, communication skills—these are the things the UN peacekeeping force can support us with, so that they protect the civilians who are in the camps, allow humanitarian services to go smoothly, without any interruption from violence. And if the people stay long, without hearing bullets, fighting, and violence, then they will gain confidence to go back from the camps to their villages.

And I believe also, that there are some problems with the African Union and the UN. Since we agreed in Abuja on the Nov. 30 [2006], no troops have been contributed; the AU has not asked the member countries to contribute troops to increase the number of troops in Darfur. The same thing also, with the UN: Despite the fact that we agreed three months ago, we have not seen anything that they have provided.

All these things are costly in terms of lives, in terms of confidence, and I would prefer that serious measures be taken by these two organizations, rather than blame my government all the time, when they are not even efficient enough to do what they are supposed to do after the agreement was reached, in November 2006.

Freeman: I would like to explore this situation, because most of the way that it is naively played in soundbytes here, is that the government of Khartoum is run by Islamicists, who are trying to eliminate the Africans in Darfur. This actually has nothing to do with the history of the region; it's much more complicated. It's more than Darfur, because it's a regional conflict that involves now Chad, the Central African Republic, and Libya, and there are clearly outside forces involved. Also, your President, Bashir, who was just in France, said to one of the Arabic newspapers, that there are Western capitals that are financing, and providing logistics to the rebel groups in Darfur. I wonder if you could address some of these questions.

Ukec: Yes, the situation in Darfur cannot be isolated from other things that are happening. The government in Chad has been undergoing a lot of pressure from rebels there, and they always accuse Sudan of funding and supporting the rebels. On the other side, my government thinks that the rebels that have refused to sign the Darfur peace agreement are under some influence from the neighboring countries.

We have gone to Tripoli several times—the middle of last year. We had an agreement with Chad. When my President was in France recently, at the Franco-Africa conference in Cannes, my government and the governments of Chad and



Central Africa were to meet and discuss this matter.

I believe there could be some countries that are interested in destabilizing Sudan. The Africans and the Arab-origin tribes in western Darfur have been living with one another for thousands and thousands of years. But also we have to look at the climate change that brought pressure on these people. There was a severe drought for several years, and the desert has moved southward almost 90 miles. This has made the herders look desperately for areas where they can graze their animals, which put pressure on the people who are sedentary, or who are farmers, and this is being ignored.

But there is one thing which is crucial, which is development aid, or aid from somewhere. If we in Sudan also had the opportunity to expand our resources and improve the lives of people in Darfur, this conflict could be minimized.

As you say, I believe there are other countries that like to fish in this situation in Sudan. We don't want it to continue to affect the rest of the countries. We want to have good relations with Central Africa, and Chad in particular, because our tribal people overlap; as a result, there is always an impact when there is war, or when there is turbulence in one part of the country, it affects the neighboring countries.

I also think it is possible that the Western countries don't understand the complexity of our areas. We have deep-rooted traditions. Those deep-rooted traditions are not easy to wipe away by a UN peacekeeping force, or somebody else coming to intimidate us with the no-fly zone, or sanctions.

Sanctions have always pushed us away from the Western world. That is why Chinese President Hu Jintao was in Khartoum. They are helping us, with things we could not have gotten from the West, which refused to give us help. They are pushing us towards China, and that's why China purchases probably about 60-75% of our oil.

And we can use our own resources, whatever is imposed on us. These countries, or institutions, or leaders who are imposing these things on us must know that we are a sovereign state, and we can handle our life as we want it.

Freeman: It seems to me that if the people who are sincere about wanting peace in Darfur, had spent the last 10-20 years providing fresh water, a lot of the crisis in Darfur would not be there today.

President Bashir has made very clear that it would be a violation of Sudan's sovereignty to allow in UN troops in anything but a supportive role to the current AU troops. And you've now said that the AU troops need a great deal more support. What kind of peacekeeping force would be necessary, and is there going to be more pressure put on President Bashir to relinquish control to the UN? Andrew Natsios, special envoy, has said that if Sudan doesn't agree to more UN troops, there is a "Plan B" alternative, which has yet been undefined.

Ukec: I really don't see any reason to be worried about that so-called Plan B. I think the problem is, how to help my people, to stop violence. And the best scenario is to increase the number of African Union peacekeeping forces, from currently 7,000 to probably, up to 20,000, I think that would be sufficient to be in between the warring parties, so that peace and tranquility rule.

I don't see that any intimidation will help the situation, because that may infuriate some factions. When the war in Kosovo took place, there were mujaheddin who went there from all over the Islamic world, to help the Muslims. This is also possible [here], and we don't want that to happen. That's why we don't want the UN peacekeeping force handling the peacekeeping in Darfur. Because people, when they see the UN, look at it as a Western power. That will generate a more dangerous response from ordinary people, who think that their sovereignty has been violated, and that there is a hidden agenda by the West against Sudan, and this may become terrible, especially when people are not happy now about the situation in Iraq. They will see that it is the equivalent of Iraq coming, being flanked from the African side, and then recolonization of countries which have become sovereign and independent. All these are the fears that may become real, if things I hear in the press take place.

The other thing is that, for over 50 years, the people in the South have been fighting, and 5 million people have died. Five million people died between the first and second phases of war in Southern Sudan. Over 5 million have been displaced. Not even a single day did the press in the West say that there

was genocide in the South.

Well, I don't know whether what is happening in Darfur is genocide. In a war people definitely die, but I'm worried about the extent of the interest which has been generated by the media. In the *Washington Post*, a one-page ad is taken out by an interest group, to distort facts about the situation in Darfur. A huge amount is spent in buying pages in the *Washington Post*, rather than sending it to the displaced persons in the camps.

Freeman: It's something like \$50-100,000 per page.

Ukec: It may be more than that. This amount could build a hospital, provide water. Why are we spending the money here, rather than giving it there, to the people who are suffering? If people are really interested in helping the Sudanese, who are under the stress of war, it is better to take the money there.

That is why people say that there is a hidden agenda. Especially my President—he may be right, that there is a hidden agenda. It is not peace which is wanted, but trying to destabilize the entirety of Sudan. My government worked hard to reach an agreement with us from the South, and established a very important document, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It has worked hard to provide a peace agreement with the people in the East. We call it Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement.

And also, with the help of Western countries, there were negotiations in Abuja, where we reached the Darfur Peace Agreement. Why resort to violence now? Why resort to intimidation, when the government of Sudan is forthcoming and working hard to end the turmoil in Darfur?

Freeman: What are the conditions in the South? How are they improving?

Ukec: The situation in the South is relatively calm. We had cessation of hostilities in October of 2002. And since then, we have never had any serious violation of the cease-fire, except on Nov. 29, 2006, in the city of Malakal, involving issues with militias.

Between 1983 and 2005, there were factions which were supporting the government of Sudan, factions which were militia associated with the government, and the SPLM. Since the peace agreement was signed, there has been total tranquility in many parts of Southern Sudan. There have been no serious incidents in Bahr al-Ghazal, in Equatoria, except incidents of the Lord's Resistance Army ambushing people. And now the government of Southern Sudan is working hard to come up with a peace agreement between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army.

Other than that, there have been no significant violations. A few disgruntled militias are those which we are worried about. And after the Malakal incidents, we are trying to tackle that.

The situation in the South is total devastation, because they have been undergoing war for two and a half decades.

There are no roads, no schools, no hospitals, and there is no nearby country strong enough to induce any quick development. We are still waiting to remove mines along all the traditional roads. We are hoping that the Oslo Accord, whereby so many countries pledged to help, fulfill their pledges, and provide enough support so that we can launch meaningful development, restart schools, open hospitals, open roads, make bridges, and thrive.

That's the only thing we need in Southern Sudan. We don't need any more violence. We don't need any more fighting. We are serious about the Lord's Resistance Army, to resolve its problem with the government of Uganda.

I believe guerrilla war cannot be wiped out. I believe negotiation and peaceful solutions to the problem are the best way, and the government of Uganda must understand that seriously, and must be very serious about negotiating, and be flexible, so that the Lord's Resistance Army is eliminated, either physically, or through incentives, so that they join the government. I believe the South will be in good shape in a short while.

Freeman: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in January 2005, so it's a little over two years old. Part of that agreement is that a separate southern federation has been set up, I think, of about ten states, and that by 2011, six years from the signing, there would be a referendum on whether the southern grouping would secede. How is the unity process working? Is that moving forward, is it being undermined, and how is the share of the oil wealth being used to develop the South?

Ukec: Southern Sudan badly needs development, in order to operate, and make life easier for the people. But the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has two bottlenecks. The first bottleneck is that the National Congress Party [NCP] and the SPLM have to come to an agreement about boundaries. The boundaries between the South and the North have not been established. The boundaries of the enclave called Abyei, which is oil-rich, have not been decided. If the boundaries are not established, then we do not know which oil belongs to the North, and which oil belongs to the South, because the only oil wealth that belongs to the South is where the South gets 50%. Any oil that is fully in the northern part of Sudan, doesn't have to have 50% given to the South. . . .

Most of the commissions that were supposed to be established, have not been established. And there is a blame game between the SPLM and the NCP, which are the major parties in forming those commissions. In order for both commissions to sit and make decisions, there has been a lot of blame game—the worst time was during the celebration of the second anniversary of the signing of the CPA, where both leaders, the First Vice President and President Bashir, were at loggerheads, pointing fingers at one another. That has put us in a turmoil which needs to be resolved.

The SPLM had its meeting about a week ago, and their

communiqué indicated that they are committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and that they believe that they should put their act together with the NCP so that they can resolve the crucial issue—which I tell you is still this demarcation of the boundaries.

If there is disagreement between the partners—we have the four partners, the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, and Norway—they can come in. These partners should come, and become arbiters, to come to a solution, and say, “This is the boundary.” And if that is the result, I don’t think there will be any problem.

This situation causes a lot of problems in public opinion. Sometimes, people in the North think that unity may not be possible, because Southern Sudanese are angrier. Northern Sudanese are very ambivalent in this situation, and think that if the leadership doesn’t unite, the people and the parties don’t work hard to bring the people together, it’s going to be detrimental. You know that in 2011, a referendum will ask the people in the South to decide whether to remain in a united Sudan, or secede as a different country.

This is what the late Dr. John Garang said, that unity must be made attractive. And I think it is the responsibility of my party, the SPLM, and the NCP, to condition public opinion, and do the right things, so that there is no adverse impact on the population in the South, in particular, when 2011 comes.

Displaced Persons

Another important issue is the displaced persons (IDPs). The people from the South, who are in Khartoum now, are almost like the people who are in Darfur camps. They are bundled together in a very small place, in the desert, with a lot of dust, and they don’t have any jobs. They have to scramble from here to there; women become slaves in the houses of officials and those who are rich in Khartoum, just to survive. These people need to be taken back home immediately. The government, and especially both governments—the government of National Unity, the government of Southern Sudan—and the organizations, speaking of the UN, should be very active to move these people back, because they are in a very dire situation. There are over 3 million Southern Sudanese who need to go back home. And they don’t have any resources. This is another burden on the government of Sudan, and that’s where help is needed from the rest of the world. The rainy season is close; in May it is going to rain again. In three months, you cannot move 3 million people.

The third thing is the census. The census is to take place this November. And, if you are in the North, the rules say that you will not be counted as somebody who is from the South. And that affects a number of Southerners. And as a result, transportation of Southerners back to their localities is very important, so that people are rightly counted, and people benefit from their numbers, because the districts are going to be divided according to the numbers.

If 3 million Southerners remain in the North, then the

resources, when they are divided, will only go to the North, because the people are in the North, even though in the long run they will move back to the South.

So, we are in a crunch situation. The government of Southern Sudan and the government of National Unity need to work hard to help the transportation of people back to the South.

The fourth thing I want to say, is the issue of development. South has been in war for 50 years, that is from 1955 to 2005, and that is not an easy thing. The government of National Unity should give the best opportunities to the South. They should freeze development in the North, to build bridges, build roads, and keep the current situation in the North still, and take all the resources they have to upgrade the South.

In Darfur, if they build bridges, make schools, open the hospitals—these things don’t exist. I was in Khartoum, and for 25 years they never built any bridges in Khartoum; but the past year, they are building four. Khartoum has one-third of the population of Sudan, now. There is nothing in Juba, there is nothing in Wau, there is nothing in Malakal, which needs bridges badly.

There are no universities in the South. All those things make Southerners ambivalent. How serious are our brothers in the North, ready to help us out from this struggle?

Freeman: What do you estimate the population of the South is, not counting the 3 million in Khartoum?

Ukec: Probably between 12 and 15 million.

Freeman: Twelve to 15 out a population of about 35-40 million.

Ukec: Yes, I believe the South is probably between 12 and 15 million.

Freeman: Concerning the CPA, Roger Winters spoke before the House of Representatives of the United States, and basically what he said is that the National Congress Party is selectively not carrying out agreements of the CPA, in a sense, trying to sabotage it. Andrew Natsios, who is a special envoy, said there is cause for concern about the implementation of the CPA, that it is vulnerable. What ideas do you represent on the CPA to the United States Congress?

Ukec: I’m not as pessimistic as they are. I am very optimistic, because there are a lot of things that have been implemented.

My presence here as ambassador to the United States, is a part of the CPA. We have ambassadors now selected, we have diplomats selected, they are already working. We have changed the currency of Sudan, you know, from dinar, to Sudanese pound.

We have done a lot of things. The government of Southern Sudan is formed. The Southerners are in control, they have their own police, they have their armies. For those who are pessimistic, we have a deterrent against returning to the previous situation, because we have the SPLA. The army of the South is still there. They are in all the barracks, they are

training themselves, they are doing everything for themselves.

So we should not be whining all the time that things are not going right. The border issue, which I mentioned before, is the only thing that people are worried about. But even the delay in implementation is not only on the part of the government of National Unity. It is also the part of the South. Sometimes the situation doesn't allow commissions to meet; sometimes it is the people of the South who have not brought their representative to the commission so that they can implement something.

I believe we have reached the point of no return. The North has no ability to renege on the CPA, because that is detrimental. The current members of the government of National Unity, who are members of NCP, have to thank the SPLM and the CPA, because it has extended their rule. If we were still fighting, we might have overthrown them. So I think it is in their best interest to implement the CPA. Because outside that, the Umma Party, the DUP, they are all hostile towards the NCP.

And the only way for us and for them to be in power, and make things change towards a democracy, and come up with elections in 2008, or early 2009, is to stick to the CPA. I am not as pessimistic as those guys say. I say that it is promising, that sooner or later things will be fine.

Freeman: As I was telling you earlier, Mr. LaRouche addressed a group of diplomats here in Washington early this month [February]. And he said that the number one battle in the world is between globalization, which is being pushed by the British crowd, and the rights of the sovereign nation-state. How do you see this being played out in Africa? There are great physical wealth and resources in sub-Saharan Africa, which are not being used by African countries, but being taken away. Now China is becoming very interested in developing infrastructure in Africa, in return for some of these resources. So Africa has now become a part of this conflict between the nation-state and globalization. I was wondering if you could say something about Sudan and Africa as a whole, in this.

Ukec: I think Sudan is a wealthy nation. It has all the resources, mineral as well as agricultural. We are actually considered the breadbasket of the world! And if not, at least the Middle East will get what they need, and sub-Saharan Africa will get food from Sudan.

I believe that globalization is a serious issue. That's why these powerful nations are always encroaching upon our sovereignty. They would like entire countries to be under their care, and do what they want, invest wherever they want. When they find leaders who are stout and strong, and would like to put them at bay, they define them as enemies and put them into a lot of difficulties.

I know China does business with the United States, but our human rights and theirs are not any different. I don't know why we are more victims than anything else, and I believe

this is also applicable to other countries, like Zimbabwe, which has been targetted badly for trying to show that they own their own land, and what they want to do with it is theirs. If they want to be poor, that is their choice. . . .

Sudan is a victim of its large land, a lot of resources, and so many other things that these globalizers want. I believe LaRouche is on the spot in many cases, and he's had the intellectual thinking that aroused the intelligentsia of those developing countries, so that they will protect themselves, and be aware of what is going on.

What is the true fight? We look at it from the periphery, but we don't know what is inside. LaRouche may be the right person to find out what the hidden facts are. We do not sort this out. And that is my opinion. It has nothing to do with the government of Sudan, actually. These are all my personal opinions.

Freeman: Thank you for giving us this wonderful hour of education on Sudan, and we hope everything turns out exactly in the right direction that you are optimistic about. Mr. Ambassador, you've been very generous.

Ukec: Thank you for having me, and I think your magazine is a very important intellectual magazine, which should have itself rated among the core leadership in developing countries, so that they also see the other side of the story.

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