

The “Third Force” in Rwanda and Sudan

By John Bart Gerald

After reading General Dallaire’s *Shake Hands with the Devil*, his account of commanding U.N. forces in Rwanda during the 1994 slaughters, I’m puzzled at how much horror human nature is capable of, or how much it has to forget. Dallaire left several things unsaid. He mentioned his U.S. military training, but didn’t mention Paul Kagame’s, a colonel in the army of Uganda who was plucked from U.S. training at Fort Leavenworth to lead the Tutsi invasion of Rwanda. And Dallaire didn’t reveal the arms sources for the sometimes sophisticated weaponry enjoyed by Kagame’s forces. Dallaire does mention that Hutu massacres of civilian Tutsis were caused by Kagame’s invasion, but doesn’t identify the mysterious “third force” relentlessly driving Rwanda toward tragedy.

As the next tragedy unfolds in Sudan, we need to know more about what the “third force” is, this force that drives entire nations into condemning its civilian population to massacres or starvation.

Kagame’s invasion of Rwanda was covertly paid for by United States funding to Uganda. Ugandan President Museveni, favored by the International Monetary Fund, allowed Uganda to be the launching base for military actions against surrounding countries. Remigius Kintu as President of the Uganda Democratic Coalition claimed in 1997 that Museveni received 1.8 billion US dollars in loans from the World Bank to train rebel movements for return to Rwanda and Sudan among other African countries. The independent Casoliva and Carrera report from Spain lists 183 million dollars US. aid to Uganda from 1989 -1992.

In accounts of the Rwandan slaughter, the peoples’ choice of weapon, the machete, is consistent with their poverty. The invading Tutsi army killed with machine gun, rifle and artillery. Dallaire notes that Kagame’s artillery shells would leave the outline of a victim’s body like a red shadow on a stucco wall. According to several heavily suppressed sources, the surface-to-air missiles which brought down the Rwanda President’s plane and sparked the mass murder, were sophisticated, of U.S. Iraq war ordinance, and traced to Kagame’s command. The Tutsi invasion with its propriety and functioning supply lines was appropriate to a first world nation’s army, while most Rwandans remained in poverty.

Killing by wealthy armies is less personal and less likely to be called genocide. Killing by economics is the least personal of all.

In Rwanda, lists were made of Tutsi and Hutu, similar to what the CIA in Indonesia and Chile for example, called its “shooting lists” as it turned them over to armies for extermination. French and Belgian army advisors worked for Rwanda’s government at the time. When the slaughters were encouraged if not directed by the country’s radio, the powerful nations refused to jam its signals. Was this genocide by the list necessary for Rwandans who were already sensitive to tribal identification ?

The Rwandan genocide as it is called, occurred about six months after the Tutsi had similarly massacred several hundred thousand Hutu in the Tutsi takeover of Burundi to the south, and swelled the number of Hutu fleeing to Rwanda who were pushed beyond the acceptable. The regional shift of power suggests an international effort, as the Tutsi, became once again the rulers of Rwanda, and Burundi, with strong influence in Uganda..

Responsibility for any “genocide”, may rest with any outside force destabilizing the governments of the five lakes region of Africa and replacing them with governments friendly to the U.S. and World Bank development.

What seems to be an expanding military-political operation of duration and magnitude, is requiring genocide as a facet of its toolkit.

Sudan supported Iraq during the first U.S. and Coalition war. In 1996 U.S. President Clinton released 20 million dollars of aid to the countries around Sudan to contain it. U.S. involvement with Sudan tangled with public consciousness in 1998, when the US bombed a pharmaceutical company in the capital. The Sudanese claimed the company made half the country’s medicines. This act of war destroyed a new government struggling with democracy, which then reverted to martial law. In 2004 we read reports of mass killings by Arabs, in media synchronicity with the neglect of human rights for Arab ethnic groups in the United States and Canada.

To the south of Sudan a long civil war between Christian forces and the Islamic government has calmed due to international pressure. It is likely that the Christians would be funded through Uganda, by the U.S. Another front was opened against Sudan’s government in the Darfur region, by African groups, under the wing of rebels to the south. So the government of Sudan asked Arab militia help to contain the rebel movement. Supposed bases of insurgence were attacked to discourage cooperation with the rebels.

That is what the U.S. did in Vietnam for a decade. In Darfur over a million local people fled their homes and filled refugee camps, usually in neighboring Chad. In negotiations the U.S. backed rebels haven’t cooperated, causing more massacres and displacement. Killings, burning of mosques, rape and enslavement, are blamed on government supported militia, though tactically work against the government’s interest. These are terrible crimes and are much more personal and of better use to the media than death by cluster bomb. The actual victims are as guiltless as the people of Iraq.

The point of rebel tactics seems to be to trip the U.S. and European militaries into intervention in what is being called a “genocide” because so many people are dying or will die. Once a situation is recognized as a “genocide,” nations who have signed the U.N.’s Convention on Genocide are supposed to do something about it. The US officially declared genocide in Sudan under the Sudan Peace Act of 2002; which would allow under U.S. law, unilateral military intervention. The U.S. did nothing overt about it; so one guesses the Act’s purposes were covert. and suspects U.S. control of the rebels in Darfur.

The U.S. usually refuses any mention of the “genocide” factor, but in the case of Sudan international law rests firmly in defense of non-aggressor nations, so some pretext would be needed to allow outside intervention. A “genocide” factor is now of tactical use and we may recognize a pattern of intentional regional de-stabilization resulting in tragedies for the populations.

What the Sudan and Rwandan tragedies have in common is that the mass killings in both instances rise from a legitimate government’s response to military attack. The military attack is illegal, but doesn’t justify war crimes in response. It is likely that a military planner could foresee mass civilian killings and displacement, as a result of opening a war. So the responsibility for resulting war crimes becomes complex. It seems arbitrary to assign guilt entirely to the defending country when there is evidence of provocative aggression by another.

It is possible that we are slow to understand the “third force” in such situations because of its continuing presence in global news. As a military tactic mass killings are war on the people by the powerful, and are increasingly the function of militaries. There are elements of genocide in the mix, much as in Vietnam, whenever the killers and victims are of different ethnic or religious or racial and I would add, “political” groups. What first world citizens are reluctant to admit is that in military actions by powerful nations against third world countries, there are few first world casualties and so many military and civilian casualties in the third world, that these are not wars but slaughters. Does the U.S. wish to consider one or two of these tragedies a “genocide,” for tactical reasons ?

Increasingly, third world countries seem set up for slaughter, particularly if their peoples are prone to disease and poverty. War efforts divert any available funding from necessary social services. To force impoverished nations to war is a professional crime of arms merchants.

In Sudan the government has publicly condemned the killings and claims to be trying to stop the crimes, but it hasn’t helped. Sudan remains under military threat from the U.S., which makes it difficult for the government of Sudan to save its people from renegades and starvation. Either as victims of armed attack or victims of starvation and sickness, huge numbers of the civilian population are lost.

In both Rwanda and Sudan, the killings which become genocide or mass slaughters and displacements, began in response to a military threat from groups linked to the U.S.. There are no legal or moral justifications for aggression or genocide. We need to learn surer ways to call crimes of power to account.

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