

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON says



APRIL
3
2006



By Si Frumkin

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS IN DARFUR

The good news is that the U.N., NATO and European Union have all agreed that the peacekeeping force of African soldiers has been ineffective and that an international operation must be launched, using European soldiers, to end the slaughter and suffering in Darfur. (So far, only the U.S. has called the Darfur tragedy "genocide". The Europeans apparently feel that genocide is too strong a term to use for the 200,000 murdered and 2 million raped, mutilated, crippled and homeless refugees to neighboring Chad. And so they have done nothing. On the other hand, the U.S. that *has* called it genocide, hasn't done anything either).

The bad news is that it will take about a year or so of negotiating, organizing and equipping before any soldiers will be sent. I am sure that by then the situation will have been solved. There will be peace in Darfur - peace of the cemetery.



The amazing thing about all this is what the media, the politicians and the sincerely concerned organizations and individuals have not mentioned: there are European soldiers in Chad, right across the Sudanese Darfur border. They are well-trained fighting men; they have tanks, jet fighters, helicopters and all the rest. They could stop the Arab Moslem janjaweed militias that are doing the dirty work for the Sudanese government. They could shoot down the Sudanese Antonov bombers and helicopters that bomb and burn the villages. They could impose a no flight zone over Darfur - like the one imposed by the Americans and the British in Northern Iraq between the two Gulf wars.

The problem is, the soldiers are French!

In 1960, African French colonies achieved independence and Gabon, Central African Republic, Congo and Chad joined France in a multilateral military agreement. The agreement was ridiculously one-sided, especially for a

country that is so critical of what it sees as oppressive and arrogant American imperialism. France was granted unlimited and automatic transit and overflight rights and two major military bases. In exchange, France was to provide defense against external and internal threats if so requested but it could honor or refuse these requests as it saw fit. France was also to provide Chad with equipment, training and French advisers in Chadian uniforms.

For the next four decades French bases in Chad increased or decreased as needed by France. There were several government changes with French support or opposition. In 1983 and 1986, France reluctantly, and after pressure from the U.S., helped stop Libyan invasions. The last available figures show that in 1987 about 2500 troops were stationed around the capital, N'Djamena (formerly Fort-Lamy), as well as mine disposal units, military aircraft, armored vehicles and surface to air missiles.

In August 2004, when hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to Chad from Darfur, France reacted. About 200 ground troops were deployed in support of the Chadian army and French transport planes and helicopters began transporting humanitarian supplies that had arrived from

Europe (ironically, much of it from Denmark!) to refugee camps that were not accessible to road transport during the rainy season.

Unfortunately this didn't last. Flights had to be terminated because of reports of Sudanese fighter planes that had supposedly been seen in the area!

Since then there have been no confirmed reports of any French activity.

New York Times columnist, Nicholas D. Kristoff, is one of the few journalists to devote a great deal of time to the Darfur tragedy. He is also the only one who has mentioned the existence of French soldiers in Chad. In his March 7, 2006 column he writes that Sudan is arming and equipping a proxy army of



French army draftees training

Chadian rebels who had already invaded Chad in late December but were repulsed. They are now gearing up to try again. Sudan's aim in this, Kristoff says, is to gain an opportunity to attack Darfur's population from both directions.

Kristoff is circumspect and laconic about the French role: *"Much will depend on whether the French will use their military base in Chad to fight any Sudanese-sponsored invasion; the French aren't saying what they'll do."*

I am sure that I know what they'll do: *nothing!*

Over a hundred years ago, in his famous *"J'accuse!"*, Emil Zola accused his government of anti-Semitism, corruption and immorality in the trumped-up Dreyfus affair.

Today, France should be accused of cowardice, indifference to suffering, willingness to disregard or accommodate evil and an eagerness to ignore or surrender to it. France refuses to accept a responsibility to act when it is time to do so. Its hostile and contemptuous attitude towards the United States, a friend and an ally that has liberated, supported and helped when help was needed, is despicable.

History of the 20th century has not brought glory to France or other Europeans. History has proved again that Americans are ready to shed their blood and spend their treasure on behalf of oppressed strangers in strange lands. It has also proved that if America doesn't do it - no one else will. If we are constrained from interceding in Darfur, Europe will not take our place.

France has stood idly by many genocides - it will continue to do so. It may have been a great country in the past but its greatness is long gone.



THE OPPORTUNITY

FROM THE EDITORS, *The New Republic*, March 13, 2006

THE GENOCIDE IN Darfur has been going on for three years now And, for three years, the international community hasn't done much to stop it. It has threatened, but not enforced, sanctions. It has sent peacekeepers, but with insufficient numbers and a weak mandate. It has decried "crimes against humanity," but charged no perpetrators. And so the violence continues, with more than 200,000 people killed, two million left homeless, and the conflict now spilling over into neighboring Chad. The Sudanese government, meanwhile, has not even pretended to disarm its murderous *Janjaweed* militias. In fact, President Omar Al Bashir recently declared the *Janjaweed* a fabrication. And he has had the audacity to press the United States to lift its eight-year trade embargo on his country. As UN. Sudan envoy Jan Pronk put it, "The people on the ground are just laughing."

It is commendable, then, that the Bush administration is starting to get serious about Darfur. At the United Nations, John Bolton is pushing for authorization of a more muscular UN. force to take over for the African Union

step up political pressure at home. Last December, Congress refused the State Department's request for \$50 million to sustain the AU's Darfur mission. As a result, State has had to take away money from Afghanistan to pay its Darfur bills. Congress is going to need a lot of convincing before it approves an even larger NATO commitment.

And, even if the Bush administration can get the political support and the money for its proposals, it's questionable whether it can get the troops. The AU couldn't even make the 7,700 number planned for its current deployment. And Bush is talking about twice that. NATO, despite being best -

mandate, the money, and the troops for his Darfur proposals. We would like the international conational Relations, explained the reluctance to the Associated Press: "If we do it through NATO, we'll give further encouragement to all those who are condemning the white man and are fueling the clash of civilizations." But what of those who are condemning the white man for ignoring the problems of a predominantly black continent?

The excuse among American officials is not the usual one about military overstretch. They know that sending a battalion or two to Darfur is entirely feasible and could make a huge difference. Rather, they talk about a lack of appetite from the American public.

"I don't get a lot of people calling me on the phone or writing me letters saying, 'Send US. troops to Sudan,'" Chris Padilla, chief of staff to Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, said during a December discussion at the US. Holocaust Museum. That may be, but six senators have found mmunity to stop pussyfooting around the demands of Khartoum. We would like the United States to increase pressure on its allies and be prepared



Janjaweed Arabs - killers on horseback

(AU), while the State Department is trying to get NATO to increase its logistical support. Both efforts are worthy. The current AU force is overwhelmed. Fewer than 7,000 troops patrol a region the size of Texas from the back of pickup trucks. All they can do is report back on violations of the sham cease-fire, escort a few humanitarian convoys, and, occasionally, accompany refugees who leave the relative safety of the camps to collect firewood.

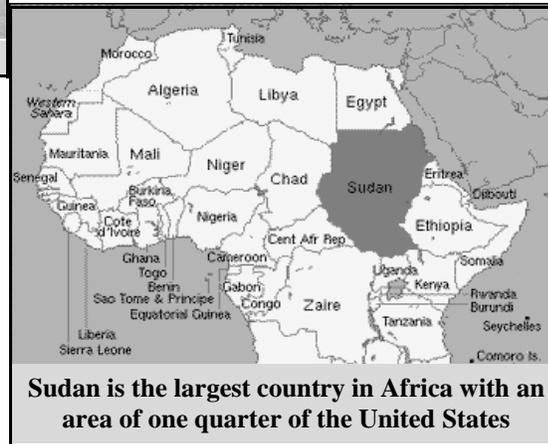
But, with the greater numbers, better resources, and stronger mandate that the Bush proposals would provide, the Darfur peacekeepers might actually have a chance. They could hold Khartoum to its promise to disarm the militias. They could coordinate humanitarian agencies. And they could actively protect civilians, helping to establish the conditions for refugees to return home.

That is, if there is enough political will. The international community has been loath to do anything the Sudanese government doesn't sign off on. And Khartoum has already stated its opposition to a UN force. That means Bolton will have to work doubly hard to win Security Council approval for a meaningful mission.

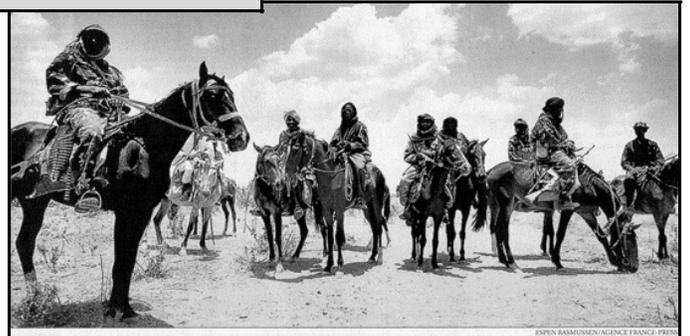
The Bush administration will also have to

equipped to assemble trained battalions quickly, has emphasized that it does not want to send troops. Dominique Moisi, deputy director of the French Institute of Intere-nough support among their constituents to sponsor a bipartisan resolution calling for NATO troops, including US. troops if needed, to stop the genocide in Darfur. Opinion polls, too, have found that a comfortable majority of Americans support sending US. troops to Darfur as part of a UN. or NATO mission.

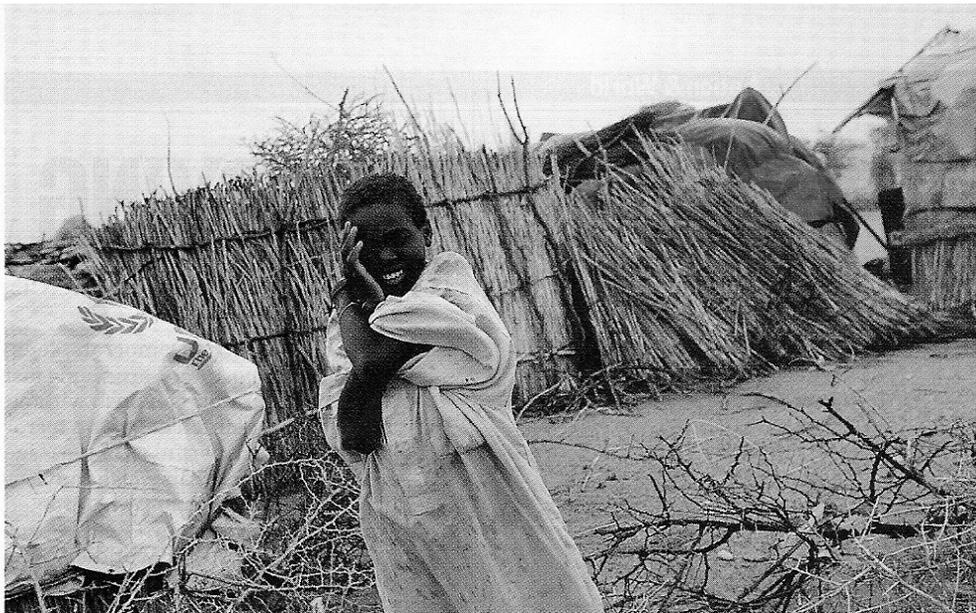
We would very much like Bush to get the



Sudan is the largest country in Africa with an area of one quarter of the United States



to galvanize NATO members by volunteering some of its own troops. Whatever it takes to convey that genocide is no laughing matter. Ø



HOME. A child at a Darfur camp for civilians uprooted by the fighting

REMEMBER DARFUR?

The U.N. considers what to do as the crisis worsens

By Dan Morrison

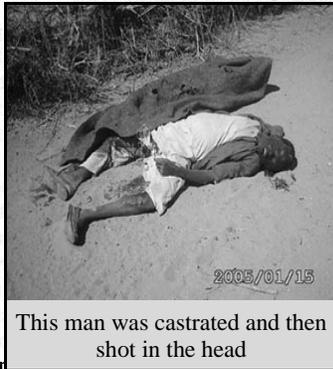
KHARTOUM, SUDAN—Until a couple of weeks ago, the town of Mershing was something of an oasis amid South Darfur's nightmare landscape of village burning, looting, rape, and widespread killing. Its population had swollen to 55,000—with some 20,000 local inhabitants outnumbered by 35,000 internal refugees who had escaped the fighting elsewhere with little more than their lives.

Now, Mershing is described as a ghost town. Its homes and eight large refugee camps emptied in a panic as residents and aid workers fled the government-backed Janjaweed militiamen on horseback and camels who attacked and looted—retaliation against civilians for a rebel assault two weeks earlier that killed six government

Mershing's residents got no protection from local police or from African Union peacekeepers about 40 miles away, according to aid workers and U.N. officials. Some have taken refuge in other towns, but many are living in the open rocky scrublands, with little food or water, no security, and their fates unknown.

Against the backdrop of fighting, serial murder, and rape throughout Sudan's Darfur region, the U.N. Security Council, chaired this month by the United States,

is moving toward a decision to take over and substantially expand what is now an inadequate African Union peacekeeping force. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, in a *Washington Post* column, said such action "is needed, and soon." And the Bush administration has signaled its support. Still, it could take as long as a year to compose such a force, assuming that Washington can persuade China—which buys about 5 percent of its oil from Sudan—to go along on the Security Council.



This man was castrated and then shot in the head

While the world has taken intermittent notice, the crisis is unrelenting. More than 180,000 people have been killed by Khartoum's proxy Arab militias, and more than 2 million civilians—mostly black, Muslim farmers—have been pushed from their villages and land into camps where they live at the opposing markers and gunmen. More than two years of diplomatic efforts—plus an African Union peacekeeping force of 7,000 for an area the size of France—was supposed to have provided an interim cease-fire, but that has been elusive.

The situation is growing both more dire and more difficult with each passing month. There is the prospect of starvation, as the food-aid pipeline runs short of supplies. And the violence is becoming more complex. The Sudan Liberation Army rebels, whose uprising in February 2003

sparked Khartoum's scorched-earth retaliation, have splintered into numerous competing factions, with each commander looking for Land Cruisers to steal, targets to hit, and ground to occupy. Rebels are also blocking traditional grazing routes in south Darfur, bringing deadly retaliation from the militias, officials say. Interventions by such disparate eminences as U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick and Libyan supreme Muammar Qadhafi have failed to unify the rebels either on the battlefield or at the negotiating table.

Aid imperiled. Bandits, rebels, and Arab militias regularly attack food and aid convoys. They also fight one another. Neighboring Chad, a cosponsor of

peace talks being held in Nigeria, has since entered its own proxy war with Sudan. The latest stage of fighting puts at risk the delivery of food, water, sanitation, and medical attention to more than 3 million people, half the population of Darfur. Food deliveries to relief camps continue apace, but distribution to villagers—who account for half of the United Nations' food aid needs in Darfur—grows more perilous each day.

Diplomats talk up the prospect for a peace deal by the end of March that will call for the disarming of rebels and militias and the safe return home for displaced people. It is unclear, though, what influence that would have on the ground, particularly when someone else—think Chad and Libya—keeps the factions supplied with guns and cash. To enforce a future peace deal, diplomats are counting on a bigger, stronger, and better-funded U.N. peacekeeping force.

By then, though, it may be too late. The World Food Program needed \$300 million by January 31 to maintain food supplies to the region. The United States is providing \$100 million, guaranteeing food into March. After that, says WFP emergency coordinator Carlos Veloso, "the pipeline is dry." Between 2.5 million and 2.8 million people could face starvation, and aid workers say it will be too late if governments don't help before the pictures of starving children start showing up on TV. "The donor countries will wake up to the news in four or five months and write a big check," Veloso says, "but the deaths will have happened." ●



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Southern California Council for Soviet Jews publication
(affiliate member of Union of Councils for Soviet Jews)
P.O.Box 1542, Studio City, CA 91614

APRIL
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2006

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ALONG THE CHAD-SUDAN BORDER Nicholas Kristoff, N.Y. Times

For more than two years, the world has pretty much ignored the genocide unfolding in the Darfur region of Sudan, just as it turned away from the slaughter of Armenians, Jews, Cambodians and Rwandans in earlier decades.

And now, apparently encouraged by the world's acquiescence, Sudan is sending its proxy forces to invade neighboring Chad and kill and rape members of the same African tribes that have already been ethnically cleansed in Darfur itself.

I've spent the last three days along the Chad-Sudan border, where this brutal war is unfolding. But "war" doesn't feel like the right term, for that implies combat between armies.

What is happening here is more like what happens in a stockyard. Militias backed by Sudan race on camels and pickup trucks into Chadian villages and use machine guns to mow down farming families, whose only offense is that they belong to the wrong tribes and have black skin.

I found it eerie to drive on the dirt track along the border because countless villages have been torched or abandoned. Many tens of thousands of peasants have fled their villages, and you can drive for mile after mile and see no sign of life — except for the smoke of the villages or fields being burned by the Sudan-armed janjaweed militia.

In some places the janjaweed, made up of nomadic Arab tribes that persecute several black African tribes, have turned villages into grazing lands for the livestock they have stolen. At one point, my vehicle got stuck in the sand, and a group of janjaweed children materialized and helped push me out. The children were watching a huge herd of cattle with many different brands. Their fathers were presumably off killing people.

This is my sixth trip to the Darfur region, and I've often seen burned villages within Darfur itself, but now the cancer has spread to Chad.

One young man, Haroun Ismael, returned with me — very nervously — to the edge of

his village of Karmadodo, between the towns of Adré and Adé. Eleven days earlier, Sudanese military aircraft and a force of several hundred janjaweed had suddenly attacked the village. Mr. Haroun and his wife had run for their lives, with his wife carrying their 3-month-old baby, Ahmed.

The janjaweed raiders overtook Mr. Haroun's wife and beat her so badly that she is still unconscious. They also grabbed Ahmed from her arms.

"They looked at the baby," Mr. Haroun added, "and since he was a boy, they shot him."

Sudan is also arming and equipping a proxy army of Chadian rebels under a commander named Muhammad Nour. The rebels were repulsed when they tried to invade Chad in late December, and now they are regrouping for another attempt.

Sudan's aim seems to be to overthrow Chad's president and install a pawn in his place, in part because this would allow Sudan's Army to attack rebels in Darfur from both directions.

Regardless of whether the rebels succeed in overthrowing Chad's government, they could ignite a new civil war in Chad. Much will depend on whether the French will use their military base in Chad to fight any Sudanese-sponsored invasion; the French aren't saying what they'll do.

Chad's army is too small to defend its border, so it tries to defend potential invasion

routes. That leaves villages in other areas defenseless.

"See that smoke over there?" asked Ali Muhammad in the market town of Borota. "The janjaweed are burning our fields today."

"Most people here have fled," he added, "but I have old family members to look after, so I can't leave."

These areas are too insecure for the United Nations and most international aid workers, who are already doing a heroic and dangerous job in Darfur and Chad. So Mr. Ali and others left behind get no food aid and go hungry.

In the last few weeks, President Bush has shown an increased willingness to address the slaughter in Darfur. He should now encourage the French to use their forces to defend Chad from proxy invasions, make a presidential speech to spotlight the issue, attend a donor conference for Darfur, encourage the use of a NATO bridging force until U. N. peacekeepers can arrive, enforce a no-fly zone and open a new initiative for peace talks among the sheiks of Darfur.

The present Western policy of playing down genocide and hoping it will peter out has proved to be bankrupt practically as well as morally. Granted, there are no neat solutions in Darfur. But ignoring brutality has only magnified it, and it's just shameful to pretend not to notice the terrified villagers here, huddling with their children each night and wondering when they are going to be massacred.