

# Sudan — target of foreign aggression

*Africa*  
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**S**INCE January 14, 1997, Sudan has been subjected to aggression by a combined force of Ethiopian and Eritrean regulars and rebels from the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). Since then, the international media have accorded extensive coverage to the aggressors, by promoting their military strategy, and masking their identity. The main theme of the press reports is that it was only the SPLA rebels who had mounted the invasion and secured four positions within two days. These reports make us believe that after securing their positions, those rebel forces had begun their march on the strategic site of Damazin which was the capital of the Blue Nile State. The location of the Rosieres dam, provides the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, with 80% of its water and electricity supply. Under a planned strategy, this advance was reported repeatedly by the press. It was only on one or two odd occasions that the press had to admit that no independent confirmation was available to them and that their reports were based on conjectures.

Here, Muriel Mirack Weisbach (EIR, March 7, 1997) reveals that in actual fact, all such press reports, predicting the imminent destruction of the Rosieres dam, and the subsequent insurrection in Khartoum against the government, have been filed from Cairo, Addis Ababa, Asmara and Nairobi. Most notable of all was a feature which included lengthy interviews

with Baroness Caroline Cox, Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords, Francis Den, a leading Sudanese opposition figure now in the United States and Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma Political Party which was now working with the rebel SPLA, under Cox's direction, to overthrow the Khartoum government. The CNN feature had predicted that the advance of the rebels was inexorable, and that the central government's days were numbered. Also, CNN called for a mobilisation of international "humanitarian" organisations to aid the insurgents.

**D**URING Feb 17-26, a group of Americans visited Damazin to gain first hand knowledge of the state of affairs obtaining there. To their utter surprise, they saw that the situation on the ground was totally different from the one that had been depicted by the press. Newspapers and the British intelligence had deliberately created alarm to break the morale of the government in power. In actual fact, there was no imminent danger of its downfall. The delegation had come to the conclusion that press reports were mostly fabricated, and that, acts of violation committed by foreign aggressors had been deliberately suppressed.

Weisbach further reveals that a few American political and civil leaders also travelled up to the military strategic centre of the Blue Nile State on Feb 23, and visited both El-

*The Muslim*  
Rosieres, the site of the dam on the Blue Nile, and Damazin, urban headquarters of the government and military. They were briefed in detail about the social and economic effects of the invasion. These delegates were told in clear terms that the enemy action had been a direct aggression from behind Ethiopian borders, prepared by massive Ethiopian artillery attacks. In this backdrop, one could safely say that the first casualty in Sudan was the truth as Sudan had witnessed massive press lies. To aggravate matters, it had maintained absolute silence with regard to human rights violations and the Ethiopian invasion.

Contrary to media reports, which have portrayed Damazin as a town under siege, its population in panic, as John Garang and his forces hover outside the city limits, the situation which the American political figures found there was quiet. The presence of military units protecting the town and the dam, was to be expected and was significant. In addition, there were volunteers to be seen everywhere. Not only local political figures, but also legions of students had donned military uniforms to defend their country. This contrasted sharply with media lies, according to which the government had been isolated. Economic and civil life was normal in Damazin; civilians were going about their normal activities without any expression of fear and were mobilized to provide food and other essential supplies to the

troops.

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delegates visited military headquarters in Damazin,

where they received an extensive background briefing by the commander of the Sudanese army in the state. He reported that the invasion had been utterly unexpected and massive. The Sudanese troops resisted until ammunition was exhausted, then they withdrew. On Jan 13, Ethiopian forces entered territory and occupied the towns, which were between 15 and 50 kms from the Ethiopian border. One town occupied, Menza, was only 95 kms from the Damazin dam, which the Ethiopian and rebel SPLA forces hoped to attack and destroy.

**T**HE Commander said, that two-third of the troops were Ethiopians, and only one-third SPLA. He emphasized the fact that there was no "rebel offensive" and said, "If there is any neutral committee that wants to come and see, they will see Ethiopian tanks and troops". He also underlined the gravity of human rights violations, which included the execution of town leaders, the rape of women and girls, and the disappearance of thousands of civilians. He pointed out that the occupying forces were holding 10,000 civilians in Keissan and Kurmuk hostage, forbidding them to leave. This had greatly hampered Sudanese military operations to liberate the towns, because they did not want to endanger the lives of the civilian population.

The victims of the invasion, whom the Schiller Institute delegation saw in the camps and hospitals were in a certain

sense the privileged ones. Those civilians who could not flee the invading armies were still trapped in the occupied towns, only if they had not been abducted or killed. Serious investigations had been conducted by the Sudanese to ascertain the fate of those civilians, while the international community had turned a blind eye.

Thus far, all appeals by the Sudanese government to the United Nations, for example, to stop the aggression, have fallen on deaf ears. Although the wildest allegations of supposed human rights violations by the Sudanese government have immediately prompted international intervention and interference, there has been not a remote mention of the human rights violations of the Sudanese civilian victims of Garang and his Ethiopian backers. Instead, the push for sanctions, which Baroness Cox had been pursuing for over two years, had been accelerated. The British have been demanding that the Sudanese civilians airline, Sudan Air, be grounded, in the hope that an aviation ban would debilitate the government and pave the way for a rebel offensive against the capital.

Members of the American delegation, who returned to the United States on February 26, will bring the truth about military, political and the humanitarian situation in Sudan to the attention of the public and of those politicians who boast their concern for the well-being of Africa. Hopefully, the truth will be heard.