

100422 Rwanda - Are Sarkozy and Kagame playing games?

Pan African Postcard, Horace Campbell

Summary & Comment: Following a visit to Rwanda by French President Sarkozy the widow of the former Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana, was arrested and released on bail. Was there some collusion between Rwanda and France over the militarisation of the eastern DR Congo? the author asks. Paul Kagame must use an open political process to put an end to military solutions to political problems, he concludes. DN

Are Sarkozy and Kagame playing games?

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Intrigue and uncertainty surround the arrest of Agathe Habyarimana in France on Tuesday 2 March. Agathe is the widow of the former president of Rwanda Juvénal Habyarimana. The fastest genocide in human history took place in Rwanda between April and July 1994. Both Juvénal and Agathe Habyarimana had been associated with the most extreme section of the Rwandan polity called the '*Akazu*'. This was the section of Rwanda that promoted genocidal ideas, and their ideas were translated into the fastest genocide in history. Agathe Habyarimana, otherwise known as 'Lady Genocide', was referred to in Rwanda as the political force behind the *Akazu*, the extremists who organised and carried out the genocide.

Since the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko in the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), Agathe Habyarimana had sought asylum in France while there were efforts to extradite her for her role in the genocide. After living comfortably within the networks of planners of war and destabilisation for over 12 years, she was taken into custody days after French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited Rwanda in February 2010. President Nicolas Sarkozy of France admitted on Thursday that his France had made 'grave errors of judgment' in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, but stopped short of offering a formal apology. Instead of an apology, Sarkozy promised a new era of cooperation between Rwanda and France. Agathe was, thereafter, released on bail.

Is this a farce or tragedy? Can the reader imagine if 16 years after the Nazi Holocaust the SS (Schutzstaffel), architects of the Nazi Holocaust, were living comfortably in a foreign country despite having been accused of killing six million Jews? With that in mind, we must also remember that Agathe Habyarimana is not the only suspected genocidaire who has been sheltered around the world. There is a diaspora of extremists from Rwanda who are coordinating wars in the Great Lakes region. Many of these extremists are living in Europe and North America.

Félicien Kabuga is one of the most well-known of these extremists. Kabuga, who allegedly was the chief financier of the Interahamwe, lived comfortably as a businessman in Nairobi, Kenya, for many years. After living openly and colluding with the ruling elements in Kenya, Kabuga has disappeared from public view in Kenya, but has not been arrested, despite the fact that there has been a warrant out for his arrest from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for Rwanda.

Both Agathe Habyarimana and Kabuga have been linked to the Interahamwe and Ex-FAR (Rwanda Armed Forces), the extremist militia that was mobilised for genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda. Since 1994 when the French army under Operation Turquoise assisted the *Interahamwe* and the *Rwanda Armed Forces* (Ex-FAR) to flee from the army of the *Rwandan Patriotic Front* (RPF), these genocidaires have made the eastern Congo a space of perpetual war and plunder. The Ex-FAR and the Interahamwe have since given different names to their so-called 'rebel organisation', and the most recent name is the *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda* (FDLR).

Literally, over a million Rwandese were held hostage in the eastern Congo by Interahamwe and Ex-FAR after 1994. From their bases in the Congo, they had carried out military forays into Rwanda. The war against Mobutu in 1996 released a million refugees who returned to Rwanda, and 40,000 of the most extreme genocidaires formed themselves into militant groups in the eastern DRC, especially North and South Kivu. While the rank and file lived in the eastern Congo, the architects of the genocide were involved in the business of war, plunder and trafficking while flipping between Cameroon, France, Kenya, the US, Germany and Belgium, coordinating a war in the eastern Congo and anticipating to go back and finish their work.

THE PLUNDER OF EASTERN CONGO

Since 1996, militia groups in eastern Congo have been involved in war and the rape of women. The details of these wars are now linked to the plunder of the resources of eastern Congo. In the first five years after the genocide, Rwanda gained international sympathy because it claimed its war in the Congo was to combat those who had committed genocide. Since the peace accord of 2002 that ended the major wars in the Congo involving Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the government of the DRC, peace has eluded the people of the Congo. Despite the fact that the largest UN peacekeeping force (MONUC) now exists in the Congo, a UN Security Council report points to collusion between the Congolese army, the Ex-FAR and MONUC. These UN Security Council reports on war in the DRC make it clear that many military forces, including the Rwandan army, benefit financially from the militarisation of Eastern Congo.

Since April 2009 there has been a bill before the US Senate, the Congo Conflict Minerals Act, that would require US companies selling products using tin, tantalum or tungsten to disclose the country of origin of the materials to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Progressives have been campaigning in the United States to ensure that the US government act and pass the Congo Conflict Minerals Trade Act of 2009 (HR 4128) into legislation to ensure that companies manufacturing, retailing or trading in minerals comprised of tin, tantalum, tungsten or gold originating in the DRC have the absolute obligation to defer finances from reaching armed groups and military units inflicting death, destruction and human rights abuses.

RWANDA PLUNDERS EASTERN CONGO

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has ingratiated himself with the West by presenting himself as a victim, and has sought political support from progressive Africans for his fight against the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe. It is now clearer, however, that there is no political will from Rwanda under Paul Kagame to end the wars in the Congo. Rwanda and Uganda have in the past been named by the UN Security Council as plunderers of the resources of the Congo. The UN 'Report of the Panel of Experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo' estimated the Armée Patriotique Rwandaise has been earning about US\$320 million a year

from commercial operations in eastern Congo. Rwanda enjoys the distinction of being an exporter of coltan when coltan is not mined in Rwanda.

From time to time when the violence and rape of women reach the international news, there are ritual noises about Rwanda withdrawing from the eastern Congo and reigning in its own militia. The arrest of General Laurent Nkunda in Rwanda must be seen as part of this ritual. There is a need for transparency and openness about Rwanda's activities in the Congo if there is going to be peace in the Great Lakes region.

From the records of the balance sheet of the Rwandan economy, it becomes clearer why it is imperative for Kagame and his foreign accomplices that the eastern DRC remain destabilised. Hence, the strategic planners of the West do not want an end to war and rape in the Congo. The Western governments and their non-governmental organisations that profit from 'conflict situations' in Africa are enablers of the Rwandan leadership and are complicit with the perpetuation of war. War is good business for arms manufacturers and for Western NGOs and humanitarianism.

Peace-loving Africans have been concerned by the anti-Chinese rhetoric coming out of some sections of Europe. Kagame should come clean about what he discussed with the British Army Chief of General Staff (CGS) General Sir Richard Dannatt, who visited Rwanda in February 2009. These discussions have now been followed up by high-level visits from European leaders. What was the nature of the 'regional security' that was discussed? French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, a former official of a well-known international non-governmental organisation, had been working hard to smooth relations between France and Rwanda, especially after the French courts accused Kagame of downing the plane of former Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana.

Because of the ambiguity of this incident - which has been blamed for triggering the genocide - it was urgent for Rwanda to expose the truth about what happened. Instead, there were intense secret consultations between Rwanda and France, leading to the first visit by a French president to Rwanda since the 1994 genocide.

It was after Sarkozy left Rwanda that Agatha Habyarimana was arrested in France and later released on bail. Are Sarkozy and Kagame playing games? We ask this question because of the vitriolic anti-Chinese sentiments coming from certain European capitals, where there are accusations of China colonising the Congo. Fifty years after the West colluded to assassinate Patrice Lumumba and propped up Mobutu and Mobutuism, the same West is stoking the fires of war in the Congo. The political leadership in China itself has not been asleep.

Earlier this year, General Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, visited the Congo to discuss bilateral ties and military cooperation. China is a member of the UN Security Council, and if there have been provocations against Chinese workers in the Congo to foment crisis, China should bring this matter to the AU (African Union) and to the public. We cannot afford another proxy war in Africa.

Kagame and Sarkozy are two unpopular politicians. Sarkozy presented himself as a shameless racist when he gave a speech in Dakar, Senegal, in July 2007. He said:

'[Colonialism in Africa] is not responsible for genocide. It is not responsible for dictators. It is not responsible for fanaticism. It is not responsible for the corruption, prevarication. It is not responsible for waste and pollution. The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has never really entered history. The African peasant . has known only the eternal renewal of time via the endless repetition of the same

actions and the same words. In this mentality, where everything always starts over again, there is no place for human adventure, nor for any idea of progress.'

Sarkozy insulted the people of Senegal and Africans everywhere. It is obvious that Sarkozy's mindset and understanding of Africa is in no way different from that of the typical racist European portrayal of Africans over the centuries as a people without history, a people that lack the capability to build a harmonious society. It is this same Sarkozy that Kagame has now mended fences with and made his political bedfellow. Africans believe in forgiveness and ubuntu. But Africans also believe in the politics of truth. Why are the financiers of the Ex-FAR and the Interahamwe being organised and funded from the US and France? It has become obvious that for Kagame to continue mining coltan, there must be war in the Congo. And for this illegal mining, the construction of roads and railways is a threat to the plunderers of the Congo.

Within Rwanda itself, prominent allies of Paul Kagame who formed the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) have now run away. General Kayumba Nyamwasa, who was head of the army, and Patrick Karegeya, who was head of intelligence, have run away. Theogene Rudasingwa, who was the secretary-general of the RPF, has run away. Major Alfonse Furuma has run away. Even this week, other top officials of the RPF have exposed the deep dissent within the ruling party. These former officials must come clean on the level of collusion between the West and Kagame in the militarisation, destabilisation and plunder of the Congo.

These former RPF leaders in the US and South Africa cannot hope to take power militarily. The problem of Rwanda and the Congo require peaceful solution. Decent French citizens should separate themselves from Sarkozy and those in France who colluded in the execution of the genocide and Operation Turquoise. Agathe Habyarimana should be arrested and those hiding Félicien Kabuga should be exposed. Paul Kagame must open the political process in Rwanda to put an end to military solutions to political problems. The capitalist crisis cannot be resolved by another long period of war and destruction in Africa.

**Horace Campbell is a peace activist who is working to realise the dream of the late Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem of building African unity by 2015.*

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