



Sudan: no to a "humanitarian" invasion!

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On 30 July the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution drafted by the United States threatening sanctions against Sudan if it does not disarm the janjaweed militia in the western Darfur region of the country. The resolution includes a provision permitting the "interruption" of economic, transport, communications or diplomatic measures. "sanctions by any other name."

On 22 July Blair gave the go-ahead to prepare plans for possible military intervention in Sudan - including sending up to 5000 British troops.

The UN resolution demands Khartoum prosecute within 30 days militia known as the janjaweed, accused of killing thousands of civilians in Darfur. So are the imperialist preparing for another "humanitarian" intervention to remove a "rogue state"?

The government's aim is to maintain "Sudanese unity" and to tighten its grip on Darfur's valuable mineral wealth, principally uranium. This fight is related to the struggle in the South, a potential source of huge oil wealth. Sudan has 2bn barrels of recoverable oil and currently produces 250,000 barrels a day despite the war.

This oil money has allowed the government to import the most modern technologies of death. The crucial company in this operation during the last five years is the Greater Nile Oil Consortium. The largest share of the project is held by BP Amoco. In August 1999, a 1,600-mile pipeline was opened, linking the southern oilfields to Port Sudan on the Red Sea - the country's only port. As soon as the oil started flowing, the US dropped its support for the southern rebels. Now Bush is trying to enforce a peace deal and cash in on the bonanza the crisis in Darfur is somewhat of an embarrassment to him.

Bush, Cheney and the US oil interests they so directly represent had hoped to use the present Sudan regime, tamed of its Islamist excesses by a deal with the Southern rebels, to guarantee the pipeline from the southern oilfields to Port Sudan.

West Africa supplies 15 per cent of US oil and the figure is growing. Since 9/11 the US ruling class has become disillusioned with the unstable and unreliable Saudi royal family the U.S. Hence, oil companies and the US military have developed a powerful interest in the petrochemical riches of sub-Saharan Africa. The continent appears to be on the verge of a new oil rush - what the Guardian has called a "new scramble for Africa". Only this time there is one big grabber.

West Africa already supplies the US with 15 per cent of its oil imports, and the share is expected to grow as the Bush administration seeks to reduce dependence Saudi Arabia and Gulf. One Washington think tank expects Africa's share of the U.S. market to grow to 25 per cent by 2015. Vice President Cheney's recent National Energy Policy Report states that West Africa is "one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market."

US oil interests, certainly eager to get their hands on the expanding oil fields in southern Sudan, all favour dialogue with the Khartoum regime and a loosening of existing economic sanctions that have hampered their business in Sudan. The United States has already delivered \$116m in assistance to Sudan to encourage a settlement with the rebels and has pledged a total of \$300m if it is finalised. Egypt, the key US ally in the Nile basin, would be very hostile to a US intervention on the side of either the southern or Darfuri rebels. Neither Egypt nor the US wants to see the break-up of

Sudan.

However sections of the fundamentalist Christian right in the US are rooting for an intervention in support of what they call the 'southern Christians' - in fact most of the population remain animists, but US-based missionaries are hard at work there. They use the forced abduction by the 'Arab' militias to accuse the Islamist regime of re-introducing slavery, hoping to inflame 'progressive' US public opinion and justify a 'humanitarian' intervention to overthrow the Islamist regime.

This claim that the Sudanese conflict is a war between Christianity and Islam is totally ridiculous. Many Muslims are engaged in armed opposition to the regime. The second largest armed group in the country belongs to the Beja Congress, based among poor Muslims in north eastern Sudan, and there are several other groups from the north in the NDA coalition which groups all Sudanese opponents of the regime.

The only way for the oppressed nationalities, for the peasants and workers of Sub-Saharan Africa to prevent this economic and environmental catastrophe is to oppose any 'humanitarian' invasion or occupation of Sudan by US, British or French imperialism. They will only intervene, if at all to get their snouts in the trough of the vast mineral wealth.

Africans need only to look at what the hundred years of plunder of the Arab world has done for the ordinary working people of the region. If Blair and Bush want to stop ethnic cleansing, let them stop Ariel Sharon from grabbing the land of the Palestinians.

Of course, they can and should supply ALL the food, shelter and medical aid the refugees need, at once. But even this would be only a drop in the ocean, a tiny fragments of the reparation they owe for the plunder of Africa

African workers, peasants and youth across the whole region should help the Darfuri people, not only to survive but to drive out their oppressors. But beyond this a struggle needs to be launched across all these states against the imperialist plunderers and their local stooges. Only thus will the sickening cycle of corrupt dictatorships, repressive religious obscurantist regimes and genocidal outbursts be ended.

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