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AFRICAN AFFAIRS

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INFO LOG-00 AF-00 AID-00 CIAE-00 OAS-00 DODE-00 DOEE-00
EB-00 OIGO-01 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-16 JUSE-00
LAB-01 L-00 ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01
PA-01 PH-00 PRS-01 P-01 SB-00 SCT-03 SFR-01
SP-00 SR-00 SSO-00 SS-00 STR-01 TSE-00 TSO-01
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WAS THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF FRENCH JOURNALISTS REPORTING FOLLOWING THE EVACUATION OF FRENCH NATIONALS. IT WAS DONE LARGELY BY FRENCH JOURNALISTS SINCE ONLY THEY COULD CIRCULATE RELATIVELY FREELY IN HUTU-HELD AREAS. IN ADDITION, GOF POLICY IN RWANDA OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS WAS THE SUBJECT OF CONCERTED, HIGHLY NEGATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE, FUELED BY WELL-DOCUMENTED LEAKS.

4. ALTHOUGH GOF SPOKESMEN TRIED GENTLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO REMIND THE FRENCH PUBLIC THAT THE MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EVOLUTION OF RWANDA POLICY, NO SPECIAL EFFORT WAS MADE TO PUSH ALL BLAME ON TO THE ELYSEE, THUS LEAVING THE BAG IN THE HANDS OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT. ONE FACTOR THAT ALL OF OUR CONTACTS CITED WAS THE EFFECT ON GOF AFRICANISTS OF THE TELEVISUED IMAGES OF THE SLAUGHTER. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS GAVE MEDIA ATTENTION DID NOT CREATE PUBLIC OR PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE FOR INTERVENTION. RATHER, IT WAS A DECISION OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT OF POLITICAL CLASS.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

5. ACCORDING TO OVAI STAFFERS

ARGUMENT WAS THAT DESPITE THE EVIDENT POLITICAL RISKS AND HUGE COSTS, A FAILURE TO ACT COULD BE VERY DAMAGING TO THE CENTER-RIGHT'S HOPES IN 1995 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THUS, THE POLITICAL DANGERS OF INACTION WERE JUDGED TO BE GREATER THAN THOSE OF INACTION. FOR FOREIGN MINISTER JUPPE, THE FINAL STRAW WAS THE MURDER OF NEARLY 100 ORPHANS DURING THE WEEK OF JUNE 13

AS A CEASE FIRE WAS BEING DEBATED AT THE OAU SUMMIT, THE OAU SUMMIT

6. A SECOND ELEMENT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION TO THE OAU SUMMIT IN TUNIS. THE DELEGATION WAS HEADED BY BERNARD DE MONTEFERRAND, THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHIEF DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS, AS A GENERAL RULE, ONLY ON CRISIS SITUATIONS IN ORDER TO PROTECT BALLADUR'S INTERESTS. DE MONTEFERRAND AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION WERE TAKEN ABACK BY THE INSISTENCE OF THEIR NORMALLY DOCILE FRANCOPHONE PARTNERS THAT FRANCE, DESPITE ITS DESIRE TO REDUCE ITS ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA, NEEDED TO ACT IF IT WAS GOING TO RETAIN ANY CREDIBILITY IN THE REGION -- ESPECIALLY AFTER ITS DECISION TO "CUT AND RUN" FOLLOWING THE EVACUATION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS IN APRIL, LEAVING AFRICANS TO BE SLAUGHTERED WHILE

EUROPEANS SAVED.

NGOS

7. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A TRADITION OF COOPERATION BETWEEN NGOS AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, IT IS CONDUCTED IN A VERY DIFFERENT MANNER THAN IN THE U.S. OPEN CRITICISM OF A GOF POLICY BY FRENCH NGO'S IS RARE, ESPECIALLY BY THE CATHOLIC-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. WHEN

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, MOPS, PHUM, PREF, RW, FR
SUBJECT: RWANDA AND FRANCE: WHY NOW? THE OAU, MEDIA, NGOS AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

2. THE GOF'S SUDDEN DECISION TO INTERVENE IN RWANDA AFTER TWO AND ONE-HALF MONTHS OF WELL PUBLICIZED MASSACRES HAS LEFT MANY IN FRANCE AND ABROAD WONDERING WHY THE FRANCE HAS CHOSEN TO ACT AT THIS LATE DATE AND WHAT IT HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH A BROAD RANGE OF GOF AFRICANISTS HAVE NOT REVEALED A WELL REASONED PLAN FOR STABILIZING THE COUNTRY; RATHER, THE GOF POLICY SEEMS TO TO SPRING LARGELY FROM AN EMOTIONAL REACTION FROM THE CONTINUED SCENES OF SLAUGHTER AND A STEADY DRUM-BEAT OF CRITICISM BY THE MEDIA AND NORMALLY APOLITICAL NGOS OF FRANCE'S PAST AND PRESENT ACTIONS. IN ADDITION TO THESE DOMESTIC PRESSURES, THE GOF DELEGATION CAME IN FOR PERSISTENT CRITICISM BY ITS AFRICAN PARTNERS AT THE OAU SUMMIT IN TUNIS. FINALLY, AT A POLITICAL LEVEL, THERE WAS CONCERN THAT GIVEN THE INABILITY OF THE UN OR OAU TO ACT, THE RWANDA AFFAIR COULD LEAVE AN IMPRESSION OF INCOMPETENCE AND CALLOUSNESS THAT WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY

THE MEDIA EFFECT

3. PERHAPS THE MOST CONSISTENT AND READILY IDENTIFIABLE ELEMENT IN THE GOF DECISION TO INTERVENE

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SUCH CRITICISM HAPPENS, IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED TO HAVE A POLITICAL COLORATION, SINCE NGOS ARE OFTEN LOOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE LEFT OR RIGHT. HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF RWANDA, THE CRITICISM CAME FROM A WIDE SPECTRUM OF NGOS/PVOS THAT TRADITIONALLY HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN A POLITICAL DEBATE, SUCH AS "MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERS/FRANCE" AND "ACTION INTERNATIONALE CONTRE LA FAIM." THIS CRITICISM WAS ALL THE MORE STINGING SINCE IT HIT GOF POLICY ON SEVERAL FRONTS SIMULTANEOUSLY: HUMAN RIGHTS, HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS, ATTACKS ON CATHOLIC CLERGY AND LAY WORKERS, FRANCE'S PAST ACTIONS, FRANCOPHONE SOLIDARITY, COMPARISONS WITH EX-YUGOSLAVIA; ETC.

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8. HIGHLY PUBLICIZED EVNTS!

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DROVE GOF AFRICANISTS INTO A FURY, SINCE IT ONLY INCREASED THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF A CENTER-RIGHT GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A POLICY OR COURAGE. QUAI CONTACTS, STRESSED THAT THE STINGING CRITICISM AND SUBSEQUENT

CALL FOR HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION BY BY GOF/FRANCE CARRIED TREMENDOUS WEIGHT.

DECIDE IN HASTE.....

9. OUR STRONG IMPRESSION THAT THE GOF HAS YET TO DEFINE ITS POLITICAL GOALS OR DEVELOP A PLAN ON STABILIZING RWANDA OR THE REGION REMAINS UNCHANGED. ASSERTIONS WE HAVE HEARD THAT FRENCH INTERVENTION WILL LEAD TO A "POSITIVE SPIRAL" ARE BASED MORE ON HOPE THAN ANY SOLID ANALYSIS. AS ONE EXAMPLE OF THE NEED TO COME

UP WITH A COHERENT POLICY AT ALL COSTS, DEFENSE MINISTER LECTARD DURING A JUNE 22 TELEVISION INTERVIEW DEFENDED THE INTERVENTION BY CLAIMING THAT "IF ONE LIFE IS SAVED, THE OPERATION IS JUSTIFIED." IN EFFECT, THIS IS THE ARGUMENT LONG USED BY BERNARD KOUCHNER FOR SOMALIA AND EX-YUGOSLAVIA -- AND HEAVILY CRITICIZED BY THE CENTER-RIGHT DURING THE '99 ELECTIONS AND EVER SINCE, I.E., THE SUBSTITUTION OF "HUMANITARIAN ACTION" FOR FOREIGN POLICY.

11. BUJUMBURA MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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