CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AFRICAN AFFAIRS

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING TELEGRAM

PAGE 01 OF 07
PARIS 17431 89 OF 83 2416312 3974 025515 8016
ACTION EUR-09

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 onto the Elisee, thus leaving the bag in the hands of the current government. One factor that all of our contacts cited was the effect of GOF Africans on the televised image of the slaugtherer. It should be noted, however, that this same media attention did not create public or parliamentary pressure for intervention. Rather, it was a decision of the French political class.

5. According to OAU staff...

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 1985 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THUS, THE POLITICAL DANGERS OF INACTION WERE JUGGERED 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.

6. A second element was the experience of the French delegation to the OAU summit in Tunis. The delegation was headed by Bernard de Menthon, 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 Ballard's interests. De Menthon 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
SUCH CRITICISM HAPPENS. IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED TO HAVE
A POLITICAL COLOURATION, 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 THAT TRADITIONALLY HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN A POLITICAL DEBATE, SUCH AS "MEDICINS SANS
FRONTIERES/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.

B. HIGHLY PUBLICIZED EVENTS

DRIVE GOF AFRICANISTS INTO A FURY, SINCE IT ONLY
INCREASED THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF A CENTER-RIGHT
GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A POLICY OR COURAGE. GULAR CAVAFIDES
STRESSED THAT THE STINGING CRITICISM AND SUBSEQUENT
CALL FOR HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION BY MSF FRANCE CARRIED TREMENDOUS WEIGHT.

DECIDE IN HASTE.......

...THEIR STRONG IMPRESSION THAT THE GOF HAS YET TO
DEFINE ITS POLITICAL GOALS OR DEVELOP A PLAN OR
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 LESENDRA DURING A JUNE 27 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 1993 ELECTIONS AND EVEN
SINCE, I.E., THE SUBSTITUTION OF "HUMANITARIAN ACTION" FOR FOREIGN POLICY.

1. BURUNDA MINIMIZING CONSIDERED.

HASRINAN