

20 years Apology: A Political Campaign for Dr. Riek Machar Teny- a Case of “Why Garang Must Go Now” is now recanted

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(Worcester, MA, USA)-“*Riek Machar has a very strange way of interpreting his collaboration with the NIF regime. He believes that unless the SPLA and Dr. John were defeated there could never be peace in South Sudan. According to him, therefore, it was justified to use any means, including collaborating with NIF regime, to achieve that objective. Once Garang and his army were out of the way, Riek would resume the task of liberating South Sudan*”. P. A. Nyaba

Dr. Riek Machar Teny, a Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) is perhaps known by those who either have a vague knowledge about the liberation of the South as the man who fought for “self-determination” after a failed coup to rid Dr. Garang de Mabior as the chairman and the commander in-chief of the SPLM/A in 1991. I find this amusing. Indeed, he fought with the SPLM/A when he was a Zonal Commander in Western Upper Nile in 1986. There is no doubt Dr. Riek Machar was victorious in his assignments. However, I am baffled when Dr. Riek Machar credited himself with the title of “self-determination” without mentioning other leaders. According to Nyaba, “the Nasir adventure was a political and military move carefully calculated to snatch the leadership from Dr. John Garang at one of the weakest movements in the Movement’s history. The movement had just retreated back into the country from its bases in Ethiopia following the demise of the Mengistu regime. Many SPLA units had not reached their destination inside the Sudan and the Movement was still in a state of reorganization and consolidating its positions in the liberated areas” (Nyaba p. 79).

I find this insulting to all the heroes who joined the struggle to fight for self-determination, and now Riek Machar seems comfortable with this tittle. Dr. Riek Machar is proud about this title in his Movement’s manifesto, *South Sudan: A History of Political Domination- a Case of Self-Determination*. How egotistic can Dr. Riek be to champion this tittle? This slogan didn’t start with the formation of “South Sudan Independent Movement” (SSIM) in 1991. This was the dream Southerners had when they formed Anya Anya 1

Why Dr. Garang did not assert the “self-determination” movement

It is necessary to teach the history of our liberation correctly. Dr. Garang de Mabior and his comrades had two visions to bring self-determination. The first strategy was to fight for the

“united Sudan”. Secondly, if the “united Sudan” wasn’t achieved then the South could opt for self-determination. Dr. Garang didn’t preach the slogan of “self-determination” because all Southerners knew they didn’t need to be treated as second class citizens in their own country.

To paint a bigger picture, the survival of the SPLM/A within the Sudan, and East Africa was Dr. Garang’s first choice. The name Sudanese People Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A) was the reason why Sudanese Muslims in Nuba Mountains joined the SPLM/A to fight the National Islamic Front (NIF). This was the reason Cdr Yusuf Kuwa and his comrades joined the SPLM/A. If Dr. Garang would have choose to form his Movement as “South Sudan Independence Movement” (SSIM), the survival of the SPLM/A would have been choked immediately. Secondly, this strategy benefited the SPLM/A with Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam’s regime. If Dr. Garang would have preached the slogan of “self-determination”, I doubt Mengistu would have supported the SPLM/A in the first place. Mengistu’s regime was a great ally of the SPLM/A until he was overthrown by the current government. On the other hand, the Eritreans were fighting Mengistu’s regime to be a separate country. How can Mengistu support “self-determination” for southerners, and not for the Eritreans? Omar Bashir was also adamant about the South becoming a separate country from the North. This is why it took Southerners decades to gain their independence. Riek’s and Lam claims of “self-determination” after the split are bogus!

After a failed coup to ousted Dr. Garang, who became Riek’s ally? Did Nasir faction fought side by side with SPLM/A as two separate Movements against their common enemy or did Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol conspire with the Khartoum government to destroy the SPLM/A? According to Nyaba, “before announcing the coup, Riek Machar made sure first to send commander James Biel Jok to Malakal garrison, Mr. Gatluak Deng, to brief the NIF governor for Upper Nile State and the commander of Malakal garrison about the plan and to get assurances of the NIF support. The NIF government accepted to supply military logistics in form of ammunition” (Nyaba p. 92). After making these arrangements with the common enemy, how can Dr. Riek and Dr. Lam claimed the title of “self-determination”?

Let’s judge our leaders based on their actions. All leaders in the government represent all tribes in the Republic of South Sudan. Unless the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) adopted what Paanluel Wel called, *Tribocracy: The New Political Philosophy for the New Country*. Otherwise, Dr. Riek Machar’s crimes are his own and the Nuer tribe shouldn’t be blamed for his mistakes. Dr. Riek Machar doesn’t represent the Nuer tribe nor does his name “Riek Machar Teny” represent the Nuer tribe. However, I am ashamed at those individuals who are quick to bring up “tribe” especially when citizens criticized their leaders. Riek’s name is not a nickname for the Nuer tribe nor does President Kiir mayardit and Lam Akol represent the Dinka or Shilluk tribe. This thinking is absurd!

The Nuer fought for self-determination like all other tribes in the South. Riek’s crimes against humanity in Bor in 1991 are his own actions because he was the leader who commanded those forces to massacre innocent civilians. In fact, majority of his forces were from the Nuer tribe, but that shouldn’t give anyone a reason to generalize all Nuer as collaborators. Only forces

under his command were responsible for killing civilians in Bor. Riek acted on his own to weaken his opponent by killing Dr. Garang's tribesman. Dr. Riek Machar's interview spoke for him. In this interview, Dr. Riek says, "I was not physically there, but I am the commander of the armed forces. They were in touch with me, and they had specific instructions". According to the Amnesty International report, "fighters aligned with Machar massacred more than 2000 Dinka Bor. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98wtodZ2OK4>). Ironically, Bor was the birth place of Dr. Garang de Mabior.

An interview given by Riek right after the split, he says, "Garang didn't like semblance of institutions of structures of democracy within the movement. He is interested in running the Movement as his personal property". I wonder what exactly Dr. Garang was running as his "personal property". According to Nyaba, "the internecine fighting between the SPLM/A mainstream and the Nasir faction that followed the split played well into the hands of the NIF regime which regained initiative on the military front, recapturing from the SPLA such as strategic towns like Pochalla (April 1992), Kapoeta (June 1992), Torit (1993) among others" (Nyaba p. 78). Thousands of the SPLA soldiers died when these towns were first captured, but with Riek's idea of "self-determination", the NIF recaptured these towns without resistance.

According to Nyaba, "the only beneficiary of the fighting between mainstream SPLA and the Nasir faction was the NIF government which took advantage of the situation to regain territory in the Juba-Nimuli axis unleashing a new wave of human displacement and suffering. These NIF successes, reversing the liberation process, could not have come about without his strategic collaboration with the Nasir traitors". (Nyaba p.101). This decision by Dr. Riek and Dr. Lam not only cost many lives, but it weakened the Movement tremendously.

Understanding 1991 Split and the return of Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol to power

In Nyaba's book, *The Politics of liberation in South Sudan*, he says, "there is a basic fault with Riek Machar's logic. The objective of the coup was to wrest the leadership of the SPLM/A from Dr. Garang. That meant that the survival of the movement was equally important to Riek Machar. But, having failed to oust Garang, he then turned around to work with the common enemy for the destruction of the SPLM/A" (Nyaba P. 100). Given the actions taken by Riek Machar in this critical time of our struggle, I find myself laughing when I saw the headlines in Sudantribune that Dr. Riek apologized to Bor community, and not to the entire country. The trick of his apology is that there is no direct quote from Dr. Riek Machar instead of a single noun, "apology". Perhaps Dr. Riek Machar doesn't want to be quoted later in the future. Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. lam Akol broke away to form their movement, which did affect the Dinka Bor, but it ultimately brought the SPLM/A to its knees in 1991. According to Nyaba, "even so, there are times when national interest takes precedence over narrow party objectives. It was more pertinent in the situation where the immediate military confrontation with the NIF regime had not yet been resolved" (Nyaba, p.100). Despite what was on our plate, Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol choose to resolve the so-called "democracy" militarily, and not politically. The people of South Sudan should be careful not to put their trust in Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol. You would think these individuals would return to the Movement

immediately after a failed coup to fight their common enemy, but instead they continue to wage war for years. Is this the man we call our Vice President or is this a title? How can we hold citizens accountable if Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol are not accountable for their crimes? Perhaps this is why President Kiir has too many amnesties in the South. Let's not mix up Bor Massacre and 1991 coup. These are two separate crimes. Perhaps Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol should apologize for the coup. Riek's apology was unwise and he needs to reconsider his apology. Perhaps he should start his campaign of apologies in Nasir.

Apology by Dr. Riak Machar to Bor Community in Juba

Riek's apology came as a surprise to all South Sudanese since it took him 20 years to accept Bor's massacre. Why now? Why the Dinka Bor and not the whole country? The Dinka Bor was not the only sub clan of Dinka who suffered during the split. All tribes from the South paid in blood. According to Sudantribune, "Riek Machar has apologized to the Dinka Bor community by acknowledging his responsibility for an incident in 1991 which resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives in the community". According to Sudantribune, "the officer in charge of the SPLA information department, Malak Ayuen Ajok, revealed on the official South Sudan TV that Machar acknowledged his responsibility of the 1991 incidence in Bor following his defection on 28 August 1991 from late John Garang's leadership". (Sudantribune).

It makes one wonder why there is no direct quote from Dr. Riek Machar. Dr. Riek should have gone to the grass roots where the massacre took place so the widows and orphans can hear his apology. How can the victims forgive him if they don't hear it from Dr. Riek? The Dinka Bor, the Nuer, and the entire country deserve a genuine apology. The massacring of civilians is not equivalent to an "apology", for war crimes.

The relationship between Dinka and Nuer

The Nuer tribe and the Dinka have lived for generations without massacring one another until Riek became an intellectual in Nuer Community. They have lived side by side and even intermarried. Although there were small disputes about cattle and water rights, these issues were easily solved by tribal chiefs. However, the coming of Dr. Riek as an intellectual in Nuer Community, he made everything Nuer vs. Dinka. The setback Dr. Riek had cost the people of South Sudan is not compensated by an indirect apology.

Early Campaign for Dr. Riek Marchar

Escaping Bor Massacre at gun point in 1991, I never forgot who Dr. Riek Machar was and what he's capable of. Dr. Riek Machar apology is a political campaign because it was given by a government official. Dr. Riek Machar is a genius because he wants to lessen his war crimes. The Dinka Bor weren't the only tribe affected by the coup. First, he needs to start his apology in Nuer because the Nuer sons died in vein as a result of his greed. We were at the point of victory when Dr. Riek made this decision.

Gordon Buay, the former Secretary of the South Sudan Democratic Party sounded like an idiot when he made this statement to Sudantribune, "I was completely shocked that a man like Riek Machar could apologize for 1991 Nasir Declaration which brought the right to self-determination to fore. It very sad indeed that Riek Machar should reduce himself to the level of Peter Gadet". I wonder where this man was when the NIF almost defeated the SPLM/A in 1991 in the name of "self-determination". It's sad to hear *Wurnyang* in his voice. Even Emma MacCune can attest to this statement. It took Dr. Riek Machar 20 years to surprise everyone with his apology. Dr. Riek Machar is our Vice President, but let's not forgets who he is. Dr. Riek Machar is not a changed person if everyone thinks his mistakes are history. Let's not be fooled by Riek's education attainment. Dr. Riek Machar is psychological engrossed by Ngundeng's prophecies. Ngundeng was a self-proclaimed prophet in the 1900s in the South. By comparison, he's like Lirpiou in Dinka and Nyikang in Shilluk. Apparently, Ngundeng hasn't revealed himself to Riek yet.

Peace and Reconciliation among South Sudanese

In order to allow peace and reconciliation in the South, we shouldn't be offended when we criticized those who betrayed us. How can we make our leaders accountable if we can't point out their mistakes? Don't take this article as an attack on the Vice President, but a reminder that 1991 coup is still vivid in our minds. This topic is sensitive to all of us, but when is the time to bring up these issues? Dr Riek Machar is my Vice President and I deserve the right to criticize his actions. My article is also a reminder to those kids who were born during the war and may not know who their Vice President is. Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol only cares about their political ambition, they don't care about anyone else. Yes, they are educated, but their education serves no purpose. How many times did Dr. Lam Akol left and return to the Movement?

Conclusion

Hence, I urge the youths in the South not to judge their leaders based on tribal lines, but what they represent to the public. If we want development then we shouldn't be afraid to point out mistakes. I am optimistic that South Sudan will not be a failed state as Bona Malual stated in his retirement article. He says, "South Sudan will be divided into countries of tribes". I believe we have to forgive Dr. Riek Machar, but we will never forget what he did.

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