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SOCIETY NEWS

SSSUK is now almost four years old and has grown from an uncertain launch by a small steering group into an organisation which is known by Sudanists worldwide. In a recent survey, I managed to note 47 different countries to which at least one copy of the newsletter has been sent, ranging from Australia and Indonesia to Canada and Brazil. Perhaps, this is a worthwhile point to bear in mind as we prepare for the Second International Sudan Studies Conference which SSSUK is hosting in Durham next April (8th-11th). Preparations are making excellent progress and many offers of contributions have been received. Members of SSSUK and the SSA should be receiving more details in due course, and I really hope many of us will be able to attend. It looks as if we will have participants from Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East and it is a wonderful opportunity to exchange experiences and information with colleagues whom you are unlikely to meet very often. Please write to the Conference Organiser if you require more details.

Closer to home, this year's One Day Symposium and AGM is being held on Saturday September 29th. The venue is being changed this year to London House (London WCI). More details will follow soon, but there will be a less cramped timetable and lunch and other refreshments will be included for an all-in price of £5. There is scope for a couple more papers to be considered, and if you are interested, please write to (or telephone) me at the address below.

One item on the AGM will be the election of two posts. After nearly four years I am retiring as Secretary and editor of *Sudan Studies*, and Robin Hodgkin is retiring as a committee representative of the Sudan Government British Pensioners' Association. Anyone wishing to nominate (or be nominated) for either of these posts should write to me before the end of August. Dr Ahmed el-Bushra, the Sudan Cultural Counsellor, is also retiring, but his post is ex-officio and will be filled automatically by his successor.

This is the time of year for a renewal of Society membership and I am pleased to say that this is the fourth year running that the fee has remained unaltered. However, may I please strongly encourage you to return your renewal form as soon as possible. Delayed returns cause all sorts of administrative problems and sending out reminders wastes funds. If you have problems paying in sterling, it is possible to pay for more than one year at a time.

Finally I end by wishing my successor as Secretary and Editor well and thank all members of SSSUK who have contributed to this and earlier issues.

Addresses:

Secretary and Editor:

Dr A Trilsbach, 10 Thornlea, Godinton Park, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3JX. (0233-63-4922).

Conference Organiser:

Mrs Janet C M Starkey, c/o Sudan Archive, University Library, Palace Green Section, Durham, DH1 3RN, (tel: 091-374-3028 or 0388-526047).



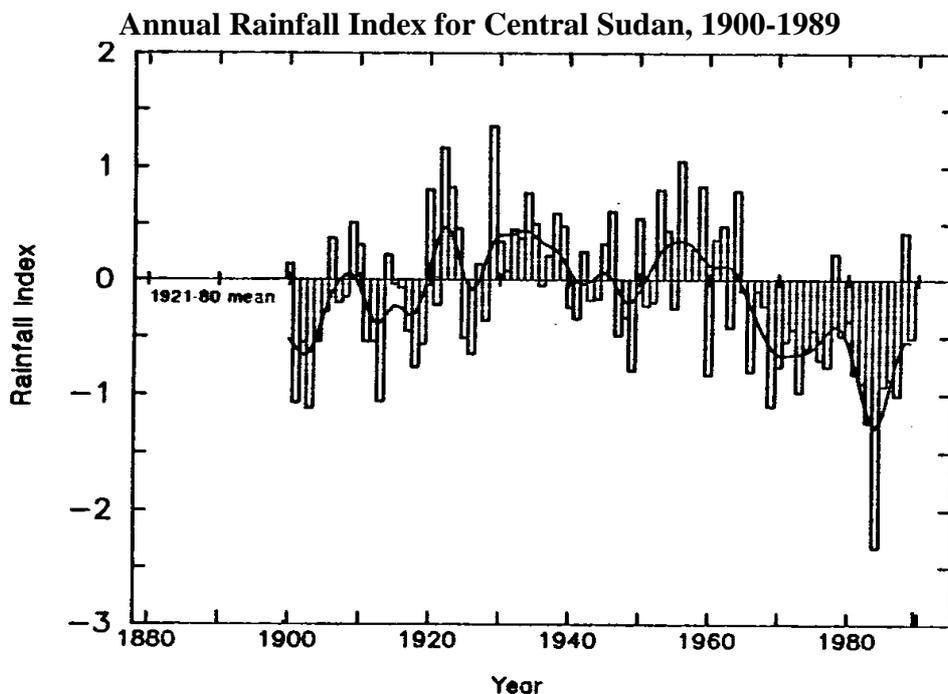
THE SUDAN WET SEASON IN 1989

Mike Hulme contributes to the series of environmental updates

Following the heavy rains in parts of Sudan in 1988, the 1989 wet season in Sudan was drier, more typical of the dry years of the 1970s than of the very dry years of the 1980s. The graph below shows the annual rainfall index for central Sudan (between latitudes 12° and 16° N) for the years 1900 through 1989. The index is based on a maximum of 26 stations and updates the time series which have previously appeared in *Sudan Studies* (No 1 and No 6). Although the 1989 rainfall index value was only -0.5 (compared with +0.45 in 1988), this was still wetter than the first seven years of the 1980s. The dry phase that has characterised central Sudan since the late 1960s certainly cannot yet be said to have ended. The UK Meteorological Office produces a seasonal rainfall forecast for the Sahel which is usually issued before

the end of May. Currently, the forecast generates a single rainfall estimate representative of the whole Sahel. Their 1989 forecast, issued in late May, was for a year close to or just below the 1951-80 average. This appears to have been a reasonable forecast for central Sudan based on the rainfall index shown here. One of the difficulties with this sort of large-area forecast, however, is that individual locations within the Sahel may experience very different rainfall conditions to the regional average. As long as this point is appreciated by those who use such information, the Meteorological Office forecast would appear to be a promising development for those involved in short-term environmental planning. The 1990 forecast is due by the end of May.

Dr Mike Hulme is a Senior Researcher at the Climatic Research Unit (UEA).





LACONDA RAID

Iain Marshall offers more anecdotes from Sudan, this time from central Khartoum.

A *laconda* is a very cheap Sudanese hotel akin to a dosshouse but low on sleaze. A typical example in central Khartoum is situated between the *Gasr an Nil* and *Saalih* hotels. I once took some Save the Children Fund workers who'd never before eaten *fuul* beans, to have supper at this establishment. Patrons sat outside on straw *birish* mats to eat, while streams of taxis, lorries and Toyota pick-ups buzzed up and down, only inches away from the diners' ears, droning like oversized flies. My aid-worker acquaintances, who thought the cheapest meal to be had in the capital cost ten Sudanese pounds from the Sahara Hotel, enjoyed their first taste of the ubiquitous bean, and were astounded to learn that it was available in the city for as little as seventy five piastres.

Months later I was back in Khartoum staying at the *Gasr an Nil*. From my third floor window I had perfect view of the boys from the *laconda* as they transformed their stretch of unpaved sand and dirt into a restaurant'. A long trestle table facing the traffic held bowls of *Salaata*, a type of yoghurt called *mish*, a peppery sauce of red *shatta* and a wide-diameter metal pan for barbecuing mutton. On the ground at the end of the table, a charcoal burner as big as a household dustbin supported a pot shaped like a huge bloated hip flask. This was a specialized utensil for boiling *fuul* beans. There was also an enormous aluminium container full of water with a communal mug adrift on the surface.

The *sheyaa* stall beckoned with enticing tendrils of steam and smoke which arose from chunks of mutton hissing on the hot pebbles and smouldering charcoal. Sunset was approaching and the city was pleasantly warm instead of punishingly hot. I stepped out of the *Gasr* with some companions into the heady atmosphere of the street and wandered down towards the *laconda*, relishing the sound of the birds fighting in their hundreds for a place to perch in the roadside *nim* trees and savouring the various smells which crept into the open at



nightfall. We walked up to the trestle table and ordered some *fuul* and *sheyaa*. While the others sat on the *birish* with the beans and bread, I waited by the table until our quota of meat was charred enough to be edible.

We had been sitting on the ground eating for about ten minutes when a lorry stopped level with us and the twelve or so men, who'd been balanced on the back, descended, and with mute, uniform efficiency began to dismantle the rudimentary restaurant, throwing its paraphernalia into the back of their lorry. The barbecue went in, the bowls of yoghurt and salad likewise. The boys managed to drag the *fuul* pot back inside the front gate of the *laconda* but were not so fortunate with the water container. A member of each faction held a side of the water pot and a silent tug of war ensued.

The entire raid passed off without the exchange of a single blow or angry word, a surreal dumb show unfolding before our eyes. I remember trying to eat as fast as possible in the fear that our supper was about to be whipped away from under our noses, but for some reason we were not disturbed, unlike the Sudanese customers who had their evening meals unceremoniously snatched away. Their task completed, the men boarded the truck and were driven off into the night.

The only explanation we could pluck from the mass of rumours and fictions which constantly swarmed around Khartoum like locusts, was that the newly elected government was cleaning up the capital and was putting unlicensed traders out of business. Half an hour after the raiders had swooped, I saw the smoke of scorched meat rising from the roadside once again. The boys had hastily reconstructed their "restaurant" and were doing a brisk trade. Earlier, the boy in charge had wished us farewell from the "ruins" of his establishment with a grin wider than a broad bean, and the words "Sudan is a very bad place".



Iain Marshall spent four years teaching in various schools in Northern Province and now works at the Vietnamese Centre at East Molesey, Surrey.

SOME NOTES ON AFTERBIRTHS

John Edgar offers some comments on the ritual disposal of afterbirths in various parts of the Sudan.

While living in Dar Fur in 1980 and 1983, I was told about the ritual disposal of afterbirths by a few of the peoples of that area. I hope this information may be of use to ethnographers interested in these matters. The rituals seem to have a protective function, dealing with the afterbirth so that no harm may be worked on the child through it by malevolent spirits or people. The rituals all involve either burial or placing in trees.

The *Masalit* bury the afterbirth in the family compound or leave it up a tree. The *Ibiri* (or *Maraariit*) bury the afterbirth in the family compound or just outside it; the afterbirths of animals are placed in pot fragments and left up in trees. The Fur deposit their afterbirths in a fragment of broken water-pot and lodge it in a cactus tree (thereby assuring their children long and prosperous lives, they say). The *Wegi* group of the *Beri* (*Zaghawa*) bury the afterbirth near the door or gate of the enclosure with some seeds. It is subsequently watered, the idea being that as the seeds germinate and grow and flourish, so the child will too (a contradictory belief exists amongst the *Masalit*, who are superstitious about the culture of long-living plants, justify by their proverb “the planter dies before the tree [dies]”).

Different afterbirth customs can be observed in other areas. In riverain Sudan, the afterbirth of a male is solemnly buried in the family compound, near to the house foundation, without any song or incantation; the aftermath of a female is buried with much laughter and joviality;

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alternatively they may both be thrown into the river (see El Tayib, A. (1955) “Changing Customs of the Riverain Sudan”, *Sudan Notes and Records*). Across the border in Tigre, the afterbirth is buried under the threshold of the front door, mixed with seeds and certain fruits, “so that anyone who steps over the remnants in stepping over the threshold will not become ill”.

John Edgar is a linguist, currently researching at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and is working on a compilation of A Lexicon of Islamic Terms in African Languages. Anyone wishing to contact him about this should write to him at: 22B, Biddenham House, Plough Way, London, SE16 2LX.



NEW RESEARCH

Dirk Hansohm outlines some ongoing research into small industries in Sudan.

THE POTENTIAL OF SMALL INDUSTRIES IN SUDAN:

Sudan is in a severe development crisis. Traditional structural adjustment measures have failed and the need for a more comprehensive approach is acknowledged¹. The promotion of small industries could be part of such an approach. A number of advantages with regard to economic and social development are ascribed to small industries: low dependence on imports and infrastructure, high labour intensity, income generation, geographical dispersion, capability to increase the savings capacity, linkages to the agricultural sector, and others.

However, the data which are necessary to identify the sector's potentials, their constraints, and appropriate measures of promotion, are largely missing. Most of the enterprises are not recorded in the statistics. Still, the existing data on the small industry sector (enterprises with less than 25 employees) testify to its importance and positive performance².

The research project intends to contribute to the knowledge of small industries in Sudan³. In order to assess their actual and potential role it is necessary to combine a micro-level study with an analysis on the macro-level - supply and demand factors as well as government policy are determining the fate of small industries. In this regard, not only industrial policy, but also other fields such as agricultural, foreign trade exchange rate policies and other issues have to be considered.

For a micro-level study, the western Sudanese town of Nyala was selected. Field research was carried out between November 1987 and November 1988. The field research consisted of a quantitative survey of all industries in the town, a qualitative study of selected establishments in selected traditional and modern industries, and a number of other interviews and observations. Various ministries and other government boards, financing and promotion institutions and research institutions in Khartoum and El Fasher, the regional capital, were visited. Different small studies on small industries in Omdurman, Darfur, Kordofan and the Eastern Region in 1986 and 1989 provide additional knowledge.

Presently the data are analyzed in the context of a discussion of the literature on potentials and growth constraints of small industries in developing countries, especially in African low-income countries⁴.



Footnotes:

1. c.f. Hansohm, D. (1986) "The Success of IMF/World Bank Policies in Sudan", in Lawrence, P. (ed) *The World Recession and the Food Crisis in Africa*, James Currey (London). Hansohm, D. and Wohlmuth, K. (1987) "Sudan: A Case for Structural Adjustment Policies", in *Development and Peace*, Vol.8. Hansohm, D. (1989) "IMF/World Bank Policies in Sudan and its Critics", in Wohlmuth, K. (ed) *Structural Adjustment in the World Economy and East-West-South Economic Co-operation*, (University of Bremen).
2. c.f. Hansohm, D. and Wohlmuth, K. (1989) *Sudan's Small Industry Development. Structures, Failures and Perspectives*, Berichte aus dem Weltwirtschaftlichen Colloquium der Universitat Bremen, No 16. Hansohm, D. (1990) "Rural small Industries and Crafts", in Centre for Agricultural Strategy (ed) *The Agriculture of the Sudan* (Oxford University Press).
3. The theoretical background is published in Hansohm, D. and Wohlmuth, K. (1987) "Promotion of Rural Handicrafts as a Means of Structural Adjustment in Sudan", in *Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives*, Vol.6 (Nos 2 and 3).
4. For a first report on the field work c.f. Hansohm, D. (1989) *The Potential of Small Industries in Sudan: Case Study of Nyala*, Sudan Economy Research Group Discussion Paper No 14 (University of Bremen). On the industrialization process of Sudan c.f. Wohlmuth, K. (1989) "Sudan's Industrialization After Independence: A Case of Africa's Crisis of Industrialization", in Islam, N. (ed) *The Balance Between Industry and Agriculture in Economic Development*, Vol.5.

Dirk Hansohm is a member of The Sudan Economy Research Group at the University of Bremen. Anyone wishing to contact him should write to him at: The Sudan Economy Research Group, FB 7, University of Bremen, PO Box 330440, D-2800 Bremen 33, West Germany.



THE FOREST NATIONAL CORPORATION

The Forests Department was created by legislation in 1901. The Department, then known as the Woods and Forests Department, started with responsibilities for protection of the natural forests and creation of forest reserves. The Forests Department, now called the Central Forests Administration, now forms part of the Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources. Its Headquarters is located in Khartoum and consists of Afforestation, Inventory and Management, Utilization, Gum Arabic, Planning and Monitoring, and Administration and Finance sections. It is responsible for the management of the national forestry resources. In northern Sudan, the regional forestry departments, which until August 1985 were part of the regional ministries of agriculture, have been recentralized and are under control of the Central Forests Administration. In southern Sudan, the Forests Department, which used to be one autonomous unit within the Ministry of Agriculture of the self-government of the Southern Sudan, became three regional forests departments according to the 1983 Southern Sudan Regional Government Act.

For a number of reasons, the Forests Department was not able to continue the programmes it originally envisaged. Forest reservation, which was to cover 15% of the total area of the country (89.5 million feddans) stopped at only 0.5% (3 million feddans). Afforestation programmes were reduced from an annual target of 80,000 feddans to slightly over 25,000 feddans. Production of sawn timber fell from an annual average of 25,000 cubic metres until 1970, to only 10,000 cubic metres during the 1980s. Moreover, the Forests Department was unable to continue effective protection of the natural forests from fires, illicit felling and clearance for unauthorized mechanised farming.

For these reasons, the Forests Administration has been restructured into a Forest National Corporation with the assistance of the World Bank and bilateral Co-financiers. In 1985, the regional forest administrations, then recentralized, came under control of the Central Forests

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Administration. The Forest Laws of 1932 (the Central Forests Ordinance and Provincial Forest Ordinance) were revised and amalgamated into one Forest Bill, which was passed in 1989. The 1932 Forest Policy had previously been replaced in 1986 by a new and more effective National Forest Policy. Moreover the Forest National Corporation Bill was passed in 1989 and a service-oriented Corporation to replace the Forests Administration has been established. According to its empowering act, this Corporation will provide for the wood and the environmental protection needs of the people of Sudan. The World Bank and bilateral co-financiers are furnishing some 58 million US dollars over 7.5 years to strengthen key functions of the Forest National Corporation, such as planning, management, marketing, financial systems and career development. A large extension programme accounts for a quarter of the base line costs, and further funding for inventory and research (which will continue to be under the Agricultural Research Corporation). The University and Polytechnic in Khartoum are assisted to improve their turn-out of graduates and technicians.

Dr H O Abdel Nour is general manager of the Forest National Corporation.



THE POWELL-COTTON COLLECTION

Tony Trilsbach, the SSSUK Secretary, tells of a little-known collection of Sudanese artefacts in Kent.

The Powell-Cotton Museum holds the private collection of Major Powell-Cotton, who was a big game hunter who later devoted his life to the study and collection of Indian and African fauna and ethnography. In all, 28 collecting expeditions were mounted between 1887 and 1939 and the material gathered now forms one of the largest private displays of its kind in the UK. Although the geographical focus of the collection is wide-ranging, the Sudan contributes to a number of displays.

Before reaching any of the galleries, the visitor is confronted by a huge diorama of the African Savanna with most of the principal African game animals stuffed and arranged in “realistic” juxtaposition. Many of the animals shown were shot in Sudan and the overall effect is to create an impressive African atmosphere before moving on to see the main collection.

Gallery 2 contains material (mainly weapons) acquired through a skirmish with the Didinga tribe (Case 3), and various domestic artefacts collected from the Hadendowa and Beni Amer tribes of the Red Sea Hills.

Gallery 3 contains some of the best Sudan exhibits; three dioramas of tribal life in

southern Sudan made by a former museum curator. One shows a Dinka family party, focussing on a baby’s cradle and tribal jewellery. The second has a Zande theme showing the production of a piece of pottery in a “human” image. The final model highlights the strength of the Latuka warriors and the role of various weapons. There is also a fan of Sudanese spears.

Gallery 5 contains many more domestic and personal items collected from various parts of southern Sudan, lying within or around the Nile valley and the surrounding marshes. These items were collected during an expedition mounted in 1933 and include items such as a Shilluk pipe-bowl and various types of jewellery.

In addition to the Sudanese items, the collection covers similarly impressive displays which, quite literally, represent the whole continent of Africa. There are also large collections of masks, jewellery and pottery from much of the Indian sub-continent and Japan. There is also a display of Stone Age cultures in the Pacific islands. The museum’s displays are not static, and much material exists in the museum archive.

I can strongly recommend a visit to see this very impressive collection. The museum and the adjacent “Quex House” and Gardens are open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays between April and September, whilst the museum only is open on Sundays throughout the year. It is located at Birchington, close to Margate and the telephone number of the curator is 0843-42168.



CURRENT AFFAIRS IN SUDAN

Charles Gurdon continues his series on contemporary political and economic issues in the Sudan. The column is based on reports prepared for the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), but the author stresses that this column presents a personal viewpoint and does not necessarily reflect the views of EIU, SSSUK or anyone else.

THE POLITICAL SCENE:

It is now almost a year since the 30 June 1989 coup which brought the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), led by General Omar al-Bashir, to power. Recently the National Islamic Front (NIF) leader, Dr Hassan al Turabi, who is both the deposed Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi's brother-in-law and the principal architect of the "September Laws" which introduced Islamic Sharia law in September 1983, finally admitted what had been obvious - that the NIF was behind the coup and is now dictating government policy. After initial confusion, the regime's political, but not its economic, policies have become frighteningly clear. Its three central elements are described.

ISLAMISATION:

The most contentious is the determined effort to turn Sudan into an Islamic republic as soon as possible. This is being done in a number of ways including the enforced introduction of Islamic codes and the destruction of much of Sudan's traditionally liberal and tolerant secularism. Some of the changes, such as closing public places during prayer times, segregating the sexes on public transport, and painting shop fronts green, are not significant in themselves. However, the return of Islamic "Hadud" punishments, the official and widespread discrimination against women and non-Muslims, the physical attacks against Christians and animists, and other signs are far more disturbing.



Although it appears to have been postponed because it was impractical, the RCC was planning to introduce a federal system of government. Each of the regions would then hold a referendum to decide whether Islamic *sharia* law would be implemented. The combination of the organisational skills of the well financed NIF could result in narrow majorities for the implementation of *sharia* law in most of the northern provinces.

Whether or not this would be the case in the capital is more debatable because of the large number of non-Muslims and non-practising Muslims. The Junta's insistence that non-Muslims would be free to leave a region if they disliked its Islamic *sharia* laws would be no comfort for the 1.8 million displaced people in the Khartoum region. Unless proper safeguards are introduced to protect minorities, the RCC's policies for a federal structure would be gross discrimination against the non-Muslim population.

THE CIVIL WAR AND OPPOSITION:

A second strand of the RCC's policy is to use military force rather than negotiation to end the civil war. It was the army which resumed the civil war in October 1989 after an unofficial ceasefire had lasted more than six months. While this might have been intended to obtain a stronger military position from which to negotiate with the SPLA, the RCC and its Islamic fundamentalist supporters view the conflict as a "*Jihad*" or holy war. They hoped that the combination, of religious zeal and military aid from other Arab states would ensure victory against the "Marxist infidel" rebels. The RCC's recent legitimisation of Arab militias, through the new Popular Defence Act, and the virtually explicit encouragement to kill both southerners and non-Muslims is only the most odious sign of this "*Jihad*".

The attempt to end the war by military means has proved a total failure. The SPLA's push into Western Equatoria has led to a string of minor victories over an increasingly demoralised



army. The SPLA is now stronger than at any time since the war began in 1983. Although with considerable army effort it may prove impossible, the SPLA is now poised to capture the regional capital of Juba and thereby threaten the Junta's hold on the whole of southern Sudan. If the military situation deteriorates any further, as it probably will during the forthcoming rainy season, it may be forced to come to the negotiating table with a genuine desire and need for peace. It may decide incorrectly, however, that it can strengthen its hand by still more futile conflict.

The Junta's current suppression of any dissent is more repressive than anything experienced in Sudan's recent history. As an example, in April there was an alleged coup after which 28 officers were executed, despite the fact that half of them were already in prison and could not have taken part in the alleged coup. It has become increasingly obvious that the RCC is not scared to use repression to maintain power and is using it as a deliberate policy to "put the fear of God" into the population.

Besides an increasing number of executions, which followed trials with little or no semblance of justice, the Junta has also condoned, if not actively encouraged, some torture. Ministers' insistence that the traditional Sudanese toleration makes torture impossible unfortunately holds little water today. Although many of the more famous former politicians have been released into house arrest, there are still well over 100 political detainees who are being held without charge.

Despite the magnitude of Sudan's political and economic crisis and the disastrous policies being pursued, it is likely to remain in power during the next six months. However, pressure is mounting and there are still two possible factors which could lead to the overthrow of the RCC before the end of 1990.



The army is losing the civil war and morale is very low. If there was a major military setback, such as the fall of Juba or one of the other provincial capitals, there could be a military revolt or a successful coup. The army is a microcosm of Sudanese society and there are few extended families in northern Sudan who do not have a relative serving in the south. As the army casualties have mounted, the war has affected increasing numbers of northern families for whom the war had previously been a remote event. Except amongst the Islamic fundamentalists there is growing opposition to the war both within and outside the army.

The second threat to the Junta is the possibility of demonstrations and riots which could result in the overthrow of the current regime. Precedents for this were the popular uprisings in October 1964 and April 1985, which led to a change of government (The peaceful use of “peoples’ power” didn’t begin in the Philippines, East Germany or anywhere else, but in Sudan). It could happen again - with demonstrations sparked either by a military defeat, food price rises or the growing repression - unless the Junta was prepared, like China and Romania, to use brutal force to end it (although Sudanese soldiers will rarely fire on northern civilians). Hence the RCC will either have to alter its more controversial policies or tread very carefully if it is to stay in power beyond the end of 1990.

THE ECONOMY:

One of the casualties of the Junta’s brief term in office has been the Sudanese economy which has been totally overshadowed by political events. This situation is likely to continue as it grapples with maintaining control in the north and the civil war in the south. The economy is currently on auto-pilot and is just about ticking over but is still dangerously weak. The Junta’s refusal to knuckle under and implement the IMF’s package of austerity measures means that there can be no resolution or major improvement in the debt situation. This is



reflected by the fact that Sudanese government debt is now being traded at only two cents to the dollar in the inter-bank secondary debt market which is lower than any other country in the world. At the same time financial aid is drying up as Sudan's traditional allies and benefactors express their opposition to the Junta's divisive and disastrous policies.

Unfortunately, the prospects for Sudan's economy are very bleak. The latest forecasts suggest that both cotton and sorghum production will fall in 1990 and, given that they accounted for only 47% of the total in 1988, this trend augurs ill for this year's trade performance. In addition the prevailing instability in central and western Sudan will probably hinder the harvesting of both gum Arabic and sesame, the two other major export products.

Although the stocks being held by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan should ensure that it is not necessary to import sorghum this year, the level of wheat and wheat flour imports will probably increase. At the same time, however, the shortage of foreign currency, the reluctance of Sudan's traditional allies to provide cheap crude oil, and the generally depressed state of the economy, will probably reduce the level of imports in dollar terms although, because of the continual devaluation of the Sudanese pound, the cost of imports would rise in local currency terms.

The resultant visible trade deficit is likely to increase in 1990 while the combination of higher defence spending, a reduction in private inward remittances and lower foreign aid disbursements will contribute to an even higher account deficit. The deteriorating external payments situation will be compounded by high interest payments on external debt, estimated by the World Bank at US\$225 million in 1990 as compared with only US\$55 million and US\$119 million in 1987 and 1988 respectively.

All in all, the current prospects for Sudan are probably bleaker than at any time for decades. As friends of this wonderful country and its people, who deserve a much better government

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than they have ever had, we must do all we can to help end its senseless civil war and restore its secular, liberal, heterogeneous and tolerant society.

Charles Gurdon prepares quarterly political and economic reports on Sudan for the Economist Intelligence Unit.



THE JONGLEI CANAL AND THE WATER OF THE NILE

Tony Trilsbach reviews two new books concerning the River Nile: "The Jonglei Canal" and, by kind permission of African Affairs, "The Waters of the Nile".

The Jonglei Canal - Impact and Opportunity, edited by Paul Howell, Michael Lock and Stephen Cobb, Cambridge Studies in Applied Ecology and Resource Management (Cambridge University Press), 537pp. £39.50 or \$75.

This broad and detailed analysis of the Jonglei Project is the modern equivalent of the series of documents published on its predecessor, the Equatorial Nile Project, nearly half a century ago. Fourteen people have contributed to its 537 pages, which are divided into themes on: Controlling the Nile; The Natural Environment of the *Sudd*; The People of the Jonglei Area; Agriculture and the Exploitation of Natural Resources; The Local Effects of the Canal; and Rural Development and the Future.

When construction began on the canal in the second half of the 1970s, there was still little scientific study of its likely effects on the ecology and peoples of the affected areas. There was limited detailed scientific research, and there had been no real attempt to synthesise and balance all the various components (economic, social, ecological and scientific) of the scheme. The principal objective of this book is to try and redress that weakness and bring together the best available information. The authors do their best to ignore the current collapse of scheme, and to set aside any political judgements. An underlying assumption is that one day the canal will be built.

Although it is impossible to divulge any of the wealth of detail provided, in this review, it is worth high-lighting some of the conclusions: the fact that political

dissent and war will cause more long-term ecological damage than the worst possible scenario of the canal's impact; much social and economic change had already begun as a result of earlier civil war and floods, including a contraction of kinship ties; control of the impact of the Jonglei Canal on the communities was left to one statutory body (The Jonglei Executive Organ) which had many divergent opinions to the other statutory body (The Permanent Joint Technical Commission), which was more concerned with the wider hydrological effects; there are dangers in seeing the Canal as an end in itself, without consideration for wider "basin management"; the existing trench has already proved hazardous for both domestic and wild animals and has shown a need for re-evaluation of the impact on animal routes, but there is some hope that one bank could be used for an improved road; the people most affected by the canal have had little effective representation and better southern representation in the decision-making process could be a possible step towards reconciliation and a resumption of construction.

All in all this is an excellent book. Like all multi-authored books, the jell is sometimes not at its best, but this is, nevertheless, an honest attempt to meet a clear and direct objective. If anything the book is not political enough and assumes that one day peace and stability will reign. Unfortunately, I find these circumstances beyond my horizon at present and would like to have seen a greater range of development scenarios under a variety of imperfect political circumstances.



However, I do strongly recommend that anyone interested in this broad subject should try and read the book and I believe that with hindsight it will be seen as a “classic” and will stand comfortably on library shelves alongside works by authors such as H. E. Hurst.

The Waters of the Nile: Hydropolitics and the Jonglei canal 1900-1988, by R. O. Collins. Clarendon Press (Oxford), 441pp. £45.

This book charts the hydropolitics of the Nile Valley from 1900 to the present day, although there is one chapter on European Imperialism in the Nile valley which extends back into the last century.

At face value, this book seems to lack any real original theme and could be said to be a more modern version of John Waterbury’s *Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley*, published in 1979. However, this is an unfair criticism because, despite the fact that there is a considerable overlap in the material content, there are two main differences. Firstly, Collins does not attempt to give a systematic balanced review of the whole Nile system, but instead focuses on the debate for major hydrological controls in the South in the context of developments elsewhere along the river.

Secondly, there is a wealth of detailed information on issues which, taken by themselves seem to have little real importance, but collectively give the

reader the feeling that he or she is attending the Jonglei debates from a position in the public gallery. One can almost feel like a participant and the style of presentation enables a deep understanding of, not only the facts, but the more subtle nuances of decision-making and the role of personalities in their own right.

As an historical account which manages to maintain a sense of suspense and which is able to tell a story in a lucid and flowing way the book succeeds, but in Chapter 10 falls down on some of the broader scientific details of the Canal’s possible impact. Here it seems to gloss over some of the less immediate and less obvious impacts, but in a strange way this is a strength, as it presents an ideal complement to *The Jonglei Canal: Impact and Opportunity*, and read alongside this book one has the ideal blend of style and drama from Collins, and the scientific detail in the book edited by Howell, Lock and Cobb. It is interesting to note that Collins’ Chapter 10 is also called “Impact and Opportunity”!

Overall, this is another excellent book on the theme of the Jonglei Canal and is required reading for both hydrologists and people interested in the southern affairs. It is just a little unfortunate that both the above books have been published when the Jonglei Canal Project seems to be totally dead and buried and is at best a phoenix waiting to rise from some very cold ashes.



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CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUDAN STUDIES

The Editor is always willing to receive articles for publication in *Sudan Studies*. The principal criterion for inclusion is relevance to the Sudan. Contributions can be based on formal research, experience, reviews or anecdotes. Each issue should present a balance of articles covering the range stated. Ideally, there should be a broad subject coverage between the sciences and the arts, although this balance varies between issues according to the nature of the contributions received. Anyone who has ever been to the Sudan should be in a position to contribute something. Some items are as short as 50 words, whilst others can be a few thousand (printed in parts). An ideal length is something that can be printed in 2-3 pages of the newsletter. If you are able/willing to contribute, please write to the Editor at the following address:

Dr A Trilsbach, 10 Thornlea, Godinton Park, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3JX, UK.



NEWS ITEMS

SUDAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION:

The 9th Annual Conference of the Sudan Studies Association was held in Lexington (Kentucky) between the 19th and 21st April. A number of papers were presented within panels on: Socio-Economic Aspects of Sudanese Development; North-South Literary Themes and Structures; Trends in Islamisation; Themes in Sudanese History; The Politics of Women, Development and Islam; Recent Social Science Research; Nubian Cultural History; The Future of Democracy in the Sudan; and Democracy and Human Rights in the Sudan.

Dr Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban is President-elect of the SSA.

SOUTHERN SUDAN SUPPORT GROUP:

A number of people concerned about the plight of Southern Sudanese has been formed to act as an information and lobby group. A meeting was held in Birmingham on Saturday 14th April, and others are invited to join the group. Anyone interested should write to Jo Gaunt, Kathy Gordon or Barry Sesnan, c/o 213 Birchfield Road, Birchfield, Birmingham, B20 3DG (021-356-4241).

TAIL-PIECE

A tail-piece contribution from the Editor.

A few years ago I was travelling with a Sudanese friend from Omdurman to El Obeid on one of the buses which frequent this route. The bus was not one of the more modern “de-luxe” ones, but was instead an old converted Bedford lorry travelling at about 20 miles an hour with the occasional puncture thrown in for good measure. Realising that we would not reach El Obeid in daytime, my Sudanese friend commented that he knew someone in Bara and that we could break the journey there for the night. I agreed, but then he added that he didn’t know exactly where he lived and seemed to be rather concerned about this. An hour or two later it was very dark and we still hadn’t reached Bara. Suddenly he exclaimed “There’s Bara!”, pointing to a faint glow on the horizon. A minute or two later I saw that the glow was coming from a single hut with no other habitation in sight. Somewhat innocuously I commented “If that’s Bara, you will easily find your friend.” Much to my surprise my Sudanese friend burst into laughter and claimed that that was the funniest joke he’d ever heard. At first I thought this was a send-up, but it was obviously true, for he told it to just about every Sudanese we met for the next fortnight.