

# 10.

## FOOD AND SECURITY IN THE GARRISON TOWNS

*[We have] very little control. We know all this food is going somewhere. Very little is going to the intended beneficiaries. WFP is turning a blind eye.*

*Relief official, Juba*

In the South, the Sudan Government has been less able to exercise unchallenged control over relief programmes. The NIF government inherited OLS and other international relief programmes in the South, including an ICRC airlift, the Lutheran World Federation/Sudan Emergency Operations Consortium (LWF/SEOC) airlift, primarily to Juba, and the Combined Agencies Relief Team (CART) within Juba. Also, of course, it did not control most of the Southern countryside. Given the international presence and the concession on sovereignty represented by OLS, the Sudan Government cannot exercise total control of relief operations in the name of state sovereignty in the garrison towns of the South. Instead, negotiation is more important. But it has still achieved most of its ends. This entails tight control of information and a gradual process of taking control of major relief operations. The ultimate end is, without doubt, the end of OLS—as the Sudan Government has often promised—and a return to the pre-1989 days whereby the Khartoum government exercised sovereign authority over all relief programmes on Sudanese territory.

## INFORMATION CONTROL FROM KHARTOUM

In theory, there is a basic ideological incompatibility between the government and the aid agencies: the concepts of the Comprehensive Call contrast sharply with the precepts of the humanitarian international. There should be a conflict. Nonetheless, the Sudan Government has proved itself adept at getting its way. The basis of this is controlling information and analysis. It does this by restricting access and debate, and by playing the sovereignty card.

The Southern Sector of OLS has developed elaborate rules on neutrality and adherence to humanitarian principles, which it has tried to apply to operations mounted out of Kenya (see chapter 12). These rules are virtually unknown in the Northern Sector.<sup>1</sup> In place of a process of negotiation, based on a set of principles, the Sudan Government simply regulates, and out of respect for sovereignty and a general aversion to any form of confrontation, the UN in Khartoum has almost always complied.

What passes for 'needs assessment' in the Northern Sector is merely recycling elementary and unchecked figures for numbers of people 'in need' obtained from local government officers. The official *OLS Review* was severely critical of the low quality of such assessments, which it argued were too often 'purely on the basis of speculation'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Review Team regarded numbers for 'beneficiaries' in official reports as 'unreliable, even fictitious', noting that the figures were produced in response to donor demands for them.<sup>3</sup> (Many of the 'recipient' figures are in fact higher than the 'in need' figures!)

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Terms of Reference for an Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) Review,' 18 August 1995, cited in Ataul Karim, Mark Duffield *et al.* *OLS: Operation Lifeline: A Review*, University of Birmingham, July 1996, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *OLS Review*, pp. 117-25, 132-3, 233, quote from p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *OLS Review*, p. 230.

The issue of information control will recur in the three case studies presented, in summary form, below.

## **HUMANITARIANISM UNDER SIEGE IN JUBA**

As the largest town in the South and the regional capital, Juba has immense political significance: its capture would be symbolic of SPLA victory, and might create a political momentum leading to Southern secession, the fall of the government in Khartoum, or both. Hence, maintaining control of Juba, and by implication securing its food supply, is an imperative for the government.

Food aid has kept Juba alive for over eight years. In mid-1988, the SPLA noose around the city tightened. The last overland relief convoy arrived in September: one convoy on the road from Yei was attacked by the SPLA and eleven Kenyan drivers were killed. Since then, the city has been an enclave, fed by what can be produced within the secure perimeter and what can be flown in by the government and (mostly) international agencies. Between November 1988 and 1995, LWF/SEOC under the command of Bob Koepf mounted one of the world's largest and longest relief airlifts, providing over 60,000 tonnes of food to the city with scarcely a break. It was a tremendous logistical achievement, against formidable difficulties. But some profound questions need to be asked about the impact of the food provided.

Since 1988, aid agency reports on the situation in Juba have been remarkably uniform. They have presented a picture of a large (and often expanding) displaced and 'in need' population, low food stocks, and a food delivery operation struggling to catch up, hobbled by late and inadequate donor funding.<sup>4</sup> Though there is no doubt that major human needs have existed, these reports have rarely been backed by well-substantiated evidence. Doubts have been cast on the 'in need' population

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Duffield, Helen Young, John Ryle and Ian Henderson, *Sudan Emergency Operations Consortium (SEOC): A Review*, University of Birmingham, February 1995, p. 152.

figures, which have probably been subject to the common agency tendency to exaggerate.<sup>5</sup> The total population of Juba and its environs has been claimed at about 250,000-300,000 over the last ten years, with up to two-thirds of this number displaced. Sometimes, CART agencies have disagreed among themselves, and in 1986 the EC publicly cast doubt on the existence of widespread hunger.<sup>6</sup> At one point, shortly after a donor-WFP estimate put the numbers of displaced at 150,000, CART made a distribution based on a figure of 250,000—much to the donors' annoyance. 'But we also have to be humane,' remarked one of the CART members involved.<sup>7</sup>

There has been uneven monitoring of food stocks and little analysis of the food economy of the city, a notable omission especially for the period since 1993 when the secure perimeter has expanded and local food production has increased. Most significantly, relief reporting from Juba appears to have paid little heed to the rapidly changing military and political situation, which is essential for understanding and predicting relief needs.

### **An End to Neutrality**

The LWF/SEOC airlift, and its less regular companion, the WFP/OLS airlift, have been essentially logistical supply operations. They deliver food and hand it over for distribution. The main distributor has been CART.

As discussed in chapter 5, CART was the first and most sustained attempt to achieve neutrality and accountability in the provision of relief in the Sudanese civil war. At its inception in 1986, it offered a positive model for relief operations. Although formally envisaged as a logistical

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<sup>5</sup> *SEOC Review*, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Graham and John Borton, 'A Preliminary Review of the Combined Agencies Relief Team (CART), Juba 1986-91,' London, Overseas Development Institute, March 1992, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

co-ordination body, its ambitions ranged wider: CART would be collaborative, deliver food on the basis of need, account for it, wholly independently of the military, and might even be able to reach an accommodation with the SPLA. CART and its members also became public advocates for the victims of the disaster in Equatoria.

It did not prevail. Before it was a year old, CART became a battleground in which the government and military contested for control of aid resources with relief agencies and their donors. Over the years, the government won. The first decisive victory was scored in late 1986, when the donors acceded to the government's definition of the programme, and failed to prevent (or even protest against) the expulsion of the UN Resident Representative. Two expatriate aid workers in Juba were also expelled. Thereafter, the links between the local (implementing) agencies and the international NGOs were systematically put under pressure. CART's major donor, the EC, provided funds only on a month-by-month basis, which made planning extremely difficult (operations continued because Oxfam guaranteed the cash flow). As the SPLA advanced, displaced people poured into Juba and rural areas reachable by CART contracted. The hopes for promoting self-reliant development collapsed into mere emergency feeding programmes, and the prospects for cross-line supplies to SPLA-held areas vanished. In January 1988, the army commandeered ten trucks—the nine that remained intact were returned only after considerable donor pressure. From March, CART's own vehicles moved out of Juba under military escort. In Terakeka, supplies were consigned to the only 'trusted' senior figure in the town—who also happened to be the garrison commander.<sup>8</sup> 'Neutrality' was beginning to wear thin.

Hence by the time of the most serious famine in Juba, between August and October 1988, CART had already become seriously emasculated. The LWF airlift (taken over by SEOC in 1991) did not help it to reassert its neutrality. It appears that LWF proposed the airlift partly as a means of re-entering Sudan (it had been expelled the year before), so

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<sup>8</sup> *CART Review*, p. 28.

it was not in a strong position to strike a favourable deal. LWF/SEOC had no staff inside Juba. Its first ground visit was in 1991, the second and last in 1993.<sup>9</sup>

In February 1989, the Governor proposed that CART be taken over by the government. He backed down after representations from local leaders and donors. In October that year, CART had its most serious confrontation with the government, following its support for a UN-proposed plan to assist displaced people in Juba to return home (implicitly to SPLA-controlled areas), together with a reduction in supplies to Juba. The military governor accused CART of 'gross interference in state policy'<sup>10</sup> and demanded that the RRC chair the consortium. CART's links with western donors again proved their worth, and the government backed down. It was the last major confrontation that the government lost.

The SPLA again tightened its siege of Juba in January 1990, culminating in an attack on the city and indiscriminate shelling that killed at least nine people. This was the second major humanitarian crisis in Juba. Thousands more displaced people crowded in. It followed a suspension of WFP flights the previous November (LWF flights stopped for only eighteen days, and WFP flights resumed with OLS II in March). In early 1991, security tightened its grip on CART, confiscating NGO radios and insisting that a security representative sit in on committee meetings.<sup>11</sup> Later in the year, CART briefly allowed its food to travel on military trucks.

The SPLA's June and July 1992 attacks on Juba again worsened the situation in the city. A mutiny by Southern army units in the garrison was timed to coincide with a major SPLA assault. The SPLA briefly overran the military headquarters, but its assault troops were then obliged to withdraw. In retaliation, government forces destroyed a large part of the town and killed large numbers of residents and displaced people.

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<sup>9</sup> *SEOC Review*, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> *CART Review*, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> *CART Review*, p. 21.

Hundreds were arrested and scores executed, among them two Sudanese employees of the EC and one of USAID. It used an aeroplane with UN insignia (that had earlier been flying WFP food) to transport arms to the city. But the sting of international protest was drawn when, a few weeks later, the SPLA murdered four expatriates (three aid workers and a journalist). The outrage and energies of most international agencies were directed into trying to decide how to respond to the SPLA killings, and the opportunity for a reappraisal of feeding Juba was lost.

The Sudan Government exploited its opportunity. The regional government finally succeeded in imposing the RRC Chairman as CART chairman, formally ending the neutrality of the consortium. One Sudanese aid official said, 'The original idea of CART is being violated by the Government.' He explained how this worked in practice:

They [the RRC] said, whenever food is sent from Nairobi, information should come to the RRC first, two weeks ahead. Otherwise they have no right [i.e. obligation] to release it. They also need to know about the programme, why the food is needed. [They said] there is a need to follow RRC guidelines.<sup>12</sup>

In short, unless there was a specific request to do otherwise and formal advance warning, the RRC took automatic control over any relief delivered to Juba.

### **An End to Accountability**

The first major questions about the accountability of CART were raised in 1989 when a stockcheck found 700 tons of food missing.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, LWF/SEOC never raised any serious questions about accountability, and—until the commissioning of an independent review in 1994—neither did its donors. The Northern Sector of OLS, under

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<sup>12</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *SEOC Review*, p. 154. This may have been due to control errors and underweight bags, see: *CART Review*, p. 19.

UNDP, was also loath to ask hard questions or push for a deeper analysis.

Mounting pressure from the government and security (especially in the wake of the 1992 battles and killings), the expanding role of the Comprehensive Call agencies, and influence from the commercial-military cartel that profited from speculation in the food market, all eroded the accountability of CART. The consortium structure now became a point where the government could exert pressure: CART could not say no when the RRC, under government or military direction, demanded access to the CART stores for unauthorised withdrawals. There were no serious countervailing pressures. One Juba resident complained:

There was military pressure. The stores were controlled by CART. The government through the RRC used this loophole. A poor civilian like Dr William [Mogga, former CART secretary] would not have the power to say no. . . . The NGOs should have said to WFP to control the store. That would have been good; WFP can say no to the government.<sup>14</sup>

Questioned on some food that disappeared, one Sudanese relief official illustrated how the 'loophole' worked:

We don't know how it was used. If it was taken to the CART stores there would be a record. But they [Security] can release it. They use other NGOs to hide the facts. Most Islamic NGOs will do that for them. [These releases don't need the authorisation of the CART Steering Committee because] the Islamic agencies come with tissues proposals. They say there are people there when really there are not. When you want to send something [i.e. relief] with a third party, Security will not allow it. The Steering Committee is intimidated. Before the meetings, usually the Security and the RRC Chairman and the WFP man meet

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<sup>14</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996. WFP was in fact given control of the CART store.

first. We are powerless. No matter how we go upwards, we can do nothing.

They [the Government] do everything under the cover of CART. Decisions are made by the Chairman of CART, who is the Chairman of the RRC. Whatever decision he is taking is with the backing of Sudan Public Security for NGOs, who fully protect this man and protect all Islamic NGOs. The Chairman dismissed the Acting Administrative Manager, Guido Lolik [in November 1995]. He did it alone.<sup>15</sup>

Hence, the food supply and distribution operation in Juba, of which CART was the largest element, was essentially in government hands and was serving government strategy, but had an independent international facade.

International aid agency staff also began to complain, for example saying, 'There is no control of CART. Nobody can control it. . . . They cannot prove that all the food has been distributed.'<sup>16</sup> In particular, WFP (which stations a food monitor in Juba), was increasingly unhappy; it found that individual agencies were more accountable than CART itself.

In 1994, the CART accounts were audited for the first time, and the accountants declined to certify. Some relief workers alleged that this was a conspiracy, that the accounting firm was Islamist and influenced by the government. True or not, the CART management had exposed itself to profound and genuine criticism, and had to take the consequences, including a far-reaching management review.<sup>17</sup> The government took the opportunity to promote the role of the RRC and selected Islamic agencies.

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<sup>15</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Hassabo and Company, 'Combined Agencies Relief Team (CART), Juba: Administrative and Management Review,' July 1995.

## Food and Control

After 1992, Islamic NGOs came to play a prominent role in the city. IARA had been admitted to CART in 1987, and in 1993 three more joined: Da'awa al Islamiya, IIRO and Muwafaq al Khairiya. Other NGOs such as al Birr International and Nidaa al Jihad also began programmes. The Comprehensive Call began to be implemented, coinciding with successful military efforts to expand the 'secure zone' around the city in the wake of the SPLA attacks. As elsewhere, the Islamic agencies are dedicated to ideas of self-reliance and agricultural development. The UNDP Area Rehabilitation Scheme in Juba feeds into this model, by giving material support to projects developed under the auspices of the Comprehensive Call. WFP food policy has also concurred. General food rations to displaced people have been withdrawn, to be replaced by food-for-work programmes, school feeding projects, and programmes for 'self-reliance' in peace camps—with only small free allocations of food to disabled people and malnourished children.

International relief agencies in Juba have been trapped by their own rhetoric into giving support to the NIF strategy in the enclave. Following the battles of 1992, foreign NGOs including Oxfam and ACORD began to put emphasis on food security through local production. In 1994, a report indicated that about forty per cent of the food grains and over sixty per cent of the vegetables grown within Juba and the peace camps were produced with the assistance (ploughing services, seeds, irrigation, credit and extension) of one NGO—the ACORD Juba Multisectoral Programme.<sup>18</sup> The government was a keen supporter of this programme, and readily provided land for seed multiplication and facilitated the import and transport of necessary inputs. On one occasion, the government exceptionally offered the NGO the use of a radio (it declined the privilege).

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<sup>18</sup> El Hadi Abdalla, 'Juba Visit Report,' August 1994.

This degree of government co-operation with a foreign NGO is highly unusual. It reflects a high degree of confidence in the ACORD programme and staff. It also reflects the failure of favoured Islamic NGOs to deliver on their promises of food security. An agriculturalist who visited farms run by two Islamic NGOs in 1994 reported that they were far less successful than their public claims had indicated:

These Islamic NGOs are really funny. Despite the fact that their staff are not agriculturalists, they have never been to Juba nor [do] they know about farming practices and requirements in [this] farming zone, and they refuse to consult us on these issues. Their only qualifications are that they are NIF supporters. They believe that they know everything, and now you see how they mess with everything, they are using the wrong varieties of seeds, wrong cultural practices. In Khartoum they are talking big about their achievements in food production, just to raise more funds. Even their photos on their last annual reports on the crops, I am dead sure they were taken from [another NGO's] farm.

The beneficiaries of the foreign NGOs' food security programmes have not necessarily been poor farmers. The productive land around Juba and its peace camps is highly prized, and much of it has been allocated to medium-scale farmers from inside the city, many of whom are Northerners and affiliated to the NIF. The food produced within the enclave is also distributed through government-controlled channels. This state of affairs has led NGO workers to question whether the programmes are benefiting the government more than the poor people of the area.

But there is no doubt that Islamic agencies remain the government's favoured intermediaries in the Juba enclave. Relief, military control and social transformation are intimately linked under the principle of *tamkiin*: awarding dominance to the NIF-affiliated Moslem minority. *Tamkiin* in practice is illustrated by the Abdel Rahman ibn Awf al Waqfiya al Khairiya (Charitable Endowment Foundation). This runs *mahmiyat* or 'protectorates' around Juba. The Foundation was officially inaugurated in

October 1993, with the main objective of supporting *Jihad* and providing funding for Nidaa al Jihad.<sup>19</sup> According to its executive director, Ibrahim Mohammed Ahmad Hasan:

Ibn Awf al Khairiya has sought to establish investment bodies in the form of protected settlements, and the development of the friction regions in the northern, western, eastern and southern borders. This is a direct call for the sons of Southern and Northern states to migrate to the South for ethnic cross-breeding of the *Umma* and through intermarriage and blood relations.<sup>20</sup>

'Investment bodies' refers to agricultural or other 'developmental' projects that can attract private finance. Sudanese newspaper reports indicate that the Foundation has taken over some loss-making formerly state-run enterprises.

'Protected settlements' has the ring of counter-insurgency. Some Islamic agencies are known to co-operate closely with the military in Juba. They have privileges such as two-way radios and ready availability of travel permits.

But the most remarkable aspect of the Ibn Awf al Khairiya policy is the reference to systematic inter-marriage between Moslem men and non-Moslem Southern women. This is confirmed by other statements by the agency.<sup>21</sup> As the children of Moslem men are required to be Moslem, and the 'protectorates' are run by Islamic agencies, this would have the implication of bringing a new Islamised generation of Southerners into being. The existence of marriage schemes is not in doubt. Reports indicate that eligible men are given financial incentives to participate. Lubaba al Fadl, a leading NIF women functionary and Secretary-General of the World Association of Moslem Women, reportedly stated in a women's conference in Khartoum in 1992, that she endorsed marriage schemes in Southern Sudan as a means of solving the political and social

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<sup>19</sup> *Al Inqaz al Watani*, 5 October 1993, p. 6

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Advertisement in *Al Sudan al Hadith*, 19 December 1992, p. 11.

problems of the region and that she would allow her 'husband to marry even two from the region'. However, other details of marriage schemes (for example the voluntary nature of the unions and the extent of government involvement) remain obscure.

## **FOOD SUPPLIES, PROFITS AND PEACE CAMPS IN WAU**

Relief manipulation has been more blatant in Wau than in Juba. Three reasons are particularly important.

One is that there was no CART-type structure in Wau (the first attempts to start one in 1986 were aborted by the SPLA shooting down of an airliner at Malakal and the government's hard-line reaction). Wau was left without any substantial relief during the height of the Bahr el Ghazal famine. Both sides blocked access, and overland food convoys were looted. Only in December 1988 did the ICRC begin a small feeding programme in the town, and the following year other agencies began to return.

Second, Wau is divided between a mainly Dinka part and a Fertit-dominated part, with a precarious balance between the two groups in allocation of supplies and jobs. In 1987, the army, under the control of General Abu Gurun, and supported by Fertit militia, waged war on the inhabitants of the Dinka part of town, alleging that they were supporters of the SPLA. A series of massacres culminated on 11-12 August with the killing of several hundred Dinkas, and perhaps more than one thousand on 6 September.<sup>22</sup> The atrocities abated at the end of the year, with the transfer of General Abu Gurun, but tensions have remained high. One factor that contributed to the fighting was the influx of Dinka displaced people, fleeing *Murahaliin* raids, who were portrayed as a security threat. The large and constantly-growing displaced population has been a challenge to the authorities in Wau ever since.

Three, the food supply cartel has been virtually unchallenged. During the period of mass killing, the army maintained artificially high

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<sup>22</sup> 'Sudan's Secret Slaughter,' anonymous report, 1988.

prices in the Dinka part of town, ensuring that the inhabitants were impoverished while merchant-officer partnerships made handsome profits. While the internal fighting has stopped, exploitation has continued.

### **The Crisis in Wau**

The crisis in Wau is a political one. There are over 100,000 people in and around Wau town, perhaps three quarters of them displaced. The displaced have fled raiding and fighting in rural Bahr el Ghazal. They are in a hopeless situation until the war ends or an intermediate solution is found that enables them to return to their homes with a reasonable degree of safety. But international agencies have been loath to recognise this: instead they have always sought a ray of optimism, envisaging some prospects of rehabilitation within the environs of Wau. At the same time, they have approached the situation with an emergency mindset, with year-by-year proposals and programmes. The result has been a curious amalgam of a commitment to moving along the 'relief-to-development continuum' and a short-sighted incapacity to plan strategically. The government, which has (at least since 1992) had a strategic plan, has readily exploited the international agencies' gullibility.

Since 1989, the government has presented the protracted crisis in the town as a problem of 'development' and lack of 'self-reliance'. From the same date, UN plans for the displaced envisaged their return home. There were no immediate prospects for this, given the devastation in rural areas. By 1990, when *Murahaliin* raids had subsided and rural Bahr el Ghazal was beginning to recover, the prospects of return looked much brighter. The SPLA was also beginning to tighten its siege. In 1991, as conditions worsened in the town, while they improved in rural areas, people began to leave. The Government, which had tolerated discussion of return when it was not a realistic option, now began to look for alternatives. It was saved by the split in the SPLA, which provided the military opportunity for the army to retake the offensive. In the dry season of early 1992, the army and PDF relieved the military pressure on

Wau, opening supply roads to north and south, expanding the secure perimeter, and seizing large herds of cattle in raids.

At the same time, the government came up with a strategy that would, in the UN's phrase, put the 'displaced citizens back into the mainstream development process of the country.'<sup>23</sup> This was the creation of peace camps and agricultural schemes.

### **Government Strategy since 1992**

Following the SPLA split of 1991 and the dry season offensive of early 1992, the Sudan Government was optimistic that the SPLA could be militarily defeated. The attack on Juba shattered that confidence, but the Sudan army continued to make substantial gains. One of the aims of military action was mass displacement, to provide human fodder for the Comprehensive Call, which began to be implemented in 1992.

In late 1995, a new variant on government strategy emerged in response to new military threats in eastern Sudan. This was based upon securing key strategic areas of the South (the oilfields, the Ethiopian border and the three main towns), and hence confining the SPLA to an area south of nine degrees north. Proxy forces (the South Sudan Independence Army led by Riek Machar and Kerubino Kuanyin) and the *Murahaliin*-PDF were to be used to destabilise a swathe of Southern countryside, to prevent the SPLA gaining a significant military presence in these areas. Meanwhile, the government envisaged an 'oil spot' pattern of secured areas spreading out from the major towns, based upon peace camps, agricultural development schemes and major lines of communication (such as the railway).<sup>24</sup> International assistance has been used to support the 'developmental' aspects of the Comprehensive Call.

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<sup>23</sup> UNDP Project SUD/032/88, p. 8; Mark Bradbury, 'Wau Case Study: Notes for Official OLS Review,' 26 May 1996, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> The 'oil spot' strategy and metaphor was used by French military commanders during the occupation of Morocco in the early 20th century.

The policy of establishing peace camps began in Wau in March 1992. Displaced people in the town relocated to three newly-set up peace camps within the secure perimeter. The decision to do this was not taken in consultation with relief agencies or even the government-headed Local Relief Committee. By 1996, three additional 'peace villages' and three camps along the railway line had been set up.

Islamic NGOs have been given preferential access to work in the peace camps. They are also given privileges such as the use of radios and ready access to government officers. Local Christian NGOs were not permitted to work in the peace camps

### **Profiteering**

A merchant-officer cartel in Wau has exercised tight control over all food supplies to the town, and distributions. Unlike Juba, Wau is not an enclave: it can be fed by overland convoys from Kordofan and Darfur (by rail and road), and the Bagari Loop of Fertit villages to the west of the town also produces marketable surpluses. During the late 1980s famine, the army ensured that food was sold in Wau markets at a price equivalent to three times purchase price and transport costs. Such high prices would normally have attracted more traders, whose supplies would have brought the price down. By regulating the military escorts that made commercial access possible, the army maintained an artificial scarcity. An attempt to provide 8,800 tonnes of relief via Raga in 1987 foundered. Only 131 tonnes reached Wau; the remainder, stored in Raga army compound 'for security', was stolen with the active connivance of the soldiers.<sup>25</sup> The army dismantled an important bridge on the Raga-Wau road, making wet season deliveries impossible. Only 200 tonnes of relief food reached Wau in the first eleven months of 1988, when the ICRC was finally given permission to begin a relief airlift.

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Symonds, 'A Report on the Situation in Raga, Western Bahr el Ghazal Province, June-August 1987,' Khartoum, September 1987.

The army also controlled the food supplies from the Bagari Loop, at one point prompting a suggestion that aid agencies supply local people with bicycles so that they could reach Wau market independently of army-escorted lorries.

The ICRC operation was meagre compared to need, but still faced consistent obstruction from the authorities. This culminated on 2 September 1991, when a land mine placed on Wau airport runway blew up an ICRC plane, abruptly halting the airlift. The mine was planted in one of the most securely guarded parts of Wau, casting suspicion on the army as the culprit. Within days, the price of sorghum in Wau rose three-fold. The government also actively discouraged LWF/SEOC from initiating a relief airlift to Wau along the lines of its Juba airlift. In January 1992, the army withheld permission for a food convoy to travel to Wau, and it was widely speculated that this was related to the cartel's efforts to keep food prices high.

### **Humanitarian Compliance**

The military in Wau was the first beneficiary of the western donors' policy of compliance, adopted in late 1986. After the proposed 'mini-CART' for Wau was abandoned in August, the European Community began consigning food directly to the military authorities in Bahr el Ghazal. Since then, the government and army have handled relief with near-total impunity.

The donors, including OLS-Northern Sector, have failed to challenge the government's version of events. There has been a near-complete failure of independent assessment and monitoring, and very little analysis of the food economy or the reasons for the enduring crisis.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the UN has been willing to accept government's definition of the problem, requiring only (semi-)independent estimates of the numbers of people in need. The result has been that the UN is ready to negotiate programmes based on access (usually through implementing organisations designated

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<sup>26</sup> Bradbury, 1996.

by the government), rather than an independent assessment of the nature of the problem. Neutrality and accountability have not been undermined: they never entered the picture.

The first formal relief co-ordinating body in Wau was the Local Relief Committee (LRC), set up in 1991. It is chaired by the RRC, includes security, members of the state relief commission, UN, ICRC, church organisations and Sudanese NGOs. Like CART since 1992, it is a tool of the government. But no more than a year after the LRC's establishment, the government had the confidence to go further. The state commissioner for relief was made chairman of the LRC, giving direct executive control to the Governor's representative. Following the adoption of the Comprehensive Call and the establishment of peace camps, the government has often dealt directly with its favoured Islamic NGOs, including Da'awa al Islamiya, IARA, Muwafaq al Khairiya and IIRO. There are varied and contradictory reports on the effectiveness of these agencies. Muwafaq has at least three peace villages in the region.<sup>27</sup> The OLS Review team reports that official government meetings were held in the Muwafaq offices in Wau.<sup>28</sup> The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction has begun to work with the National Development Foundation to assist 'returnees' (i.e. people displaced to Wau from SPLA-held areas).

Rather than challenging the co-option of relief into counter-insurgency and the Comprehensive Call, the UN has actively co-operated, by setting up an Area Development Scheme. In March 1994, UNDP sent a mission to Wau to assess the prospects for such a project. The mission reported that 'it is possible to resume normal economic activities within the region close to Wau particularly in crop production.'<sup>29</sup> UNDP justified its resumption of 'development' activities by referring to continuities with its post-1972 rehabilitation activities, as though there were no war at all. The UNDP project proposal combines

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<sup>27</sup> Siraj el Din Abdel Bagi, interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

<sup>28</sup> *OLS Review*, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> Bradbury, 1996, p. 41.

conventional aims such as improving self-sufficiency in food production with reference to participation and bottom-up methods of implementation. The project began in April 1995. UNDP's partner in this enterprise is the state government, and its intervention is aimed at three peace villages and three 'indigenous' villages, totalling 20,000 people. While wholly consonant with the Comprehensive Call model of agricultural development, it appears oblivious to how the displaced actually survive (chiefly by providing the town with cheap goods services such as firewood and fodder).

It is clear that the UN accepted, wholly and uncritically, the government's definition of the problem and proposed solution. While supporting the government's counter-insurgency strategy, UNDP appears to believe that this form of development will contribute to peace.

## **UPPER NILE: AN OIL SPOT**

Upper Nile is the most strategic region of the South, because of the Jonglei Canal project, the river Nile, land suitable for mechanised farming, and above all the oilfields. The Sudan Government has invested more political, military and humanitarian resources in Upper Nile than elsewhere in the South. This approach culminated in the signing of the April 1996 Charter, in which Commander Riek Machar's South Sudan Independence Movement joined the government. Malakal is now the government's favoured base for a relocated OLS.

Until 1991, Malakal was the most cut-off major garrison in Sudan. Famine conditions were reported as early as 1984. It was supplied by Nile barges, extremely irregularly. Government-imposed delays of three months or more were common, and no relief at all was available in the town between March 1988 and February 1989. On arrival, the security services and local church agencies contested for control of relief supplies. On one occasion, food remained in store for nine months until the issue was resolved. At times, food prices in Malakal were the highest in Sudan. The situation was only mildly alleviated when more relief agencies arrived under the auspices of OLS. As late as 1995, the

government authorities were able to confiscate about 600 sacks of relief from a local NGO with impunity.

The major change in government policy in Malakal came in the wake of the August 1991 split in the SPLA, which reduced and finally removed rebel military pressure on the city. Around the town and in the northern parts of Upper Nile, the Comprehensive Call agencies became active.

The Da'awa-ist agencies' activities reflect the article of faith among NIF hard-liners that the SPLA is historically doomed. The idea that Southerners traditionally have 'no culture' is axiomatic to them; the destruction of war has only reinforced such views. An advisor to the NIF wrote:

[The South] is a wasteland . . . it has been a free-for-all—a place of starvation and disease. Young kids roam the bush with automatic weapons. Rail lines have been destroyed, bridges burned. Violence can explode anywhere between anybody.<sup>30</sup>

In the late 1980s, it was fashionable for NIF members to compare the SPLA with RENAMO,<sup>31</sup> with the implication that no negotiation was possible: without external support, the rebel army would collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions. Therefore, government strategy should be to introduce 'civilised' values, laden with material benefits, to bring the population round.

The Peace and Development Foundation (since renamed the National Development Foundation) was created with this philosophy in mind in

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<sup>30</sup> T. Abdou Maliqalim Simone, *In Whose Image? Political Islam and Urban Practices in Sudan*, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 117. In fairness, note that Simone also points out and criticises many Northerners' failure to understand Southerners' 'Africanity', p. 190.

<sup>31</sup> Abdel Wahab el Effendi, 'Discovering the South: Sudanese Dilemmas for Islam in Africa,' *African Affairs*, 89, 1990, pp. 371-89 at p. 386. This comparison has not been heard since RENAMO began talks with the Mozambique Government and contested elections in 1992.

early 1992, as the last sentence of the following quotation from its inaugural press conference makes clear:<sup>32</sup>

The Peace and Development Foundation has set up comprehensive development programmes to rehabilitate and reconstruct war-torn areas in Southern Sudan, starting with the areas where peace had already been established.

The Director General of the Peace and Development Foundation, Fadl Al Seed Abu Gisaisa, said in a press conference yesterday that development programmes will expand in the areas which enjoy peace in the South.

He said that they will depend on local materials in boosting agricultural and pastoral development, in addition to the rehabilitation of the citizens civilisationally and culturally.

The 'Peace from Within' strategy accompanies this: individual rebel leaders are enticed to join the government fold, weakening the SPLA and allowing the government to claim that peace is spreading more widely: another pacified 'oil spot'.

Muwafaq al Khairiya is prominent among the Islamic agencies in Upper Nile. In an interview, its Executive Director, Siraj el Din Abdel Bary, spoke about the agency's role.<sup>33</sup>

There is a lot of suffering caused by war. The war is affecting people negatively. . . . Our understanding is that everybody should try to play a role in recovering the situation.

Nowadays, peace and stability is dominating the South. Most parts are out of the war zone.

Faced with evidence that the SPLA controls significant areas in the South, Siraj el Din said: 'Well, there are some areas [outside government control]. But generally it is stable.' He went on to describe how Muwafaq works:

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<sup>32</sup> *Al Sudan al Hadith*, 9 March 1992, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

You may know about the government campaign of Peace from Within.

It is a project led by the government. It is to convince the rebels that it is better for them and their kind to live in peace. We thought that there would be a way to take part and rebuild the country. We as an organisation offer development, not relief; and this is especially in emergencies. We play a role in teaching people how to cultivate, not teaching them to be dependent.

Siraj el Din was underplaying his agency's role: Muwafaq is also involved in relief distributions in the region.

A major shock to the Da'awa-ist programme in the region came in October 1992, when a neo-traditional Nuer religious leader, Wutnyang Gatakek (who is widely referred to as a *Kujur* or 'witchdoctor') rallied a substantial army and launched a surprise attack on Malakal, which he briefly overran. This was a serious military crisis and embarrassment to the government. Members of the supposedly pro-government Anyanya II joined Wutnyang's assault, as a result of which Anyanya II was disbanded and the local militia policy was reviewed. The attack was also a blow for Muwafaq al Khairiya, two of whose workers were killed in the fighting.

Some of the implications of the attack are evident from subsequent official press coverage:<sup>34</sup>

The Governor of Upper Nile, Colonel Paul Reith Kwanj,<sup>35</sup> met yesterday morning at the headquarters of Muwafaq al Khairiya in Khartoum with its workers and managers, in the presence of the deputy leader of the Popular Committee for Salvation in the Upper Nile and the State ministers.

The Director General of Muwafaq, Dr Sulaf al Din Saleh, presented a report on the programmes and activities of the Foundation in the region. He stressed that the humanitarian services will continue in

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<sup>34</sup> 'The Governor of Upper Nile Praises the Efforts of Muwafaq al Khairiya,' *Al Quwat al Musallaha*, 10 January 1993, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> He was subsequently killed in a plane crash.

the region, despite the latest events which the Foundation has faced as a result of the treacherous *Kujur* attack and its killing of two of the Foundation's employees.

He announced that the Foundation had opened a wireless radio system in Banjila area to connect the north of Upper Nile with Khartoum, in the framework of a radio network that would be set up in peace villages in the Upper Nile this year.

The Director General enumerated the services offered by the Foundation in the fields of health, education, culture, media and agriculture in the peace villages in the State.

He said that the Foundation in co-operation with the Peace and Development Foundation had sent a caravan to Burun, Bunj and Meban areas so as to provide clothing, medicine and food. He said Muwafaq teams will be sent to Malakal to train women in the neighbourhoods in handicrafts. These are in addition to the environment programmes and encouragement of 'productive families' [projects] in Malakal. The Director General indicated that the Foundation will work towards making local citizens get involved in agricultural investment.

The Governor welcomed those services and praised the administration of Muwafaq al Khairiya. He re-iterated his government's total support for all the activities and programmes of Muwafaq in the State, explaining that the citizens had felt for the first time that there was a government [in the region] when Muwafaq al Khairiya brought social services and mills to Upper Nile.

Muwafaq al Khairiya is not only delivering the Da'awa, but, in the words of the Governor, government itself.

## **RESTRICTING ACCESS TO SPLA-CONTROLLED AREAS**

The Sudan Government has never accepted the compromise to its sovereignty represented by OLS: not only does it deliver the largest amounts of material assistance to SPLA-held areas, but it enjoys the diplomatic privileges and recognition of being a UN operation. Indirectly, OLS extends recognition to the SPLA. The Sudan

Government has rarely concealed its long-term aim of closing down OLS. It has been deterred by the diplomatic embarrassment this would cause (allowing OLS to continue is one way the Sudan Government uses to deflect human rights criticism) and by the resources it gains (especially valuable since the ban on development assistance). But since the UN has adopted the 'relief to development' model, the government believes (probably correctly) that the UN and other agencies would continue to operate in its territory if OLS were closed down, while the SPLA-held areas would lose out.

Occasionally there are threats to close down OLS altogether and bring the entire operation under government control. These were made in 1989 and 1990. They were dropped when OLS formalised its procedures for gaining access in 1993-4, but more recently have been revived. The Acting Commissioner of the RRC said in early 1996:

There is a committee in progress to end OLS. The Chairman is Awad Khalifa, the former RRC Commissioner. It reports to the State Minister of Social Welfare.<sup>36</sup>

In 1995 a marginally less extreme version of this was proposed, namely the relocation of the logistical base for the Southern Sector from Lokichoggio in northern Kenya to Malakal, where the government would be able to exercise a great deal more *de facto* control. So far, the western donors have resisted these threats.

In the meantime, the Sudan Government has used a number of stratagems to control and restrict relief moving to Southern Sudan. The most common method is to refuse to issue permission for flights. There is a long history of failing to grant flight permissions, or granting them only at the last minute. Under the more assertive leadership of Philip O'Brien from early 1993, OLS Southern Sector took the attitude that locations not expressly forbidden were permitted, provided that the government was notified, and succeeded in increasing the number of locations where OLS was present tenfold. In 1995-6, the government had more success once

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<sup>36</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

again in restricting Southern Sector access. First, it used the pretext of an unauthorised flight by the agency CCM to Pariang in Upper Nile, and the capture of two relief workers by the army, to pressure OLS. In 1996, it succeeded in withholding permission to fly to flood-stricken Pochala for several key months. The government has proved more patient and persistent than most of its humanitarian adversaries.

A more imaginative initiative was made in 1995, when the Sudan Government introduced the concept of 'war zones', to be distinguished from 'war-affected areas.' The OLS mandate is to concern itself with 'war-affected areas'; the government defined 'war zones' locations with active hostilities. The Sudan Government proposed that OLS should have access to the latter but not the former.<sup>37</sup> The UN agreed: it ceded the authority to define 'war zones' to the Government. Following this, parts of Eastern Equatoria were declared off-limits to OLS operations, while the government mounted an offensive there. The full ramifications of this innovation have yet to be seen, but if the government exploits this UN concession, it could strangle much of the Southern Sector activity.

The new-found government confidence of 1995-6 unpicked many of the gains made by Philip O'Brien's earlier assertiveness. The head of OLS-Southern Sector found himself trying to explain and justify the UN's apparent policy of compliance in the face of government obstructionism.

The government has repeatedly used the argument of cost to try to shut down the Southern Sector. It has pointed out that delivery by air is many times more expensive than delivery overland, and has proposed using road, rail and barge deliveries from the North to replace air deliveries from Lokichoggio. The counter-argument from the Southern Sector has been that cross-border road deliveries would be a cheaper alternative, and that there could be delivery across the front line to government-controlled towns. But cross-line access would entail drawing a map of government-controlled and SPLA-controlled areas, and the government conceding that it controlled rather less territory than its

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<sup>37</sup> *OLS Review*, p. 28.

propaganda claims. When cross-line access was proposed, the government quietly toned down its complaints about cost.

Another government strategy has been to deny that significant numbers of people are living outside areas of government control. It has repeatedly disputed population figures produced by the SPLA or by relief agencies. This has yet to convince any major donors.

A final, oft-repeated strategy, is to accuse the OLS Southern Sector and European or American NGOs of supplying the SPLA with war materials. The suspicions run deep. One government official said:

We discovered that some NGOs illegally entered Sudan, with heavy trucks and big aircraft. They bought some non-food items—we understand what that means. . . . There were seventy trucks carrying parts for a barge.<sup>38</sup>

This was the pretext for shutting off operations in late 1989 and again in late 1990, and the accusation has been made periodically ever since. Another official spoke in these terms:

The SPLA first depended on native possessions, on looting from the natives. Suddenly that has been stopped as other sources came. If it is only for the needy people, then what about the armed people? How do they get it? If I depend on a source and it stops, it means I found an alternative.<sup>39</sup>

In November 1996, the Sudan Government accused the ICRC of providing military support to the SPLA, and closed its operations.

The UN in Khartoum seems to share much the same opinion, justifying its tolerance of government abuse on the grounds that they suspect the same thing is going on with the SPLA. One senior UN official said:

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<sup>38</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

<sup>39</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

[When] the rebels saw they were the beneficiaries [of OLS] there was a lot of motivation to kiss ass. They formed their humanitarian wings and co-operated with the agencies. Here we have the Government Relief Act of 1992, which says that the government owns the property [of relief agencies]. But when it comes to distribution, it's not that different [with the SPLA]. In some ways the government is more up-front.<sup>40</sup>

This may be true. But in the Southern Sector, the humanitarian agencies have been able to collect a great deal more evidence about relief needs and the effectiveness of programmes, and have engaged in programmes that, whatever their success, have genuinely attempted to introduce transparency and humanitarian principles into relief operations. In the Northern Sector, the UN has simply surrendered: it has not even tried to contest.

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<sup>40</sup> Interviewed in Khartoum, February 1996.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The Sudan Government is interested in the resources unlocked by OLS, and is determined to subvert the principle of a negotiated breach of sovereignty. It can do this in two ways: either by exercising direct operational control of OLS (for example by relocating the Lokichoggio base to Malakal, as it has proposed) or by closing down OLS altogether. It has kept both options open. It aims to capture the resources currently channelled through OLS into its 'developmental' programmes in the South, by tying the major donors, UN agencies and international NGOs into long-term rehabilitation and development programmes that function independently of the OLS infrastructure. To a large extent the government has succeeded: most UNDP and UNICEF programmes in the South would probably continue even if OLS were closed down (and especially if the closure were not seen as the work of the government, but blame could be placed on the SPLA). In the meantime, the Islamic agencies are progressing with the Comprehensive Call agenda.