

11.

AID RESOURCES AND DISUNITY IN THE SPLA

This relief has destroyed our relationship with the Dinka and other groups.

Nuer Prophet Wutnyang Gatakek

The Sudan Government's humanitarian strategy is thorough and sophisticated. But its successes have been greatly facilitated by shortcomings on the other side: the SPLA, SRRA and international relief agencies working alongside them have not developed an approach of comparable sophistication. On the contrary, relief has exposed the political weaknesses of the Southern rebel movement, and may even have deepened them. The central reason for this is that control of aid resources is seen as an end in itself, rather than a means to a set of social and political goals.

The creation of OLS was tribute to the SPLA's military success. It extended an unprecedented recognition to a rebel organisation, both in Sudan and internationally, and provided aid resources into the heart of SPLA-held Sudan (while aid to the camps in Ethiopia was also increasing). Because the world overwhelmingly blamed Khartoum for the famine, OLS was a propaganda coup for the SPLA, and a vehicle for much more favourable publicity, as journalists and diplomats could now visit most parts of the SPLA-held areas in relative comfort and safety. It was an opportunity that previous liberation movements had only dreamed of.

Internally the SPLA was still weak. Its massive battlefield victories and huge field army were not matched by a functioning civil administration, a practical social agenda, a humanitarian capacity, or a diplomatic strategy. OLS brought resources and opportunities that could have helped the SPLA address these weaknesses. This could have entailed either liberalisation (as most aid workers would have preferred) or a more sophisticated and

effective but still authoritarian kind of political mobilisation (perhaps a mirror image of the NIF's Comprehensive Call). OLS certainly helped many Southerners, both ordinary rural people and commanders. Overall, however, the coming of OLS probably did more harm than good for the SPLA.

1989-91: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

OLS arrived as a new phase in the war got underway. The SPLA was for the first time faced with the challenge of administering substantial amounts of territory. It is true that it had claimed to control vast areas long before that, but 'control' meant little more than rendering a place unsafe for the Sudan Government, and making it available to rebel fighters for movement, recruitment and requisitioning. It had not, on the whole, established steady relations with the civilian populations. However, in the space of a few months in late 1988 and early 1989, the SPLA captured many towns, giving the movement uninterrupted dominion over a wide swathe of land, which it faced no immediate prospect of losing.

In retrospect, it is tempting to identify the two years from 1989 to 1991 as providing a vital missed opportunity for the SPLA to transform itself. Whether that entailed democratisation or not, the essential component would have been to adopt a practical social and political programme for the areas it controlled. That in turn would have required defining the mutual responsibilities of soldiers and civilians, in which the former would protect and respect the latter in turn for recruits, food and other forms of support. There was some progress, notably on trade policies in Upper Nile. But no big initiative was made to reform the governance of the SPLA until the end of 1991, by which time it was too late.

While it is easy with hindsight to suggest such a reform, there were many practical difficulties. The culture of the SPLA would have had to be changed, to limit or control the ruthlessness that had been instilled in the soldiers. A new understanding of army discipline was required. The inter-tribal animosities that had been exacerbated needed to be soothed again; a task that would take months or years under the most favourable conditions. And for John Garang to have encouraged the High Command openly to discuss policy issues

would have risked reviving elements of disunity and factionalism that Southern leaders had shown in the past.

These were hard problems, but urgent ones. The delay in tackling social policy can be attributed partly to the exceptionally fluid military and political conditions, and the expectation that the end of the war was at hand. Between the 1988 November Accords and the June 1989 coup, a negotiated peace was in prospect; and in the early days of the Omer al Bashir government, the opposition universally predicted that it would collapse. Meanwhile the SPLA had to learn fast how to deal with international relief. OLS was negotiated and re-negotiated in these volatile circumstances. From November 1989 onwards, the chronically undefined status and character of OLS created uncertainty within the SPLA. The movement's political agenda was set by the diplomacy of responding to the changing politics of the North and trying to obtain a favourable deal with the humanitarian agencies, rather developing social priorities for Southern Sudan itself. The leadership also had absolute faith in the Mengistu regime, which led to the unquestioning reproduction of the relief model of the Gambela refugee camps wherever possible (it also led to the SPLA continuing to fight for Mengistu inside Ethiopia for some weeks even after the Ethiopian army had surrendered in May 1991).

If there existed in the SPLA any beginnings of a debate about the need for civil administration, they were swept up in the hasty new relief programme. For example, Lam Akol has since claimed that he wanted to use the relief operation to lay some foundations of civil society. At the centre of his plans was the humanitarian face of the movement, the SRRA.

[W]e came with the idea that SRRA should be expanded. First to adapt to a bigger organisation like OLS. Second to train people to establish civil institutions.¹

But the SPLA's militaristic ethos was a bigger obstacle than the shortage of trained people per se, as pointed out, among others, by Bona Malwal, editor of the *Sudan Democratic Gazette*:

¹ Interviewed on 4 April 1996.

Is it really necessary to insist that all recruits to the movement should still undergo extensive military training? Surely the needs of the liberated areas have moved beyond those of the purely military? There are many teachers, doctors and other professionals who would dearly love to return to liberated areas of Southern Sudan to do the jobs for which they have been trained. However, they have refrained from doing so because of the thought of military training and the uncertainty of being able to pursue their professions. There is a vast untapped personnel resource waiting to be utilised by the SPLA which is going to waste for want of a clearly defined political policy in the liberated areas.²

Leaving aside the political motives of John Garang in maintaining militaristic centralism, and those of Lam Akol and Bona Malwal in criticising it, the question arises: in practice, how could a humanitarian wing of the SPLA established some autonomy from the military? The most effective way of reconciling humanitarian and military interests is if both are based on a shared, practical social agenda in the liberated areas. Absent this, SRRA staff would either have to be subservient to the military, or in confrontation with it. To win any confrontations would have required some courage and determination by SRRA field staff, clear directives from the top of the SPLA and a capacity to enforce them, and some independent communications and resource flows.

These conditions were absent. All long-distance communication, especially by radio, was subject to military control in the name of security, so there was very little opportunity for SRRA secretaries to use an external resource as a way of changing the balance of power in their areas. Officials were often appointed by local commanders, and always dependent on their goodwill; they remained as the instruments of the military, rather than those of any humanitarian organisation. This meant that they would try to obtain relief, but remain answerable primarily to the commander for the distribution of the supplies. Some commodities might go to needy civilians, some to soldiers, and some for serving the enrichment of relatively powerful individuals.

² *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, June 1991, pp. 2, 4-5, 8.

Most of the foreign aid agencies were committed to the idea that relief should feed civilians rather than soldiers, and should be distributed according to their own criteria of humanitarian need, rather than through a local network of patronage. The relationship between SRRA field staff and the military was not one that they could condone, so any frank discussion of the link would have been dangerous for the SPLA. The SRRA head office was thus continually making assurances that it could not substantiate. It was unable to explain credibly the way the organisation worked, or to convince agencies that it was fit to manage relief projects by itself. Its role became fixed as one of a minder and intermediary for the foreigners.

This role was less about facilitating contacts than limiting them. The SPLA had inherited from Mengistu's Ethiopia an attitude of deep suspicion towards people from western countries. When Lam Akol briefed commanders on the coming of OLS, '[they] were very apprehensive. They always think of NGOs as spies. At one meeting in Kapoeta I said: Yes, let us assume they are spies. But countries do not stop spies from coming. It is up to you to safeguard your information.'³ The SRRA naturally became part of the mechanism for controlling and manipulating information. As the recognised counterpart of the foreigners, it needed to be staffed with intelligence personnel and others directly reporting to the military authorities. And it had to conceal this. The basic techniques of deception were already well-practised; they were similar to those that had been used in the refugee camps in Ethiopia: exaggerate the numbers of accessible people in need; make up ambiguous and false distribution reports; strictly limit the movements of the foreigners; do not let them talk to anyone without security clearance; use interpreters to censor the information from innocent interviewees; punish SPLA officials who are indiscreet. But inside Sudan the scope of operations was more fluid and more widespread than in the refugee situation. The SPLA and SRRA quickly needed to gain a capacity to implement these techniques in many new locations.

Three factors assisted this task. One was the war itself, which meant that the SPLA had to be given the responsibility for the personal safety of foreigners; so it could generally limit their

³ Interviewed on 4 April 1996.

movements on grounds of security. Secondly, the situation was a novel one for most of the foreigners concerned; there was little experience of working in the middle of a war, or working in Southern Sudan. The third factor was the focus of OLS I on delivery targets and sensational publicity.

The architects of OLS, notably James Grant of UNICEF, were highly conscious of the possible historic status of the agreement, and were determined that the operation should be widely recognised as a great success, largely in order to win the support of donors for further big humanitarian initiatives in future. The Sudan Government's concession on sovereignty was an important one, but it was not set out in any document with legal validity. It was only implied in an informally-agreed 'Plan of Action', undertaking to serve 'all civilian non-combatant populations in need of emergency relief throughout the Sudan'⁴. The plan gained an air of definition not by signatures but by numbers. Like many other big humanitarian programmes, its delivery targets were not based on a detailed evaluation of the human needs, since to do so required time, access and expertise that was unavailable. Instead the needs were determined by a common-sense view of the problem: they were set high enough to show a dramatic increase on what had gone before, but low enough to be logistically and financially conceivable.

Compiled hurriedly in the interests of speeding the relief task, the UN figures proved not altogether reliable. For the UN no less than for governments, insurgent-held territory had been terra incognita. . . . Moreover, the data were used to frame objectives primarily in terms of tonnages and transport. The ton soon took on a life of its own. . . .⁵

In maximising the OLS delivery figures, the UN counted quantities that were moved before the beginning of OLS or by agencies who considered themselves to be working outside OLS. In the field, the

⁴ 'Plan of Action—Sudan Emergency Operations', High Level Meeting, Government of the Sudan and the United Nations, Khartoum, 8-9 March 1989.

⁵ L. Minear, *Humanitarianism Under Siege: A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan*, Trenton, N.J., Red Sea Press, 1991, p. 39

UN's preoccupation was with managing a large throughput in a short period: insufficient resources were available for monitoring or for trying to understand local communities and institutions. Indeed, the hectic demands of OLS I killed off some more patient and sensitive approaches to the business of humanitarian work in Southern Sudan, such as the SRRA capacity-building process that had begun in Nairobi in July 1988.⁶

Under the pressure of OLS, then, SRRA could not be a good foundation for civil administration. More fundamentally, the very existence of an erratic but significant flow of relief commodities from outside made it more difficult for SRRA secretaries or local people to appreciate what was their entitlement and demand it, or for SPLA commanders to establish an enduring system of local provisioning. To put it plainly: with the promise of relief supplies, commanders had even less need to gain the willing acceptance of the populace. Meanwhile the presence of foreigners gave legitimacy to the heavy involvement of the military-based security service in matters of civilian welfare.

Again we must state the main limitation of this argument: in 1989-91 the SPLA lacked a strong concept of civil administration anyway. The impact of relief did not destroy an enlightened policy; it only helped to retard the formation of one. At the same time, relief did not make the SPLA more authoritarian—or rather, as it could scarcely have become so, relief did not help the SPLA to entrench its political power and ideological hegemony. This was because the SPLA took a straightforward militaristic view of relief as a welcome flow of resources but a potential security threat. A more politically adept movement would have integrated external relief into a practical social and political programme, and strengthened its domestic legitimacy and capacity to mobilise resources. A big opportunity was missed. In the two years after the launch of OLS, therefore, the SPLA neither moved towards liberalisation nor a more politically effective authoritarianism. Despite its military successes, it was

⁶ 'Report on an assignment carried out by Anthony Ratter of ERDA Ltd for an with the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association August 1988-March 1989.'

politically fragile, and that fragility was exposed in the catastrophe which hit it in 1991.

THE 1991 SPLIT IN THE SPLA

On 28 August 1991, three members of the SPLA High Command—Riek Machar, Lam Akol and Gordon Koang Chol—issued their 'Nasir Declaration', announcing that John Garang was removed as leader of the SPLM/A. Garang was not removed; the Movement was split. To date it has recovered neither its unity nor the military strength it possessed at that time. The Sudan Government exploited the initial weakness and disarray to recapture a number of garrison posts, which were then used for intelligence work and for supplying anti-SPLA militias and new factions. It managed to ensure the survival of the Riek faction and to encourage further splits. The divisions weakened the rebel cause as a whole, since the factions often fought against each other.

The peoples of Southern Sudan are diverse and have never succeeded in forming a united front in pursuit of their common interests. Even in times of relative peace, their leaders tended to manoeuvre against each other for lucrative positions in the state, while building up their personal support along tribal lines, and securing it by patronage. The SPLA from 1983 attempted to solve this problem by waging war to gain power, and unifying its politics by means of military authority. Its campaign made progress up to 1991, but some of the methods used to achieve battlefield success began to seem misguided, even to some of John Garang's immediate subordinates. In 1990, Commanders Riek Machar and Lam Akol informally canvassed other members of the SPLA about the desirability of policies that were more liberal, democratic and humanitarian.

John Garang, as Chairman of the Movement, had from the early years of the SPLA deliberately prevented the emergence of free debate about policy. Civilians and soldiers—even members of the High Command—were given no forum for an open airing of their views. This created a risk that the most able officers—those with strong ideas of their own—would feel misused and rebellious. Garang's solution for this involved promoting talented people

rapidly, and giving them a lot of freedom within their own sphere. Riek and Lam were both prime examples. (Their advancement had caused some grumbling among colleagues who considered themselves to have a stronger right to seniority, on grounds of political and military experience.) But Garang's system of promotion failed to secure their personal loyalty to himself.

The fall-back option was to punish disloyalty harshly. Garang had already had imprisoned or killed several senior colleagues who opposed him. His ability to do so in the past had rested largely on the support of Colonel Mengistu in Ethiopia, who had steadily backed him as leader. Previous appeals by dissident commanders, including Kerubino Kuanyin, to Mengistu to overrule or depose Garang had backfired. But in May 1991 the Mengistu regime collapsed. The SPLA was forced to move out of Ethiopia; it lost its training camps, its main immediate source of military hardware and other supplies, and its radio station. Garang's personal control was weakened. At the same time, he was released from the need to conform with Mengistu's policies.

This change in the situation was by itself enough to open up a prospect of liberalisation in the SPLA. Sympathisers sensed the opportunity and made some frank criticisms. The prominent journalist and politician Bona Malwal, published an influential article called 'Questions the SPLA can no longer ignore'.⁷

Very important questions have been raised as a result of success on the battlefield, which the SPLA can no longer afford to ignore. Some of these questions are so pressing that the SPLA needs to formulate practical solutions as a matter of urgency. . . .

One of the issues was the question of independence for the South, a taboo subject while the SPLA enjoyed Mengistu's patronage.

From the initial organisation of the SPLA in 1983, its philosophy has always been clear to the leadership, if not always quite as clear to the movement's rank and file. Put simply, the SPLA wanted nothing to do with separatist issues Many Southern Sudanese

⁷ *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, June 1991, pp. 2, 4-5, 8.

have felt that the SPLA should liberate the South and establish a separate Southern state.

Another set of questions related to the dominance of the army and the neglect of civil administration and a range of practical social, economic and political programmes.

[T]he question of whether the SPLA can continue adding territory to the liberated areas without first consolidating its gains by setting up an alternative civilian administration in the areas under its control. For a movement which professes the principles of democracy and representative government as one of its policy objectives, the SPLA can no longer ignore the question of political administration in the areas under its control. . . .

[T]he SPLA leadership needs to break away from the political slogans of the past, which served their purpose when the guerrilla army was in its infancy, but which are now largely irrelevant to the administration of the liberated areas. The old mentality of soldiering on steadfastly to the ultimate military victory can no longer be allowed to reign supreme if it is at the expense of everything else that the movement has gained so far. . . . The main issue now would be the removal of the military blinkers in favour of a clear-sighted political approach to the administration of the liberated areas by a newly created civilian body.

. . . .

The people of Sudan . . . have responded favourably to the SPLA's ideology of militarising society in order to mobilise its forces for the struggle against a despot. However, the Sudanese public does not expect the militarisation to remain forever. . . . [T]he SPLA needs to show the way, by expanding upon its previously limited political philosophy, by developing a political culture through the creation of a civil society progressing side by side with the continuing military struggle.

In other words, it is time that the SPLA's political wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) came out of the shadows of subordination to exert its influence in the liberated areas.

Reflecting the unspoken consensus among Southerners, the weakness of the SRRA came in for particular criticism:

It has become evident that the humanitarian wing of the SPLA, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA) has failed to achieve much of its agenda primarily because of its close attachment to the military aspects of the SPLA. It has always been known that the SRRA was part of the SPLA but most observers would have preferred that it remained distinct and operated on a purely humanitarian basis. Unfortunately, military considerations have regularly hampered the SRRA's ability to provide relief to the needy civilians behind SPLA lines. . . . As things stand today, the SRRA does not help either the SPLA or the would-be donors to the cause by continually referring even the most insignificant of decisions to the SPLA leadership.

Expressing a widely-felt view among Southerners, this persuasive article concluded that

there is a pressing need for the SPLA to practice the democratic ideals it has been preaching for so long. It is impossible to speak of democracy whilst every aspect of life is being subordinated to the military cause.

This challenge to the SPLA's approach came from a journalist living in exile in Oxford. Published in June 1991, within three months it was echoed by a more practical challenge, in the 'Nasir Declaration' of Commanders Riek, Lam and Koang. The commanders called for democratisation of the movement and an agenda of self-determination for Southern Sudan. The main difference was that they identified the root cause of the problem as being the leadership of John Garang. In the end they had almost no option but to assert their independence from him. They were already under strong suspicion of disloyalty. When Garang called a meeting of the whole High Command (the first one ever) in Kapoeta,⁸ they knew that if they attended it they would probably be arrested.

RELIEF AS A CAUSE OF DIVISION IN THE SPLA

⁸ In the event, the meeting was actually held in Torit.

How big a part did relief operations play in making the rift between Riek/Lam and Garang? A simple link was alleged by the SPLA Mainstream in its 'Torit Resolutions' of 12 September 1991 (Paragraph 10)⁹.

There is sufficient documented evidence that individuals within the NGO relief community were deeply and actively involved in the recent Nasir abortive coup by Commander Riak and Commander Lam. Relief planes, relief radios and foreign relief personnel were the main agents used in the abortive coup. . . .

A great many foreign aid workers were present in Upper Nile (where Riek was the senior SPLA commander) between the months of May and August 1991, because of the return of refugees from the camps in Ethiopia. The available evidence fails to show that any of them knew in advance of a specific plan to overthrow Garang. However, several weaker links between the SPLA split and the relief programme can be made.

Many if not most of the aid workers were impressed with the affable personality of Commander Riek; the kind of co-operation that he seemed to give to their work was in contrast with what they met in other areas. Some of them came to regard themselves as his personal friends, and one of them, Emma McCune, married him during that period. Although such people were probably not privy to his exact plans, they were aware that his views were importantly different from those of John Garang. They expressed their support for these views, and rendered small services such as carrying messages to other parts of Sudan and the outside world. (Relief personnel are constantly exchanging favours with local commanders in all parts of Southern Sudan.) In this case, their derogation from strict political neutrality may have encouraged Riek to think that aid agencies and the countries of the West would look favourably upon his cause, if he should break away. The 'Nasir Declaration' seems to have been angled towards this kind of constituency; five of its thirteen 'immediate steps' are about promoting relief. The new faction rapidly set up its own relief administration, the Relief Association of Southern Sudan (RASS), which received recognition, co-operation

⁹ Interviewed on 14 April 1996.

and assistance immediately from OLS and various NGOs. Though relief resources were not mentioned in the SPLA-Nasir's attack on the alleged conspiracy, the food, money and transport unlocked by RASS undoubtedly proved the most significant humanitarian contribution the split and its aftermath.

The changing pattern of relief delivery was important. As described in Chapter 4, international provision for refugees had supported the SPLA's centralist strategy, which was based on training camps and bases in Ethiopia. It was therefore partly responsible for the crisis which occurred when this strategy fell apart, on the fall of Mengistu. About 200,000 refugees returned to Southern Sudan. The great majority belonged to Upper Nile, and most of these passed through Nasir, where Riek had his headquarters. The UN mounted a relief operation centred on Nasir, involving deliveries by barge from Northern Sudan, and air drops. This was the first time that significant quantities of relief were arriving here without having to come through places controlled by Garang. It gave Riek and Lam more independence from him. Despite their supposedly humane agenda, they and their subordinates continued to manipulate the relief system in much the same way as Garang's SPLA.

The first clear example of their willingness to do this came shortly before the split, during the crisis of returning refugees.

It was . . . with the arrival of 3,000 Uduk and Maban families, originally from Blue Nile, that it became clear that there was a significant element of SPLA control in the choices that at least some of the returnees were making. The Blue Nile group arrived at Nasir two weeks after the first returnees. They had walked to Maiwut, a location en route to their home territory, and had been turned around by the SPLA and brought to Nasir. By this time many of the first wave of returnees had left Nasir in search of food, and the arrival of a second major wave assisted the SPLA authorities to keep pressure on the UN and international community for assistance And these Uduk and Maban people stayed in their camp, without permission from the SPLA to leave, until May 1992.¹⁰

¹⁰ Alastair Scott-Villiers, Patta Scott-Villiers and Cole P. Dodge, 'Repatriation of 150,000 Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia: The

It must have been apparent by mid-1991 that relief could be a useful resource for a splinter movement. Examples of the ways in which it was used in military tactics are given later.

The August 1991 split would have been less devastating for the rebel movement as a whole, had it not led into a cycle of inter-factional fighting. One catastrophic event in particular started the chain of retaliation: the Bor Massacre, a massive series of raids against the Dinka areas of Kongor and Bor, from September to November 1991. Hundreds, probably thousands, of civilians were slaughtered; many women were raped or abducted; the countryside was stripped of cattle and other property; thousands more people died of hunger and disease as a direct result.

Riek, Lam, Koang and their commanders must take the main responsibility for the Bor Massacre, although they probably did not plan it in the form it took. To a great extent they were carried along on a tide of popular feeling which they had unleashed by their Nasir Declaration, and which they tried to incorporate into a military operation, but failed to control.

Many Nuer had long felt themselves to be oppressed by the Dinka in the SPLA. Unsurprisingly, they interpreted the revolt by the leading Nuer commander in their area to be (among other things) an act of ethnic liberation. The hostility of the southern Nuer to the Bor Dinka was exacerbated by jealousies arising from the 1991 OLS relief programme. One of the Lau section chiefs who led his people to Bor was later asked to explain the causes of the fighting:¹¹

When we were rebels against the Sudan Government, all the assistance donated by foreign governments was converted by Garang to particular benefit. Secondly, all military assistance was diverted or given to his own tribe, and leaving the other tribes. Thirdly, when the UN tried to assist the population because of hunger and war, all the relief aid was diverted to a particular area, the area of Bor.

Manipulation of Civilians in a Situation of Conflict,' *Disasters* 17, 1993, 202-17.

¹¹ Interviewed in Waat, December 1994

In the dry season of 1991, the UN World Food Programme had managed to deliver food by road to Jonglei province. Most of the relief that was sent to the Nuer centres of Waat and Ayod was first stockpiled at Kongor (in the Dinka area). Since the quantities delivered were always very small compared with the perceived needs, Nuer people thought that supplies were being intercepted on the way. To make matters worse, many of the SPLA administrators posted in Lau country were Dinka officers who were suspected of using the relief to enrich themselves at the expense of the locals. But the fact that the whole Bor population was assumed to have benefited unjustly from relief may help to explain why many Nuer went on to treat women, children and elderly people as legitimate targets of vengeance.

The potential of relief to create divisions was routinely recognised by the Nuer prophet Wutnyang Gatakek, for example at a public speech in Nasir in June 1992.

This relief has destroyed our relationship with the Dinka and other groups. People are saying that the relatives of John Garang [i.e. the Dinka] are the ones who received a lot of food over the last nine years. And now that it is also coming to you, it will divide you. The Lau Nuer are saying, 'The [eastern] Jikany are the people who consume this food,' and the Jikany are saying 'This relief operation started in our area and it is ours,' and 'Why should this food be collected by other people?' This [attitude] is very bad indeed.¹²

The Lau and Jikany sections of the Nuer were indeed destined to clash with increasing severity over the following two years, (though the major causes may have been disputes over land and cattle rather than relief). The Bor Massacre provoked counter-attacks and vicious reprisals by the SPLA-Mainstream. A cycle of inter-factional fighting was set in motion, which persisted for many years.

RELIEF AS PART OF INTER-FACTIONAL WARFARE, JONGLEI 1992-3

¹² Quoted in: Sharon E. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping With Money, War and the State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 342.

In the next phase of inter-factional fighting, relief operations enabled and encouraged Riek Machar to mount an offensive that might otherwise not have taken place. Following the Bor Massacre, in early- and mid-1992 the SPLA-Mainstream carried out many reprisal raids on the southern Nuer area around Ayod and west of Waat. They looted the food reserves, and disrupted the planting season. They recaptured some of the cattle taken in the Bor Massacre, but many of these were dying of disease. SPLA-Nasir continued to conduct raids of its own, as far south as Kongor. Sudan Government forces also passed through the area in March 1992, as part of an offensive that recaptured Bor, Torit and Kapoeta. Unsurprisingly, this fighting and insecurity created acute food shortages in the latter part of the year. The area between Ayod, Waat and Kongor was to become known as the 'Hunger Triangle'.

Khartoum's 1992 reconquests had the effect of blocking the overland relief route from Kenya and Uganda to Upper Nile. One alternative was to send supplies to Nasir by barge from northern Sudan. (It is likely that Government intelligence officers were among the barge crews and the relief operation was probably abused to facilitate the arming of the Nasir faction against the SPLA Mainstream.) But the barge operations were rare and erratic. OLS had to resort to airlifting supplies. This was expensive, and hampered by the fighting and the frequent denial of flight clearances by the Government. At one point in 1992, Khartoum restricted OLS air access to six locations, four of them under the SPLA-Nasir faction. These factors kept the relief operation at a low level through most of 1992, although the aid agencies were aware of a gathering crisis of hunger, and of the causes for it.

Their response only acquired a sense of urgency at the end of October. A party of television journalists was taken to Waat to report on the condition of the displaced people there, as an attempt by the UN to rally the commitment of donors to OLS. (The UN's campaign was eventually successful in securing a much higher level of funding for 1993, and in putting pressure on the Khartoum Government to allow greatly increased access to rebel-held areas by air.) From November, the rate of food deliveries to Waat increased

dramatically.¹³ So did the number of displaced people in the town.¹⁴ The rise in population was mainly due to the usual 'magnet effect' of relief. Many of the arrivals were Dinka people, made destitute by the fighting, who had been faced with little choice but to migrate northwards: the only established relief delivery point in the SPLA-controlled Bor Dinka areas was now at Panyagor, near Kongor; and relief deliveries here had been very infrequent because of insecurity.

Waat was the site of one of the two main garrisons of SPLA-Nasir troops in the area bordering the Bor Dinka. The other was at Ayod, where a UNICEF assessment officer reported that '[s]upport for the fighters of the Nasir faction in terms of cereals and livestock was taxed from all parts of Ayod [County].'¹⁵ Relief operations tended to back the fighters, whether by increasing the level of contribution that could be raised from the local population, or through direct diversion by some military authorities in centres where there were big distributions.

The relation between relief centres and military bases was most strikingly seen in the creation of Yuai, in January 1993. The Nasir faction persuaded WFP/OLS that a new centre was needed 'to alleviate the pressure on Waat'¹⁶ and that Yuai was a suitable location. Yuai was not marked on the maps at that time; it was a semi-desert area with seasonal water, very sparsely populated. (A UN worker initially reported that the local authorities had managed to register a 'local population of 3,564 subsisting mainly on fruits and fish'.) At the end of the month, about 15,000 displaced people were directed there from Waat. With them went a sizeable contingent of armed forces. The new camp happened to be situated sixty kilometres south-west of Waat, close to the Nuer/Dinka border. As a military position, it was thus admirably placed to protect the

¹³ In the seven months from April to October, WFP delivered 463 MT. In just two weeks of November it delivered 120 MT, and in December 273 MT, using daily flights of Buffalo aircraft. Source: OLS situation reports.

¹⁴ On 20 October, the number of people counted as requiring food assistance around Waat was 7,769. By 18 November 14,807 people were registered for relief. By 7 January the figure had risen to 21,916. Source: OLS situation reports.

¹⁵ Report dated 16 December 1992.

¹⁶ WFP monthly report for December 1992, issued 5 January 1993.

permanent Nuer population centres further north. (The village of Pathai, between Ayod and Waat, had been raided by the SPLA-Mainstream on four separate occasions in 1992.¹⁷)

But the garrison was not merely defensive. It was a vital base for Riek Machar's new campaign in the first months of 1993, which resulted in the temporary capture of Kongor. To be more precise, the position that Riek attacked and occupied was not the village of Kongor itself (a former government centre) but a place called Panyagor where there was an established airstrip. During those months, he took it twice and lost it twice. Each time it changed hands, WFP quickly received requests for food assistance. When Riek was there in March, OLS increased its delivery capacity by using C-130 aircraft, and WFP began to make a food stockpile ahead of the rainy season. Riek evidently wanted to use the relief to create another population centre and military base. He had seen that many displaced Dinka were willing to go to his Nuer areas to receive supplies: apparently he now hoped to win their allegiance in their own country. It was while he was in Panyagor that Riek hosted a conference with other prominent dissidents from the SPLA, which attempted to pull together a faction with a broader ethnic base, to be known as 'SPLA-United'.

Even while this meeting was taking place, the SPLA-Mainstream counter-attacked, and recaptured Panyagor. It followed this up immediately by devastating Ayod and Yuai. These were the military bases from which the attack on Kongor had been launched, and they were also—not by coincidence—the main relief centres in the area. Many destitute civilians were killed in these attacks, or died soon afterwards.

During and after this time, OLS was heavily criticised by sympathisers of the Mainstream SPLA. They complained that it was guilty of political bias, because a disproportionate amount of relief seemed to be going to Riek's areas, as opposed to Garang's. Often this criticism melodramatically attributed malice to the managers of OLS:

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch/Africa, *Sudan: Civilian Devastation*, New York, 1994.

The aim of this manoeuvring is to subvert the politics of Southern Sudan and place real political power in the hands of the officials responsible for delivering food.¹⁸

To most aid agency workers, these accusations no doubt seemed unfair. They believed that relief was being sent to places where the need was greatest, and that 'humanitarian neutrality' meant providing supplies according to the needs of the suffering, rather than to a notion of political balance. However, the above narrative suggests that a more active and politically conscious approach was needed. Given that they were unable to prevent relief from supporting soldiers, OLS and donor governments should have refused to begin operations in Yuai, should probably have made it clear to Riek from the outset that they would not supply him in Panyagor, and should have striven harder to establish a more secure relief-point for displaced Dinka in SPLA-Mainstream areas.

FURTHER SPLITS

After 1991, further splits took place among those who had originally been together in the SPLA. At the end of 1992, some of Garang's long-time political prisoners escaped. One of these, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol was then assisted by the Khartoum Government and by Riek Machar's faction to embark on a career of destruction and looting in Bahr el Ghazal. Shortly after his escape, John Garang's Chief of Staff, William Nyuon, turned round and began harassing the SPLA-Mainstream in Eastern Equatoria; also with the help of the Government and Riek's faction.

Meanwhile, the SPLA-United was proving itself divided. In early 1994, Lam Akol broke with Riek and then withdrew to his home (Shilluk) area, around Tonga. Riek Machar then re-named his group the Southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), while Lam Akol retained the name SPLA-United. SSIM itself was shortly to split.

¹⁸ 'How "Operation Lifeline Sudan" has Turned Relief into Political Bias', *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, August 1993.

In each of these cases, the splinter-groups tried to use humanitarian relief to support their new factions. For Lam Akol the international relief operation was of interest in part as a route to political recognition and administrative support. He came to the point of dispute with the managers of OLS in November 1994, when they asserted that the relief wing of his movement, the Fashoda Relief and Rehabilitation Association (FRRA) was not a counterpart organisation of OLS in the same sense as the humanitarian agencies of the Garang and Riek factions (SRRA and RASS respectively), despite the fact that it was the only Sudanese relief organisation working in the SPLA-United area. Lam pressed his point in May 1995 when his forces waylaid and looted a relief barge, holding prisoner a WFP worker for one week. He succeeded in pressing negotiations and winning some concessions.

OLS officials at this time did not want to be seen as encouraging the proliferation of rebel factions. This was partly an intuitive political judgement, and partly a conscious desire to keep humanitarian operations clear of political effects. In particular they felt that Lam wanted a seat at any national or inter-factional peace talks. To grant counterpart status to FRRA would be a step towards UN recognition of the whole faction. This was particularly so because the distinction between humanitarian and political affairs was being blurred by programmes of 'humanitarian principles' and 'capacity-building' (see next chapter).

The UN's fear of faction proliferation looked both to the past and the future. As regards the past:

We need to bear in mind that we are still blamed by the SPLM/A (Garang) for our position on the [1991] split in which, they argue, our actions—i.e. recognising the new faction without conditions—helped the formation of SPLM/A-United and thereby the splitting of the rebel movement.¹⁹

For the future, the effect of a precedent was feared:

¹⁹ Philip D. O'Brien, OLS Co-ordinator and UNICEF Chief of Operations, to Christoph Jaeger, UN Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in the Sudan, 10 January 1995.

According to the best information, there are three other potential figures among the southern Sudanese who are currently considering the possibility of establishing their own (mostly ethnically-based) factions. They are all watching to see how we will react to Lam Akol's various demands before deciding whether or not to establish their own factions.²⁰

In July 1996 OLS finally recognised FRRA, but six months later the feared proliferation had not yet occurred.

The factions of Kerubino Kuanyin and William Nyuon were slightly different, in that for most of the time they were officially subordinate to that of Riek Machar. Operationally, however, they were so independent that they can be considered separately. Kerubino (this word is commonly used to designate any forces that the man is presumed to control) makes little pretence of having a serious political programme. He is a warlord who appears to be motivated mainly by a desire for vengeance against John Garang, and by loot. Since 1994 he has been marauding throughout northern Bahr el Ghazal, from his base in the Government enclave of Gogrial. He targets the places that produce most food or hold stocks, stealing what he can and destroying much of what remains. Relief deliveries are prime targets, and the way that OLS works in the region has undergone a progressive change, largely as a result. Before 1994 there existed continuously-staffed relief stations, in places like Akon and Mayen Abun. These were repeatedly raided by Kerubino; the aid agencies lost equipment; the centres were moved; and eventually the concept of a semi-permanent base in the area was abandoned. Airstrips had now been created at a large number of locations; WFP and NGOs would visit one place for up to a week at a time, to organise distributions and other programmes. Often the food would be stockpiled in the open for a few days. Kerubino would learn its location by monitoring the relief radio communications, and sometimes arrive even before the distribution had taken place. So by 1996 the agencies had made the relief procedure much quicker, and were taking precautions against publicising dates and locations. This did not prevent Kerubino kidnapping relief workers at the end of the

²⁰ *Ibid.*

year, and driving a hard bargain with international mediators to grant their release.

William Nyuon's use of relief was more in the style of Riek Machar. With Riek's help, he established a base in Lafon, north of Torit. Lafon was a relief centre. There, in mid-1994, he sent about 500 Nuer boys aged between eight and sixteen. An OLS feeding centre was set up and WFP increased its dry food distributions. But by the end of the year, the boys were in just as bad a condition as at first. Forty-seven of them had died. It became clear to the UN that the food and other supplies, destined for the children and other civilians, were being stolen by the military. The boys had been brought from their homes in Upper Nile to act as soldiers and assistants to soldiers. At this stage, their main help was taking the form of dying as a way of attracting relief supplies. The survivors were mostly repatriated to Upper Nile by UNICEF in December 1994 and early 1995.

William Nyuon rebelled against Riek Machar in August 1995, and formed an alternative version of Riek's faction (known as SSIM-2), in alliance with Garang's SPLA. William himself was killed in January of the following year, and his group was officially reunited with Garang in May.

The careers of William and Kerubino illustrate how superficial are the political labels attached to many Southern Sudanese rebels. Some local commanders enjoy considerable independence of action. The catalogue of abuses committed by splinter factions should not hide the fact that many of the same crimes are committed by John Garang's own subordinates, and that the perpetrators are seldom disciplined strongly or brought to justice. The spread of relief operations throughout Southern Sudan has contributed to loosening the chain of command; some commanders in remote places are a little less dependent on the central leadership because they can occasionally obtain food, utensils, medicines, radio sets and vehicles by their own enterprise in looting and diverting international aid. The potential divisions in the Southern movement are many, perennial and not very far from the surface. Yet the project of creating a more enlightened, stable and cohesive rebel movement has also advanced in some ways in recent years. Its path forward is the subject of the next chapter.

PEACEMAKING

The issue of peacemaking in Sudan since the 1989 coup deserves a book of its own: there has been a succession of initiatives at various levels, with an extremely complicated history. More than seven different non-governmental institutions have been involved at one time or another in negotiating between government and rebels, or between different Southern factions.²¹ This book cannot go into details. Nor is peacemaking a central concern of this book, except insofar as it has an impact on humanitarian programmes and the possibility of building a coalition against famine.

External peacemaking efforts in Sudan have been handicapped by numerous factors. One is the widespread belief among European and north American mediators that getting Sudanese from different political organisations to sit together and talk is itself an achievement. While this may be true elsewhere in the world, it is not the case in Sudan: there has never been a lack of dialogue between political opponents, and politicians on all sides have managed to maintain cordial personal relations despite their deep political differences.

Another difficulty lies with the belligerents themselves. In many ways, peace poses more problems than war to both the NIF and the SPLA and other Southern factions. Providing an opportunity for negotiating peace is not enough even to start a peace process. Instead, a mediator must be in the position of being able to offer genuine inducements to peace and genuine sanctions for not achieving it. Non-governmental mediators are not in a strong position to achieve this.

Thirdly, humanitarian programmes have, on balance, proved more of an obstacle than an asset to mediation. The idea prevalent in the early days of OLS that the existence of a humanitarian operation by itself facilitates a peace process was soon laid to rest. War or ceasefire, OLS continues. Meanwhile, other assistance programmes have grown up on both sides that are based on solidarity: these would

²¹ Jan Gruiters and Efreem Tresoldi, *Sudan: A Cry for Peace*, The Hague, Pax Christi, 1994.

not necessarily expand (and might indeed contract) if the war came to an end.

Many mediators have been handicapped by their own interests in the continuation of humanitarian programmes. This has meant that mediators have been unable to use the one real resource at their disposal, namely humanitarian aid. With the exception of the U.S. re-direction of food shipments to Port Sudan in late 1990, no major donor has considered an embargo on humanitarian aid to either side. In addition, donors have generally shown more interest than the belligerents in major international humanitarian programmes (such as OLS). There has always been a bargaining, implicit or explicit, on the terms on which relief programmes can continue. This has put the donors in a very weak position to try to negotiate for any other concessions. Meanwhile, the proliferation of mediators, each one apparently anxious for a share of glory, led Garang to refer to them as 'peace vultures.'

A further problem is that attempts to negotiate for unity between the SPLA factions have been undermined by divide-and-rule tactics from Khartoum. The peace agenda within the South can contradict the agenda for trying to negotiate with the Government.

Government-SPLA Peace Talks

From 1989 until 1993, there was a plethora of international peace initiatives, by former President Jimmy Carter, the Nigerian Government, and others, trying to mediate between the SPLA and the government. There was an apparently endless international circuit of meetings and declarations, which gave the impression that the next one may offer a better deal for any one of the participants. The negotiation process was becoming self-defeating. Finally, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was named as the sole mediator. IGADD includes the governments of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia (in theory but not currently in practice), Sudan and Uganda. The Sudan Government initially welcomed this. At last there was a single mediator and the prospect of bringing some discipline and prospect of genuine clarity and even progress to the peace process. In July 1994, the IGADD mediators introduced some basic principles to the negotiations, and achieved some modest but significant progress towards recognising how peace talks could, in principle, proceed.

But by 1994 this time the Sudan Government had also antagonised Eritrea and Ethiopia, and came to regret the prominent role of IGADD. The September 1994 IGADD talks broke down, and the government called for a 'new mechanism' for mediation.²² But while the Sudan Government publicly rejected IGADD as no longer neutral, the African and western countries involved re-affirmed their commitment to IGADD. The Sudan Government now tried to undermine the IGADD process by bringing in alternative mediators such as President Carter and President Molyneux of Malawi. President Carter's initiative illustrates how humanitarianism can be manipulated for political-military ends. In March 1995, Carter negotiated a two-month ceasefire in order for a Guinea-worm eradication programme to proceed. This suited the government in three respects: (1) it allowed the army to resupply beleaguered Southern garrisons, (2) it did not apply to the Nuba Mountains, where an offensive was in progress and (3) it helped to undermine

²² *Sudan Update*, 30 September 1994, p. 1.

the IGADD process. The SPLA agreed to the ceasefire simply because rejection would have brought it adverse publicity internationally.

By the end of 1996, the IGADD peace process was frozen and no alternative is in sight. This made clear the true interests and intentions of the Sudan Government: it was seeking a military solution. Only should the military tide turn against it, would the government be likely to revive the negotiations.

What the IGADD process has signally failed to address is internal democracy within the Sudanese opposition. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) asserts its democratic credentials, which are indeed much more impressive than the government's, as its main parties were elected by popular vote in 1986. But the parliamentary period had serious democratic failings, some of which have been reproduced since the parties went into opposition. Despite the reforms of the 1993-5 period, the SPLA's democratic credentials remain slender. In short, many of the same political players who formed the coalition for famine in the South in the late 1980s are now in the 'democratic' opposition, without having repented or reformed, only this time alongside the SPLA, which was far from innocent in the 1980s famine. Under current circumstances, the NDA does not represent a progressive anti-famine coalition.

Reconciliation in the South

Peacemaking initiatives within the South have been similarly handicapped, and for the most part, similarly unsuccessful. There have been several hopeful initiatives from outside and inside. The first was an attempt by the churches to mediate between the SPLA-Torit and the SPLA-Nasir in 1991. This did not succeed, but it provided at least a forum in which the leaders of the factions could meet. It thereby helped set the stage for the inter-factional agreement at Abuja later in 1992 that they would both support the idea of self-determination for the South. However, there are suspicions that the church mediation also heightened the ambitions of some of the factional leaders, by putting them on an international stage. One of the churchpeople involved in organising the meetings said:

We got a fantastic lot of [financial and other] support from the donor community. I was very impressed. It was a wonderful feeling that this was for a good cause. But, to me, when I look back, I wonder if this was when we began to give all those warlords a chance. Perhaps we created a monster. Those people got too big for their boots. But it was all in good faith. This was the first time for many of us to be involved in such a thing. Maybe we did the right thing, but we ended up creating something else. With the Riek faction I got the feeling that, now they were out, they got the opportunity to perform. It gave them legitimacy and prestige.²³

The prominent church role also led to suspicions in the SPLA that church leaders wanted to wrest the political initiative from the Movement itself.

The Washington Declaration of October 1993 was a classic example of failed quick-fix mediation. Congressman Harry Johnston was determined to achieve a settlement, but did not seem aware of the complexities that this entailed. While John Garang and Riek Machar were ready to agree on the substantive points in the draft agreement—and indeed signed documents to this effect—the two leaders refused to sign the same piece of paper, failing to agree on the titles they and their factions were given.²⁴ The agreement collapsed in mutual acrimony.

Externally-sponsored negotiations have several things in common. The meeting places tend to be outside the country, the principal actors are the established political-military leaders and their chosen delegates, and the agenda is influenced by the mediator. They therefore have a tendency to reinforce the external orientation of political processes and the legitimacy (and perhaps material power) of the existing leadership. All negotiations of this kind have a potential for marginalising ordinary citizens, and many mediators have not taken safeguards to mitigate this.

²³ Interviewed on 27 February 1995.

²⁴ See: *Sudan Update*, 10 November 1993.

Internal Initiatives

The most significant and promising peace-making initiative was an internal one. In April 1995 at Lafon, junior officers in the SPLA and SSIM agreed not to fight each other, but rather to collaborate against the government. This led directly to Cdr William Nyuon re-allying himself with the SPLA-Mainstream, and a hopeful process of dialogue with wide popular support across the South.

Unfortunately, the opportunity this presented was squandered. There was intransigence on both sides. Riek Machar tried to derail the process, first by dismissing his more conciliatory commanders, and then by assassinating William Nyuon. An equally big obstacle was Garang's determination not to deal with the other factions as political movements, but rather to re-absorb individuals into the SPLA. Later in the year Garang blocked SSIM's attempt to join the NDA, leaving it isolated. He effectively pushed Riek into allying with the government. When individuals did rejoin the Movement, this also did not prove productive. For example John Luk, who took over as commander of William's faction of SSIM, precipitously announced a unity accord with the SPLA shortly after Riek signed the April Charter. He had not sufficiently consulted his people beforehand, and many in his faction saw this move as a capitulation to Garang, and preferred instead to join the SSIM of Riek.

Lam Akol of the SPLA-United was more patient, not wanting to be pushed into a corner. But Garang also repeatedly stalled negotiations for political agreement. A high-level delegation from the SPLA-Mainstream met with Lam in July 1996,²⁵ followed by repeated efforts by regional friends to obtain a formal agreement of co-operation or even unity. However, at the time of writing, these have not come to fruition.

Given its popular support, the 'Lafon Process' could have led to an important realignment of Southern politics. A united leadership of the SPLA, or a strategic alliance between the anti-government factions, would have been just one outcome. A shift in the balance of

²⁵ SPLM/SPLA United, Press Statement, 'Reconciliation and Unity Talks Between the Two SPLM/A Factions,' 18 July 1996.

power away from the leadership towards middle-ranking commanders and other leaders would have been another. Potentially, this could have had positive ramifications for the Movement's readiness to take on board a practical progressive social agenda. But arguably, the prospect of a more democratic process within the Movement was more threatening to the leadership than the implications of reconciling with the rival leaders.

'Peace from Within'

As it became more internationally isolated, the Sudan Government launched its own attempts to win round rebel factions and individuals. Under the name *Salaam min al Dakhal* ('Peace from Within') it set about circumventing the established procedures of IGADD and negotiating directly with rebel commanders, at all levels. The Government offered political concessions (positions in State or Central Government, and some modifications of government policy—usually cosmetic) and financial inducements. Carefully-prepared delegations were sent to talk to SPLA commanders, anti-government politicians and community leaders. Often the delegates included relatives of the targetted individual. Many were rebuffed. Some succeeded.

The most notable success of Peace from Within was the Charter of 10 April 1996, signed by Cdr Riek Machar and Cdr Kerubino Kuanyin of SSIM. Under this agreement, SSIM joined the government. The two commanders have since been promoted to the rank of Major-General. The Charter contained many fine words about respect for human rights and cultural diversity. More tangibly, it promised that 'a referendum shall be conducted by the people of the Southern Sudan to determine their political aspirations.'²⁶ This apparently-major concession is however hedged by pre-conditions: 'After the full establishment of peace, stability and a reasonable level of social development in the south.' Article 2 also clearly rules out Southern independence, supposedly the political aim of SSIM: 'The unity of the Sudan with its known boundaries shall be preserved.' A number of other disaffected SPLA commanders and some Southern

²⁶ Article 3.

politicians have also signed. The government has targetted individuals who are in financial need and who are frustrated by their failure to advance within the SPLA: some critics have dismissed it as buying loyalty with bribes.

Despite the claims of the Sudan Government and media, and some of its apologists, the April Charter does not promise peace. It is a mechanism for divide-and-rule, not a genuine attempt to reach a negotiated solution to the war. It is a propaganda ploy for trying to conceal the government's rejection of the IGADD process and its principles, and its failure to enter into meaningful dialogue with the SPLA-Mainstream and the NDA. The SPLA-United of Cdr Lam Akol has also rejected the Charter.

'Peace from Within' is in reality intimately bound up with counter-insurgency and social transformation under the Comprehensive Call. This can be seen clearly in the Nuba Mountains, where it goes hand-in-hand with a programme known as *Nafir al Sha'abi* ('Popular Mobilisation'). *Nafir al Sha'abi* refers to the creation of peace camps and the recruitment of men (often by force) to join the PDF. The Sudanese media refers to the leaders of the *Nafir al Sha'abi* as also the leaders of 'Peace from Within': this is peace by conquest. In the South, the progressive language of the April Charter (for consumption by Southerners and western diplomats) is contradicted by the ongoing Islamist extremist rhetoric and practice of the Comprehensive Call.

CONCLUSIONS

The defeat of the Mengistu government revealed the political fragility of the SPLA as it existed then: it was already run as a government rather than a liberation movement, and without the support of Ethiopian state power, its political and military structures were ripe for fragmentation. International relief aid influenced the timing and nature of the crisis that followed and helped make the SPLA-Nasir faction militarily viable. The control and manipulation of aid resources became a key factor in the Southern factional struggles that ensued: aid exacerbated the internal crisis of the SPLA and probably made the internal Southern war more brutal.

OLS, the donors and the NGOs had not, until well after the key moment in 1991, considered how they could be manipulated by the factions in pursuit of such abusive military agendas. Whatever the motives, their responses were often—in the wider context—unhelpful. We now turn to the key question of whether the SPLA and the humanitarians were able to learn the lessons of the post-1991 cataclysm. Verbally, all acknowledged that reform was needed: practically, what was achieved?