

U.S. legislators: Charges against Sudan are unfounded

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

In its continuing plot to break up Sudan and unleash genocidal warfare throughout the Horn of Africa, British intelligence has been waging an international campaign, alleging that the Khartoum government has been guilty of wide-ranging human rights violations, from forced Islamization and persecution of Christians, to child abduction, genocide, and slavery. In the forefront of the British crusade to slap United Nations Security Council sanctions against Sudan, has been Christian Solidarity International (CSI), run by Speaker of the House of Lords Baroness Caroline Cox. Together with other British intelligence front organizations, such as Amnesty International, CSI has issued reports which have claimed to document cases of slavery. Cox's CSI deployed two journalists from the *Baltimore Sun* last April, to go with her to rebel-held territory in southern Sudan, where a mock transaction was orchestrated, whereby the journalists "purchased" a slave and set him free.

It was on the basis of this cheap Hollywood set-up, chronicled three days running with color pictures, and soul-searching personal accounts by one of the two *Sun* correspondents, an African-American, that authoritative political forces, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.), presented resolutions calling for sanctions against Sudan. The NAACP resolution was rushed through approval at the eleventh hour of the organization's annual convention as an "emergency resolution," without any debate; to become binding, it must be approved by the executive in an upcoming session in October. Representative Payne's bill, H.R. 3766, has been referred to the House Banking Committee. In November, the case of Sudan is up for review by the UN Security Council, and the decision to extend an aviation ban and other economic sanctions will

be taken. Although the action in the UN, initiated by the British in January, is officially based on charges that Sudan has been harboring three Ethiopians suspected of having been involved in the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last year, the moves by the NAACP and Congress are to be exploited, to drum up political and emotional support for sanctions.

In the entire charade orchestrated by Cox, a systematic effort has been mounted to find African-American spokesmen who would raise charges of slavery against Sudan, because it could be expected otherwise that leading African-Americans would protest against any U.S. decision to support sanctions against an African nation. In fact, Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan, following a trip to Africa which included a stop in Sudan earlier this year, denied the slavery charges, and challenged the press to go and document its wild accusations. In response to the Nation of Islam leader's challenge, Cox and her sidekick John Eibner concocted the slave transaction for the *Baltimore Sun*.

Although official invitations were issued by Sudan's Ambassador to the United States Mahdi Ibrahim Mohamed, to members of Congress, including several representatives of the Congressional Black Caucus, none of them agreed to travel to the country and see for himself.

Instead, on the initiative of the Schiller Institute, a delegation of four U.S. elected officials took the time and trouble to go to Sudan, and conduct a thorough fact-finding mission, to determine whether or not there were any substance to the grave charges. Their verdict: The charges are unfounded. Thus, the only delegation of American elected officials thus far to examine the evidence has come out with findings that refute the lies of Cox et al. This will force the responsible parties in the NAACP as well as the Congressional Black



The U.S. delegation of elected officials meets with National Assembly President Dr. Hassan Turabi in Khartoum. Left to right: Member of the Alabama State Legislature Thomas Jackson, former U.S. Rep. James Mann of South Carolina, member of the Massachusetts State Assembly Ben Swan, Turabi, and Speaker Pro Tem of the Arkansas State Legislature Ben McGee. On the right is Lawrence Freeman of the Schiller Institute.

Caucus, to rethink their resolutions. The fraud about to be perpetrated on the African-American community, has been exposed.

The first U.S. delegation

On the initiative of the Schiller Institute, a delegation of four U.S. elected officials travelled to Sudan on Sept. 13-23, to look into allegations of government-condoned slavery, and other grave human rights violations. The delegation, led by former U.S. Rep. James Mann of South Carolina, was made up of Speaker Pro Tem of the Arkansas State Legislature Ben McGee, member of the Massachusetts State Assembly Ben Swan, member of the Alabama State Legislature Thomas Jackson, and, from the Schiller Institute, Lawrence Freeman and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

The delegation met with Sudanese officials at the state and federal levels, as well as Muslim and Christian leaders, representatives of leading economic sectors, and the press. Among them were the leaders of the National Assembly (parliament), including its president, Dr. Hassan Turabi; deputy speaker, Abdel Aziz Shiddo; the chairman of the Foreign Parliamentary Relations Commission, Dr. Mohamed Shakir Alsarraj; the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Einayet Abdel Hameed; the chairman of the Peace Committee, Juang Tuoj Nyoab; the deputy chairman of the Human Rights Committee, Rev. Adi Ambrose; and many leading parliamentarians. The delegation was also received by the secretary general of the National Congress, Dr. Ghazi Sala-

huddin Attabani; the secretary general of the Council for International People's Friendship, Ahmed Abd Al Rahman Mohamed; the minister of justice, H.E. Abdel Baset Sabdarat; the president of the Sudanese American Friendship Association; and many others. On the state level, the delegation was received by the chairman of Khartoum State Legislative Council, Maj. Gen. Eng. Babiker Ali Eltom (ret.), along with many committee chairmen, and the minister of agriculture of South Kordofan state, Dr. Badawi B. Osman.

The American delegation used the ten-day visit to probe Sudanese representatives in-depth, on the alleged human rights violations. It was not a symbolic, or token gesture, but a serious effort to find answers to the questions and allegations raised against the Khartoum government. The government authorities did not present a Potemkin village version of the facts, but allowed the visitors to travel freely when and where they wanted, and to speak to whomever they liked. The following is a summary of their discussions and findings, regarding the leading allegations.

I. Is the Khartoum government an 'Islamic fundamentalist' regime?

A. Are Christians allowed to worship freely?

On Sunday, Sept. 15, the first day of their stay in Sudan, the legislators visited two churches, participating in morning

mass at the Catholic cathedral in central Khartoum, and in an evening service in the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, at All Saints' Cathedral Khartoum, also in the capital. Both churches were packed with parishioners; both had large groups of children attending Sunday school.

During the evening service at the Episcopal church, a power outage, a common event in Khartoum, put out the lights, so the entire parish simply moved outdoors, with chairs. The officiating pastor welcomed the American delegation, and, after inviting a member of the American group to say a few words, urged the parishioners to stay on after the service to chat with the visitors, and "tell them what the situation is like in Sudan." The Episcopal Church is the Church of England, and was introduced into Sudan by the British during their colonial rule. Many of the parishioners belong to the opposition to the ruling government, and openly displayed their hostility toward the government. Rep. Thomas Jackson, who is the minister of a Baptist church in Alabama, spoke for the U.S. delegation, explaining the fact-finding nature of the mission. Following the service, scores of parishioners approached the delegation, plying them with questions and offering them various accounts of life in the country. Several had complaints to air, and some spread stories of human rights violations. One, for example, said that the government "picked up street children" and put them away in forced labor camps. Another spoke of "slavery," without offering any details. One well-to-do man said that he had been invited to the U.S. ambassador's residence for the following evening, and wondered if the occasion might be a reception for our delegation. None of the many people who talked to the delegates ventured to claim that Christians were hindered in the practice of their beliefs, as the contrary was obviously the case.

B. Are Christians discriminated against in public office?

Further contact with Christians included meetings in the Nuba Mountains with members of the Catholic Church, the Coptic Church and the Sudanese Church of Christ (see accompanying article). One of the several persons accompanying the delegation was Rev. Adi S. Ambrose, of the Pentecostalist Church. Like many other Christians from southern Sudan, Reverend Ambrose is a member of the National Assembly, where he serves as deputy chairman of the Human Rights Committee. The vice president of Sudan, by law, is a Christian. That post is now held by Zupair Mohamed Sailih. The practice of assuring Christians adequate representation in government, social, and political bodies, was interpreted by some members of the U.S. delegation as a Sudanese form of "affirmative action." During a day trip to the agricultural complex known as the Gezira Scheme, the delegation was hosted by the minister of agriculture of Gezira state, Anthony Hour Michael, a Roman Catholic.

The most thorough presentation of relations among the religions in Sudan was provided by Rev. Gabriel Roric,

bishop of the Episcopal Church and state minister for foreign affairs, who met the delegation on Sept. 19. In Sudan, he explained, there are Christians from various denominations, including the Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Pentecostalist, Orthodox, Coptic, Armenian Orthodox, Evangelical, and others. "We have no problem with religions in the Sudan," he explained. "What problems exist are a legacy of the colonial period, which divided the country into two distinct zones." Reverend Roric explained that, under British colonial rule, Muslims in the north were allowed to acquire education, some even reaching the university, whereas in the south, "a fourth-grade diploma was sufficient to get a teaching job." At the time of independence in 1955, therefore, there was no intelligentsia to speak of from the south. More important, he said, "we in the south were taught Christianity, and the law prohibited Islam." There was a British-imposed division of the country, which prevented southerners from travelling to the north, and vice versa. This led to widespread ignorance of religion; "only a literal view of the Koran or the Bible was known," he said.

Serious efforts have been launched to overcome this ignorance. As Ahmed Abd Al Rahman Mohamed, secretary general of the International Council of Friendship, explained to the delegates, his organization has promoted dialogue among the religions, by organizing three international conferences so far on the theme. Vatican representatives have taken part in the conferences, along with high-ranking Christian leaders from Sudan, and other countries throughout the world. Recently, he reported, a delegation of two Christians and two Muslims travelled to South Africa for ecumenical talks, and bishops from South Africa are expected to return the visit soon.

C. Is the war in southern Sudan one of 'ethnic cleansing'?

British propaganda alleges that the ongoing war in southern Sudan is one of ethnic cleansing by the Islamic north against the Christian south, and that displaced persons from the south are forced to convert in camps in the north.

The war, which started in 1955, just six months before Sudan declared independence from Great Britain, was an expression of the vast discrepancies between north and south which colonial rule had institutionalized. Mohamed Al Khalifa, chairman of the High Council of Peace, who received the delegation on Sept. 16, explained the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of Sudan. "There are 385 tribes," he said, "and 270 different language groups." In the south, where "65% of the population are black Africans," the majority is not Christian. "About 19% are Muslims, 18% are Christians, and the rest are animists," he explained. The war, he went on, is "not religious or racial." The question is, how can wealth and political power be distributed equitably. Successive governments have tried to deal with the question, and the current federal system is the result. Of 26 federal states, 10 are in the south,



A scene at the Aulia Mountain displaced persons camp, which is "home" for 40,000 families, mostly from the south. They said that there was no religious persecution or pressure on them to convert to Islam. Their biggest complaint was lack of food, clothing, and medical care, and lack of economic activity, generally. The U.S. delegation found little difference between conditions at the camp and among the northern Sudanese living in the area.

each with its own government and legislative assembly. Islamic law, or *sharia*, introduced by Gaafar Nimieri in 1983, has been limited by the current government to those states with a Muslim majority; states in the south which are predominantly animist, are not governed by *sharia*, but by custom law. Thus, religion, and religious law, is not the issue. Some of the rebel groups were fighting for independence, secession from the state, which the central government could not accept. Others, such as John Garang's Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), have declared their aim to take over the entire country.

As to conditions in the conflict zones, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Shiddo readily acknowledged that "in any area of conflict, human rights don't count," and pointed to the example of Vietnam. "We admit," he said, "that both rebel and government forces have committed atrocities in the war. That is all the more reason . . . to fight for peace as our highest priority."

Mohamed Al Khalifa, head of the Supreme Council for Peace, showed that there has been considerable progress toward peace, although this topic has not captured the attention of the international media. Following several attempts at peace negotiations over the last three years, in Abuja, the government has succeeded this year in bringing a majority of the rebel factions to an agreement. The political charter, which guarantees freedom of religion and self-determination, signed

in Khartoum in April 1996 with two main rebel factions, has since been endorsed by three others, leaving the faction of SPLA chief Garang virtually isolated in the enemy camp. The rebel groups now in agreement with the charter include the Southern Sudanese Independence Movement (SSIM), and factions of the SPLA from the Nuba Mountains, Bahr Gazal, and Equatoria states. In addition, an agreement was signed between the governments of Uganda and Sudan just a week before the U.S. delegation arrived in Khartoum, to end support for hostile acts against each other; this means, that Uganda's support for Garang's insurgents will be terminated.

In answer to a question from the delegation, Al Khalifa explained that the clause in the agreement, stipulating that camps for refugees will be moved to 100 kilometers away from the Uganda-Sudan border on both sides, means that "this will automatically create a cease-fire, because refugees had been being used as soldiers." Similar negotiations, he added, are ongoing with Kenya, to assure non-aggression and non-assistance to rebel forces. Al Khalifa mentioned that the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, temporarily relocated to Nairobi, Kenya, had expressed its satisfaction with the Uganda-Sudan agreement. He said he thought that the United States could function as mediator, if it so desired, to bring about similar agreements with Kenya, as well as to bring Garang to the negotiating table, to "ask him what he wants." When queried about Garang's position, Al Khalifa said, Garang does not

oppose the charter, but refuses to negotiate *tout court*. As Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Shiddo had put it, "Garang has not questioned the credibility of the charter, but the credibility of the government."

Asked by the American delegation, "What is motivating Garang to continue in the opposition?" Al Khalifa answered, "The opposition has no issue, except that it wants to overthrow the government and rule. Even Rick Machar [leader of the SSIM], who was in favor of secession, has now signed the charter. He said he was not really for secession, but for federalism, which he now has." Throwing further light on the role of Garang in nurturing lies about the war, Al Khalifa related how "Garang went to the U.S.S.R. and said his war was ideological, it was a socialist struggle, and he got weapons from them. Later, Garang went to the West and presented himself as a freedom fighter against tyranny, slavery, human rights violations, and he got weapons. He went to the World Council of Churches and said he was fighting a religious war, of Christians against Islamic fundamentalists. When he went to South Africa, he said he was fighting a war against apartheid, a race war of black versus white."

The U.S. delegation wanted to know, "What will happen to the rebels if they agree? Will they be punished?" Al Khalifa's answer was that they would all be treated equally as citizens, and would be encouraged to resettle in the war-torn areas, and reconstruct. "There is already an amnesty," he said, "for all those bearing arms against the government." In answer to a question about the role of the Peace Council, which he heads, in the areas retaken by government forces, Al Khalifa responded, "We declare an amnesty, provide security for civilians, re-open schools and hospitals, protect them from the SPLA." He referenced an area which had been liberated just one day earlier, by the people of Ekuatoria state, and said seed and other requirements for farming were being made available. Regarding allegations of mistreatment of civilians, or forced displacement of persons, he said they were untrue, and cited religious principles which call for the protection of the weak, especially women, children, and war victims.

A visit to a displaced persons camp

To follow up on Al Khalifa's report, two members of the U.S. delegation visited a camp for displaced persons, about an hour's drive from Khartoum. The visit had not been planned as part of the delegation's program, and came about only because logistical problems made it impossible for the entire group to travel together to the Nuba Mountains. The two who remained behind in Khartoum, while the others drove to Kadugli, decided therefore to visit a displaced persons camp. As it was a Friday, i.e., a holiday, none of the officials in charge of the camp were available. The delegates, whose arrival was utterly unexpected and without any forewarning, were cordially received by inhabitants of the camp, who immediately summoned several English-speaking men, and the chieftain of their tribe. They answered all the questions of

the delegation, and also offered their own commentary on the situation.

The Jebel Aulia (Aulia Mountain) camp, one young man explained, is "home" for 40,000 Sudanese families, who have been displaced as a result of the war. Most of them come from the south, from Juba, and the Nuba Mountains area. Many come from Rumbag in Bahr al Gazal state. One of the tribal chieftains present is from there. Others come from Nimuli, where fighting is still reported, from Ekuatoria and from Upper Nile states. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are active there, as in other such camps, including the Red Cross, Red Crescent, Oxfam, Gol, Dawa, Hillal, Sudra, and others. The camp is managed above all by the Sudanese Council of Churches (SCC). The young man who briefed the delegation in English, said he came from Juba, where his family still lives. He has been in the camp since 1991, as have most of the inhabitants. He teaches Arabic and English in the schools that have been set up for the children. There are 11 teachers, including himself, for 700 children, ranging from the first to the sixth grade.

The greatest grievance voiced by the 20 or so persons who crowded into one mud hut, to brief the U.S. visitors, was the lack of adequate food, clothing, and, above all, medicine and medical care. There are, they said, clinics on the grounds, run by the SCC, but they are ill-equipped and not adequately staffed to care for such numbers of people. There is a hospital in Jebel Aulia and in Khartoum, where people are taken for care. One major problem, they said, is pre-natal, delivery, and post-natal care. There are often cases of diarrhea, malaria, and malnutrition. Basic food items available include sorghum, lentils, cooking oil, wheat flour, beans and dried meat (from Italy), plus powdered milk for children.

In answer to questions by the American visitors, they said that there was no religious persecution, and that regular church services and other church functions were carried out for the camp. There was no attempt to force anyone to convert to Islam. Their main concern was that the standard of living was so low, and that they would prefer to return to their homes. They explained, that they could not return to the south, until the areas were pacified, and until building materials were made available. "Here we have the materials to build," they said, "even if it is only mud huts." The other major complaint they voiced, was the lack of economic activity. They said they had full freedom of movement, and could have contact with the Sudanese residents in the area. They could fish off the nearby bridge at the dam, with materials provided by the camp, but they did not have facilities for farming.

When the U.S. delegates compared the living conditions and the standard of living of the camp inhabitants with those of many northern Sudanese in the area, and in the immediate vicinity of Khartoum, they could find very little qualitative difference. A large number of Sudanese live in makeshift mud huts; many are, like them, without hot and cold running water, and without electricity. The difference lies in the fact that

the camp is dependent on shipments of food, clothing, and medical supplies from Khartoum, as humanitarian aid, and has no actual economic activity, through which people can support themselves. In this respect, the U.S. delegates said, the camp did not differ from other such camps for displaced persons or refugees, in places such as the Gaza Strip, for example. Officials from the Ministry of Justice had briefed the delegation on the problems of inadequate food, water, and sanitation in the camps, and had stressed that such conditions were, unfortunately, not unlike those of other Sudanese. The officials explained that the government has made available to each person 200 square meters of land, within 10-15 minutes of an urban center, free. By providing minimal services, water, and access to schools, the government hopes to make it possible for displaced persons to re-create an existence for themselves in the north, if they so desire.

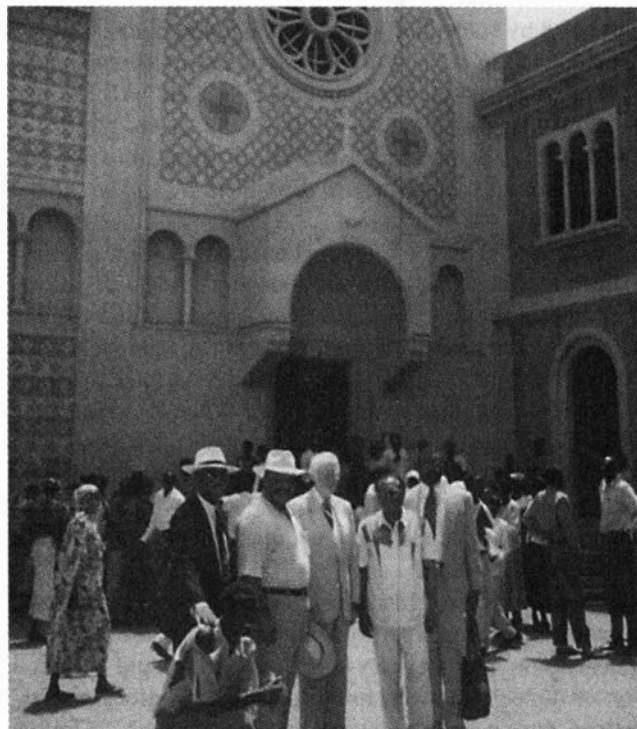
The residents of the camp who briefed the delegation urged the Americans to mobilize public opinion abroad, especially in the United States, to do something about these conditions, to promote peace so that they, and others like them, could return to their homes and resume normal lives.

II. Does slavery exist in Sudan?

Does the government condone slavery, promote it, or organize it? Before travelling to the Nuba Mountains for on-site investigations, the U.S. elected officials engaged in lengthy sessions with groups of Sudanese officials, posing direct questions on the matter. One such session involved the minister of justice, along with the chairman of the Committee on Slavery and Servitude, and other legal experts. The American delegates asked for explanations of reports they had heard, that children in the south had been sold into slavery. A full overview of the history of the allegations of slavery was provided by the Sudanese officials.

What emerges is a record of deliberate fraud on the part of the would-be investigating agencies. In 1992, the Ministry of Justice group reported, Gaspar Biro was appointed as an independent expert for the United Nations, to investigate allegations of slavery and other human rights violations in Sudan. While Biro was visiting Sudan that year, the United Nations issued a condemnation of Sudan—before their special envoy could file his report! Similarly, Amnesty International requested visas to visit Sudan in 1993, and a March 1993 date was fixed for their arrival. Before the visit could take place, Amnesty issued its report, in the form of a book entitled *Tears of Orphans*. They further related how, following United Nations allegations in late 1995, they had sent investigating teams to the designated areas. Biro, they said, had been pleased with the team's report, issued Aug. 15, which showed no cases of slavery in the Nuba Mountains.

In response to queries by the delegates, regarding the official position of the government on slavery, it was explained



Left to right: Ben Swan, Ben McGee, Jim Mann, Sudanese protocol officer, and Thomas Jackson, outside the Catholic cathedral in Khartoum. Street children are brought into social centers which are run by the government as well as the church. The Catholic Church has three such centers in Khartoum.

that the government has signed all international conventions against slavery and would prosecute and punish any offenders, even with the death penalty. The point is, of all those who have charged the existence of a slave trade, no one has provided the Sudanese government authorities with names or other facts which could lead to identification and prosecution of any perpetrators.

Representative Swan from Massachusetts raised the point, that it would be good for people such as Randall Robinson of TransAfrica, and members of the U.S. Congress, who had mobilized against apartheid in South Africa, to visit Sudan. The response was: "We want to involve any and all interested parties in the international community to join in investigations, because we know there is skepticism about government committees. Let them come and see for themselves. They are welcome here."

In a discussion with Minister for Federal States Dr. Ali Haj on Sept. 19, Representative Jackson from Alabama raised the question of slavery. Minister Ali Haj's response was, "The first time the issue was raised to me was in March 1973, in Washington, in the context of moves at the time to bring about peace in the south. It came up again," he continued, "when Rep. [Frank] Wolf [R-Va.] issued statements, that 12,000 slaves had been sold somewhere in Sudan. This figure was

published by something called the *Sudan Gazette*, which is run by Bona Malwal, a man who was minister of culture under Nimieri, and has since been in the opposition.” Ali Haj said he had invited Bona Malwal to travel to Sudan and buy up the slaves, if they existed on the market, to prove his point, and take them back as free men to the United States, but he did not respond.

Ali Haj said that he had been contacted by some African-American groups who had heard about the slavery allegations, and, after travelling to California, Alabama, Illinois, and Washington to meet with them, he organized groups to visit Sudan. Three such groups at the time did visit Juba, the Nuba Mountains, and other contested areas. When Representative Swan asked who the people were from the United States who had formed the delegations, Ali Haj explained that they were members of the African Health Foundation, whose members are not elected officials, but who organized groups of 15, 22, and 49 to visit Sudan.

The Ministry of Justice representatives also answered questions regarding reports of children missing off the streets of Khartoum, and allegedly kept in detention, sold into slavery, or forced to convert to Islam. Street children, they explained, have been brought into social centers which are run by the government as well as by the church. The Catholic Church has three such centers in Khartoum. The children are fed, clothed, given shelter, and education. The Ministry for Social Planning has a program to provide for 26,000 orphans. Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Shiddo, acknowledged that some problems did exist with the government’s treatment of street children. Sometimes, he related, government representatives would pick up *shamasha* (street children—from the Arabic, *Shams* which means sun, children out in the sun) at random. Some of the children taken into social centers turned out not to be vagrants, and were returned to their families.

Representative Swan mentioned to Dr. Ali Haj, that in the United States one very great social problem was that of homeless children, and said he wished the United States had some form of preventive system to help them out. Minister Ali Haj pointed out in response, that in Brasilia and Mexico, reports say street children are shot like wild animals. “We, here,” he said, “are doing what we can in good faith.”

The delegation followed up its briefing sessions on slavery, by travelling to the Nuba Mountains on Sept. 20-21, as we report below.

III. Is Sudan a military dictatorship?

Members of the delegation had received personal warnings, backed up by press reports, against travelling to Sudan, on grounds that it was “the most dangerous country in the world.” The fact that the U.S. State Department had ordered

the embassy to leave Khartoum on Jan. 30, 1996 (the same day the United Nations passed its first resolution condemning Sudan for allegedly harboring terrorists), filled out the picture of a lawless capital, where gun-toting Islamic fundamentalist terrorists could prowl the streets like alley cats.

One of the anecdotes most frequently encountered by the delegation in Khartoum, had to do with the fate of the U.S. Embassy personnel since their forced removal. Whereas in Khartoum, Amb. Timothy Kearney had been wont to go jogging mornings through the streets without a security detail, or any worries, and his wife had been known to go shopping quite independently in the city markets, once they had moved to Nairobi, the tune changed. Three cars belonging to embassy personnel had been stolen, at gunpoint, and two embassy employees had been robbed, also at gunpoint. The sources of the anecdotes were persons from the U.S. Embassy itself.

It was neither the desire nor the mandate of the U.S. delegation of elected officials, to investigate allegations, that Sudan is harboring terrorists. As Swan made clear in discussions with his Sudanese hosts, there was no way that such a delegation could ascertain the veracity of such allegations—for example, that three persons suspected of involvement in the assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last year, were being harbored in Sudan. The delegation was seeking answers to other questions, regarding slavery and human rights violations. It was, however, eager to learn about the Sudanese political system.

During its ten-day stay in Sudan, the delegates experienced no harassment from police or military officials. The military checkpoints, about which members of the delegation had been forewarned, were nowhere to be seen. No military were visible on the streets, except for two ceremonial guards outside the Presidential palace, and a security detail near the entrance to the same. Only once was the delegation’s car stopped by police; one delegate, who was videotaping everything on the way, happened to photograph a military installation, without realizing it. A sign nearby indicated that the facility was not to be photographed, but the delegate did not see it in time. After the driver had explained that it was an American guest, who had done so inadvertently, the car was allowed to proceed without further delay. The film was not examined or confiscated. Members of the delegation were free to roam about, go for walks, use private taxis, meet with individuals who had nothing to do with the official tour, talk to foreign press representatives, and so forth. No questions were asked. No attempts were made to monitor their movements.

The political system

The most thorough presentation of the Sudanese political system was given the delegation by Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin Attabani, secretary general of the National Congress, who received the delegation Sept. 19 in the headquarters of his organization. Dr. Ghazi explained that the National Congress has been organized to bring together grassroots organizations

representing various constituencies, such as women, youth, trade unions, farmers, etc., because the country has not yet been fully unified. "When we became independent in 1956," he said, "we blindly adopted the Westminster model of democracy. Only later did we realize that it could not work, because it evolved in a different historical setting. Parties in Sudan," he continued, "were founded at the time, along the fault lines of society which existed then: They were tribal and regional, and as a result, society could not develop." Sudan, he continued, then detailed a series of military coups, punctuated by periods of democracy, and leading personalities asked themselves what democracy was all about. "Our focus," he said, "was on participation and accountability, we concentrated on the principle, not the form."

"Our situation was similar to that of America," he continued, "because we both had been colonized by the British. But the difference lies in the fact that, when the British left [when the Americans won the War of Independence], you did not adopt a British system." Sudan, on the other hand, did adopt the Westminster system.

"The federal system" which now reigns in Sudan, Dr. Salahuddin continued, "is unknown to the British." Referring to de Gaulle, he recalled how the great French leader had realized that the British parliamentary system did not suit the French, and called into being the Fifth Republic. If the French, he said, who shared many cultural and historical traits with the British, saw it this way, as did the Americans and the Canadians, then all the more reason for the Sudanese to chart out their own path. "We saw it as appropriate for us," he explained, "to find the right form, maintaining the principles of these democratic experiments, without following a specific model." He emphasized the need for political stability to allow for building the nation, and said democracy was essential to this.

Dr. Salahuddin made no attempt to present the Sudanese experiment as an absolute or as a model for export. On the contrary, he stressed, it must be "self-reflecting and self-perfecting." Sudan now enjoys greater freedom than in the past, he said, based on laws, including for a free press. But the system must be constantly subjected to review.

Comparing Sudan's system to that of the United States, which the Sudanese lawmakers studied in depth, he pointed out that the powers of the Sudanese Presidency are limited compared to those of the U.S. Executive. The Council of Ministers in Sudan, whose powers and responsibilities are collective, may overrule the President, something which is not the case in Washington. The President does not have the right to dissolve the National Assembly. According to a newly introduced principle, the judiciary reviews the acts of the President, his cabinet, and individual ministers, as well as the National Assembly, the state governments, and the state ministers. All acts are therefore under judiciary review, which means that any individual may contest the acts through the Supreme Court.

"Ours is a serious attempt," Dr. Salahuddin concluded, "at a democratic system that *works* in an African context. It is not a democratic facade. The economy is being liberalized, but with a social welfare system, which should cater to the poor and needy."

The delegation asked Dr. Salahuddin how he came to be the secretary general of the National Congress, and he explained: The National Congress meets every two years. It represents a national structure articulated from the local level to the nation. There are 17,000 residential areas as basic units, in which every citizen 18 years of age, who has resided there for three months, is eligible for participation and for assuming local office. There are no party membership cards. At the council level, local governments are elected, which issue by-laws, make budgets, etc. Then, one proceeds to the state level, and finally, the national. The federal system was introduced in 1992, in an attempt to unify the vast country, which still lacks a national rail infrastructure, for example, and has many language and ethnic diversities. Comparing the country to India, in certain respects, Dr. Salahuddin explained that federalism had been a demand raised by the south back in 1956, at independence. It had not been instituted, because it was seen by many governments as a form of division or partition. "It took up to 40 years to realize that federalism is not about partition," he said, and added, "the peace we are making today

So, You Wish To Learn All About Economics?

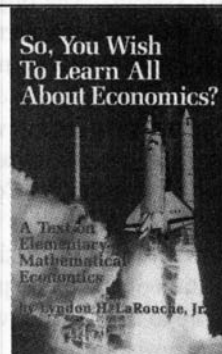
by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

A text on elementary mathematical economics, by the world's leading economist. Find out why *EIR* was right, when everyone else was wrong.

Order from:

Ben Franklin Booksellers, Inc.
107 South King Street Leesburg, VA 22075

\$10 plus shipping (\$1.50 for first book, \$.50 for each additional book). Bulk rates available. Information on bulk rates and videotape available on request.



with the rebel groups is a direct result of the federal system.”

He explained that through the congress process at all levels, 5,000 deputies are elected to attend the National Congress, and they, in turn, elect the secretary general. He was elected through this process at the National Congress in January 1996.

There were further questions from the American delegation: How does a local or tribal group bring its concerns or grievances to the attention of the secretary general? Dr. Salahuddin answered, the deputies who convene at the National Congress consider themselves “advocates of the base,” and bring these issues to the assembled body. Over a period of three days of convention, the 5,000 elected deputies convene in committees of 700-800, to thrash out policy issues. Representative McGee wanted to know, if coalitions were formed on such occasions, to lobby for infrastructure projects, for example, which might affect more than one locality or state. In response, Dr. Salahuddin took the example of the least-developed states, which are the ten in the south and some in the north, which founded a group called NIMA, which meets at the legislative and governmental level every three months, to discuss the best utilization of resources. This was compared to inter-state cooperation in the U.S.A.

Another means through which citizens raise issues to the congresses, is through public political debate, and the press. Dr. Salahuddin gave the example of a seminar which had been held just the evening before, in Khartoum, “on an issue which had been taboo five years ago: the pros and cons of the multi-party system.” The organizers of the seminar, he said, had expected about 150 participants, but 600 attended, including members of the government and the opposition. The press reported widely on the debate.

A further question was raised about the relationship between the congresses at their various levels and governing bodies. The National Congress, Dr. Salahuddin answered, is a political body, and is the supreme decision-making organ. It tends to make decisions of a broad nature, defining the direction of economic policy, for example, but not in detail. It is up to the Legislative branch, the National Assembly, to draft legislation.

A complex system of elections

In elucidating the rather complex system of elections which Sudan has evolved, Dr. Salahuddin first explained the problem which the political leadership faced in the country. He characterized it as “wrangling between the modern sector and the traditional sector.” The modern sector is made up of the educated layers, the top 10% of the population who are literate. The multi-party system, which existed for a short time prior to 1989, had favored the traditional sector, he explained, as the system of geographical constituencies promoted tribal and regional allegiances. Thus, he said, a qualified person might be defeated by an illiterate who had tribal backing. As a result, the more influential people, excluded from the system, took part in conspiracies with the military

to seize power, in a cycle of coups and counter-coups. The current congress system, he said, is an attempt to rectify this.

“Even though it may not seem ‘fair,’ the people who come through the congresses tend to be the professionals, the educated layers, the members of the modern sector. It is through the congresses that 125 members are elected to the National Assembly; they represent the modern sector. The other 275, who are elected directly to the National Assembly through geographical constituencies, come through tribal and local support; they represent the traditional sector,” he said.

In an effort to guarantee representation to the “weaker sectors,” such as women, a sort of quota system has been introduced, whereby 20 of the 125 parliamentarians elected through the indirect, congress system, must be women. As the visiting American legislators immediately noted, this is similar to the “affirmative action” concept in the United States. They remarked, that the 21 women in the Sudanese National Assembly—one directly elected and 20 elected through the congresses—represent a higher number than women serving in the U.S. Congress. They also expressed surprise to find out that three members of the Sudanese Supreme Court are women, appointed on the basis of merit.

Further material on the political system was presented in the delegation’s meeting with its counterparts in the Khartoum State Assembly. Led by the chairman of the Khartoum State Legislative Council, the group included members of several committees, including those on education and social affairs, economics, and agriculture. They explained that the Khartoum State Assembly, made up of 60 members, is elected according to the same procedure used for the National Assembly; i.e., that part are elected by the State Congress, and the rest by direct election from geographically designated electoral districts in the state. The governor is selected by the council, from three candidates chosen by the President. The governor selects his cabinet, which is subject to the approval of the council. Again, 10% of the members are women.

A final briefing on the electoral system was provided by Dr. A. Moneim Z. Nahas, Deputy Chief Justice (ret.) and head of the General Elections Authority. Dr. Nahas said that in 1994, the International Parliamentarians Association, of which Sudan is a member, established the criteria for free elections, which provided the basis for Sudan’s Election Act of 1995. He explained that in the recent 1996 elections, Sudan registered eligible voters for the first time. In prior cases of elections (in 1955, 1965, and 1986), there had been ad hoc committees which ran the elections, but no voter lists were made. In 1996, all Sudanese of sound mind above the age of 18, resident in a location for three months, were registered as eligible voters. Copies of the completed lists were sent to the individuals states, and entered into state registers; copies from the states were forwarded to the National Permanent Register. Dr. Nahas described the elections for the National Assembly and the President (the first direct elections for President) which took place in April, and noted that the international observers sent to monitor the tally, had issued statements confirming

that they had been fair and free. The observers included the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Arab League.

IV. Is Sudan a threat to the United States?

After hearing the British line, that Sudan considers the United States to be the "White Satan," the greatest shock delivered to the members of the American delegation was certainly the realization that the entire Sudanese intelligentsia, and the Sudanese people as a whole, are very pro-American. The current, bad relations between the U.S. government and Sudan are viewed as an aberration by the Sudanese, who think of their country as close to America culturally as well as historically. As Ahmed Abd Al Rahman Mohamed, secretary general of the Council for International People's Friendship, pointed out, the United States had been on good terms with previous governments. "I was interior minister in 1983," he said, "in Nimieri's military regime, which was far worse than our situation now. But at the time, Sudan was the number-one friend of the U.S." Now, he continued, when one would expect Washington to seek stability in Sudan, and thereby, in the entire strategically important region, the opposite is the case.

One common feature in the Sudanese and American experience, which many people pointed out to the delegation, is that both were colonies of the British Empire. Unlike many other former British colonies in Africa, Sudan has developed deep ties with the United States, especially through the thousands of Sudanese who have studied in the United States. Dr. Turabi, president of the National Assembly, who has graduate degrees from England and France, is a relative exception to the rule, as most other leading members of the government, legislative bodies, and professionals, studied in America. Yet even Dr. Turabi, in his lengthy conversation with the delegation, was outspoken about his positive impression of the United States, a country which he knows well, having visited almost all 50 states.

During a farewell dinner, cordially offered by the Sudanese-American Friendship Society, members of the association turned out to be former diplomats at their embassy in Washington; lawyers who had studied international law at Harvard, as well as engineers who graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; a woman engaged in public health, who as a former parliamentarian, had visited the United States 30 times, and remembered certain political figures such as Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.), who had shown interest in Sudan; a diplomat who lived in the United States for 12 years, who viewed the current tensions between Khartoum and Washington as transitory; and so on and so forth. As one member stressed, Sudan's educated layers have contributed historically to building up administration, medicine, and other social sectors in many countries in the area, from the Gulf

countries to other African neighbors, as well as the United States itself. Across the board, the attitude expressed by these and scores of other Sudanese whom the delegation met with, was one of eagerness in improving relations with the United States. The mere existence of a Sudanese-American Friendship Society, as former Representative Mann noted, demonstrates the desire to improve contact and communication between the two peoples.

On several occasions, members of the American delegation asked their hosts what "message" they would like to have sent back to the United States, to Congress, and to the American people in general. The answer invariably included the notion, that Sudan did not constitute a threat to U.S. interests in the region or elsewhere, and that it sought only to establish relations on a basis of mutual respect between the two countries. One leading member of the Friendship Society said they expected the United States to treat Sudan with "fairness." Another leading political figure stressed the need to have a "fair deal," and demanded that the United States make judgments about the political and social reality of the country on the basis of first-hand knowledge, not on the basis of "reports" issued by diplomatic missions elsewhere.

The fact that the Schiller Institute organized a delegation of elected officials to visit the country, the first since the grave allegations have been circulated, was taken by all as a sign of good will, on the part of some Americans. The question remains open: Will the U.S. administration follow up?

The Gezira Scheme

Sudan's struggle for food self-sufficiency

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

One of the leading reasons why Sudan has been singled out for destruction by the British, is that it has the potential to feed not only its own population, of 28 million, but the entire African continent and beyond. According to reports produced by strategic think-tanks such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., Sudan could be the breadbasket for Africa and the Middle East. *EIR* has documented at length, how the unparalleled agricultural potential of Sudan could be realized, through application of modern methods of mechanized agriculture, on a vast scale, including water management projects (see *EIR*, Jan. 1, 1993, "The Rebirth of Africa," and June 9, 1995, *Special Report*).

Because the intention of international policymaking insti-