CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

Horn of Africa: Its Intractable Dilemmas

The Horn of Africa is a vast territory extending from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean on the south of the Arabian peninsula. Generally, the countries of the Horn include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. The people of this region represent a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Due to its strategic geographical significance, the Horn of Africa has been a victim of foreign aggression for centuries. State boundaries within the Horn, for example, are the result of European colonialism. Colonial rule and the process of its establishment created additional conflict that caused the displacement of many populations in the region. After independence, the Horn was once again victimized, by the military and dictatorial regimes which replaced the former colonial authorities. Civil servants often found themselves struggling with government jobs for which they were not prepared. The result was total social, economic and political disaster for the region (Siad Barre of Somalia and Haile Mariam Mengistu of Ethiopia are but two examples).

The legacy of colonialism has been reinforced by ethnic, tribal, religious and other differences and inequalities. Exacerbated by superpower intervention, drought and famine, this legacy has caused the mass exodus of refugees and internally displaced people in the Horn. The 1984-85 famine in Ethiopia, the 1986-88 famine in southern Sudan and the present crisis in Somalia and southern Sudan are clearly related to the colonial legacy. In fact, refugee movement within the Horn has become a vicious cycle of violence, political instability and famine. At present, there are more than five million refugees, making the refugee population in the Horn the biggest in Africa and second highest in the world. This refugee problem has also become an obstacle to development. Whereas some of the obstacles to development are imposed from within, the international economic disorder also plays an important role in retarding the development of the region. As René Dumont (1969) clearly pointed out:

> The looting of the Third World has never stopped since the period of slavery and colonization. It is con-

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> tinuing in our own day in the form of unfair system of trading in which raw materials initially agricultural and subsequently mineral are brought far below their value.

It could be added that the same is true of the human capital of the region, with regard to the "brain drain" phenomenon. The marginalization of the developing countries has had a disastrous effect upon the people and countries concerned. Therefore, it is important that there be more pressure from Africans to get fair play within the international economic order. The concepts of self-sufficiency and self-reliance are fundamental for Africans in order to get respect. Any assistance channelled toward developing countries should be long-term developmental aid with a view to achieving self-reliance.

One method of achieving self-reliance is by establishing linkages between educational institutions of the North and South. With this in mind, the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, has in principle agreed to initiate joint research with the Institute of Development Research, Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. Such North-South cooperation will benefit scholars, local and international NGOs, and more importantly refugees, returnees and displaced people.

This special issue is intended to raise some fundamental issues concerning the Horn of Africa. Much of the information contained in this issue is based on field work, participatory observation and discussions with refugees, returnees and displaced people, and local and international agencies which have first hand information about the countries in question. Jean-Pierre Mputu addresses the main reasons that caused the departure of millions of refugees from the Horn. One of the fundamental issues raised in this issue is a look at the background of the existing crisis in Somalia. In that regard, Hassan Mohamed looks at the multidimensional nature of the conflicts and wars in the Horn by presenting different views than those held by the mainstream media and academic writings. Shoa Asfaha and Véronique Lassailly-Jacob address the issue of self-sufficiency, local integration and future prospects within the context of UNHCR-sponsored agricultural settlements that were established in Eastern Sudan for Eritrean refugees. Alastair and Patta Scott-Villiers, and Cole Dodge outline the failure of the international community in dealing with the 150,000 Sudanese refugees who were pawns in Sudan's civil war and who were repatriated from Itang refugee camp in Ethiopia in 1991. This pattern was also demonstrated within the context of the Tigryan refugee repatriation where nearly 200,000 Tigryan refugees returned to Tigray (Teklewoini, 1993; Hendrie, 1991). John Morris provides an overview of the situation of the displaced in the Sudan. Aggravating problems are shown to be the war between the North and the South, the change in land tenure toward mechanized farms, and the obstacles put in the way of aid agencies by the warring factions. The future of Sudan is not seen as a bright one amongst her neighbours in the Horn.

Generally, the Horn is confronted with a variety of obstacles and challenges for future development. Although the initiative to look at long-term developmental policies and programs has to come from within, external pressure from the international community and attitudes toward the region must also change to reduce the tension in the region and the displacement of people. ■

Yohannes Gebresellasie, Guest Editor.

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Les Personnes Déplacées de la Corne de l'Afrique[1]

Jean-Pierre Mputu

Abstract

Human suffering within the Horn has become endemic. The multidimensional crisis that has surrounded the region for decades has been exacerbated by inter- and intra-ethnic violence, conflicts and wars. These conflicts and wars have had disastrous social, economic, political and environmental consequences—in particular human displacement within the Horn. This paper defines new categories of refugees. The author questions whether displaced people in the Horn are Convention refugees, environmental refugees or simply economic migrants. The problems that they face in the first country of asylum and the resettlement country are discussed.

Introduction

> La souffrance humaine, en Afrique noire, semble être devenue une endémie. La dramatique crise multiforme qu'elle traverse depuis des décennies s'est notamment traduite par des conflits inter-ethniques nombreux (internes ou inter-étatique), par de terribles violences, par un regain de mortalité infantile, par de graves disettes et famines et par un flot important de personnes déplacées et réfugiés... C'est le continent qui compte le plus grand nombre de fugitifs: en 1990, on estime à 5 millions, le nombre de réfugiés et à 12 millions, le nombre de personnes déplacées (Mathieu 1991, 40).

Les situations politique, économique et écologique de la Corne de l'Afrique se sont gravement détériorées depuis quelques années. Des conflits armés de toute sorte s'y sont produits provocant ainsi la déstabilisation des secteurs économiques, pourtant encore faibles. La politique de regroupement forcé des villages, entreprise par l'ancien gouvernement militaire d'Éthiopie, a aussi contribué à la déstabilisation de la région. À l'instabilité politique et économique provoquée par des hommes en guerre, s'ajoute celle créée par les destructions ou dégradations naturelles. Pour la population locale, il ne reste qu'une seule issue: la fuite. Mais une question se pose: ces personnes déplacées sont-elles réfugiées au sens onusien du terme ou simplement migrantes économiques?

Après la grande sécheresse de 1984-85, les situations dramatiques trouvées dans le camp des réfugiés de la famine éthiopiens de Wad Kowli (cf. Berry 1985, 16-17), au Soudan, où dans celui des réfugiés de la famine soudanais d'Itang, en Éthiopie (cf. Hudson 1985, 18), devraient interpeller la communauté internationale afin qu'elle recherche une solution plus durable et plus décente aux problèmes de ces nouvelles catégories de réfugiés.

Les personnes déplacées et la Convention de Genève de 1951

L'article 1A(2) de la Convention de Genève et l'article 1(2) du Protocole de New York de 1967 définissent le réfugié comme étant une personne:

> Qui,... craignant avec raison d'être persécutée du fait de sa race, de sa religion, de sa nationalité, de son appartenance à un certain groupe social ou de ses opinions politiques, se trouve hors du pays dont elle a la nationalité et qui ne peut ou, du fait de cette crainte, ne veut se réclamer de la protection de ce pays; ou qui, si elle n'a pas de nationalité et se trouve hors du pays dans lequel elle avait sa résidence habituelle à la suite de tels événements, ne peut ou, en raison de ladite crainte, ne veut y retourner.

La Convention et le Protocole eurent deux mérites: le premier, fut celui d'avoir défini juridiquement le terme "réfugié"[2] et le second, fut d'avoir établi clairement d'une part les droits et les devoirs des réfugiés et d'autre part les obligations des pays d'accueil.

Les réfugiés ont des devoirs à l'égard du pays hôte, en particulier l'obligation de respecter ses lois et ses règlements ainsi que les mesures adoptées pour maintenir l'ordre public (cf. HCR 1988, 14; Mulamba Mbuyi 1993, 29); le droit fondamental[3] accordé à un réfugié est celui de ne pas être expulsé, ni renvoyé, de quelque manière que ce soit, dans le pays où sa vie ou sa liberté serait menacée en raison de sa race, de sa religion, de sa nationalité ou de son appartenance à un groupe social donné ou de ses opinions politiques [Art. 33].

Ainsi, suivant les enseignements de la Convention de Genève, entérinés par le Protocole de New York, ne peut revendiquer du statut de réfugié que celui qui est compris dans le cadre restreint de cette définition (voir HCR 1979, 10-27) comme décrit ci-dessus. Ces réfugiés reconnus par la Convention sont des "réfugiés classiques."

Les nouvelles catégories de réfugiés dans la Corne de l'Afrique

> Cette région connaît depuis longtemps troubles internes et guerres, gouvernements tyranniques, absence de démocratie et persécutions, sécheresses et inondations, qui provoquent désorganisations, massacres, morts prématurées et exodes massifs (ibid, 42).

Les quatre pays qui composent la "Corne" de l'Afrique ont connu, tour à tour, des régimes marxistes-léninistes copiés sur le modèle soviétique et des guerres interminables soutenues par l'URSS, Cuba et la RDA. On ne peut passer sous silence la violence de la répression que ces régimes ont perpétrée. Les guerres récentes en Éthiopie sont celles menées contre l'Érythrée, les "Tigray" et en Ogaden.[4] Le Soudan, pour sa part, a vu s'éveiller le cauchemar des violences ethniques et religieuses entre le nord et le sud du pays;

Jean-Pierre Mputu, doctorandus en droit canonique de l'Université Saint-Paul d'Ottawa.

la Somalie, quant à elle, s'est retrouvée, plus tard, coincée dans une guerre civile sans merci opposant les fidèles du Président Siad Barre aux diverses factions armées de libération nationale.

Toutes ces guerres et rivalités, ajoutées aux diverses "destructions écologiques"—les États de la "Corne" de l'Afrique sont géographiquement situés dans des zones de turbulence climatiques où périodes de sécheresse alternent avec pluies diluviennes—ont conduit de nombreux habitants à fuir leur région et à partir, dans le même pays ou à l'étranger (en traversant parfois des frontières invisibles) dans l'espoir d'échapper à la mort ou de vivre moins misérablement (Mathieu 1991, 41).

Les personnes déplacées par les destructions écologiques sont de nouvelles catégories de réfugiés qualifiées par la jurisprudence internationale de "réfugiés environnementaux"; ces réfugiés sont les victimes de certaines calamités naturelles (sécheresses, inondations, désertification...), ou autres catastrophes survenues indépendamment de leur volonté; ces personnes déplacées sont souvent très peu assistées; non seulement leurs dirigeants politiques essayent de les empêcher de quitter le pays en ordonnant la fermeture des frontières mais encore elles sont entassées dans des camps d'urgence[5] où elles sont confiées aux offices de l'aide humanitaire quant elles ne sont pas tout simplement abandonnées à elles-mêmes.

Ces nouveaux réfugiés remettent en question la définition de la Convention de Genève et interpellent la communauté internationale afin qu'elle leur accorde protection et assistance au même titre que les réfugiés conventionnels.

La difficulté consiste aussi à établir la distinction entre les demandeurs d'asile qui répondent à la définition de réfugié lato sensu donnée par la Convention et ceux qui fuient leur pays pour chercher de meilleures conditions de vie; cette dernière catégorie de personnes est communément appelée à tort "réfugiés économiques."

Établir la distinction entre réfugiés politiques et simples migrants économiques semble facile; mais il ne faut pas oublier que c'est le pouvoir politique qui organise le secteur économique et nous affirmerons avec Jacques Vernant (1954, 11) que

> Dans un grand nombre d'États modernes, toute mesure, quelle qu'en soit la nature, est "un événement politique", car poursuit-il encore, la situation économique n'est plus assimilée à un phénomène "naturel", mais engage la responsabilité des États.

C'est pourquoi, il serait à présent aberrant de continuer à persister à pouvoir différencier les réfugiés politiques des réfugiés économiques, car, nul ne l'ignore, l'État est aujourd'hui responsable tant de la persécution de ses ressortissants que de leurs conditions de vie.

Les réfugiés et les difficultés liées au premier pays d'asile

> Celui qui voudrait quitter son pays d'origine pour demander asile ailleurs est confronté à plusieurs difficultés d'ordre administratif: d'abord, il y a déjà une difficulté technique résultant de l'absence de passeport. Les autorités frontalières du pays où le réfugié voudrait entrer seront peu disposées à l'accueillir, ne serait-ce que pour la raison que son identité n'est pas établie et peut susciter des doutes. En conséquence, ne pouvant pénétrer régulièrement sur le territoire où il voudrait trouver asile, le réfugié s'y introduit clandestinement. Il y mène alors une existence illégale, évitant tout contact avec les autorités, vivant toujours sous la menace d'être découvert et expulsé (Bolesta-Koziebrodzki 1962, 86).

Ensuite il y a des difficultés liées à la sécurité du réfugié qui, en affrontant les autorités du pays d'accueil, risque le refoulement ou le simple renvoi du territoire; tentative qui ne pourra que faire empirer sa situation déjà précaire en mettant en danger sa vie et celle de ses plus proches parents restés au pays.

D'où le choix souvent difficile et périlleux du revendicateur du statut de réfugié de quitter ce premier pays d'asile qui, le plus souvent, est un État frontalier ayant des relations de fraternité, de bon voisinage et d'amitié avec le pays d'origine du requérant d'asile. Cette migration clandestine le persécutera encore dans le deuxième pays d'asile où il se verra refuser l'asile et sera prié de quitter le pays sous peine d'être renvoyé manu militari dans le pays d'origine ou dans un pays de premier séjour juste pour avoir séjourné dans un autre pays avant la demande du statut des réfugiés. Cette situation est à la base de l'augmentation des "réfugiés en orbite" qui contournent la planète sans statut juridique et sans protection légale.

Parmi ces "réfugiés en orbite" se trouvent les "réfugiés environnementaux" qui se sont vus refusés un statut de réfugié dans un pays tiers, car les États occidentaux ont fermé[6] et ferment encore (Marissal 1993, A3) leurs portes à ces nouveaux réfugiés qui sont alors ballottés d'un pays à un autre sans statut juridique.

Par opposition aux réfugiés classiques de la Convention de Genève, le réfugié en orbite est celui que les États se renvoient, faute pour lui d'avoir un pays d'accueil déterminé (voir Du Bled et Carlier 1986, 21; Bettati 1985, 147; Melander 1978, 3).

Ainsi la plupart des réfugiés provenant des pays de la "Corne" de l'Afrique n'ont pas la chance d'obtenir le statut de réfugiés, car leur départ du pays d'origine n'est pas commandé par des raisons d'opinion politique, d'appartenance raciale, de religion, de nationalité ou d'appartenance à un certain groupe social telles que décrites par la Convention de Genève de 1951; et les raisons humanitaires ne jouent pas efficacement dans leur dossier en cas de procédure pour l'obtention du statut des réfugiés.

Le Canada, à titre d'exemple, a essayé de déroger à ces devoirs internationaux en introduisant dans sa loi sur l'immigration de 1976 la clause de "pays de premier asile." Les agents de l'immigration qui décident de la demande d'asile en première instance, sont d'avis que tous les requérants

ayant séjourné dans un pays voisin avant de venir au Canada pourraient y être renvoyés. Mais nous pensons que l'on devrait tenir compte aussi de différents problèmes d'administration et d'ordre sécuritaire que rencontrent les réfugiés dans le pays de premier asile avant de pouvoir les y retourner. Pour se rendre au Canada, les personnes déplacées en provenance des pays de la "Corne" de l'Afrique doivent nécessairement transiter par un pays tiers et dans la plupart des cas, ce sont les États frontaliers des pays d'origine de ces personnes persécutées qui servent de tremplin.

Conclusion

L'histoire ou mieux encore le vieux passé juif peut nous servir de conclusion et nous instruire. La Bible raconte l'histoire d'un certain Joseph, dont les ancêtres auraient quitté Bethlehem, leur village natal, pour aller s'installer à Nazareth en Galilée.

Quelles ont été les raisons qui ont causé leur départ? Des raisons politiques? Des raisons économiques? On peut aussi se demander si ce sont les persécutions politiques dirigées contre son fils ou bien les perspectives d'un meilleur niveau de vie qui incitèrent Joseph à fuir en Égypte. Quelles sont les véritables raisons? Quelle aurait été aujourd'hui la position d'un pays d'accueil si un nouveau Joseph apparaissait invoquant les mêmes raisons que celles du Joseph de la Bible?

Est-ce que l'on prêterait foi aux affirmations de Joseph ou, au contraire, l'enverrait-on, lui et sa famille, dans un camp regroupant ceux qui vont être refoulés chez eux sous prétexte que leur crainte n'est pas fondée? Ou encore, serait-il envoyé dans un "pays sûr" en attendant que sa requête soit examinée et que le processus de sélection s'accomplisse afin de déterminer si sa requête est recevable ou n'a pas un minimum de fondement?

Les instruments internationaux élaborés pour protéger les réfugiés sont actuellement dépassés; leur révision s'impose pour faire face aux nouvelles catégories de réfugiés qui apparaissent et se multiplient chaque jour. ■

Notes

1. Cf. Mathieu (1991, 42): "En 1990, 2 millions de personnes sont réfugiées dans les quatre pays (Éthiopie, Somalie, Soudan et Djibouti) qui constituent la Corne de l'Afrique. Les trois premiers de ces pays accueillent chacun des réfugiés, cependant qu'ils sont aussi responsables d'une fuite massive d'une partie de leurs citoyens... Cette zone est un carrefour de civilisations, de religions, d'ethnies, retaillées en fonction des interventions des colonisateurs anglais, français et italiens. S'y sont heurtés, depuis longtemps, d'une part le vieux régime théocratique éthiopien (chrétien, régissant des peuples assez sédentaires), État structuré mais au pouvoir limité par des féodalités, et d'autre part, les peuplades somaliennes, composées de pasteurs nomades évoluant sur un territoire artificiellement découpé par les colonisateurs qui, dans leur migration à partir de la côte, ont exercé une pression constante sur l'Ogaden et le Kenya."
2. Dans le langage courant, le terme "réfugié" désigne aussi bien une personne forcée de quitter son domicile habituel que celle qui est victime d'une inondation ou celle fuyant la persécution; Voir à ce sujet Bolesta-Koziebrodzki (1962, 60).
3. En plus des dispositions relatives à l'instruction, au marché du travail, à l'assistance publique et autres bénéfices de caractère social.
4. L'Érythrée fut rattachée à l'Éthiopie en 1950 pour récompenser l'engagement de l'empereur d'Éthiopie du côté des Alliés pendant la seconde guerre mondiale (cf Mathieu 1991, 42). De la même façon, des territoires somaliens (de l'Ogaden en 1946 et du Haud en 1955) furent annexés à l'Ethiopie pour récompenser son effort de guerre; mais devenue indépendante en 1960, la Somalie entra en guerre contre l'Ethiopie en vue de reprendre ses possessions territoriales.
5. Voir la politique de "villagisation" appliquée en Ethiopie sous le régime du Président Mengistu Haile Mariam.
6. Cf. Melander (1985, 29): "Depuis la fin des années 1970, l'afflux d'étrangers n'a cessé de croître en Europe, malgré l'arrêt officiel de l'immigration. Parmi ces étrangers, le nombre de personnes cherchant l'asile a considérablement augmenté depuis la deuxième moitié des années 1980. La politique de "frontières fermées" a donné lieu à un essor de trafics organisés par des passeurs exploitant la détresse humaine."

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Refugee Exodus from Somalia: Revisiting the Causes

Hassan A. Mohamed

Résumé

Cet article se propose d'examiner les causes du conflit Somalien qui a provoqué l'exode de plus de deux millions de réfugiés. Par une approche historique du développement de la tragédie, l'auteur offre une perspective plus complexe et très différente de celle offerte par les médias qui se cantonnent dans des discussions simplistes et superficielles des symptômes actuels. Pour Hassan Mohammed, les causes de la crise Somalienne sont liées à un processus de désintégration de la société civile et de ses valeurs sociales, culturelles et politiques, une désintégration qui résulte de quatre évènements historiques: le découpage de la nation et du territoire Somalien en plusieurs entités; l'impact de la guerre froide; l'imposition de systèmes politique, culturel et éducatif étrangers à la culture Somalienne; et enfin, la manipulation et l'exploitation des divisions claniques par l'élite politique afin de demeurer au pouvoir.

Introduction

The most recent and probably the largest refugee exodus in the history of the Horn of Africa started in Somalia in 1988. By the end of 1992, the world had witnessed the ugly consequences of four years of civil war and famine that had devastated Somalia and led to the disintegration of the state and civil society. The destructive forces of war and famine have claimed the lives of approximately 350,000 Somalis and sent more than one million refugees to every corner of the globe. Most of the refugees fled to neighbouring countries. According to sources such as U.S. Committee for Refugees (1993) and UNHCR (1993) there were about 400,000 Somali refugees in Ethiopia in 1992, another 320,000 in Kenya and approximately 85,000 hosted by tiny Djibouti. Another 250,000 refugees were dispersed in Asia, Europe and North America. Besides, about two million people were internally displaced (see Tables 1-4).

This article discusses the causes of the Somali disaster from a different perspective than the standard mainstream explanations. The severity of the crisis in Somalia was largely unknown to the outside world prior to the televised images of starving multitudes and marauding armed youngsters which attracted the world's attention—eventually leading to the now famous "Operation Restore Hope." But the impressions portrayed gave neither an accurate picture nor adequately explained the genesis of the crisis. In most cases, the causes of the current chaos and crises in Somalia have been attributed to internal factors, such as "a senseless tribal war over state-control." This became the standard premise for most of the popular and academic writings on the crisis in Somalia.

The fixation on the immediate social crisis—such as lawlessness, anarchy and starvation—can be both misleading and unjust. It is misleading because the emphasis is on the symptoms and not on the causes of the situation. This approach not only leads to inadequate understanding of the problems but is also unjust when the diagnosis primarily focuses on the single dimension of internal factors, while ignoring external and historical aspects. Such a single-sided approach tended "to blame the victims for their misery and agony" (Keynan 1992) and resulted in the portrayal of Somalis as "either gun-crazy looters or as hapless victims" that needed to be rescued from themselves (Rakia 1992).

It is unfortunate that the discourse on the crisis in Somalia has so far ignored the complex historical development of the tragedy. Abdi Samatar (1992, 626) aptly described the problem:

> One of the casualties of the gruesome nightmare that is gripping Somalia has been the capacity to think historically and systematically about the nature of the malady, and to find practical ways of controlling the present in order to build a more sustainable future.

The failure of "Operation Restore Hope" is an apt illustration of this point; the good intentions of the operation made many innocent Somalis victims rather than beneficiaries of the supposedly humanitarian intervention.

To understand fully the causes of the crisis, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional scholarship which tends to reduce the causes to a single factor, namely, Somali segmentary clanism (Abdi Samatar 1992 and Keynan 1992). The causes behind the crisis are the result of an interplay of political, economic, sociocultural and ecological factors that have been in the making for a long time (Wisner 1992; Keynan 1992 and Abdi Samatar 1992). The correlations of these can be understood from a historical perspective that views the disintegration of indigenous social systems and civil society as the consequences of:

1. the impact of the colonial legacy especially the partition of the Somali nation and territories;
2. the legacy of the Cold War;
3. the imposition of alien centralized structures, systems of governance, culture and education which contributed to the disintegration of the indigenous political, economic and sociocultural modes of life and structures that were compatible

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with the harsh and precarious environment of the Horn of Africa; and finally

4. the failure of the mentally colonized ruling elite to develop viable alternatives to western values and systems of governance rather than resorting to the manipulation and exploitation of the segmentary nature of the Somali social system in order to stay in power.

The Partition of the Somali Nation: A Colonial Legacy

A major causal factor in the current crisis is the impact of the colonial partition of Somali nation into five separate parts: British Somaliland in the north; North Frontier District (NFD, which Britain later ceded to Kenya); Italian Somaliland in the south; French Somaliland (now Djibouti); and a large region known as Ogaden which all three European powers relinquished portions of to Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia as a reward for his collaboration (Lewis 1988; Harbeson 1991; Zolberg 1992 and Sheikh-Abdi 1993). Only two parts of the Somali nation—the former British Somaliland and former Italian Somaliland—out of five gained independence and united, on July 1, 1960 to form the present Somali Democratic Republic. For Somalis, one of the most devastating results of the colonial partition was that it "frustrated Somali national aspirations and fractured the basis for statehood laid by stable colonial rule elsewhere [in Africa]" (Harbeson 1991). Consequently, this legacy gave birth to strong sentiments of Pan-Somalism, whose pursuit helped precipitate sporadic wars between Somalia and Ethiopia. For example, the wars of 1960, 1963-64 and 1976-78 directly contributed to several refugee populations. Before we discuss Pan-Somalism let us first look at the role of the superpowers during the Cold War era in the Horn of Africa.

The Role of the Superpowers

The proximity of the Horn of Africa to the Suez Canal and the oil rich Middle East have made it attractive to foreign involvement in its affairs. The United States and the former Soviet Union, driven by geopolitical and ideological motives, turned the Horn of Africa into one of the most bitterly contested battlefields of the Cold War. Since the early 1960s, the superpowers—partly in response to the demands of their local clients—dumped massive amounts of deadly weapons into the region.

Somalia and Ethiopia are among the poorest countries in the world, yet during the 1970s and 1980s their military rulers diverted tremendous amounts of national resources to build and sustain huge standing armies. One Somali writer, Keynan (1993) estimated that Somalia spent between 60 and 80 percent of its annual budget on defense. He put the annual public expenditure per soldier at $US 2,065; compared to, say, the salary of $US 100 to a senior lecturer at the Somali National University. The cost of soldiers weapons to the local people—delivered in the form of loans and aid—exceeded $US 12 billion. For example, at the height of Ogaden war in "just five months, between November 1977 and March 1978, the Soviet Union dumped $US 2 billion worth of sophisticated weaponry in the Horn (Keynan 1992, 6-7)." Today, the deadly arms in the hands of the Somalis that confront the UN multilateral military mission are the legacy of the Cold War (Zolberg 1992). There is no need to elaborate the

Table 1. Somali Refugees in Africa, 1992

Ethiopia	Djibouti	Kenya	Egypt	Tanzania	Uganda	Total
400,000	85,000	320,000	5,600	1,200	4,100	815,900

Note: Approximately 2,000,000 internally displaced in 1992.

Source: USCR, 1993. *World Refugee Survey, 1993*. Washington, DC.

Table 2. Somalis with Refugee and Refugee-like Status in Asia, 1992

Saudi Arabia*	Yemen	Other	Total
150,000	56,200	15,100	221,300

*Refugee-like status

Source: USCR, 1993. *World Refugee Survey, 1993*. Washington, DC.

Table 3. Somali Asylum Applicants in Europe, 1988-92 and Jan.-June, 1993

Host Country	1988-92[1]	Jan.-June 1993[2]	Total
Denmark	2,000	433	2,433
Netherlands	10,400	6,008	16,408
Norway	2,400	114	2,514
Sweden	7,200	505	7,705
Switzerland	2,300	1,919	4,219
United Kingdom	6,500	835	7,335
Finland	n/a	57	57
France	n/a	389	389
Spain	n/a	55	55
Total	32,800	10,315	43,115

[1] Source: UNHCR, 1993. *The State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection*. Geneva.

[2] Source: European Consultation on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). 1993. *European Data Source*.

Table 4. Number of Asylum Claims in Canada by Somalis, 1989 to September 1993

1989	1990	1991	1992	Jan.-Sept. 1993	Total
2,704	3,879	3,495	3,194	1,631	14,903

Source: Immigration Support Services, Field Operational Support System Canada.

role these arms have played in Somalia's ongoing destruction and refugee exodus.

Pan-Somalism: The Faded Dream

The post-colonial regimes of Somalia spent considerable amounts of energy and resources toward unification of the dismembered Somali nation. Pursuing this dream led to constant hostilities and open warfare between Somalia and the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia and Kenya during the 1960s. A decade later, sensing the decline of the legitimacy of their military rule, Siad Barre (Somalia's former dictator) and his colleagues played their final card—Pan-Somalism, a matter heavy in every Somali's heart.

In 1975, Somalia supported the dominant Western Somali Liberation Movement (WSLF) in Ogaden (under Ethiopian rule) in an attempt to realize the dream of Somali unification. On July 23, 1977 the Somali army entered Ogaden in support of WSLF. It quickly captured more than 95 percent of the Somali inhabited lands and launched assaults on the outskirts of Harar and Dira-Dawa.

The balance of power changed when the former military regime in Ethiopia broke off relations with the United States. At the same time, Somalia expelled the Soviets. Viewing the Horn of Africa as a strategic area, the superpowers switched horses. The Soviet Union embarked on a massive airlift, which the world had not experienced since the World War II, to support the Ethiopian side and to save Mengistu's regime. Siad Barre was unable either to persuade Russia to be neutral or to secure western help. Consequently, Somalia lost the war to the forces of Ethiopia, equipped with Cuban, East German and Soviet expertise and technology.

The Aftermath of Ogaden War

The Somali rulers had disastrously miscalculated the whole endeavour and the Somali people paid a costly price. First, there was the unprecedented flight of 1.5 million refugees from the vengeful re-imposition of Ethiopian rule in Ogaden. Second, the defeat had a negative psychological impact on the morale and self-esteem of the population and set the stage for the political disintegration of Somali unity. Once the last hope for Pan-Somalism had vanished, all of the resources, energy and sentiments that had been directed toward the external enemies became a double edged sword that was now turned inward. Third, people could no longer endure the political, economic and social hardships, and openly challenged the leadership as a result. Thus, the pursuit of Pan-Somalism had directly contributed to the present destruction. Harbeson (1991, 223), comparing the consequences of Ogaden war for the rulers of Ethiopia and Somalia, also contends:

> The causes of the [current] civil wars in Somalia are significantly different from those in Ethiopia. The 1977-1978 Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia had failed to extend and escalate the ongoing Ethiopian civil wars and in general had helped to rally support for a beleaguered Mengistu regime. In contrast, in Somalia the Ogaden conflict inspired the civil war that was to topple the regime of Siad Barre more than a decade later.

Finally, the defeat had widened the division among the ruling class that had already been engaged in a feud over the misappropriation of public resources and the state treasury:

> Once the new regime consolidated its power, which took about four to five years, the hard-fisted military bureaucracy began openly to raid the public coffers at an unprecedented rate, particularly after the Ogaden war of 1977-8. The defeat of the Somali army added more fuel to the disintegration of the ruling junta and the armed forces (Samatar and Samatar 1987, 683).

The squabbling among the leadership took the form of "pitting one faction against the other in an old and familiar fashion" (i.e., "clanism"; ibid, 684). A clan-based attempted coup in 1978 was brutally suppressed and consequently the resources of the nation were diverted to the diverse warring factions among the elite.

Tribalism in African Social Systems

> Son, the tribalism business is the work of the urban people. They cook it there and then serve it to us. (Issa, a peasant in Jowhar, spring 1990; Quoted by Abdi Samatar 1992, 625).

One of the major contentions of this paper is that the majority of Somalis do not view tribalism as the cause of their problems but rather as the creation of the ruling elites. In the past, it had been the colonial administrations that used the "centrifugal tendencies" of indigenous social structures as a divide and rule strategy to consolidate their power. In the pursuit of their economic and political interests, the post-independence ruling elites used tribalism to divide and manipulate the clan-segmented, but otherwise homogenous, Somali society.

This view is not unique to the Somali context; we find support from African scholars who argue that, in Africa, colonialism has created "tribalism" in addition to nation-states. For example, Osaghae (1991, 28) contends that "modern" forms of tribe and tribalism are emergent social structures. He cites Raymond Apthorpoe who argues that "the colonial regimes administratively created tribes as we think of them today." Similarly, Ali Mazrui (1980) argues that the western impact has instilled three levels of identity among Africans: the identity of tribe tops the list followed by identities of nation-state and race. The point here is that the way tribalism is defined and used today evolved during the colonial era. Of course, African communities were divided along different lineage and kinship structures, but the divisive aspects of tribalism were less pronounced because African societies had indigenous social laws and norms—called *Xeer* in the Somali context—that regulated civil society and ensured political stability. Hence, many African communities were more stable and harmonious than they are today. These systems have been mar-

ginalized as result of colonialism and western influence.

The Indigenous Somali Social System: Kinship and *Xeer*

For centuries the "pillar of Somali social structure" was the communal system based on family and clan relationships and interactions (Abdi Samatar 1992, 629). Each basic family unit or household stood as an "autonomous unit" in its economic production, yet the neighbouring groups had guaranteed their own physical and social security through formal contracts (*Xeer*) of alliances among men who calculated their loyalties to one another in terms of kinship. Kinship, a misunderstood concept in the case of Somalia, is more complex than simple biological relationship. A Somali scholar has recently described the full meaning of kinship in the pre-colonial Somali social order as follows:

> The ideology of kinship had two central elements: Blood-ties and *Xeer*. The first was essentially a product of genealogical connections buttressed by a patrilineal system harking back to real or invented common origin/ancestor; the latter was the embodiment of common wisdom and the locus of inter/intra generational and, in its most general depiction, a Pan-Somali code of conduct. The combined meaning of these elements constituted the milieu in which both the private and the public were defined. This, then, was the basis of kinship—an ideology commensurate with reciprocal production relations (Abdi Samatar 1992, 630).

Historically, in the absence of centralized and "institutionalized state structures," the *Xeer* was a socially constructed system of norms and values established to ensure the security, social justice and harmony of Somali pastoral communities. The *Xeer* system was latter modified and reinforced by Islamic values. The role of *Xeer* was to codify the political obligations of inter-clan, as well as intra-clan, lineage mates and their followers who collaborated socially and economically to share certain labour tasks, to defend or extend grazing areas, and to redistribute basic productive or subsistence resources to individuals in need. In this context, the *Xeer* kinship system served both as a cohesive and a divisive factor, depending on the dictates of the prevailing social, political and economic relations of the society—i.e., whether they were antagonistic or co-operative. The nature of these relationships were largely moderated by the *Xeer* between the different groups. The excesses of segmentary clanism were tamed and constrained by the obligatory values of *Xeer* just as western individualistic society is regulated by law and order.

In pre-colonial Somalia this system was somewhat stable, Abdi Samatar (1992, 631) described the resilience and viability of the pre-colonial Somali *Xeer* system as follows:

> What gave the *Xeer* staying power in the absence of centralised coercive machinery was the voluntarism associated with the absolute necessity of relying and living on one's labour/livestock rather than exploiting others. Such an ethic—in conjunction with Islam—prevented and restrained centrifugal tendencies in the lineage system, thereby inhibiting terrible men from plunging the community into a nightmare.

With the advent of the western-style centralized state, the *Xeer* system was continuously undermined by superseding state laws and rules. Modern Somali (and African) state rulers and elites may no longer be guided by values based on *Xeer* as these were replaced by foreign social values and systems of governance.

The Post-Colonial Centralized State

In most Third World countries and particularly Africa, the post-colonial ruling class inherited the colonial structures and its culture of state management. This fact created a dependency relationship with former colonial powers which constituted not only economic and political but also cultural and intellectual aspects. The depth of such dependence was such that the "colonial regime was to relinquish visible power but not to lose decisive influence" as Abdi Samatar and Ahmed Samatar (1987, 680) put it. Thus, the post-colonial leaders have used Eurocentric colonial models in all aspects of governance. Michael Crowder also attests:

> The colonial experience has affected the way Africa has developed over the past twenty-five years... there are many parallels to be found between the colonial state and the independent state than are conceded (Samatar and Samatar 1987, 680).

In the case of Somalia, the adoption of British style parliamentary politics exemplifies the imprint of colonial heritage on its disciples who came into power, not to mention that the constitution they were following was drafted by foreign experts:

> The Somali Independence Constitution of 1960 was written by Italian and American experts, one of whom reputedly boasted of drafting the constitution in a Rome hotel over a bottle of whisky (Adam 1992, 22).

This fact illustrates the colonized mentality of the Somali elites which led to their failure to develop the country even according to western systems—for they were as divorced from the reality of the country they were leading as was their foreign drafted constitution.

Clanism and Elite Manipulation in Somalia

Some scholars perceive the Somali indigenous social system as egalitarian, labelling it "pastoral democracy" (Lewis 1961; Touval 1963; Laitin and Samatar 1987). Furthermore, they have suggested that a multiparty system would be consistent with the pastoral values of the Somalis. Hence, the constitution of the new Somali State, up until 1969, guaranteed the freedom to organize and compete for political office through a multiparty western-style political system. But what was inconsistent with the pastoral ethos of the Somali people was the emphasis the new constitution placed on the individual entity in contrast to group—clan—entity. There is a difference between the western notion of democ-

racy that is based on values of individualistic society as compared to the Somali pastoral democracy that is based on communal social system and values—an aspect that has been overlooked.

The failure to appreciate such differences led to the derailment of the infant parliamentary democracy and the emergence of clan-based political rivalry at the national level. The segmentary nature of Somali society became the Achilles' heel that power hungry elites exploited. National resources were distributed through clans rather than through an impartial merit system. Individuals were promoted on the basis of their clan ties rather than on their individual merit and proven leadership qualities. This practice, which was neither western nor indigenous but somewhat akin to that of colonial administration, incited factionalism and aggravated the "anarchic tendencies already present in the society" (Laitin and Samatar 1987, 76). The result was chaos and the derailment of the democratic process.

There was a contradiction between the ideal and the practical, a lack of integrity on the part of the leaders and a confusion in the Somali psyche. A double standard of moral norms developed and was internalized to the extent that the Somali individual, on the one hand, publicly abhors clanism, and on the other, privately relies on it to attain personal ends. Somali psychiatrist, Hussein Bulhan (1992, 13) describes this phenomenon as follows:

> Few things reveal the social neurosis of the westernized Somali as the incongruence of what he declares in public versus what he acts upon in the privacy of his clan.

Siad Barre, an ex-officer of the colonial army and a shrewd player of Somali clan politics, exploited this phenomena to prolong his rule for more than two decades. With the help of state treasury he courted the loyalties of clan leaders and played them off against each other—to the point of supplying funds and ammunition to opposing groups. Those who opposed Barre played the same game as he did. Subsequent challenges to his leadership were invariably organizationally clan-based. Trust rather than ideas or ideology became the determining factor in political alliances.

Eventually, in late 1990, Barre's not-so-secret practice of divide and rule broke down. At home he simply ran out of clans: the Ogadens; the largest and vital Hawiye; and even the quiet and peaceful Rahanwayn deserted him. Finally, the USC (mainly constituted of Hawiye clans) with the help of others overran Barre's palace in early January 1991. But instead of sharing the leadership, the factional leaders fought over it, fuelling a new inter-clan civil war that killed more than 350,000 Somalis and scattered two million refugees around the globe.

Conclusion

There is no denial that it is Somalis who are killing each other in clan-based conflict. However, to focus solely on clanism is overly simplistic and gives a misleading explanation of the causes of the present crisis. The real causes of civil conflict in Somalia lie less with the nature of clan segmentation and more with the impact of the partition of the Somali nation; the manipulation by the ruling elites of the Somali segmentary social system; the marginalization of the indigenous social system (*Xeer*); and the inadequacy of the mediating role of the rulers and the state mechanisms that replaced it. It is the combination of the above factors that led to the destruction of the country and the fabric of the Somali nation. ■

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Analyse Critique d'une Politique d'Assistance aux Réfugiés:
Les Sites d'Installations Agricoles Ouverts pour les Réfugiés Érythréens au Soudan

Shoa Asfaha et Véronique Lassailly-Jacob

Introduction

La question des réfugiés est un sujet brûlant de l'actualité africaine. On compte aujourd'hui environ 6 millions de réfugiés en Afrique dont 750 000 au Soudan (World Refugee Survey, 1993), un chiffre largement sous-estimé puisqu'il ne prend en compte qu'une partie des fugitifs, ceux qui sont enregistrés et qui répondent aux critères définis par la Convention de Genève et par celle de l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine (OUA). Ne sont pas inclus tous ceux qui trouvent refuge à l'intérieur de leur propre pays: plus de 5 millions de Soudanais sont des "réfugiés de l'intérieur." Ne sont pas inclus non plus tous ceux qui ont franchi une frontière et se sont fondus clandestinement dans le milieu rural ou dans les villes du pays d'accueil, bien souvent les plus nombreux.

Le Soudan, à l'exemple de nombreux pays africains, est à la fois un pays producteur de réfugiés et un pays d'asile:

> Sudan—Africa's largest country—continued to produce as well as host massive numbers of uprooted persons during 1992. At year's end, some five million Sudanese were internally displaced by civil war and natural disasters, 263,000 Sudanese were refugees outside their country, and about 750,000 refugees from neighbouring countries resided in Sudan (World Refugee Survey 1993, 73).

Les 750 000 réfugiés recensés au Soudan en 1992 provenaient d'Érythrée, d'Éthiopie, du Tchad, de l'Ouganda et du Zaïre. Parmi eux, on comptait environ 530 000 Érythréens dont 280 000 regroupés dans des sites d'installations encadrés et 250 000 spontanément installés en ville ou dans des villages (World Refugee Survey 1993, 62).

Cet article évoque la situation des réfugiés érythréens regroupés dans des sites d'installations agricoles dans l'est du Soudan et s'interroge sur le bien-fondé de cette politique d'assistance coûteuse: ces sites d'installations sont-ils en mesure d'intégrer économiquement et socialement les réfugiés dans le pays d'accueil pendant la durée de leur exil? Cet article souligne tout d'abord l'originalité juridique et administrative de la politique d'asile soudanaise ainsi que la diversité et la générosité des programmes d'assistance aux réfugiés, appliqués grâce à la collaboration de la communauté internationale et de multiples ONG. Il met ensuite l'accent sur les obstacles que rencontrent les réfugiés encadrés dans ces sites pour devenir autosuffisants et localement intégrés et enfin pose la question du devenir de ces sites et de la région d'accueil lorsque les réfugiés seront rentrés chez eux.

Contexte juridique et administratif de la politique d'asile Soudanaise

David Smock, évoquant la situation des Érythréens au Soudan, souligne:

> The most notable feature of Sudan's response is hospitality. No Eritrean has been turned back at the border and, once inside the Sudan, no refugee has been forcibly repatriated—a striking contrast to many other countries, particularly in Asia, which repulse refugees at the border or which expel those who have managed to enter (Smock 1982, 455).

Comme dans la plupart des sociétés africaines, l'hospitalité est une des grandes valeurs traditionnelles de la société soudanaise. Le Soudan a une longue tradition d'accueil de populations venues d'Égypte, d'Abyssinie, d'Arabie, d'Afrique Occidentale et Centrale, se déplaçant pour des raisons économiques, religieuses ou politiques. Les flux de populations les plus connus sont les réfugiés Coptes chassés d'Égypte au VIIème et VIIIème siècle, les groupes de pèlerins musulmans se rendant au lieu saint du Mahdi pour obtenir sa bénédiction ou bien de passage vers La Mecque ou encore la fuite des Haoussa du Nord du Nigéria face à l'occupation Britannique au début du siècle, et enfin celle des migrants saisonniers venus du Tchad et de l'Érythrée. Les mouvements d'exode contemporains, c'est-à-dire les flux de réfugiés s'intègrent dans ce cadre historique des migrations vers le Soudan.

Les grandes lignes de la politique d'asile soudanaise s'inspirent des principes de la Convention de Genève (1951), du protocole des Nations Unies de 1967, et de la Convention de l'OUA (1969) relatifs au statut des réfugiés. Bien avant de ratifier en 1972 ces traités juridiques internationaux et régionaux, le Soudan poursuivait déjà une politique de porte ouverte "open door policy" à l'égard des réfugiés: le terme légal de "réfugié" fut officiellement adopté en 1967 lorsque fut créé le Commissariat Soudanais d'Aide aux Réfugiés (COR), cinq ans avant la ratification de ces traités.

En 1974, le Soudan se dotait d'une juridiction nationale concernant le

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droit d'asile (Regulation of Asylum Act) et l'article 44 de sa constitution reconnut les droits des réfugiés à demander l'asile politique en conformité avec les principes internationaux et les lois nationales. Rappelons que la définition du réfugié adoptée par la juridiction soudanaise est plus large que celle des Conventions de Genève et de l'OUA, "le terme Réfugié s'applique aussi aux orphelins de guerre et à ceux dont les tuteurs ont disparu."

Ces textes reflètent la prise de conscience précoce de la question des réfugiés et l'originalité de la politique d'asile soudanaise. Le Soudan est un des rares pays d'Afrique, avec la Tanzanie, qui se soient dotés d' instruments juridiques nationaux de protection des réfugiés.

Les structures administratives d'assistance aux réfugiés dans de nombreux pays africains sont généralement représentées par des instances gouvernementales déjà en place et des organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG). Le Soudan a été un des seuls pays africains à avoir créé une structure spécifique (COR) pour gérer et dispenser l'aide aux réfugiés. Le COR, interlocuteur principal de la communauté internationale, a la responsabilité de la mise en oeuvre du programme d'assistance. Le "Refugee Fund Bill" de 1980 lui donna toute autorité pour gérer l'assistance internationale. Placé à l'origine sous la tutelle du Ministère de l'Intérieur, son rôle et ses activités ont pris une telle ampleur en raison de l'accroissement constant du nombre des réfugiés au cours des années, qu'il apparaît aujourd'hui comme un Ministère à part entière.

La politique d'assistance soudanaise

Face à un afflux croissant de réfugiés de longue durée, -le conflit érythréen a duré près de 30 ans-, le Commissariat Soudanais d'Aide Aux Réfugiés fit appel à la communauté internationale (le HCR, Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés, le PAM, Programme Alimentaire Mondial, l'UNICEF, Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'Enfance, le BIT, Bureau International du Travail), ainsi qu'à un grand nombre d' ONG nationales ou internationales, pour l'aider à accueillir ces réfugiés et leur fournir des conditions de vie décentes.

Le Soudan adopta une politique d'asile "généreuse" et un programme d'assistance extrêmement ambitieux en décidant d'accueillir le plus grand

Abstract

A Critical Analysis of a Refugee Aid Policy: The Agricultural Settlements Established for Eritrean Refugees in the Sudan

This paper highlights the impact of the Sudanese assistance policy on the Eritrean refugees regrouped in UNHCR-sponsored agricultural settlements in Kassala province, in eastern Sudan. The pursuit of self-sufficiency through agriculture, local integration and the future prospects of the settlements are the main issues discussed. First, the singularity of the Sudanese legal, administrative and aid policy toward refugees is discussed. Sudan has always adopted an "open door policy" toward migrants and refugees, and has a long tradition of hospitality. It has not only ratified the various UN instruments governing refugee status but also has its own Asylum Act which is one of the most liberal documents of its kind, and has created a permanent administrative body through which assistance is provided to refugees.

Second, the paper outlines the long history of Eritrean migration to Sudan. Since the beginning of the century, Eritrean farmers and herdsmen have seasonally crossed the borders in search of agricultural work or pasture for their cattle. The Ethio-Eritrean war is recalled as the major cause of contemporary refugee movements since the mid-1960s. The pattern of refugee settlement—spontaneous versus organized—is briefly discussed. The organized agricultural settlements have been the focus of the assistance policy, as they are considered to be the best option in promoting refugee self-sufficiency and local integration in the host community.

Third, the paper points out the special features of these agricultural settlements and assesses the obstacles which prevent refugees from becoming self-sufficient through agriculture. While refugees are provided with plots of land, tools and seeds to become self-supporting, their means of survival come from other activities which develop informally. The concept of organized settlement and the way refugees are perceived by others have become one of the major obstacles preventing local integration. It is Kassala Province rather than the refugee settlements which has benefited the most from the international community's refugee assistance. Kassala has also benefited from cheap refugee labour used to develop its infrastructure, in particular the agricultural sector.

Finally, the issue of sustainability of the organized settlements is raised, particularly in light of the onset of the spontaneous return of refugees to their homeland. What will be the impact of this important labour force's departure on the province's economy? Will the Sudanese government be able to maintain the infrastructure and facilities in the organized settlements? While many research programs are undertaken on reintegration problems of the refugees in their homeland, too little attention has been paid to the impact of refugee departure and particularly the future of the organized settlements which have been planned and managed at high cost.

nombre de réfugiés dans des sites d'installations encadrées de différents types. Toutefois, cette politique d'assistance ne s'appliqua qu'aux réfugiés enregistrés, c'est-à-dire ceux établis dans des sites d'installations encadrées. Non seulement les réfugiés clandestinement installés ne reçurent presqu'aucun support et assistance mais encore ceux qui vivaient en ville firent l'objet de tracasseries administratives, d'arrestations et même de déportations vers des sites encadrés. La politique d'assistance soudanaise chercha à décourager toute implantation spontanée des réfugiés, en particulier dans les villes.

Grâce aux concours technique et financier du HCR, quatre types d' installations encadrées furent mis en place: camps de réception, sites d'installations agricoles, sites d'installations rurales basées sur le salariat agricole et sites d'installations semi-urbaines. Le Soudan est le seul pays à avoir créé un si grand nombre (plus de 70) et un tel éventail d'installations encadrées. Le modèle le plus fréquent et qui fit l'objet d'infrastructures coûteuses fut celui des sites agricoles où des terres arables furent distribuées aux familles afin qu'elles atteignent une certaine autosuffisance et s'intègrent dans la société d'accueil pendant la durée de leur exil.

Les camps de réception ou centres d'accueil provisoires furent ouverts non loin des frontières pour accueillir et enregistrer les nouveaux arrivés. Ils y reçurent une aide d'urgence -nourriture, abri, soins médicaux- qui leur fût fournie par des organisations humanitaires. Les réfugiés devaient séjourner provisoirement dans ces camps, entre 6 mois et un an, avant d'être transférés dans des sites d'installations aménagés à l'intérieur du pays; en réalité, le gouvernement et le HCR ne disposèrent pas de moyens financiers et logistiques suffisants leur permettant de créer suffisamment de sites pour absorber toute la population réfugiée résidant dans les camps. C'est pourquoi des milliers de réfugiés séjournèrent plus de 10 ans dans ces camps provisoires. On peut imaginer les répercussions de ce séjour de totale dépendance sur leur attitude future. Néanmoins, les transferts vers les sites encadrés, ouverts à l'intérieur du Soudan, ont souvent été impopulaires et ont parfois donner lieu à des résistances, les réfugiés préférant rester non loin de la frontière, espérant ainsi retourner plus facilement et plus rapidement chez eux dès que la situation le leur permettrait.

Les sites d'installations agricoles[1] eurent pour objectif de créer des communautés économiquement viables et localement intégrées afin de les faire contribuer au développement national et d'alléger ainsi le fardeau de l'accueil. Des financements considérables ont été alloués pour mettre en place à partir de 1969 ce programme d'assistance dans l'est et le sud du Soudan. Les premiers sites furent ouverts dans la zone de Semsem près du centre urbain de Quala-En-Nahal. Ainsi, furent créés d'une part 24 sites d'installations agricoles à l'est du pays qui hébergeaient près de 130 000 réfugiés érythréens et éthiopiens et d'autre part, 47 sites[2] au sud du pays pour environ 160 000 réfugiés ougandais et quelques milliers de Zaïrois (Stein and Clark 1990, 4). Les réfugiés y reçurent des exploitations agricoles de 2 à 4 ha, des outils, des semences et les prestations de labour d'un service de tracteurs. L'assistance internationale est dispensée dans ces sites jusqu'à ce qu'ils deviennent économiquement viables, l'estimation de viabilité étant basée sur le niveau de vie des populations locales; les réfugiés ne doivent pas bénéficier de conditions de vie meilleures que celles des autochtones. Lorsque ce stade est atteint, après une période d'environ 3-4 ans, le HCR doit se retirer et transférer ses compétences au gouvernement soudanais qui prend la relève de la gestion de l'installation. Le lotissement est alors intégré dans les structures administratives du Soudan.

Les sites d'installations rurales basées sur le salariat agricole ou "wage-earning settlements" sont un type d'installation développé surtout au Soudan. Ces sites ont été ouverts à proximité des grands périmètres irrigués de Al-Suki (non loin de la Gezirah), la Nouvelle Halfa et Rahad. Les réfugiés regroupés dans ces sites ne reçoivent pas de terres agricoles et doivent survivre en se salariant dans les périmètres irrigués d'État et dans les grandes exploitations agricoles privées ou étatiques. Il existe 6 sites de ce type hébergeant environ 30 000 personnes.

Les sites d'installations semi-urbaines sont situés à la périphérie des grandes villes de l'est du pays et ont été conçus pour des réfugiés d'origine urbaine. L'espoir du gouvernement était de pouvoir regrouper progressivement tous les réfugiés urbains dans ces sites afin de réduire les pressions qu'ils exerçaient en ville sur les équipements collectifs et le logement. De nombreux micro-projets, surtout artisanaux et générateurs de revenus, furent mis en place dans ces sites par des ONG. Toutefois, d'une part ces micro-projets ne correspondaient pas toujours aux attentes des réfugiés urbains-plusieurs sites ont même été désertés- d'autre part, l'État et le HCR n'ont pas eu les moyens financiers et techniques pour créer des sites suffisamment attractifs et nombreux.

Réfugiés érythréens au Soudan

La migration érythréenne vers le Soudan n'est pas un fait nouveau. Au début du siècle, agriculteurs et éleveurs érythréens traversaient périodiquement la frontière soudanaise, les premiers pour s'employer comme salariés agricoles, les seconds pour faire transhumer leurs troupeaux. Ce va-et-vient saisonnier, accepté de part et d'autre, se transforma complètement à partir des années 60. Le conflit politico-militaire, aggravé par les rivalités entre les superpuissances, qui opposa les nationalistes érythréens au régime éthiopien,[3] transforma dès 1967, un mouvement migratoire saisonnier en un mouvement de refuge. Des motivations migratoires d'ordre économique devinrent essentiellement politiques et écologiques (la sécheresse dévastatrice de 1984-85 précipita les mouvements de population vers le Soudan); une migration saisonnière se transforma en une migration durable; une migration d'agriculteurs et d'éleveurs

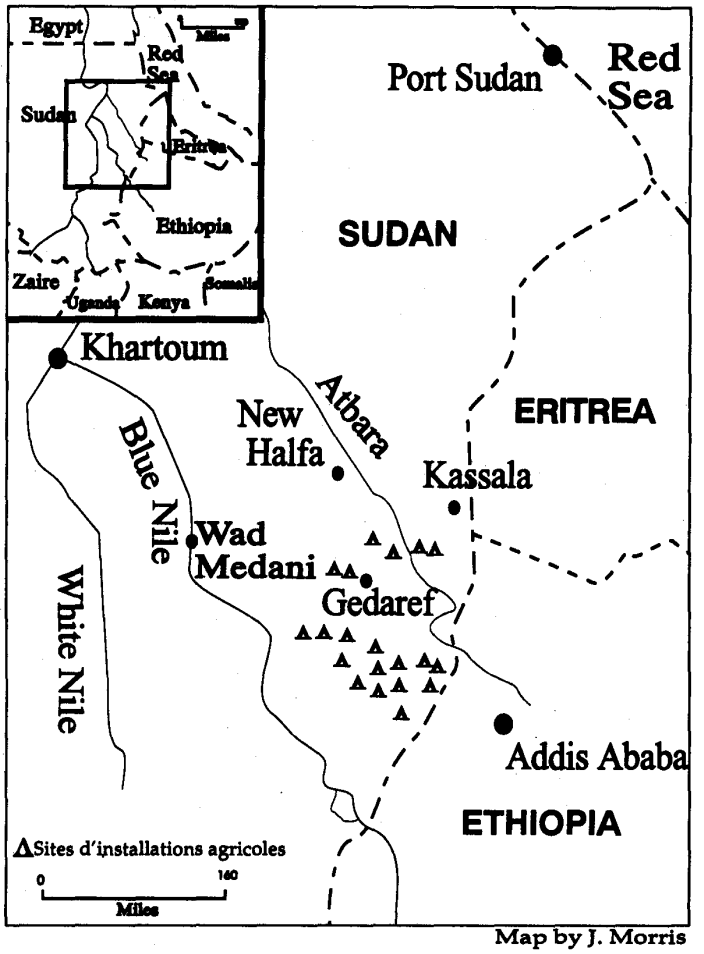
se gonfla d'une population urbaine; enfin, une migration spontanée et dont la destination était du seul ressort de l'intéressé devint une migration forcée, souvent encadrée par des instances nationales et même internationales jusque sur des sites imposés par les autorités du pays d'accueil. Ce sont tous ces caractères spécifiques qui ont transformé ces migrants en réfugiés.

Les premiers flux importants de réfugiés érythréens au Soudan, soit près de 30 000 personnes, datent de 1966-67. Ils furent suivis de plusieurs importants mouvements de fugitifs en 1969-70 (50 000 personnes), en 1975-76 (50 000 personnes dont 20 000 s'installèrent dans le camp de réception de Wad El Hilau), en 1977-78 (plus de 200 000 personnes, en grande partie des réfugiés urbains), en 1982 (plus de 10 000 personnes) et en 1984-85 (près de 200 000 personnes à nouveau). Depuis le début des années 60, près de 600 000 réfugiés érythréens ont trouvé refuge au Soudan. Certains ont continué leur route vers un pays tiers dans le cadre de "resettlement programmes" (en Europe, aux USA, au Canada), les autres, la quasi-totalité, sont restés au Soudan. Leur intégration locale dans la société soudanaise s'est produite de façon spontanée ou encadrée, en milieu rural comme en milieu urbain.

L'installation spontanée en milieu rural a surtout été le fait de la première vague de migration lorsque les fugitifs par petits groupes traversèrent la frontière la plus proche et se réfugièrent dans les villages et hameaux situés près de la frontière soudanaise. Les premiers groupes de réfugiés érythréens qui arrivèrent au Soudan vers le milieu des années soixante venaient surtout des Basses Plaines érythréennes; beaucoup d'entre eux appartenaient aux communautés Maria, Beni-Amer et Bedja et avaient des membres de leur famille ethnique au Soudan. Ils pratiquaient depuis longtemps la transhumance au Soudan oriental avant que la guerre puis la sécheresse ne les obligent à chercher refuge de l'autre côté de la frontière. Aussi, furent-ils pris en charge spontanément par ceux des leurs qui résidaient au Soudan. Ces réfugiés s'installèrent clandestinement dans les villages et hameaux de leurs hôtes et partagèrent leurs services et leurs ressources. Pendant longtemps, leur nombre et leur situation matérielle furent ignorés des pouvoirs publics car ces réfugiés ne reçurent aucune attention de la part des institutions d'aide. Pour avoir une vague estimation de leur nombre, il faudra attendre 1984-85, lorsque la gravité de la sécheresse contraindra de nombreux réfugiés "spontanés" à se rendre jusqu'aux camps de réception et dans les sites d'installations pour se faire enregistrer afin d'obtenir des rations alimentaires.

De nombreux réfugiés érythréens d'origine urbaine se sont également installés spontanément dans les villes du Soudan oriental et à Khartoum. A partir des années 80, la politique de "Terreur rouge" et l'encadrement forcé par le régime du Dergue d'Éthiopie força de nombreux jeunes à fuir les villes d'Érythrée et d'Éthiopie. Le Soudan est un des rares pays Africains à avoir accueilli un si grand nombre de réfugiés urbains. Ces réfugiés refusent généralement d'être encadrés et regroupés; ils préfèrent chercher individuellement des solutions à leur survie dans les grandes villes soudanaises. En 1988, on estimait à près de 230 000, le nombre des réfugiés urbains installés à Port-Soudan, Kassala, Gédaref et Khartoum. Pour décourager leur concentration dans les villes, l'État et les

Figure 1: Sites d'Installations Agricoles dans l'Est du Soudan



Map by J. Morris

organismes d'assistance ne leur apportent pratiquement aucune aide et la police procède périodiquement à des rafles, organisées soi-disant pour contrôle d' identité.

La situation au Soudan oriental commença à se détériorer lorsque le mouvement des fugitifs s'amplifia et que la pression sur les services publics et sur les ressources (terres arables, eau potable et bois de feu en particulier) de la région d'accueil devint telle que la compétition s'installa entre populations locales et nouveaux venus pour l'accès à ces ressources. Des relations de fraternité clanique se transformèrent peu à peu en relations entre population hôte et étrangers. Les tensions furent d'autant plus vives que les nouvelles vagues de réfugiés, les Tigrigna, les Saho, provenaient de régions plus éloignées, celles des Hauts Plateaux érythréens où les populations n'avaient plus de liens ethniques et d'affinités culturelles avec leurs hôtes. C'est alors que s'organisa l'installation encadrée par le gouvernement soudanais et le HCR.

Environ 87 000 réfugiés érythréens ont été regroupés dans 19 sites d'installations, sites agricoles ou sites basés sur le salariat, et localisés dans la province de Kassala. Ces populations réinstallées ne représentent qu'une minorité des réfugiés érythréens (près de 15% du nombre total estimé de réfugiés érythréens) et appartiennent à différentes ethnies.[4] Les autres réfugiés vivent soit dans des camps de réception, soit parmi les populations locales dans les villes importantes (Khartoum, Wad Medani, Gedaref, Port Sudan, Kassala, etc.) et dans les villages et hameaux de la province de Kassala.

Réfugiés érythréens dans les sites d'installations agricoles

Un site d' installation agricole se présente sous la forme d'un gros lotissement aux formes géométriques, entouré de terres arables. Il bénéficie en général d'un niveau élevé d'infrastructures tel que approvisionnement en eau potable[5], routes d'accès, dispensaires, écoles, centres communautaires, lieux de culte, etc. Le HCR finança en grande partie ces infrastructures et prit en charge les frais de déplacement des réfugiés depuis les camps d'accueil jusqu'aux sites. A son arrivée, chaque chef de famille reçoit un lot de 200 m^2 et des subsides pour construire son habitation, le "tukul."[6]

Les "tukul" sont rangés le long d'un réseau quadrillé de rues. Un site d'installation agricole se différencie d'un camp par le niveau élevé de ses infrastructures et équipements sociaux (dont les locaux sont généralement construits "en dur") et par la présence d'un terroir agricole. Il se différencie également d'un village car les familles qui y résident ne sont pas apparentées et ne disposent pas d'une même organisation sociale et culturelle. Un site est constitué de différents quartiers dans lesquels les réfugiés sont répartis en fonction de leur appartenance ethnique. Il rassemble une population qui varie entre 3 000 et 6 000 personnes et la distance au terroir agricole peut atteindre 5 à 10 km. Par son type d'urbanisme et sa taille, un site d'installation agricole est plus apparenté à un lotissement urbain en milieu rural qu'à un village.

Le programme agricole fût le volet central de l'assistance fournie aux réfugiés dans les sites. Chaque chef de famille reçût l'usage d'une exploitation ou "hawasha" de 5 à 10 "feddan" (un "feddan" équivaut à 0,42ha) soit 2,1 à 4,2 ha, des semences de sorgho ainsi que des outils. Le sorgho ou "durra", aliment de base de la population locale, est la monoculture pratiquée dans les sites les plus septentrionaux. Dans la partie méridionale de la province de Kassala, là où le climat est plus favorable, des semences de sésame ont également été distribuées comme culture de rente. Un service de location de tracteurs fut mis en place dans tous les nouveaux sites pour assurer les prestations de labour. Pendant les deux premières années de leur séjour dans l'installation, les familles reçurent des rations alimentaires du PAM. Toutefois, de nombreux obstacles ont contribué à freiner la viabilité économique et l'intégration locale de ces sites d'installations agricoles.

Obstacles à l'autosuffisance économique

Des localisations défavorables

La plupart des sites implantés dans l'Est du Soudan se trouvent dans la partie semi-désertique de la province de Kassala. Les terres y sont de potentialités agricoles médiocres et cette zone est plus propice à un élevage transhumant qu'à une agriculture sous pluie très risquée; Une vie sédentaire agricole n'y est possible qu'avec l'aide de l'irrigation car les pluies sont irrégulières et insuffisantes: la pluviosité moyenne varie entre 400 et 600 mm et ne permet qu'une courte saison culturale de 3 à 4 mois. Or, l'irrigation n'a pas été développée pour les réfugiés. De plus, le choix des sites n'a pas fait l'objet d'études préalables sérieuses; Prospections pédologiques, reconnaissance des ressources en eau ont été menées à la hâte quant elles n'ont pas été inexistantes. Plusieurs sites ont même été retenus par le gouvernement en dépit des avertissements de non viabilité donnés par les missions de prospection internationales (Stein and Clark 1990).

Le rôle et la responsabilité des autorités du pays d'accueil dans le choix des sites sont primordiaux. Le gouvernement soudanais n'a pas tenu compte des critères climatiques, pédologiques, économiques et sociaux établis par le HCR pour le choix des sites d'installation. Contrairement au discours officiel qui soutient que le choix des sites d'installations repose en premier lieu sur l'intérêt des réfugiés, on constate que les motivations qui ont guidé le gouvernement soudanais dans sa sélection des sites sont essentiellement d'ordre économique et géopolitique: économique, en établissant ces sites à proximité des grands périmètres irrigués d'État et des grandes exploitations pluviales privées ou étatiques afin qu'ils disposent de la main-d'oeuvre réfugiée; géopolitique, en dispersant ces sites afin de respecter un certain équilibre démographique avec la population locale et d'éviter une effervescence politique érythréenne.

Des exploitations de taille insuffisante

L'exploitation familiale a été retenue comme unité de production agricole. Le HCR et le COR avaient déclaré qu'une exploitation de 10 "feddan" serait le seuil de superficie minimum permettant l'auto-subsistance d'une famille moyenne. Or, les exploitations distribuées sont fréquemment de taille inférieure à 10 "feddan" en raison de terroirs agricoles trop restreints. De plus, l'exiguïté des superficies des exploitations ne permet pas de pratiquer un système de jachère, pratique courante chez les exploitants soudanais de la zone, en vue de régénérer la fertilité du sol. L'absence de jachère dans les exploitations des réfugiés entraîne une baisse des rendements et une dégradation des sols.

Un calendrier de labour mal organisé

Le labour des parcelles a lieu au début de la saison des pluies et précède le semis. Il est effectué grâce à un service de location de tracteurs, les exploitants payant un prix forfaitaire peu élevé. Ce service a également été étendu aux petits exploitants soudanais qui ont leurs champs à proximité de ceux des réfugiés, ceci dans le but de créer une bonne entente entre les deux communautés. La date du labour détermine en grande partie le succès de la campagne agricole. Or, les retards sont fréquents dûs en partie à des pannes, manque de carburant ou de pièces de rechange; mais ces retards sont surtout causés par le détournement de ce service vers les exploitations de grands fermiers soudanais qui, payant le prix comptant, ont la priorité sur les réfugiés et les petits exploitants locaux. Les retards de la prestation de labour entraînent la chute des rendements culturaux.

Manque de main-d'oeuvre familiale

Si le labour est mécanisé, les autres activités agricoles sont entièrement manuelles et la main-d'oeuvre occupe une place importante dans ces activités (deux sarclages, coupe des épis, battage et mise en sac des grains). En général, les hommes opèrent seuls ou bien sont aidés par leurs fils mais ce travail familial est insuffisant. Les femmes des groupes Baria, Cunama, Tigrigna et Bilein, qui, en Érythrée, participaient à la vie économique et sociale de leur village, notamment aux travaux des champs aux côtés de leurs époux, ne le peuvent plus dans les sites agricoles. En effet, les communautés ethniques qui interdisent à la femme d'exercer des activités économiques en dehors du foyer conjugal, comme les Beni-Amer et les Maria, dominent très souvent l'espace culturel et social des installations. Ces groupes ethniques majoritaires vont dominer l'espace culturel, social et économique du nouvel habitat et imposer leurs pratiques, étouffant celles des ethnies minoritaires. La position sociale de la femme dans cette société multiculturelle de réfugiés constitue un exemple remarquable illustrant ce phénomène.

Pour faire face à ce manque de main-d'oeuvre familiale ou à une main-d'oeuvre familiale inexpérimentée pour les travaux agricoles (cas des nombreux réfugiés d'origine nomade), pour également réduire la durée du temps de récolte afin d'éviter les ravages des animaux des éleveurs de la zone, de nombreux exploitants doivent avoir recours à une main-d'oeuvre salariée. Or, les rendements agricoles sont souvent trop faibles pour à la fois nourrir les familles et payer les coûts d'une main-d'oeuvre salariée. Aussi, l'agriculture n'assure pas les besoins de base des familles réfugiées.

La faiblesse des rendements de sorgho et le caractère saisonnier du travail agricole oblige les cultivateurs à pratiquer d'autres activités. Ils vont se salarier dans les périmètres irrigués d'État et dans les grandes fermes privées, ou bien pratiquer l'élevage et le petit commerce. On remarque que de nombreux sites d'installations agricoles ne sont pas devenus économiquement viables à travers le programme agricole mis en place par l'assistance.

Obstacles à l'intégration locale

Cette intégration locale est freinée par de nombreux obstacles que l'on peut identifier comme la conception des sites, leur planification et le statut des réfugiés.

La conception des sites

Des communautés ethniques diverses qui, dans le pays d'origine, évoluaient chacune dans leur propre espace géographique, économique, social et culturel, tout en entretenant entre elles des relations d'échanges multiples, sont amenées à cohabiter dans un même espace géographique restreint qui est le site d'installation. Ces familles, de filiation patriarcale ou matriarcale, de confession musulmane, chrétienne ou animiste, de tradition agricole, nomade ou urbaine, doivent apprendre à vivre ensemble quotidiennement puisqu'elles fréquentent les mêmes marchés, points d'eau, écoles, dispensaires, clubs sociaux. Cette cohabitation forcée même si elle est parfois l'objet de tensions et de conflits, atténue peu à peu les barrières socioculturelles et les préjugés ethniques qui existaient auparavant entre ces différentes communautés. Elle favorise même un renforcement des liens de solidarité entre membres de différentes ethnies. Le fait d'être des "Ladjiin" (qui veut dire réfugiés) pousse les familles à s'entraider moralement et économiquement pour faire face à la dureté de leur vie d'exil. Un "ladji" qui doit être hospitalisé en ville, va bénéficier de l'aide de toute la communauté réfugiée, toutes ethnies et religions confondues.

Cette solidarité apprend aux réfugiés à dépasser leur conscience ethnique pour développer une conscience nationale. Ce sentiment de conscience nationale se développe aussi par diverses manifestations comme des chants "révolutionnaires". Ces chants sont l'expression métaphorique de l'unité et véhiculent l'idée d'une patrie qui était perdue mais qui sera bientôt retrouvée. Pour les enfants qui ont grandi en exil et qui chantent bras dessus-bras dessous, le message transmis par ces chants est immense et le concept d'identité nationale devient peut-être plus concret et plus réel pour eux que pour leurs parents.

Bien que les réfugiés doivent s'adapter à un environnement socio-culturel nouveau, celui de la société de la région d'accueil, -ils côtoient les populations soudanaises habitant dans les environs, les nomades arabes, Shukriya ou Ja'aliyiin ou encore les "Westerners", migrants venus autrefois d'Afrique de l'Ouest-, en vivant dans les sites, ils ont moins de contacts avec la société du pays d'accueil que leurs compatriotes résidant parmi les populations locales. On remarque que l'intégration linguistique est souvent mieux réalisée par les réfugiés spontanément installés. Tels sont les résultats des interviews de Bulcha (1987) auprès de réfugiés éthiopiens dans l'Est du Soudan, qui révèlent que 82% des réfugiés spontanément installés parlent l'arabe contre 48 % seulement dans les sites d'installation.

La planification des sites

De nombreux indices relatifs à la planification de ces sites dénotent leur caractère provisoire et statique et sont autant de freins à leur intégration locale. Tout d'abord, ces sites n'ont pas de nom propre. Ils reçoivent un nom local, le nom d'un village soudanais voisin. Ensuite, les réfugiés n'ont pas de droit de propriété mais un droit d'usufruit sur leurs lopins de terre. Enfin, ces installations sont conçues de façon statique. Seule la population nouvellement arrivée est prise en compte pour la distribution des lots et des exploitations. Les planificateurs n'ont pas considéré les besoins d'espaces supplémentaires nécessaires à la croissance naturelle de la population et au déclin éventuel de la fertilité du sol. Celui qui vient de se marier doit construire son propre "tukul" à l'intérieur de l'enclos familial et cultiver une partie de l'exploitation de son père, ce qui entraîne une forte densification de l'habitat et un morcellement croissant des exploitations.

Le statut des réfugiés

Le facteur le plus important qui freine l'intégration d'un réfugié dans son pays d'accueil, quelque soit son mode d'installation et son niveau de vie, est son statut légal. La possibilité pour les réfugiés de longue durée de devenir citoyens du pays d'accueil est une exception.[7] Avoir un statut de réfugié signifie être soumis à des lois spéciales. Selon la législation soudanaise (Regulation of Asylum Act 1974), les réfugiés n'ont pas de droits politiques (droit de vote), ne peuvent quitter le site d'installation sans autorisation écrite (titre de voyage obligatoire)[8], ne peuvent posséder des biens immobiliers ou fonciers et ne peuvent obtenir de permis de travail en dehors du site. Il est même souvent difficile pour ces derniers d'obtenir un permis de travail pour d'autres activités ou une licence pour faire du commerce. Aussi, beaucoup de réfugiés ne peuvent exercer leur métier par manque de permis de travail. Toutes ces atteintes aux libertés du réfugié lui donnent le sentiment qu'il est en quelque sorte "un prisonnier" dans l'installation.

Conclusion

Il est sûr que les sites d'installations agricoles ont contribué à atténuer les effets traumatisants de l'exil pour des milliers de réfugiés et leur ont donné les moyens d'atteindre une certaine autosuffisance. Grâce aux équipements sociaux, centres de santé, écoles primaires et autres infrastructures, les réfugiés connaissent une amélioration de leurs conditions de vie même si la viabilité de ces équipements demeure incertaine.

Cependant, ces sites d'installations agricoles n'ont pas atteint leurs objectifs d'autosuffisance et d'intégration locale à travers les programmes mis en place:

- D'autosuffisance au moyen du programme agricole imposé, car les récoltes et les revenus tirés de l'agriculture sont trop faibles. Si les réfugiés survivent dans ces sites, c'est grâce à des activités non encadrées qu'ils entreprennent spontanément et parallèlement à l'agriculture. Le programme agricole, pilier de l'assistance, apparaît donc comme une façade qui permet surtout de légitimer la présence de certains organismes donateurs comme le HCR. Et promouvoir un tel programme agricole ne fait qu'alourdir l'administration des sites et grève énormément les fonds de l'assistance.
- D'intégration locale, car rassemblés dans ces sites, les réfugiés vont conserver leur identité de réfugié, renforcer leurs liens de solidarité, entretenir leur désir de retour et cultiver leur différence avec la société d'accueil. Les éléments "fondamentaux" de l'identité des réfugiés vont se conserver et se perpétuer dans ces lotissements ruraux qui, par leur existence même, sont un frein à l'intégration locale dans la société d'accueil.

Il semblerait que le choix des localisations des sites par le gouvernement soudanais ait surtout été guidé par le souci à la fois de constituer une réserve de main-d'oeuvre agricole bon marché disponible pour l'agriculture soudanaise et de développer la région orientale du Soudan par toutes les infrastructures et les équipements qui y ont été implantés grâce à l'aide internationale. Ce que voulait le Soudan, c'est le partage du fardeau de l'accueil avec la communauté internationale et une assistance qui profite au développement régional du pays par les infrastructures mises en place.

Depuis mai 1991, date de la libération totale de l'Érythrée, on assiste à un phénomène de retour spontané des populations réfugiées érythréennes vers leur pays d'origine. Le gouvernement érythréen a mis en place une structure administrative appelée Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) qui, en collaboration avec des agences des Nations-Unies et des ONG, est chargée du programme de rapatriement et de réintégration des réfugiés. Ce programme en trois phases consiste à rapatrier et à réintégrer dans leur société d'origine environ 500 000 réfugiés érythréens résidant au Soudan. Bien que ce programme ait été approuvé par les différentes institutions concernées, son financement n'a pas encore été assuré et l'accord tripartite entre le HCR, le gouvernement

soudanais et le gouvernement érythréen concernant le rapatriement des populations n'a pas encore été signé, ce qui retarde le démarrage d'un vaste rapatriement encadré. Toutefois, ce blocage administratif et financier n'a pas empêché un mouvement de retour déjà bien entamé. Près de 100 000 réfugiés érythréens sont rentrés spontanément, certains bénéficiant d'un minimum d'aides alimentaire et logistique fournies par le CERA et autres organisations caritatives locales, les autres se débrouillant par eux-mêmes. La question de la réintégration de ces populations qui, pour certaines, ont vécu plus de 20 ans en exil, fait l'objet de vastes programmes de recherche et accapare l'attention de la communauté internationale et d'une grande partie du monde académique travaillant sur le problème des réfugiés.

Toutefois, l'impact du départ de ces milliers de personnes sur l'économie du pays d'accueil est une recherche encore négligée. Qui va remplacer cette main-d'oeuvre "bon marché" qui faisait "tourner" les grands périmètres irrigués et les plantations de la province orientale? Quel sera l'avenir de ces sites agricoles, de leurs infrastructures, équipements, terres défrichées et labourées? Les populations soudanaises locales vont-elles bénéficier de ces sites équipés et aménagés? Mais surtout, le gouvernement soudanais sera-t-il en mesure d'entretenir et de faire fonctionner les infrastructures et équipements? Réintégration des populations érythréennes dans leur région d'origine mais aussi conséquences de leur départ sur l'économie de la province de Kassala, sont des grandes recherches qui doivent désormais être menées. ■

Notes

1 Les installations agricoles font partie d'une nouvelle politique d'assistance qui relève plus d'une aide au développement que d'une stricte action humanitaire d'urgence. Inaugurée en Afrique par le HCR et largement développée sur ce continent depuis les années 60 -le Soudan, la Tanzanie, l'Ouganda, le Zaïre, le Botswana, le Burundi et la Zambie sont aujourd'hui les principaux pays d'asile ayant adopté cette forme d'assistance aux réfugiés- elle a été ensuite étendue à l'Amérique Latine et l'Asie du Sud-Est mais à une échelle bien moindre. On trouve quelques exemples d'installations agricoles à Belize, au Panama, au Costa Rica, au Honduras, Nicaragua et en Malaisie. En Afrique, le Soudan a créé le plus grand nombre de sites (plus de 70) et la Tanzanie est le pays qui a le mieux intégré ces sites dans sa politique de développement agricole et son programme de "villagisation". Depuis 1961, plus de 140 sites d'installations agricoles furent créés en Afrique, principalement en Afrique de l'Est et du Sud. Environ un million de réfugiés seulement en Afrique ont été concernés par cette forme d'assistance. D'un côté, le coût de ces installations ne permet pas de les multiplier à une grande échelle, de l'autre, nombreux sont les réfugiés qui refusent de vivre dans ces lotissements trop encadrés et contrôlés et qui préfèrent se cacher en ville ou en brousse. Enfin, quelques gouvernements comme celui de l'Afrique du Sud, s'opposent à cette forme d'assistance jugée comme une solution trop durable.

2 Les 47 "villages" de réfugiés ouverts au Sud Soudan furent fermés en 1988-89 quand les réfugiés retournèrent en Ouganda.

3 Colonie italienne à partir de 1890, l'Érythrée fut ensuite occupée par les Britanniques en 1940-41 qui l'administrèrent jusqu'en 1952, date à laquelle l'Érythrée devint, par décision des Nations-Unies, fédérée à l'Éthiopie. En septembre 1961, la guerre de libération débuta. En Novembre 1962, l'empereur Hailé Sélassié procéda à l'annexion pure et simple de l'entité autonome d'Érythrée qu'il déclara province éthiopienne. 1974 marqua la déposition du Négus après 50 ans de règne, l'arrivée au pouvoir du Dergue et la libération temporaire des villes érythréennes par les deux fronts érythréens (F.P.L.E., Front Populaire de Libération de l'Érythrée et F.L.E., Front de Libération de l'Érythrée). 1978 fut l'année de la grande offensive du Dergue, soutenue par l'URSS, qui entraîna une généralisation de la guerre dans toute l'Érythrée et la reprise des villes par l'armée éthiopienne. Cette guerre de libération ("Opération Red Star" est la dernière grande offensive éthiopienne lancée en 1982), aggravée par la terrible sécheresse de 1984-85 et la lutte interne entre les différents fronts, causèrent des pertes humaines considérables et la fuite des populations par dizaines de milliers. En mai 1991, l'Érythrée fut libérée par le FPLE et, à la suite d'un référendum organisé sous l'égide des Nations-Unies, l'Érythrée accéda à son indépendance le 24 mai 1993.

4 En Érythrée, cohabitent 9 groupes ethniques, ayant chacun sa propre identité culturelle, linguistique et religieuse, ainsi que son propre mode de vie. Ils se répartissent entre les Hauts-Plateaux, les plaines côtières et les plaines de l'intérieur. Les agriculteurs sédentaires représentent environ 50% de la population et sont établis en grande partie sur les Hauts-Plateaux. Ce sont les groupes Tigrigna, Saho, Cunama, Baria et Bilein. Les éleveurs nomades forment environ 30% de la population, transhument principalement dans les Basses Plaines et forment les groupes Tigré composés de plusieurs grandes tribus comme les Beni-Amer, les Maria, le groupe Bedja, le groupe Afar, et le groupe Rashaïda. Environ 20% de la population totale habite les villes, situées principalement dans la région des Hauts-Plateaux (à l'exception de Massawa) et habitées majoritairement par les Tigrigna et les Bilein. Les principales ethnies réfugiées au Soudan sont les Tigrigna, Tigré, Baria, Saho, Bilein et Cunama.

5 Un système très sophistiqué d'adduction d'eau équipé de pompes a été installé dans de nombreux sites, dont ceux de Quala El Nahal. En 1974, il y eut transfert des sites d'installations de Quala en Nahal au gouvernement soudanais mais celui -ci n'a pas pu assurer le fonctionnement de ces sites. Il n'y avait plus de pièces de rechange et de carburant pour les tracteurs et les pompes défectueuses n'assuraient plus l'approvisionnement en eau des sites. Lorsque plus de la moitié de la population fut contrainte de quitter ces sites, le gouvernement soudanais fit de nouveau appel au HCR et à d'autres organismes pour reprendre leur assistance.

6 Le "tukul" est l'habitation traditionnelle de cette région du Soudan, une case généralement ronde, d'une seule pièce, dont les murs sont constitués d'une armature en bois colmatée de terre battue et dont le toit est en paille tressée. La grandeur du "tukul" traduit la taille de la famille et la prospérité de celle-ci.

7 Quelques Beni-Amer érythréens résidant en ville ont réussi à être naturalisés, aidés par des partis politiques soudanais dans un but électoral.

8 Étant donné les lenteurs administratives, le candidat est souvent obligé d'attendre plusieurs semaines pour obtenir une autorisation de déplacement qui n'est valable que pour un seul déplacement.

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Repatriation of Sudanese Refugees from Ethiopia: A case study in manipulation of civilians during civil conflict

Alastair and Patta Scott-Villiers, and Cole P. Dodge

Résumé

Cet article retrace l'histoire du retour dramatique vers le Soudan de 150 000 hommes, femmes et enfants depuis le camp de réfugiés d'Itang en Éthiopie. Ces gens ont été les grands sacrifiés de la guerre civile soudanaise, un statut que la communauté internationale a tardé à leur reconnaître et de ce fait à les aider comme tels. Cet article veut engager une discussion sur le rôle de la politique dans la protection des réfugiés et dans l'organisation de l'aide dans le contexte d'une guerre civile. L'information présentée ici provient à la fois d'une recherche sur le terrain effectuée pendant les trois mois du rapatriement et des rapports écrits sur cette période.

Background

Itang camp was established in June 1983 to cater to the needs of refugees fleeing Sudan's civil war that had then broken out. Itang was the largest camp established in Ethiopia for Sudanese refugees. Two additional camps were later opened at Panyido and Dima, south of Itang.

Although the government in Addis Ababa was secretive about Sudanese refugees, UNHCR was able to provide for their basic needs, albeit only after the international media had exposed appalling living conditions in these camps in 1986 (Woldridge 1987). Thus by 1988, daily existence for the Sudanese refugees in Itang was reasonable, with not only a complete food basket provided to every family, but also adequate shelter, a functional health and education service, and clean drinking water. Despite the Ethiopian prohibition on refugees undertaking their own agriculture, the camp marketplace was active and underpinned the entire economy of neighbouring areas in Sudan. The area was reasonably secure and in many respects the camp became a Sudanese community within the borders of Ethiopia.

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Itang: Relief and Political Strategy for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

After the media exposure of suffering in the camp and the consequent increase in the provision of material support, Itang became the main route for relief to the southern Sudanese both in the camp and beyond. Up until 1989, the international community had ignored the suffering inside the rural areas of southern Sudan, but had been providing copiously to the refugee camps (over 75,000 tonnes of food to the three camps annually by 1990). The Ethiopian government ensured that the SPLA was able to run the camp without much international interference, and the camp administrators thus enjoyed more autonomy and far less international scrutiny than would normally be the case. It was widely accepted that the three camps were closely linked to SPLA military/political training and supply activities, and as such played a significant role inside both Ethiopia and Sudan.

In this process, the refugees who tried to escape the civil war became political pawns. A drought hit Upper Nile, Jonglei and Bahr el Ghazal provinces in 1987, which, in combination with a total breakdown of trade and commerce, created famine conditions. In mid-1988, an extraordinary number

of destitute southerners trekked across the south of Sudan, guided on their way by the SPLA toward these Ethiopian camps. No stopping was allowed. In addition, between 1989 and 1991 relief workers for Operation Lifeline Sudan often witnessed the movement of truckloads of children, mostly young boys, travelling in the direction of Ethiopia for supposed education at the refugee camps. They were labelled "unaccompanied minors" and by the time of their return to Sudan in 1991 numbered over 14,000.

Population of Itang

The number of refugees in Itang camp during its heyday was difficult to ascertain due to multiple registration and the failure to deduct figures of returnees (MDTMRR 1991). Additionally, local Nuer and Anuak people who populated the area around the camp and who were assisting their kin from across the border were also registered. In June 1991, chiefs of the Gajaak Nuer told us that they had been receiving food from the refugee camp even though some of them were over one week's walk from Itang itself, and inside Sudan. There was also a continuous flow of traders in and out of Itang, registering as refugees, receiving temporary relief and leaving again. UNHCR reported in July 1990 that 242,093 were claiming relief in Itang camp and 280,000 by January 1991. The real number of refugees may never be known, but by mid-1991, when the camp population returned to Sudan, it was probably in the region of 150,000 according to UN and NGO sources.

Itang as a Trading Centre

As the number of refugees expanded, the camp at Itang became a centre for commercial activity. During the dry season the people of the Sobat and Pibor river basins and even from the Nile in southern Sudan came to Itang with their cattle for sale and bought significant quantities of grain and household items. They transported these back to Sudan by river. Small markets sprung up in Sudan where goods from Itang were sold. Relief supplies from Itang were dispersed over a wide geographical area. As a result of the war, the loss of the Arab merchant class (who had formed the backbone of the rural economy) led to a distinct impoverishment of the population in southern Sudan (Dodge and Magne 1991). Itang was hit particularly hard because the civil war almost completely disrupted commerce between north and south, and between the large garrison towns in the south and the rural areas. The merchants that flourished at Itang, played a very important part in providing trade in SPLA areas and hence weakened the impact of the northern military strategy of isolating the southern civilian population and then blaming the SPLA for the scarcities and suffering.

The status of Itang was due in part to its position within the relatively well developed Ethiopian marketing network, but was also facilitated by the substantial relief inputs distributed to the refugees. UNHCR was able to attract significant donor support, but was prevented from administering this relief tightly, resulting in a food surplus which found its way into southern Sudan. Itang replaced the Arab trading class and was an important safety net for people economically affected by the war. Equally, the market at Itang was a major resupply source to the SPLA.

In interviews with chiefs after the abandonment of Itang camp, often a considerable distance from Itang (for example Abwong was approximately two weeks walk away), the loss of this marketplace was considered to be more significant than the arrival of large numbers of returnees.

Relief camps function as critical factors in the survival strategy of people under stress; families divide themselves, some remaining at home trying to produce food, others move to relief sites to collect assistance and still others move to and fro to trade. It was the role of the Ethiopian refugee camps as commercial and service centres that motivated the SPLA to attempt to re-create these camps inside Sudan. Their attempt was not particularly successful, because of the people's own social adaptation to the conditions of war and because they did not receive any significant donor or agency support.

Preparation for Movement as Conditions in Ethiopia Deteriorated

The disintegration of the Mengistu government accelerated in 1991, forcing the SPLA to think of alternative arrangements. Meetings with camp residents to discuss returning to Sudan were held by the SPLA in Itang as early as January 1991. Certain groups sent individual family members back to Sudan in advance of the dissolution of the camp (to the Akobo area for instance), where crops were planted by returnees weeks prior to the arrival of the rest of their families. This may have been standard practice in the light of the lack of agricultural possibilities at Itang, but nonetheless serves to illustrate the effective coping strategies employed.

The speed with which the Mengistu government collapsed was greater than anticipated by the SPLA, but it is significant that while the SPLA had contingency plans, neither the UN nor other agencies including the major donors had taken any preparatory action. Although the matter had been raised by various concerned NGOs, even UNHCR failed to respond, despite its mandate to protect and facilitate the repatriation of refugees. Even though repatriation to Sudan, which was still at war, was not considered desirable at the time, it must have been recognized as inevitable or at least highly likely in light of the political developments.

The Demise of Itang: What Happened?

On May 26, 1991, the refugees left Itang for Sudan en masse under SPLA guard after reported attacks on the camp. Itang camp, as described, vanished overnight. There are many conflicting stories regarding what happened, but it is apparent that the camp became a target in the downfall of the Mengistu regime. A major reason that the refugees felt unsafe and accepted SPLA

safe passage back to Sudan, was that Mengistu had nurtured the SPLA. The refugees in Itang felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were identified with the SPLA and as such considered themselves vulnerable when the Ethiopian government fell. The refugees' acceptance of repatriation by the SPLA was also based on their knowledge that a relief structure now existed inside southern Sudan. Their faith in this relief structure may have been greater than warranted by reality.

The camp population crossed into Sudan at Jekau, where their movement was witnessed by a UN assessment team. Just as in 1988, the refugee movement was assisted by SPLA, who had fended off the depredations of bandits on the flooded route from the camp to the border and also on to Nasir. The SPLA left a unit at the camp as a rear guard which followed the stragglers back into Sudan.

The Role of Operation Lifeline Sudan

Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), a joint UNICEF/WFP/NGO relief operation under the loose coordination of UNDP functioning in parallel with ICRC, started in early 1989, and despite considerable political and physical constraints, managed to provide significant food and non-food relief and assisted in the re-establishment of networks of schools and health facilities in SPLA and government areas (Minear 1990). Although initially a consortium of UN agencies and allied NGOs working under a special agreement with the conflicting parties in Sudan, OLS was later to take its place as a program under the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, thereby becoming a UN operation similar to those in Yugoslavia, Angola, Mozambique and Cambodia.

The expansion of OLS coverage moved in the wake of expansion of SPLA territory and although never adequate, was instrumental in assisting the adaptive local coping mechanisms employed by the southern Sudanese toward recovery once conflict had moved away from their immediate homesteads. The main centres for relief in SPLA areas were inevitably in areas most accessible from Kenya and Uganda, but even the Ethiopian border areas including the Sobat and Pibor river basins deep inside southern Sudan benefitted from some relief under OLS.

However, in 1991, although the potential for a massive return of refugees from Ethiopia was very clear, OLS did not prepare adequately for the inevitable suffering of such a move. A proposal was made at an OLS program meeting in Kenya in October 1990 to supply Waat district and the Sobat basin with relief food, seeds, tools and fishing equipment by overland convoys to reduce the vulnerability of the local population. The proposal was accepted by all present, including UN representatives from Khartoum and a similar recommendation was made by the Multi-Donor Technical Mission in Ethiopia just a few months later. Regrettably, due to Sudanese government intransigence, little was put into place to reduce local vulnerability let alone assist returnees. Both refugee and OLS operations continued in isolation without taking into account the obvious political change in Ethiopia and its potential ramifications.

Government of Sudan Limits Assistance to Civilians in SPLA Areas

WFP was the largest transporter of food in this area and had brought overland convoys up to Waat in late 1990. The WFP office in Khartoum, however, was refused permission from the government of Sudan for the movement of convoys into southern Sudan in the dry season of 1991. UNICEF did deliver some seeds, tools and fishing equipment, but only after the embargo was lifted in late March, and in the absence of the complementary relief food this input was of more limited effect than intended. The failure of OLS at that time to extract the requisite permission from the government to allow adequate assistance in the Sobat/Waat area later conspired to increase the suffering of the returnees from Itang.

The government of Sudan's policy toward the relief of the people of southern Sudan at this time was described by USAID as "clearly capricious, if not blatantly obstructionist." The United Nations, although not completely unaware of the likely arrival of over 250,000 people from the three Ethiopian refugee camps (150,000 from Itang and 100,000 from Panyido and Dima), also did not protest. Perhaps they were tired from the endless struggle to negotiate each shipment of relief food with the conflicting parties. The United Nations accepted the suspension of the program until the rains began to fall and the area became virtually inaccessible to relief from the south.

The Refugees Return

On May 29, 1991 the authors witnessed the arrival of approximately 15,000 people at Jekau on the Ethiopia-Sudan border. These people were forced to continue moving by the bombing of Jekau by the Sudanese air force on that same day. Most proceeded to Nasir in Upper Nile province where some 130,000 were eventually registered during the next three weeks. A smaller group of twenty thousand refugees who originated from the Akobo area returned straight home. Interviews with those arriving at Jekau indicated a representative population drawn from every area of origin known to have been at Itang except for the Blue Nile group, who appeared later. This confirmed the report that all the residents of Itang camp had left.

The UN and NGOs had, from their small base at Nasir on the Sobat River, assisted the newcomers in setting up their camps. In Nasir the UN and local authorities established six registration sites where 130,000 returnees were registered during June 1991. A multi-agency team including International Rescue Committee, World Vision International, Action International Contre Le Faim, Action Africa in Need, UNICEF and World Food Program, rapidly established food distribution, feeding centres, clinics and information dissemination systems. Due to the

difficulties of moving in bulk supplies without permission from the government these facilities were in place for some time before the arrival of relief inputs such as food or shelter materials.

Political Manipulation of the Returnees

It was only 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 the second major wave allowed SPLA authorities to pressure the international community for continued assistance.

At Nasir they camped on a small hillock that projected above the flood plain by a few inches, very near to the UN base that had grown from the original small office in Nasir town. These Uduk and Maban people were denied permission to leave the camp by the SPLA until May 1992. They were the living (and dying) proof of the need for continued relief at Nasir. They were without kinship or other social links, without potential sources of local assistance and they were also caught between the SPLA—who suspected them of being allied to the government—and the government—who suspected them of being allied to the SPLA. This refugee community from the Blue Nile was not native to the southern Sudan, but could not go back to their old homes due to persisting insecurity. While other ethnic groups were able to use their social linkages and ethnic identity to their advantage, this group was prevented from doing so and as a result was much more vulnerable.

The unaccompanied children were another group whose poor state was pointed out as a compelling reason for continued relief (2,800 arrived at Nasir from Itang; the majority had been at Dima and returned to Sudan via Pochalla). While it was true that significant relief was required, it is important to recognize the role the press played in focusing on the severely malnourished unaccompanied minors while ignoring the relatively healthy majority. Although this helped to generate what little assistance was offered, it was another example of how the returnees were manipulated. This interest in the children and the resulting speculation rapidly became a political issue and was a leading factor in the subsequent split in the leadership of the SPLA in July 1991.

Some did not Believe that Itang had been Evacuated

The local SPLA/SRRA authorities were well aware that without a highly visible humanitarian crisis the obstacles to relief, which included the objections of the government of Sudan, would be too great too allow any supplies to reach the area. Other objections to increased relief came from donors and others who initially did not believe that Itang camp had been evacuated nor that the registration figures provided by the United Nations were accurate. For example, for some weeks after the evacuation of Itang, U.S. government sources claimed that the refugees were still in Itang. As a result, the WFP office in Khartoum was initially unwilling to credit UN reports from the field. This delayed the organization of relief and also justified Khartoum's resistance to relief proposals. This was particularly galling to the field workers who, although not prepared in advance, managed to track the arrival of the returnees, established registration procedures, closely monitored the situation and provided accurate estimates of the numbers of returnees involved and the effectiveness of the relief effort.

The Failure of the UN to Negotiate Adequate Relief for the Returnees

By June 11, 1991 it was reported that nearly 100,000 returnees had been registered in and around Nasir, of which about 40 percent were children, 40 percent women and 20 percent men. These figures were available to the UN team who negotiated a schedule of relief with Khartoum. However, the relief agreement which was announced on June 16 allowed for only 1,000 tonnes of grain and no other food commodities or non-food survival items such as blankets or shelter materials. Five hundred tonnes of grain were to be delivered by immediate airdrop and 500 tonnes by barge from the river port of Kosti in northern Sudan. Both the type and amount of food allowed was widely known to be inadequate—the diet was not balanced and provided for only a total of six kilos of whole wheat per person. There were limitations imposed on the number of days an airdrop could fly, so there was a long gap built into the agreement between the termination of the airdrop and the arrival of the barge from Kosti. Later in the year supplementary airdrops were negotiated but these were never enough to meet the needs and at no time was the food supply guaranteed. This created a chronic state of nutritional deficiency in those who had to remain in camps around Nasir.

The government of Sudan also failed to allow food to be delivered to other locations, where many of the returnees had settled or were heading. The concentration of the relief effort at Nasir meant that the dispersal of returnees to other areas was inevitably delayed, which ironically played into the hands of both the SPLA and the government in the north. The returnees became increasingly vulnerable and were more than ever pawns in a war they sought to escape.

The provision of shelter, blankets, seeds and tools was also inadequate, largely because of the restrictions placed on the mode of delivery. It was clear by mid July that a very large number of returnees would be staying in the Nasir and Sobat area during the remainder of the rains. In order to improve food security and thus reduce their dependence on relief food, it was necessary to provide seeds and tools in

time for the second planting in late August. This deadline was not met; greatly jeopardizing those who had no kinship links with the local community.

Some donors agreed with the principle of limiting relief; arguing that the returnees could now go back to Itang, where it would be far easier to supply them (Brennan 1991). However this policy did not take into account the extremely poor security situation that prevailed in the Ethiopian border areas and which continues to this day, nor did it consider the SPLA tactic of keeping them in camps to attract relief.

The ICRC Operation

In contrast to the UN operation, the ICRC relief operation at Pochalla successfully assisted 100,000 returnees from Panyido camp. The ICRC obtained a far more comprehensive agreement from Khartoum than did the UN and had no need to convince donors of the need for assistance. Their relief flights were unrestricted and they used three planes for daily airdrops of grain, pulses [such as peas, beans or lentils], oil and salt, as well as supplementary foods for malnourished children, shelter material, medicines, blankets, cooking utensils, seeds and tools.

The scale of the ICRC operation highlights the inadequacies of the UN's overall performance and raises the question of why the UN did not also obtain a more satisfactory agreement for the returnees under its care. It should be pointed out, however, that there have been a number of instances in southern Sudan when ICRC have failed to gain access agreements while the UN have managed to do so. This demonstrates once again the degree of manipulation faced by those wishing to provide humanitarian relief in a situation of conflict.

How the Returnees Fared

Without doubt, the majority of the returnees who survived, did so due to their own coping mechanisms. From the time they arrived in Nasir until the first provision of relief food, five weeks had elapsed. Most people, on arrival in Nasir, were visibly exhausted from their journey and hungry. Many (93,000) continued on while others waited or were forced to wait for relief at Nasir. Possessions brought from Itang such as clothes, blankets and cooking utensils were traded with the local people for food and those that were entitled, cashed in on kinship ties and received food from relatives. Even wild food in the surrounding area was eaten.

After waiting for the arrival of relief for as long as they could, many decided to move on to accessible home areas or, if their homes were inaccessible, at least to areas near their homes. The majority of those who remained in the Nasir area after a month were those who had local entitlements to both food and land for agriculture. These included Nuer of local origin and those from places such as Waat who had ties to local people by marriage. Some people, mainly the Shilluk from White Nile province, came when the relief airdrop started. In addition, some families from adjacent areas, notably Akobo, later sent some representatives into Nasir to reduce the food pressure in their home region whilst they cultivated. The flux of population stabilized by the end of June 1991 and a second registration was undertaken by the UN at the sites around Nasir.

The transition from a relatively easy life in the refugee camp to the hard realities of poor shelter, little food and unreliable relief cannot have been an easy one. However, to rural Sudanese who were refugees in Itang, not being able to produce food for their families was tantamount to losing control of their destinies, a state which had serious psychological consequences. Nearly everyone interviewed during the returnee registration process held the opinion that it was good to be home, or at least in Sudan. A visiting UNHCR officer in Nasir reported that despite the paucity of relief and difficulty of their circumstances, the returnees looked far happier in Sudan than when she had worked with them as refugees in Itang.

For those that had no claim to local resources and who had to remain in displaced camps around Nasir, the situation was desperate. This situation was well documented; suffice it to say that conditions were terrible, malnutrition the norm and deaths from diarrhoea very high.

During October 1991 among the Blue Nile displaced (the most vulnerable community at Nasir), morbidity and mortality were as follows (UN/OLS 1991):

Disease	Reported Deaths
Diarrhoea	75%
Malaria	4%
Respiratory infections	4%

Approximate mortality rate from Malaria: 16/1000/month with 45.8% of these deaths being children under five years old.

It is apparent that few of the returnees who moved through Nasir to their home areas returned to Nasir to re-register themselves and receive free food. In fact the question was often asked of returnees "Why have you not moved back to Nasir?" Invariably the answer given was "It is better to be with one's relatives and friends rather than waiting for food."

At the beginning of the returnee emergency operation, many believed that the provision of food and other relief in Nasir would attract people. This did not happen, instead requests were made through chiefs that returnees and local people alike should be assisted with tools, seeds and fishing equipment, health, education and cattle vaccination to help ensure food security and survival. It is a sad commentary that not enough of such support was provided to the returnees, particularly to those who returned to their own home areas.

Of the 150,000 people who fled Itang, approximately 120,000 moved on to home areas or cashed in on language affinity or kinship networks. These people benefitted only marginally from any relief; but they are now integrated into the life and community of southern Sudan, such as it is in a civil war. As far as is known, the great ma-

jority have survived—despite the subsequent withdrawal of OLS from large areas of the south as a result of increased insecurity. It is known that their existence is very much on a knife-edge, vulnerable as they are to the vagaries of climate and disease, to the continuing destruction wreaked by the war and to the disruption of commerce. It seems likely that they have no capital left, only their tenacity to survive. Meanwhile they have weakened the economic capacity of their hosts to the point that any major change in their circumstances will cause yet another mass migration.

Of the other 30,000, the greater proportion were the Blue Nile group. They were finally released from their role as hostages for relief and were allowed to move back toward their home territory in May 1992. However, with poor rains and a lack of any support from relief agencies (who were once again prohibited access) many floundered and subsequently half of them have been recorded as refugees in Ethiopia. The remainder have temporarily established themselves inside Sudan, in the Dagu/Chegile area, awaiting a late harvest. It would seem that the families have split—with dependants leaving in search of relief while other stronger family members continue to try to produce food. The success of their venture is, however, already compromised by both SPLA and government raids and the above mentioned denial of relief access.

One small success on the part of the international community was the return of some forty women and children, originally SPLA prisoners of war, to their homes in northern Sudan. Recognized by a UN worker in one of the camps, the ICRC negotiated their safe passage home. They were taken on a UN barge up the Nile to White Nile province where they were put under the protection of ICRC officials from Khartoum.

Discussion

This tale of forced movement, the struggle to survive and poor international response provokes some questions and suggests some obvious conclusions. It is clear that the people who became refugees at Itang and subsequently returnees at Nasir were undermined by war, manipulated by the conflicting parties, and inadequately protected and assisted by the international community. Their survival had more to do with their own tenacity and coping strategies than any other external factor.

Were the political realities of their manipulation also useful to their own survival? Yes, without the interference of the SPLA many would never have reached Itang nor benefited from refugee security and the subsequent food, health and education programs they received there. Neither would they have managed to alert the international community so rapidly of their plight. On the other hand, perhaps many could have stayed with their families in their home areas—areas that subsequently saw the re-establishment of schools, health facilities and food security under OLS.

At issue is the unacceptable manipulation by the SPLA and government of Sudan (and the government of Ethiopia of the time) which the international community was powerless to prevent. The failure of the government of Sudan to allow the international agencies to provide for returnees' food and non-food needs once they returned to Sudan was completely unjustified. The limitation on the movement of the Blue Nile group at Nasir imposed by the SPLA was equally unjustified. Thus the second major issue is the failure of the international community to recognize the political aspects of the situation. As such, while managing effectively to support 150,000 people as refugees, they were unable to help them when they returned home. The UN in particular failed to recognize the vulnerability of the refugees to the changing politics of Ethiopia and was ill-prepared to protect them inside Ethiopia or to help them when they returned, despite a clear mandate of protection.

Should the international community have taken a stronger line? Would such interference have been helpful or merely added another conflicting party? It seems fair to conclude that yes, a stronger line should have been taken, on the basis of a thorough political understanding. However, the history of international humanitarian involvement in cross-border situations and conflict make it clear that it is not only a strong response that is needed, but also an intelligent, politically aware and co-ordinated one. Many have suggested that OLS, under the direct control of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, would be more effective at dealing with such issues, but it has not succeeded so far in this respect.

We can conclude that, particularly in the context of war, the international community and particularly the UN with its mandate, needs to spend more time understanding the political factors at play in the suffering of civilians. Having recognized the forces involved, a consistent application of appropriate leverage should be brought to bear, based on the rights of civilians and especially children to humanitarian assistance. The UN is in a unique position to demand these rights, to negotiate access and to publicize manipulation, particularly with its recently strengthened mandate for intervention, as applied in Yugoslavia, Angola and Cambodia.

Part of the negotiation for protection and assistance must include corridors of tranquillity from zones of displacement back to home territories. However it is crucial to recognize that such corridors include protection in, and access to, the home areas themselves and this protection and access must be continuous rather than occasional.

The third consideration is the importance of the local social, economic and cultural setting. This is a factor in survival that is often recognized, but seldom acted upon. The underlying rationale for assistance should be primarily that the beneficiaries are themselves responsible for their own survival. Relief inputs and programs must therefore reinforce this responsibility rather than undermine it.

The fourth consideration is the degree of support provided to returnees or displaced persons by the international community compared to that provided to refugees. In 1987 it was estimated that per capita relief investment in the Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia was $30, while at the same time aid to southern Sudanese displaced in Khartoum was of the order of $2.50 per person (MDTMRR 1991). As the general level of security once more declines in southern Sudan, there is, yet again, movement of Sudanese into Ethiopia. We readily recognize that adequate assistance must be provided to them as refugees, nonetheless support to their home areas would go far to enhance the efforts of the southern Sudanese in improving their own food security and basic services, and making their homes a place where at least part of the family (if not all) can remain.

Is it necessary for people to live beyond their own borders just for the purposes of relief, basic services or trade? No, displaced persons, particularly those struggling to return to their homes and rebuild their self-reliance should be given the same level of support as refugees. The difficulties of providing such support are not so great as to warrant our ignoring the vital role that it plays. Conferring responsibility for survival means assisting in returnees' areas of origin, thereby eventually reducing the burden of support required. Such an approach also reduces the burden borne by traditional support networks. Without this, the stress of coping with the burden of dispossessed returnees is likely to result in greater levels of vulnerability and massive re-displacement among the home community.

Finally it is important to stress once again the issue of political manipulation. Between 1987 and 1988 it was estimated that 96 percent of fatalities in the southern Sudanese war were civilians. From our experience we can postulate that a large proportion of those civilians had been manipulated in some way or another into a state of extreme vulnerability which contributed to their deaths. It is this fact, more than any other, that should galvanize the international community toward an awareness of the politics of displacement and toward a more consistent approach to solidarity with and protection of the innocent victims of war. ■

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Distributing Food Aid as a Civilization is Dismantled: The Case of Sudan

John K. Morris

Résumé

Cet article examine la situation des "réfugiés de l'intérieur" dans un pays où la guerre civile oppose depuis de nombreuses années le Nord contre le Sud et où la famine menace constamment les plus pauvres. Au-delà des effets de la guerre et de la famine, l'auteur évoque les changements dans les droits fonciers qui, dans l'ensemble du pays, ont privé des agriculteurs et des éleveurs de leurs terres au profit de grandes plantations mécanisées privées. L'extension et la multiplication de ces vastes domaines, très visibles dans le paysage, sont fortement encouragés par le gouvernement en raison de leur contribution aux exportations des cultures de rente. L'auteur décrit ensuite les évènements qui jalonnent la période récente du conflit et les succès et obstacles que rencontrent les organisations humanitaires pour distribuer l'assistance dans un pays déchiré par la guerre civile.

Introduction

The rains in southern Sudan usually begin in April. They mark the end of the government's annual military offensive against the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the south. This past dry season—from about January to March—was a bloody one in southern Sudan. The armed forces of the government were able to get the upper hand against the SPLA, which has been embroiled in infighting. Reports of new assaults appeared in the western media in mid-February this year. Fighting led to a large movement of refugees travelling toward the Ugandan border. This latest assault was accompanied by a drought that put 1.5 million people at risk of starvation in southern Sudan. Aid workers say that unless food comes quickly, they can "contemplate the worst famine in Sudan since 1988, when up to 300,000 people died" (*Economist* 1994, February 12).

This article considers the internally displaced in Sudan, the context of these displacement, and the difficulties international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) have faced in trying to get aid to those who are in need. The displacement of people in Sudan occurs in a cycle of war, dislocation, drought, flood and famine, along with the effects of pushing/pulling peasants off common lands. This movement off land is accompanied by a move from sustainable agriculture to unsustainable monoculture. Following this introduction is a description of the land and situation in Sudan which is strongly affected by mechanized farming. This is followed by a description of the reasons for displacement in the country. The last section recounts Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), an agreement between military groups and aid agencies for the free passage of aid to those affected by drought and famine.

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The Current Situation

There are an estimated 28 million people who belong to 132 distinct ethnic groups in Sudan, the largest country in Africa. People of Arabic race and Muslim religion/culture live in the north and dominate the capital, Khartoum. They are also found in central Sudan where they are mainly riverine farmers, pastoralists or rain-dependent farmers. Camel breeders live a nomadic life in the scrubland of the north and west, and to the south, the Baggara Arabs herd cattle.

The southern Sudanese comprise 30 percent of the population consisting of two main groups: the Nilotic group of cattle-herding Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk whose animals graze the central grassland of the south; and the Christians and animists, who cultivate the wooded lands along the borders of the country.

Sudan has a complex demographic make-up that has been reduced to a North-South dualism supported by racial, ethnic, cultural and religious differences, with corresponding political and economic disparities. The north comprises two-thirds of the land mass and population of the country, and dominates the south, which remains largely undeveloped. Tensions which naturally occur between north and south are further inflamed by a process of Islamization that has become very aggressive in the latter part of this century.

Half of the people who live in the south of Sudan have been uprooted. They left their homes primarily because of war and drought, and 1994 marks the eleventh year of war between the government of Sudan and the southern Sudanese who are currently on the defensive. Besides 600,000 displaced in the south, some two million others have moved north—many migrating to the squatter settlements around Khartoum. Four hundred thousand others have left the country for refugee camps in Uganda, Zaïre, Kenya, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic (*Economist* 1994, February 12). Most of these people originated from the hardest hit regions of Western and Eastern Equatoria (ibid; see map).

The Land

The White Nile runs through Eastern Equatoria, feeding the largest swamp in the world. This mosquito and crocodile-infested expanse known as "The

Barrier" is one of the SPLA's major strongholds. In the dry season, however, some of the swamp dries, making it accessible to the military, and forcing many people to flee.

In the province of Bahr el Ghazal to the southwest, relief officials report that more than 200,000 people have been surviving by gathering wild food. In the same region, United Nations officials estimate that since 1989, a wasting disease carried by a sand fly has killed more than 60,000 people trapped by fighting. The disease, *Kala-Azar* or visceral leishmaniasis, can be cured in thirty days by proper medical attention (Lorch 1993).

Sudan is a fertile country, but the areas from which people are being displaced, and the areas in which the government is building "peace camps" for their forced resettlement, tend to be incapable of supporting life. Some of these are located in the desert 30 km west of Khartoum. The wind there never stops blowing; it is abrasive to exposed skin and eyes. Under the sand the ground is so rocky that latrines cannot be dug deep enough to guard against diseases (Flint 1993, March 13).

Further south and west of the Nuba Mountains (see map), food shortages have led the government to relocate the Nuba to peace camps. One-sixth of the Nuba population (163,000) are now held in one hundred "peace villages"—a number of which are in Kordofân's provincial capital of Kâdugli. In these camps, men are conspicuous by their absence. Reporter Julie Flint of the *Manchester Guardian* spoke with women about the absence of men. They said that their husbands were either shot by government forces before the relocation, or later, after having arrived in Kâdugli. Other reports suggest that some of the men have been taken from Kâdugli to Nahud—a groundnut farming area outside the Nuba Mountains that suffers from chronic labour shortages (ibid).

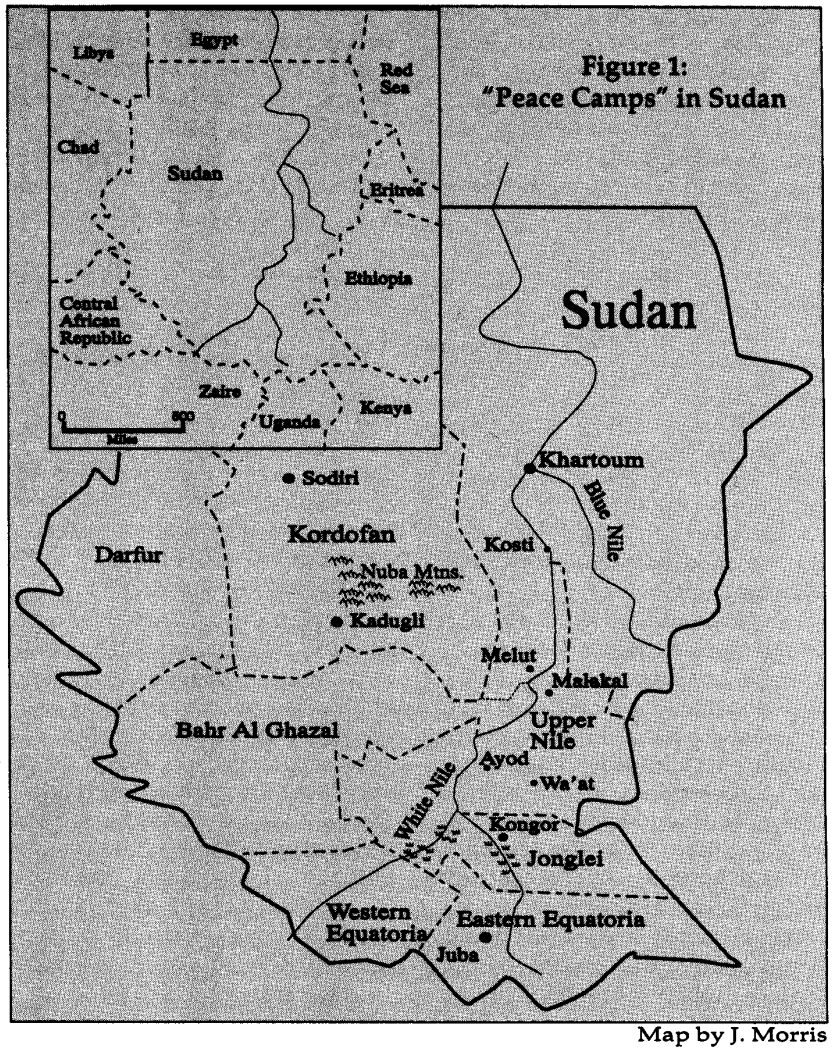
Some of the peace camps are in northern Kordofân, while others are even further afield. The Nuba are not allowed to leave the peace villages under threat of being shot. The camps are located in the precarious geopolitical boundary between north and south Sudan. A relief worker commented:

> Look at the location of these peace villages: most are in insecure areas. The Nuba are being used as human shields [by the government] (Flint 1993, April 24).

Many of the peace villages are also in the vicinity of large mechanized farms where Nuba land has been sold to the *Jalleba*—the urbanized, Arab trading class—who exploit the camps for cheap labour. Health conditions in the camps are dreadful.

> In as-Salaam, two clinics treat three hundred children everyday, despite a shortage of medicine. In a nearby squatter settlement, Dar-as-Salaam, there is only one functioning bore hole for 218,000 people (Flint 1993, April 30).

The need for camps is partly the result of a change of land tenure endorsed by the government that has resulted in the development of many large mechanized farms.



Mechanization of Farming and the Loss of Soil/Nutrients

Mechanized farms now dominate agricultural land in Sudan. Since independence, the *Jalleba*, who have dispersed throughout Sudan and the neighbouring countries, have focused

on large-scale rain-fed mechanized farms. The 1970 Unregistered Land Act facilitated a restructuring of land tenure by evicting or buying off peasants and ignoring traditional rights to common grazing lands. The establishment of mechanized farms has been strongly supported by the government since the 1970s because they provide cash crops for export, particularly sorghum (83 percent of total cropped area) and sesame (16 percent). Mechanized farming, as practised in Sudan, is really *tractorized* farming as it involves no other machines. Usually only ploughing and seeding are mechanized, while land clearance, weeding, planting and harvesting continue to be done by hand. These practices create high demands for a mobile wage labour force.

There are 34 million hectares of rain-fed arable land in Sudan. Mechanized farming is consuming this land at a staggering pace, a trend observed since the late 1960s. In 1968 there were 2.5 million hectares of land under cultivation, today there are 7.5 million hectares. This doubled the amount of land under traditional rain-fed agriculture to 3.8 million hectares (Suliman 1993a, 6). These farming practices are far from sustainable: quick economic returns are emphasized with the knowledge that there is still yet more land to plant when the present land becomes depleted; fallow periods and crop rotation tend not to be practised. Shrinking yields render land under mechanized farming unprofitable after about seven years. With the particularly marginal soils and low rainfall of Sudan, soil degrades quickly and is slow to rejuvenate. The effect is that the topsoil on approximately half of the rain-fed arable land in Sudan, or seventeen million hectares, has been lost (Suliman 1993a, 19). Loss of plant cover, particularly of trees used for gum arabic or fuelwood, also contributes to topsoil loss. Almost all of the forests in eastern Sudan have been cleared for mechanized farming. If this trend continues, there will be no forests in northern Sudan in the next decade (ibid).

Mechanized farms account for the bulk of cash crops available for export from the country, although these farms are controlled by just one percent of farmers. Some 8,000 largely absent leaseholders, tend to be horizontally structured in the production, distribution, and trading of their cash crops. Meanwhile, traditional subsistence agriculture still forms the basis of livelihood for two to three million peasant farmers (Suliman 1993, 106).

Sudan has been partially forced into the production of cash crops through mechanized farming. In the twenty year period between 1972 and 1992 Sudan's foreign debt increased from $298 million to $14 billion. Exports totalled $315 million while imports were valued at $1.3 billion. Its GDP in 1992 was $5.2 billion with an inflation rate of 150 percent and unemployment at 30 percent. This economic situation allowed the World Bank to impose structural adjustment plans over the twenty years of borrowing. In turn, these plans have encouraged the export of produce from mechanized agriculture. The International Monetary Fund's pressure for Sudan to export continues unabated. Even during the famine years of 1982-85, Sudan exported 621,000 tonnes of sorghum to pay creditors. The country's debt has altered the pattern of land tenure in the country leaving large numbers of displaced with resentment toward the *Jalleba*.

Reasons for Displacement

By 1984, some 4.5 million people had become displaced. Their only alternative was to move to towns and relief centres where food aid was available. This created dependency on begging, charity, occasional labour, theft or prostitution (Suliman 1993, 107). The country's situation is worsened by the move to a cash crop export economy making it vulnerable to international markets and the country's well publicized famine of 1984-85.[1]

While there has been nearly continuous fighting since independence in 1956, this past decade has been most destructive: claiming one million lives and uprooting perhaps three million southerners—roughly half the southern population—from their homes. Piece by piece, an entire civilization is being dismantled. The most recent escalation of civil war in Sudan has continued uninterrupted since 1983, when the civilian government in Khartoum adopted a program of Islamization for the whole country—a policy which resulted in the formation of the SPLA. The situation worsened with the military coup in 1989. General Omar Hassan al-Bashir seized power with the support of the National Islamic Front, a party resistant to any conciliation with the SPLA. The coup occurred just hours before government representatives were to meet with members of the rebel SPLA, and was staged to prevent the talks (Burr 1993, 3). At stake was the question of regional autonomy for the African peoples that inhabited the three southern provinces: Western and Eastern Equatoria, and Jonglei. The new military regime imposed a stricter Islamic Law, silenced or eliminated opponents in the North and forced the SPLA out of most of the areas it had previously controlled. In subsequent peace negotiations between the SPLA and the government, the unresolvable issue has been the government's unwillingness to repeal imposed Islamic Laws for non-Muslims.

There have been efforts to bring peace between the SPLA and the government. A negotiated agenda was resolved between SPLA factions at a meeting convened by government ministers from Uganda, Kenya, Eritrea and Ethiopia in January of this year, and SPLA negotiations with the Sudanese government were to follow in Nairobi. Khartoum had supported these talks, but since February has taken a different course—war (Scottish Churches, 1994).

Khartoum's failure to negotiate with the SPLA after neighbouring countries intervened in preparations for peace talks adds further support to the image of Khartoum as pariah. Most observers note that the government is more influenced by international than

internal pressure. But recently Khartoum has cornered itself into a reliance on the members of the Islamic Conference by alienating the rest of the world. Worse yet, its support for Iraq during the Gulf War created rifts within the Islamic Conference.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has accused Sudan of widespread executions, torture, detention and expulsions, and voted to appoint a special investigator. Last year the United States accused Khartoum of having close ties with Iran and Libya and harbouring known "terrorist groups," including the Palestinian group *Hamas*, Islamic Holy War and the Party of God (Lorch 1993). More recently, the United States placed Sudan on its list of countries that engage in terrorist activities. In early March 1994, the UN special envoy to the country submitted his report which has poised international human rights instruments against Islamic law. Sudan responded by attacking not only the report but also the envoy—making him a minor Salman Rushdie (*Economist* 1994, March 5).

Since 1991, the SPLA has become a less effective opposition due to a split into at least three different factions. This dissension seems to have eased the government's intention to plunder the south. Consider recent infighting between SPLA factions in the context of the Government's role in the south. At the beginning of the present dry season, in December 1993, a stalemate occurred with John Garang's SPLA-Mainstream holding most of Equatoria and Riek Machar's SPLA-United holding the Upper Nile. At this time the government held several of the main towns. In January it built up troops and supplies in Wan and Jûbâ, and in February began aerial bombardment of remote SPLA-held towns and villages. This turned the stalemate with the SPLA into a major dry season offensive with the intention of cutting off Garang's Ugandan supply lines. Camps for the displaced and refugees have been targeted as well as towns and villages. In the offensive against John Garang's SPLA-Mainstream, SPLA-United is reported to have colluded with government troops (Chazan 1994, February 10). By February 2, 280,000 people had fled to Kenya, Uganda and Zaïre. The SPLA called for the UN to impose sanctions on Khartoum and to establish an air exclusion zone in the south.

Few observers believe that a military solution is possible in Sudan. While the government may currently control more of the south than a few months prior, the rainy season will again stop major military operations. The difficulty of maintaining this control, given the long supply lines and deep antipathy of the region's population, has been proven in the past. In this situation aid agencies struggle to prevent mass deaths of people with no food supply. Fortunately, Western attention is increasingly being focused on Sudan. Christian leaders have visited to help bring attention to the human destruction that is occurring in the south: the Pope visited in 1992 and the Archbishop of Canterbury visited in late 1993/early 1994. There is a continuing opening and closing of famine-affected regions to journalists and international aid agencies which shows that the government does indeed respond to Western pressure. The following considers the struggle which aid agencies have experienced in the past few years in Sudan.

International Aid Agencies in Sudan

The massive famine due to civil war and drought in 1984-85 was followed with an even worse famine between 1986 and 1988. In this latter period the UN estimates that three million Sudanese were displaced. Between 400,000 and 500,000 persons died during this period (Minear 1991, 6). Inadequate rainfall followed this tragedy. In 1990-91 there was again crop failure and the numbers of destitute and dispossessed continued to grow. In November 1991, it was reported that "even the birds have moved south" from northern Kordofan and Sodiri, a town of 20,000 people, was nearly deserted.[2] Similarly in 1993, a report by USAID-Sudan noted that observers flying over a vast area around Ayod and Waat, where some 300,000 head of cattle had been enumerated in the early 1980s, sighted "not one single cow."[3] For the Dinka, a people for whom cattle is the basis of commerce, there could be no greater tragedy (Burr 1993, 24).

Over the course of time many of the Nilotic peoples from the Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal provinces (see map)—the Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk—fled to the squatter settlements that ring Khartoum. The city's Muslim inhabitants have treated these people severely. Over the decade, various governments in Khartoum have instituted campaigns to disperse the squatters and destroy their settlements. In 1990, a displaced southerner living in northern Sudan could hardly expect to

> own land, drink clean water, attend school, be vaccinated, vote, or raise objections to the government's prosecution of the war in the southern Sudan (Burr 1993, 2).

Nearly one-quarter of the children living in these encampments are severely malnourished, two-thirds live in unsanitary conditions and only 10 percent of the displaced children attend school (ibid, 7). International aid agencies have worked together to form an institution that coordinates aid activities.

Operation Lifeline Sudan Formed

In response to the effects of civil war and the famines of the 1980s, the UN, NGOs and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) successfully negotiated the formation of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) with the government of Sudan and the SPLA. This facilitated a large, coordinated relief effort between ICRC, UNICEF, World Food Program (WFP) and INGOs via negotiated "corridors of tranquillity." The Islamic African Relief Agency, the Sudan Council of Churches and local NGOs also took part in providing aid. Between March 1989 and December 1990 direct contributions to the OLS reached $200 million and in total, $300 million of resources were delivered to one and a half million people. War ex-

penditures in the same eight month period, however, exceeded $400 million for the Sudanese Government (RPG 1992, 38). Generally, it is agreed that this first OLS, or "OLS I," was a huge success. It demonstrated to the aid community that it was possible to provide humanitarian relief in the midst of a civil war (ibid).

Although famine and war continued into 1991, it was not possible to obtain agreement from the government and the SPLA to mount an OLS II, nor the following year's OLS III. Recently, however, a new agreement has been made between the government, SPLA and aid agencies for safe access to provide food aid (*Economist* 1994, February 26).

During the interim when OLS II and III failed to gain endorsement by all parties, aid agencies were treated by both the government and the SPLA with repugnance. An example is a case which occurred in mid-1990 in which USAID attempted to transport food aid by barge southward from Kôstî (see map). An agreement was in effect dating back to 1986, when both the government and the SPLA agreed not to attack barges carrying humanitarian assistance. The barge stood by at Kôstî intending to move aid southward to Malakâl. The government had not been able, however, to dislodge the SPLA from Melut and used "regional security conditions" to block the movement of food aid. The people of Malakâl, who had not received food aid in nearly a year, started to move northward. Military officials, seeking to avoid reports of large numbers of displaced in the area, ordered the departure of the last of the expatriate INGOs working south of Kôstî (Burr 1993, 12). Using aerial attack, the government then attempted to sink the barge. Their effort was not successful, but civilian casualties did result.

USAID, the instigator of OLS, uses satellite technology information to predict food needs in famine prone regions through Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) project (*Nature* 1991, 545). In the winter of 1990, FEWS estimated that five to six million Sudanese could starve with eleven million affected in 1991 if multinational assistance was not received. The government, however, seemed unconcerned with the projection and blamed international relief agencies for the domestic food shortage because they had been buying up domestic sorghum.[4] The editor of the government's newspaper made public its attitude toward the foreigners:

> The Sudanese people are smart enough to understand that most of the relief agencies have religious objectives and many of the Western agencies understand relief as offering assistance to the rebels in southern Sudan. It is not beyond the Sudanese people's intelligence to know that the problem of the South would not have been so aggravated if the Western agencies had not supplied [the SPLA] with the means of subsistence and added fuel to the fire in the form of arms, ammunition and food.

Planning for OLS III was due to commence during the Gulf War that began in January of 1991. Meetings with high level UN personnel did occur, but Sudan's support for Iraq created considerable tension between the government and the international community. In the end, OLS III could not be negotiated, for as one senior Western official put it: "We don't trust them and they don't trust us."[5] Given the worsening relations in Sudan, USAID/Sudan announced on October 1, 1991 that it planned to cease being the primary implementing agency for food aid in Sudan, transferring that function to the WFP. Further, all economic development projects were terminated for 1992. At the same time, the government restricted INGO access to the settlements it was creating to replace squatter settlements around Khartoum and the Nuba Mountains. The political climate in Sudan continued to decline and by late 1991, INGOs like Save the Children-Canada pulled out of Sudan. In essence, only UNICEF and the WFP, both of which demanded little accountability of the relief supplies provided to Sudanese agencies, were left to service the displaced around Khartoum by 1992 (Burr 1993, 26). More recently the situation has improved with the signing of a new OLS agreement that gives aid agencies limited access to the country's interior (*Economist* 1994, February 26).

The Sudanese Government, SPLA and International Involvement

The events that led to the decision of many aid agencies to leave Sudan in late 1991 were characterized by the government and SPLA using their power to frustrate relief efforts. Both groups at times blocked, diverted and/or destroyed aid and assets, such as the senseless bombing of ICRC's food aid barge.

In the fall of 1990, for example, when drought and war led to dramatic increases in the price of cereals in Khartoum, the Minister of Commerce ordered the sequestration of all food stocks held outside government warehouses. Both the UN and U.S. Ambassador to Sudan raised strong objections to the government's behaviour but could not persuade al-Bashir to release the relief food or admit publicly that there existed the possibility of a famine in Sudan. For a short time in November 1990, Washington cut off food aid passing through Khartoum, instead diverting maize supplies from Kenya to southern Sudan. Later in the month, the government's representative at the United Nations quietly appealed for "immediate food assistance of 75,000 tons for urgent delivery to drought stricken areas."[6] Donors quickly came forward.

The government has attempted to rectify its food dependency through a number of national campaigns. In January 1990, it made the elimination of wheat imports a national goal when it ordered an increase in wheat cultivation to 255,000 hectares. In a speech made by al-Bashir in North Darfur people were told,

> Because we do not want to beg for our food and we do not want the relief agencies to humiliate our dignity, through you the homeland and through your production, we will rid ourselves of this bitter humiliation.[7]

Translated into action, Bashir's pronouncement became a desperate situation when the government decided not to send aid in the months following the region's poor harvest. Later, the IMF commented that the precarious state of food reserves in 1990 was caused by the sale of "large stocks" of grain abroad. Even more sickening, the *New York Times* noted that the foreign exchange earned was "spent on weaponry from China to continue the civil war."[8]

Conclusion

The problems in Sudan seem resolvable only through increased toleration on the part of the government and the SPLA factions. A mixture of human induced problems, including the IMF's loan policy, has made Sudan an economic basket case—a condition that will continue for many years to come. Beyond ethnic tensions and efforts to impose Islamic hegemony, changes in land tenure have marginalized farmers and nomadic peoples to the point that their lives may never resemble what they were in the past. Further, the accompanying destructive farming practices are ruining the fragile soil of an unnecessarily poor nation.

Efforts to provide aid have continued in Sudan, even with the frustration of the government's contrary policies and practices. Aid agencies seem able to rise above the mayhem and focus on the marginalized who regularly starve. At times the need for aid calls into question the government's claim to legitimacy and sovereignty. If Sudan were more geopolitically, or economically interesting to the West—particularly the United States—a *military challenge* might be levelled against the government. Yet, as recent history shows, Western military intervention is rarely effective and civilian casualties are often higher than expected.

Viewed historically, and optimistically, the current condition in Sudan might be viewed as a Western-style evolution from subsistence farming to an industrial economy. What further complicates this transition in Sudan, however, is the presence of civil war, massive debt burden, and a worldwide recession that when considered together leave the resultant displaced labour out of the economy. The situation for these former subsistence farmers and nomadic peoples is grim. What makes their situation worse, from an outsider's view, is that this displacement is indirectly supported by the international economic system that is insensitive to the repercussions of loan repayments. So while economic resources have been made available to Sudan, life for a large part of the population is desperate.■

Notes

1. Suliman (1993a, 107) citing Duffield, M. (1990, 8).
2. Burr (1993, 16) citing AID/OFDA (1990, August 24).
3. Burr (1993, 16) citing Lautzse and Wagner (1993).
4. Burr (1993, 16) citing *New Horizon* (1990, November 3).
5. Burr (1993, 16) citing *Washington Post* (1991, February 23).
6. Burr (1993, 16) citing *Washington Times* (1990, November 2).
7. Burr (1993, 4) citing Radio Omdurman, 1715 GMT, February 4, 1990.
8. Burr (1993, 4) citing *New York Times* (1991, May 12).

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