

Sudan Oilfields and Genocide

There is a killing place in Africa called the oilfields of the Sudan. Here the Sudanese government (GOS) practices systemic genocide with a vengeance on its own people. In this place a more able world has ignored the cries of cruelly persecuted natives who have lived here for many generations. In this place a terrible holocaust is taking place each day. Here a repressive government kills its own after the events of September 11th, with impunity, challenging the United Nations and the coalition's resolutions to enforce the protocol of 1948 outlawing genocide.

The history of man can be found here. It is an old land where the first people on earth were found. Old empires flourished in this region, now forgotten except for their extensive ruins. In the Bentiu/Malakal area of El Ouahda, Sudan along the Upper White Nile and the Bahr el Ghazal River, a tributary of the Nile, a new history is being written, This is an arid land broken up by the rich flood plains of the Nile creating one of the most fertile farming opportunities in the world. The Nuer and the Dinka tribes have lived in this southern region for centuries, cultivating the land and tending their flocks. Slightly to the north are the Nuba people living in the mountains in small tribes. There are few roads here, with little or no infrastructure. Years ago, in the small villages, fresh water wells were dug. There is no electricity or telephone. Very little medical care is available. Schools and churches are rudimentary. There are regional trading centers which are reached by paths and roughs tracts, passable only in the dry season. In this place only the strongest survive. These villages have survived for centuries, within the infrastructure of tribal territory. Some villages communicate with the outside world via radio. Yet in these communities each person knows about the events of September 11th. Each person says "We are with the United States and would like to help them. Now you know what we have been going through for fifty years". Here the U.S. company Chevron explored for oil, discovering large fields of it in the 1970's.

In the early 1950's, the British government which had colonized the Sudan, melded Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan into one country to facilitate administration from Khartoum in the north. The Sudan has twenty million inhabitants spread throughout an area similar to the United States east of the Mississippi River. The northern area is dominated by Arabs and Black Muslims while the southern region is Christian and animist Black. When the British left the Sudan, fighting between the two regions broke out. Four years ago the statistics given for the holocaust was two million dead and five million people displaced. These figures are still being used today even though continued killing and displacement has created greater new numbers of this genocide. The current struggle dates back to 1983. The south has no administrative center. Juba, the former center, has been garrisoned by the government, a defense organization was created called the SPLA/SPLM. At first this loose confederation of tribal leaders of the Dinka, Nuer and Nuba struggled with each other on how to defend the south against the declared war from the Khartoum government (GOS). In the 1990's, the Khartoum government declared a "Holy Jihad" against the Christian south and vowed that all of the Sudan would be a Muslim nation. Over the years the government has developed into a fundamentally radical state similar to the theocracy of the Afghanistan Taliban government. Osama Bin Laden had developed his al-Qaeda organization in the Sudan before being asked to leave by the Khartoum leaders, who were encouraged by the U.S. to expel him for his terrorists activities.

The divisions between the people of the north and south are enormous, based on;

... racial and cultural division, Arab/brown against African/Black,

... as well as a religious defined Muslim north and Christian south.

... Combine that with a political divide which the "Holy Jihad" justification by the northern government provides,

and the gulf becomes as immense as any on earth. The "Sharia" or conduct code for the Muslim community provides that any persons out of the Muslim "faith" are unclean, thus they look down upon the Christian blacks as an inferior people. Last year, I wrote about the extensive slave trade of the Muslim community as we "bought back" 4119 Dinka Christian women and children who had been in slavery for an average of six years.



Presbyterian Priest and his contingent

Joan Niemeyer with children

After Chevron found the oil in the south, the criticism from the United States government over the new ability of the Khartoum Government to finance the war on the south and several deaths of its employees caused Chevron to sell its interests in 1984 to a consortium from Canada (Talisman 25%), China (China National Petroleum 40%), Malaysia (Petronas 30%) and the Sudan government's (Sudapet Ltd. 5%) which developed the fields. Later Sweden (Lundin Oil), and France (Total Fina Elf) also invested in the oilfields purchasing concessions from Khartoum (GOS). In 1999, the oil started to flow through the nine hundred mile long pipeline to Port Sudan in the north on the Red Sea and to the world. As soon as the oil began to flow the weapons technology used by the north became superior. Russian Hind helicopter gunships, tanks,

artillery, bombers supplanted rifles and mortars creating a new ability to dominate southern Sudan. So the economics for the north to carry on the genocide on the south is to be found in the oilfields which are located in the south. The northern Sudan government has created these killing fields so that the oil flow is not interrupted. The SPLA realizing that the money realized from the oil is fueling the holocaust, is trying to halt the flow while the north is creating a scorched earth policy around the fields, killing and pushing age old tribes from the region. The displacement tribulations and direct genocide has created the killing fields. Food always scarce is no more. New water sources create disease. The physical trial kills elders and infants. The holocaust continues unabated.

In the past, the Khartoum government has not allowed human rights observers to enter the Nuba/Oil field region, but a recent two week ceasefire arranged by U.S. Envoy to the Sudan Senator John Danforth with some UN observers to enter the region with the purpose of making observations in the Nuba Mountains and the oilfield. While they were in the region the ceasefire was violated by the northern government after only three days. Our trip into the oil region was scheduled the day after the ceasefire was to end and just after the return of the UN mission.



A Christian flag leading the parade of SPLA soldiers prior going to the front lines

The Trip

Persecution Project Foundation, located in Warrenton, Virginia invited Joan and I to join them in delivering medicine, beans, salt and soap to the displaced Nuer people in the oil region near Bentiu, a traditional regional trading center. On the trip was the Board Chairman of the foundation, a Christian missionary from Virginia, and a videographer from Nairobi. In the bright Advent season of 2001 where the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths have great celebrations it seemed congruent to take this difficult journey. We flew to Kenya, then to the northern border town of Lokichoggia (Loki) for our departure into the Sudan. We carried five tons of relief supplies in a small transport approximately six hundred miles to the upper Nile region to a new small town of refugees who had just built a nondescript dirt airstrip. Our pilots had difficulty finding it. The closest established town of Bentiu was occupied by government forces. It was from Bentiu that one current offensive is taking place. The SPLA has created a line of defense some four kilometers from the town, from which it was facing three different fronts on which the northern government (GOS) were attacking. It was west of this point that our loaded cargo plane landed. After we landed in a cloud of dust, the waiting crowd surrounded the plane and quickly unloaded the welcome provisions. The plane took off returning to Lokichoggia leaving us and our equipment until its return. The plan was that the plane would return tomorrow with another load of supplies and pick us up about two PM. That would allow us time to meet with the leaders and to document what we found. It seems that the

provisions arrived in the nick of time as their meager rations of corn were being supplemented by grasses found in the area after the rains just a month prior.

They welcomed us with smiling, shy faces and open arms. Joan disappeared into a sea of women and barefoot children all anxious to touch her hair and clothes. She loved it and their welcome. Soon she had a contingent of twenty youngsters in tow, holding hands and repeating the refrain from *Old McDonald Had a Farm*. After introductions with the Commissioner, Commander and local chiefs we were led to a straw walled compound where we pitched our tents. On each side of our compound we could see new tukuls being erected. These straw and thatch homes are traditional in this part of Africa. The chiefs apologized for their lack of providing a suitable tukul for us, being such a new camp. The new stores were stacked in a community compound for distribution. Shortly after we arrived the Commissioner told us a young bull was being slaughtered in respect to our visit which was a great honor for us. Just after we had put up our tents we heard a chanting from a large group of men. We went back to the airstrip and saw some several thousand troops running in a formation of fours and chanting in unison being led by a Christian flag and the SPLA colors. It was a stirring sight in the evening light. Tomorrow, the Commander told us these newly trained recruits would go the front lines. It was touching to see the long line of troops, those in front carrying automatic weapons, machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers, then the lesser armed troops with AK47 and Kalashnikov automatic rifles, finally it was the new recruits, boys, women and girls, barefoot and carrying sticks. This was the front defensive line and they were defending their families and homeland from annihilation. Maybe tomorrow they would be pushed out of this hastily laid out camp. Maybe tomorrow....



The Commander



A young SPLA warrior

The Commander is a legendary leader among the Nuer and SPLA forces. Trained in guerrilla tactics, wounded twenty eight times, it was his discipline and training that kept the north from overrunning the south in this area. Deeply Christian and Nuer he is committed to save his people. Each day is a new challenge. Each day a new attack by the north tests his and his troops mettle. At this time he is facing attacks from three different directions. In this command location he is training and conditioning his troops to be able to meet the onslaught. His brigade is known far and wide for its ability to fight, so it is with a touch of sadness that he tells me that he can not fight tanks, artillery and Hind gunships with rifles grenade launchers and mortars. The fourteen or so area chiefs that are with him for protection know full well that they will have to retreat to a new location, taking their remaining tribe with them. There will be more death and less future.



Andover Plane



Tribal chief

The young bull was killed and we ate quietly, thankful for these hospitable people. The Commander and the Commissioner sat with us providing us with a situation report. It agreed with what we had heard from experts in Lokichoggia. Singing from the soldiers camp went well into the night. Afterwards the quiet stillness of a starry night and a crescent moon provided a measure of peace for us.

Dawn broke early. The troops were training and running on the landing strip. There was to be a review by the Commander before the troops left for the front. The parade was led by a Nuer Presbyterian minister and his staff, which included a bass drum, banged with vigor by a young man. Shortly after the parade and a review by the commanders, loud artillery fire was heard in the distance. The commander told us a major battle was taking place five kilometers from our camp. For five hours the battle raged. At noon, we were told to be prepared to retreat immediately with his troops, if the battle went poorly. Also at the same time we received a radio message that the plane could not return until tomorrow. The Commander and his staff were preoccupied with the battle and its results. At two PM the artillery stopped. The tension was quite great. Then we heard that the Commander had won an important victory, with the government forces in full retreat to Bentiu. We understood that tomorrow there would be yet another battle from a different direction with a more able GOS General leading the attack.



Young girl with rifle



Woman with pipe

We wanted to walk a few miles to the river. We walked to the direction of the river arriving at the Commander's headquarters camp and barracks. Around the camp every twenty five feet were foxholes with guards in it night and day. The barracks were simple straw huts. A medical dispensary was there with little medicine, other then the shipment brought by us which included the very basics. This was an army on the move, retreating slowly, giving up their age old land grudgingly at a tremendous cost in civilian lives caused by the displacement. At the camp the Commander stopped us from going to the river telling us it was too dangerous to continue further as the gunships were patrolling it picking off water gatherers. We did not mind too much as the heat was somewhere over 115 degrees in the sun. My thermometer read 100 in the shade. In the tremendous heat we could not take in enough fluids to compensate for our dehydration. In the camp we visited with the soldiers and then walked back to the airstrip and compound where we had our tents. As the soldiers practiced deployment and tactics in this heat, I was amazed that with their meager calorie input and lack of fat that they could sustain such rigorous training in the heat for so many hours. They had a cause and were banded together to fight for survival of their families, tribes and homeland, and it is a desperate and demanding struggle. Their chanting and singing as they ran in formation in the oppressive heat was a powerful

display of the human spirit with a cause.

In the late afternoon the results of the battle became known. One hundred wounded, fifty dead of the SPLA forces. Five hundred were dead and wounded of the Government (GOS) troops with many prisoners taken by the SPLA forces. In the late afternoon we took a long walk through a small village where the meager corn stores were kept in bins and the woman prepared the corn for the daily ration for ten thousand people.

On our return we had a meeting with the fourteen tribal chiefs. The oldest chief who had his tribe north in the Nuba Mountains told us that his tribe was ten thousand families three years ago, now there were two hundred. I asked him where the rest were. Starvation, disease created from dislocation, river crossing drownings, war. Then we realized that there were few children under four and less elder persons in the crowds. They had vanished as the result of the genocide and dislocation efforts by the north. Other chiefs told of similar though not quite as great losses in their tribes. All families in their tribes were affected. When we asked what the chiefs wanted. *It was peace.* Then they prayed. Their pride in their peoples strength and endurance was quite amazing, they just needed some peace from the killing fields to rebuild their families and tribes. There was a sadness in their plea. A sadness based on a difficult past with little future for each person, young and old.



Nuer women

Carrying wounded

In the twilight the wounded were brought to the camp in a long line by women carrying straw mats on their heads. Even though the cost was great, there was joy in the camp that evening, but the Commander knew there would be a tomorrow. He knew that the artillery, rockets, tanks,

gunships would be too much for his rifles, grenade launchers and mortars. He also knew that from the captured weapons from this field of battle he would replace sticks with rifles and he would replenish his ammunition supplies. The continuing struggle will have no end until the north has killed the Christians of the south and the nation will be Muslim. That is what the "Holy Jihad" tells us.



Woman carrying the wounded from the battle Two young woman warriors in defense of their families

The next morning we awoke to a donkey braying. Shortly after stowing our gear into bags and having a meager breakfast, we heard our plane arriving and had a final meeting with the Commissioner, Commander and chiefs. The Commander went to his wounded which were crowded around the plane. He determined that after the plane unloaded its relief supplies, only the most critically wounded would be airlifted out with us. The pilots asked me if we had seen any gunships. It seems that on the prior day an NGO (non-governmental organization) plane which was to take out the wounded from the battle was harassed by two (GOS) helicopter gunships, so much so that the relief plane dove to the ground in its effort to escape and had picked up leaves and twigs from trees on its undercarriage. This was a ratcheting-up of the tyranny that the north is pursuing on the south with its newly found armaments. After our return to Loki, we were told that the pilots could not return to deliver the rest of the goods due to the gunships controlling the skies and their determination to stop relief efforts.

We took the opportunity to visit a new school for the orphans, homeless and disabled, established by the wife of the leader of the SPLA. It is a wonderful camp in southern Sudan built

for seven hundred eighty students who will board there. Initially it will have two hundred forty students equally divided between boys and girls. Persecution Project asked how they could help. They needed the money of \$100. per month per teacher for nine for the next year. The Project agreed and paid them so that they could open in January. It is a start.



Wife of the leader of the SPLA, her vision and hard work has created a school for orphans, homeless and the disabled

The story of concerned and caring non-governmental organizations with their unique and heroic dedication to give aid and help to the victims of this terrible tyranny is an exceptional human endeavor. I had heard that Persecution Project was one of very few relief organizations that was prepared to take the risk in taking supplies to the front lines of this holocaust. They found several daring pilots which would assist them in their work. Each day new rules adjust how these people of compassion, dedication and perseverance are able to assist those oppressed people in the oil region and the Nuba Mountains. The UN does not... The US does not... The European Common Market does not...The Presbyterian Church and Anglican Church do not...The Red Cross goes in if it is safe, now it is not...

The Overview

Apologists in the world say this is a long standing civil war. They would also say that among the SPLA/M there are Marxist leaning warriors. They would say that in the case of the Nuer, that two Nuer tribes fight with the north. They would also point out that the mainland Chinese have brought in troops to protect the oil interests and that these troops are used to search, destroy and remove Nuer from their tribal lands, killing them if they don't move. There is some truth in all of this, but the germane facts in the current situation are. The SPLA/M is a defense organization, originally loosely structured along tribal lines that over fifteen years has had to evolve into a quasi-governmental role. The defense need was the most great so as to stem the tyranny of a "Holy Jihad" placed upon it by the northern government (GOS). Its armaments and ammunition for which to defend themselves are captured from the government. *The SPLA is Christian based and defensively oriented.* Certainly the south will try to take back its trading

centers, which the government occupies, and to stop the oil flow. It feels the direct impact of the oil flow revenue by the improved armaments which carry out the goals of the northern government. The government with its much larger and better equipped forces has hired two Nuer tribes to help lead the battle against the south. They are placed on the front line and are the first killed and captured.

Those who would say that this is a civil war would also apologize for Hitler prior to World War II or say that the Holocaust did not take place. This is genocide and slavery in its clearest form. The three churches, Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian who have the largest presence are slowly responding. Archbishop Carey and Bishop Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the US Episcopal Church have called on President Bush to incorporate southern Sudan's plight into US foreign policy. The Pope is starting to respond on the basis of Bishop Gassis work in the oil region and the genocide in the Nuba Mountains. The United Nations has been silent as well as the European Common Market, fearful of a political, Muslim and terrorist backlash. The US is acknowledging the problem but as of yet has done nothing, even as to food relief which it has stopped. We are witnessing one of the world's largest and most cruel genocides. It dwarfs all but the Russian Gulag and the German Holocaust in its scope and tyranny. Yet the world is painfully silent. The cruelty and scope of this genocide and slavery in southern Sudan as it becomes known will shock the world and will create inquiries on how it could happen in the knowing world of 2001, well into the next century. Then there will be a wringing of hands, wailing and gnashing of teeth acknowledging the facts and the guilt for this so unjust holocaust in southern Sudan.

Lucian Niemeyer

Santa Fe

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**Persecution Project Foundation can be found at [http://
www.persecutionproject.org/](http://www.persecutionproject.org/)**

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