

## **SUDAN**

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**FRANSOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Consular/Economic Officer**  
**Khartoum (1957-1960)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa City, Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received a Master of Arts at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1948. He served in the US Army from 1943-1946, and in 1950-1951. He entered the Foreign Service in 1951 and served in Colombia, Sudan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Kuwait. Ambassador Dickman was interviewed on February 9, 2001 by Stanley Brooks.*

*Q. What happened after completing your Arabic language training?*

DICKMAN: In February of 1957, the members of our Arabic language class received their assignments. My assignment was Khartoum, Sudan. I was replacing Pat Cunningham, who happened to be a member of my Foreign Service entry class. We came to Sudan at a particularly interesting time. The Sudan had recently joined the family of nations. Under a United Nations sponsored plebiscite, the Sudanese had opted for independence in 1955 rather than uniting with Egypt. Earlier, it had been known as the Anglo-Egyptian condominium.

But the early days of Sudan's independence had been marred by disturbances in the southern Sudan. During the time the country was governed by Britain, the southern Sudan had been separated from the Muslim north and left largely to Catholic and Protestant missionaries, who eagerly sought to convert the animist tribes of the south to Christianity. With the approach of independence, the Sudanese government had decided to send Muslim garrisons to the southern Sudan while stationing Christianized or animist southern troops in the north. While this move was intended to reinforce unity in this large nation (I think it's the largest in Africa), it would backfire. It was seen by the southern Sudanese as a move to restore Arab domination in what had once been a major slave trading area. The southern units mutinied at a place called Torit. Those who survived the "Torit massacre" were captured and sent to a prison near Suakin, a lonely spot on the Red Sea, which I visited at one point and where these prisoners remained for at least 20 years.

When we flew into Khartoum from Beirut, the embassy was getting ready for the visit of Vice President Nixon. He was making a swing through the region trying to win over several Arab nations to the Eisenhower Doctrine. The Eisenhower Doctrine offered economic and military aid to countries to withstand communist aggression. While the Sudan was a very poor country and the prospect of economic aid was very enticing, its leadership was not prepared to do battle with Nasser, who had denounced the doctrine as aimed against the Arab world. Vice President Nixon seemed not to appreciate the Sudan's delicate political position at the time. I recall that he left quite disappointed.

The arrival of our effects and our car to Khartoum were delayed for six months because of the closure of the Suez Canal during the November 1956 Arab-Israeli conflict. While we spent several weeks on a Nile steamer in front of the Grand Hotel in Khartoum, we were fortunate to move into an already leased and partially furnished house built on what had been a sheep's pen so that it was lousy with ticks. However, it was one of the few houses in Khartoum with modern amenities since the honey buckets had been replaced with a flush toilet.

Khartoum was a small embassy. Lowell Pinkerton was the ambassador. Art Beach was the DCM. Wayne Swedenburg was the administrative officer. Chris Reynolds was the public affairs officer. I wore three hats as the embassy's consular, economic, and commercial officer. Ambassador Pinkerton was an old-line Foreign Service officer. My impression was that he did not particularly share my enthusiasm for the Sudan and perhaps it was due in part to his southern background.

I did a good deal of economic reporting while I was in the Sudan including the preparation of many World Trade Reports for the Department of Commerce. But being a very poor country, my efforts at commercial promotion produced few results. However, the fact that we were only a handful in Khartoum and I being the only Arabist gave me easy access to virtually all the under secretaries of the different ministries. Shortly after arriving, one of the first issues that came up that I recall was Washington's decision in 1957 to dispose of the stockpiles of long staple cotton that had been accumulated during World War II. This was coupled with new protectionist measures for the less than 1,000 growers of long staple cotton in the United States. The result was to cause the price of Sudanese long staple to plummet. The decision was a purely political one that was intended to respond to domestic pressures from U.S. cotton growers. But I also suspect that it was directed at Egypt's President Nasser. Since long staple cotton was the Sudan's main export, and it was Egypt's as well, it was certainly a blow to its already weak economy...

Another major issue that I followed very closely and remember very well when I was in Sudan, and reported on in some detail, was the negotiations between Egypt and the Sudan for dividing the Nile waters. An agreement had to be reached because Egypt had started the construction of the Aswan High Dam since the Russians had replaced the United States to help build the High Dam. As the construction began in Egypt, it was putting pressure on the Sudanese leadership. The negotiations dealt not only with the division of the waters, but with compensation by Egypt to the Sudan for the flooding and relocation of the city of Wadi Halfa, which is located near the border of Egypt, as well as the creation and operations of the Nile Joint Technical Commission. An agreement was finally reached in 1959. I do not recall the amount of money that was paid as compensation to the Sudan. I should also point out that while these negotiations were underway, both Egypt and Sudan tried to get Ethiopia involved. However, Ethiopia refused to be part of any such agreement.

While I realize that access to the Nile was life for Egypt, I also felt that the Sudan did not come out as well as I thought it should. I regretted that a sensible plan could not be worked out to reduce the loss from the evaporation of water. Wadi Halfa was considered the hottest place on Earth. I've been there and, believe me, it is. It was estimated that evaporation would amount to 20% of the total amount of water that would be stored in Lake Nasser, the lake resulting from the High Dam. It would have made much more sense to build smaller dams upstream in Ethiopia and in Sudan. It would have reduced the loss from evaporation and given more water to Egypt.

*Q: Who was the political officer?*

DICKMAN: There was no political officer until Cleo Noel came in 1958, which is one reason why I did a lot of the Nile water reporting. The Noels came from Jeddah and arrived in Khartoum in the summer of 1958. We welcomed them. In the spring of 1959, Cleo was joined by

Bob Gordon (Robert C. F. Gordon). In the summer of 1957, Ambassador Pinkerton had gone on home leave, but he would not return because of medical reasons. Art Beach, who had been the deputy chief of mission, was replaced by Bill Cole. Bill became the charge for over a year until Ambassador James Moose arrived in the fall of 1958. Also arriving at that time was Bob and Phyllis Oakley. Initially, Bob served as general services officer [GSO], but as he developed good relations with the Sudan's political leadership, Bob also began to serve as Ambassador Moose's aide.

During the year when Bill Cole was charge, we received visits from AID officials, an AID team that was led by Bob Kitchen, a highly intelligent and motivated African-American. Unlike the previous year, this time, the Sudanese responded favorably to the prospect of economic aid seeing our approach in less political terms. So, during this period, I was involved with the charge in negotiating an AID agreement. The stickiest aspect of the negotiations was over the various perks and diplomatic privileges that would be accorded to AID personnel.

Shortly after the agreement was signed, Kitchen returned to Khartoum to become the head of the AID mission. Soon, we had a large number of AID technicians whose numbers completely dwarfed the embassy's. However, the large AID mission resulted in the embassy receiving a Marine guard detail. So, all of a sudden, the embassy in Khartoum had changed from being a very small one to a very large one.

Although our enthusiasm and interest in the Sudan was not always shared by my colleagues, we enjoyed our tour in Khartoum. It lasted nearly four years. Margaret as a volunteer taught diet therapy to the first class of women who had graduated as trained nurses in the Sudan. This was at the Kitchener School of Medicine under the aegis of the World Health Organization. In fact, she was cited in a 1963 State Department publication which included a section on the role of unpaid Foreign Service wives.

Personally, I enjoyed the easy access that I had to Sudanese officials – such people (and I recall them well) as Hamza Mirghani, who was the finance under secretary; Mamun Biheri, who was the head of the central bank; Wadi Habashi, who was the under secretary for agriculture; Abd al Bagi Muhammad, who was the civil aviation director; Daud Abu Latif, the interior under secretary; Charlie Antoun, head of the surveys department; and many others. One of our closest friends was Saad ad Diin Fawzi who chaired the Political Science Department at Khartoum University. His wife was Dutch. Unfortunately, poor Saad ad Diin died of cancer shortly before we left Khartoum, which was a very sad occasion. Another one of our favorite Sudanese was Mansour Khalid, who was then a young lawyer but who later became Sudan's foreign minister in the mid-1970s. Mansour as foreign minister managed to work out political arrangements whereby the authorities in Khartoum agreed to give the southern Sudanese a great deal of autonomy. Unfortunately, his valiant effort was latter destroyed by Muslim extremists in the north, resulting in a military conflict in the southern Sudan that continues to this day.

While I was in the Sudan, I had an opportunity to travel to most areas of this country including the south. I suppose our most memorable trip was in April 1958 when the family took the train from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa as the first leg of our way for home leave. We were accompanied by Saad ad Diin's family and FSO Les Polk who was pursuing Arabic studies at the FSI and was

on an orientation trip. We got caught in a sandstorm that lasted for two days. Once we got to Wadi Halfa, we went by Nile steamer to Aswan and then by train to Luxor, Cairo and Alexandria where we boarded our only other boat trip on one of the American Export Line's Four Aces.

My travels in the Sudan, especially in the south, made me aware of just how arbitrary the European colonial powers had been in drawing boundary lines. The boundary between the Sudan and the Belgian Congo had been determined by the continental divide, not by where tribes lived. In fact, a number of tribes such as the Azande found themselves divided by two colonial regimes. Visiting the Sud, especially in the area near Wau, was also impressive. This vast swamp area that is fed by the White Nile has the potential for growing enormous amounts of rice to feed the world's hungry provided it can be farmed and reached peacefully.

My travels got me interested in Sudan's history, including books written by former civil war officers who had been hired by the Khedive of Egypt in 1866/1867. One of these civil war officers was Chaille-Long, who was sent by the Khedive as an emissary to the southern Sudan and Uganda in 1874 to negotiate a treaty of friendship with the King of Uganda. Upon his return, Chaille-Long is credited with being the first westerner to identify Lake Kayoga. In fact, I wrote a paper on the role of early Americans in the Sudan, citing Chaille-Long as an example. But I also cited the role of American missionaries in establishing what would eventually become Khartoum University, and the former president of Iowa State University at Ames, who introduced cultivation of long staple cotton in the Sudan in 1900 in Atbara, a city located 200 miles north of Khartoum. I presented the paper to the Rotarians in Khartoum, whose membership was largely British at the time. In any event, it resulted in an article which appeared in the local press.

**KENNETH P. T. SULLIVAN**  
**Political Officer**  
**Khartoum (1958-1950)**

*Kenneth Sullivan was born in 1918 in Massachusetts. He graduated from Bowdoin College in 1940, and served in the US Army from 1940-1946. His Foreign Service career included posts in Germany, Yugoslavia, Sudan, and Austria. Mr. Sullivan was interviewed on October 25, 1994 by Thomas Dunnigan.*

*Q: That is an interesting story. Well, after your adventures in Belgrade, you left Europe and moved on to Africa, Khartoum, specifically.*

SULLIVAN: Yes.

*Q: There you were political officer, I understand. What did that have you doing?*

SULLIVAN: Not much. I was the first political officer assigned to the post which had been in existence a little over two years when I got there. It started off as a listening post with a man by the name of Sweeney or McSweeney, I have forgotten. And then, when Khartoum got its independence it became an embassy and we had an ambassador and a couple of other State

Department officers and several agency people there. The ambassador was sick a good deal of the time and later went home and did not return to the post. When I got there Mr. Moose had just taken over as the ambassador and I was the first political officer assigned to the post as such.

I said there was not much to do. In the first place, the only reason we had an embassy or any sort of a post at Khartoum was because it was the capital of a recognized United Nations country. There was really nothing of action there, internally or externally, that made a great deal of difference to the country itself or anybody else. Once when asked by the ambassador what I would do if I could have my druthers about Khartoum, I said that I would consider, if it were up to me, whether I might go so far as to do what most of the small European countries did, that is take their junior officer in their embassy in Cairo and send him down every year for a week or two in what passed for winter when the temperature at night got below ninety, and look around and just be impressed with the nothingness that existed there. So there was not much going there.

I found out much later a possible reason why I was sent to Khartoum was when the political officer's post was established as was the custom at that time, other agencies had a voice in whether it would be approved or not approved, and the Labor Department approved the assignment of the political officer with the proviso that the State Department would try to get an officer with labor background because of the importance of the labor movement in the Sudan. But I came to know during my tour there that the only probable reason that the Labor Department was of that opinion was the two Sudanese who studied at the London School of Economics and had written books for their thesis on labor in the Sudan. This led somebody in the Labor Department to believe there was a labor movement there, which in fact was not true.

*Q: Did you find the Sudanese cooperative or difficult to work with?*

SULLIVAN: Oh, the Sudanese were officially and even those few that you would meet on a social basis, very few who could speak English, were most cordial. It was one of those places, however, where you had a language barrier and it restricts contacts if you don't speak Arabic mightily. You also had an illiteracy rate in the country which was then estimated to be about 95 percent. So it didn't make much difference whether you spoke Arabic which was then an alternative national language and later became the national language and was spoken only by a minority of Sudanese anyway, including those Sudanese who characterized themselves as Arabs. They speak a wide variety of mutually unintelligible dialects, most of which were when I was there had not been reduced to writing.

*Q: It is a huge country. Did you get to travel around at all?*

SULLIVAN: I was the first one to my knowledge of the embassy ever to get into the Southern Sudan and I did that by taking leave and accompanying the deputy public affairs officer who had authority from his agency to take a jeep and driver and travel through the south to record native songs to use in VOA broadcasts.

*Q: Were the troubles on then between the south and the...?*

SULLIVAN: Well, it took us about two months to get leave because supposedly there was warfare all over the area and the individual provincial governors had to give their approval. When we got the approval we traveled all over and were never bothered anywhere. We saw all of the provincial governors and the only reports that we got from the clergymen, who were the main people that we could speak with in a language that any of us knew, was that there were always rumors of strife in the next province but they themselves in 30 years had never seen any or any evidence of any.

*Q: Well, after that sojourn in Khartoum, you moved to Washington. You were sent to INR.*

**MADISON BROADNAX**  
**Agriculture Extension Advisor, Agricultural Branch**  
**Khartoum (1958-1962)**

**AID Affairs Officer**  
**Khartoum (1972-1975)**

*Madison Broadnax was born in Swords, Georgia in 1914. He graduated from a Baccalaureate College of West Virginia State in 1940, and received a Masters in General Agriculture from Michigan State College in 1942. He served in the US Army from 1943-1946. His career included posts in the Sudan, Korea, and Nairobi. Mr. Broadnax was interviewed on September 18, 1998 by W. Haven North.*

BROADNAX: My first assignment was to Khartoum, Sudan, as Agriculture Extension Advisor, the Agricultural Branch, and I was there from '58 to '62

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BROADNAX: Yes, I did. They kept calling me. One day I got a call. They said, "We've sent your GTR and can you come to Washington for the weekend?" I said, "Yes." And I did. And that's when they got serious. They said, "We have a position in the Sudan. We've been told that you're the person we want right now in that position. We want to talk seriously to you about it, and we want you to think seriously about it." The person who told him this - you knew Bob Kitchen - Kitchen had gone to Sudan and made a reconnaissance survey. He took with him Joe Walker, a fellow from Agriculture, and somebody from the Bureau of Public Roads. Anyway, he assured them that if they could break me loose from the college, I would be the person. He said, "I want to tell you, he's the youngest member on the faculty. He's well liked and he's doing a good job, but he may not want to leave. His wife has to agree with him before he goes." He told them the truth. We didn't have any children, so my wife agreed to it.

*Q: Did you have any idea what was involved, or what you were getting into?*



BROADNAX: I knew that my position was to go and assist the government of the Sudan in establishing the National Agricultural Extension Service. That's what they wanted me to do. And I had to design it and sell it to the Sudanese, which wasn't much of a problem really. But I had some barriers to overcome. One of the persons I had to deal with was the Dean of the College of Agriculture, whom I'd been told was a card carrying communist in the Sudan.

*Q: What year did you go out there?*

BROADNAX: 1958. Just before the coup.

*Q: At that time it was ICA [International Cooperation Administration]?*

BROADNAX: Right. So I started meeting with the officials in the Sudanese Department of Agriculture and they gave a reception for me the first week I was there. I met these principals and the Dean of the College of Agriculture. They knew from my background that I was in college work, so he and I had a long conversation at that cocktail party. I asked him if he was familiar with the concepts of agricultural extension--out of school training and... He said "No, I'm not." I said, "Well, that's the program we started through our land grant colleges in the United States, and I'm a product of that system. I'm here to help your government establish a (they requested me to come) national agricultural extension service. The college has always played a key role in this because they train the students that we employ. I'd like to know what you think about doing this through the university." He said, "What are the terms of doing this if I can sell it to my faculty?" I said, "The terms are education and preparing graduates to go out through Sudan and help farmers improve their agriculture. That's the term. You don't owe us anything." He said, "Well, we'd like to talk about this some more." We did from time to time.

That year, there was a dearth of trained personnel in Sudan. That year, he had nine graduates from the School of Agriculture. When the government of Sudan staffed their first extension workers, they gave me six of the nine. All college graduates. Also, they had a post-secondary training institute called Shambat Institute [in the Khartoum area], where they trained junior officers beyond high school. We had the exposure to all of those students.

I taught a course in extension to the Shambat Institute people. That helped me in two ways: they got to know me and I got to know them, and I got to learn a lot about their culture, how they did things, how the building organization functioned, and how you go through the leaders in those villages to get things done. It worked out very well, so after we had agreed upon staff--Americans--and the localities where they would be working throughout the Sudan, the Ministry of Agriculture decided that they wanted to initiate this program in southern Sudan. I had been to the southern Sudan and I took my camera when I went. In every village I stopped, I took pictures. The next time, when I returned to the southern Sudan, I distributed the pictures to the people, whom I had taken. One of them was Chief Jambo. That was the best thing to introduce me to the people of southern Sudan. I was accepted.

*Q: What was the agricultural situation in Sudan at that time, both in terms of the overall agriculture scene and the capacity of the government?*

BROADNAX: They had an administrative role that was really tattered. They had an agricultural officer in each province and they were administrators. They had nothing to do with teaching the farmers. If a farmer didn't do what they told him to do, they'd incarcerate him in some fashion.

*Q: Were they technically trained?*

BROADNAX: They were all graduates of the University of Khartoum.

*Q: What was the program like at the University?*

BROADNAX: They had a good program. The British had set up a university. They had put good people there to teach. They had some smart Sudanese coming out of that program. I went to south Sudan once with the former British Director of Agriculture Research Station. I learned more from him than I had learned from anybody, other than Joe Walker. When Joe Walker went there, he came back and gave me all of his notes from his visit out there. But he and I went to southern Sudan in a place called Yambio [Western Equatorial Province], where there was an agriculture research station. They had a Canadian operating that station. He gave me the ins and outs. Just like a professor, you know. It was of great assistance for me to learn about agriculture in the south.

When the government asked to introduce the program in the south, it turned out it was the best thing that could ever happen. We initially got an agricultural advisor at a place called Maridi [Western Equatorial Province]. He was stationed there. He had a senior counterpart assigned there, one of the six people they had assigned to me, and he had three junior agricultural officers from Shambat Institute. There we built offices; we built houses, and we had a horticulture advisor to come on board shortly after that. Due to the shortage of houses, he had to be stationed in Juba, the capital of the Equatorial Province. I told the Sudanese that we did a lot of one-on-one farm visitations in the United States, but that's too expensive for you. We've got to do it in a mass training manner. One of the best ways we can do it is through demonstration. They said, "Well, we've got plenty land in the south. We'll get a million acre farm demonstration for them." I said, "No, that won't work. Those farmers there have plots. They're small farmers. They can't even imagine themselves owning a million acres of land. Why don't we do 250? We'll grow every type of crop it's possible to cultivate in southern Sudan on that farm." We did that.

*Q: How big a farm?*

BROADNAX: 250 acres.

*Q: That's still big.*

BROADNAX: Yes, that was too big, but that's a compromise. We could bring the chiefs in to give them training. Then we had satellite village farms. That's where these junior officers were. They brought people into those satellite village farms. That program went very well until the wrong people got in charge of the government.

*Q: How did you find the Sudanese to work with?*

BROADNAX: Very easy. Very easy. In fact, I was surprised at the quickness in which they accepted me. Our adversaries had said all kind of things. They said I was a spy. It's a long story. But anyway, they didn't buy it. Everywhere I went in the country, my counterpart was with me. I never went out unilaterally, even with this British Director of Research. We were all together. They found out I was serious. They found out I knew my stuff. They found out I was genuinely interested in helping them.

*Q: Was the main project in the south, or did you have projects all over the country?*

BROADNAX: That was where the Sudanese wanted to start it because they thought the north was too sophisticated for an extension program. That's what they thought.

*Q: What did you think?*

BROADNAX: I said they were not. But anyway, I didn't tell them that. The reason why I said this was best place for the extension program to start in the south was because that's where the demonstration farm was going and we had a military general [who was] Minister of Agriculture. He made a visit to the south. He visited Maridi Demonstration Farm. The Director of Agriculture was there. Bob Kitchen was there as Mission Director. Joe Walker was there - my Chief. And all of us - my counterparts and all. He said to the Director of Agriculture, "Why can't we have something like this in the north?" The Director of Agriculture said, "Well, we thought this place had the highest priority." He went on to enumerate. He said, "We've got extension offices set up for the Blue Nile, White Nile, Kordofan, Khartoum, and the Northern provinces." Which we did. That satisfied the Minister. But he thought that was the greatest thing he had seen. I must admit that my horticultural advisor, who was the advisor to the development of the demonstration farms, did a wonderful job. He had hard-working Sudanese right with him.

*Q: Did you have demonstration farms in all the provinces?*

BROADNAX: We only had demonstration farms in the southern provinces. In the northern provinces, we used the farms that the government had already established and we improved them. You see, this is what we were up against. Sudan's major product is cotton. They had this two million acre cotton farm in the Gezira [Al-Jazirah Province] where we wanted the extension offices. When we made a reconnaissance survey of the farmers in the Gezira, we found out that some of their practices were not giving them maximum returns. We organized the extension program around food crops. But we had an Extension Information Officer in Khartoum, which was a strategic input at that time. He and his counterpart organized some slides and film and we used them in educational meetings throughout the Extension Service project area. That was the way we got an entrée into that area. In Khartoum Province, where the Shambat Institute was, the program was organized around information. We were bringing farmers into Shambat for field days and show them a variety of vegetable crops and practices. In El-Obeid, Kordofan Province, we organized a demonstration in a village about 60 miles from there. We set up demonstration farms there too. We brought in seeds from the United States. USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] backstopped us on selecting seed varieties that they thought would do well, and I

must admit we didn't fail on any. We had extension advisers posted in the capital, who taught cultural practices conducive to the region.

Eventually, they requested a Home Extension Agent. I said, "We can get you one, but tell me with whom will she work. We can't bring one unless there is a Sudanese counterpart. So you're going to have to find a Home Economist as her counterpart." The person we wanted was in education. But they did find somebody who was assigned to be the counterpart to the U.S. Advisor. She coordinated Home Economic programs among the Sudanese women, including 4-H Clubs with girls. The 4-H program was recommended by the Director of Education for Southern Sudan. It was begun in all elementary schools based on the project concept with food as a major.

*Q: How did the demonstration farms work? Did they have the impact you had in mind?*

BROADNAX: Oh, yes! Yes! Very much so. The demonstration farms revolutionized farming practices and systems throughout the Maridi area. One of the greatest impacts was the change of crop variety that they were using, to those that we brought in on the demonstration farm. We brought open pollinated seeds so they could save the seeds. They would take these varieties back and try them.

*Q: What was a Sudanese farm like in the south?*

BROADNAX: Well, in the south they were small. They were primitive. In some places, they were using sticks as implements.

*Q: How large a farm did they have?*

BROADNAX: Some of them had an acre. Some had more. But an acre was plenty. We improved the crops they were growing - vegetable crops. And eventually, we put in a small tropical tree crops as a cash enterprise, including coffee and pineapple. We put one of those Shambat Extension Officers in charge. At the time that we had to close that program out, we had increased the farmers' income in that locality by five percent, which was a great achievement at that time. We were there long enough to learn how long it took a coffee tree to come into production - it took about three years. When they were able to sell their first crop, that was just like their first Christmas. They really went for it. There was a Lebanese merchant there who grew coffee, and he had his own coffee mill and everything, and that was a ready market for them. It went very well.

*Q: Do you have any sense of scale? How many farmers participated in this program in the south?*

BROADNAX: No, I don't. Every time we had a field day or a training program, it was well attended by village chiefs and their tribesmen.

*Q: The impact was quite widespread?*

BROADNAX: Yes. Very widespread. We had two top advisors. They didn't mind working. They didn't mind getting out in the village, teaching the junior agriculture people how they want things done. All the farmers had to do was to see it and they would do it themselves. One of the best things that happened in the south: we had a Director of Education in the southern provinces. His name was Sir al-Khatim al-Khalifa. When we went there and introduced the 4-H Program, he recommended it in a bulletin and put the American 4-H emblem - cloverleaf - on the cover. He sent it out to all of the schools. I'm telling you, shortly after that you could go along and see 4-H Club cloverleaves on different projects. Sir al-Khatim was elected President of Sudan when General Abboud was ousted. He did very well. During this time, I was free to visit Army installations, and I met Army officers and everybody. Numeiri, who finally became President, was a Colonel in the south when I met him. When I went back to Khartoum as AID Affairs Officer, all of those people had moved up in the various ministries. Of course, this did not have the effect it could have, due to lack of objectivity, insight, continuity, and coordination.

*Q: Before we get into that period, which was interesting, were there any major problems or issues you had to deal with in expanding this agricultural program?*

BROADNAX: Well, I had to sell it because they always say that the line of least resistance is the best thing to do, especially if you're not industrious. Many of the agricultural officers were administrators. Some of them were slow to accept the extension program. They saw this as competition to their esteem. The Director of Agriculture had to put the responsibility on them because they were the chief agricultural officers for the various provinces. So I visited all of them. Finally they came around. Then I had a counterpart who was in school with many of them. He'd gone to the University of Wisconsin and got his doctorate in Agricultural Extension Education. He was my counterpart and he sold it to them. But the program in the south was the thing that put everybody on notice. That it was something they needed, not only in the south, but all over the country.

*Q: Throughout the south?*

BROADNAX: Yes. Yes.

*Q: How were conditions in the south at that time?*

BROADNAX: Fine. I mean the Army was there, but they weren't mistreating anybody. They were there because that was one of their commands and that's where they had to serve, you know. The people seeing me were pleased they were going about their business. We were aware that there was a Catholic bishop, who was known to be a rabble rouser. He took offense against some of the things that the northerners were doing, and he let it be known. They got tired of him. They tried to incarcerate him. He escaped. So you had those upheavals there. I couldn't let it bother me, but I was fully aware of it.

*Q: What about the competition among the different ethnic groups in the south?*

BROADNAX: They were more or less located in different areas. You take the Dinkas in the area of Maridi and Yambio Districts [in Western Equatorial Province], where this project was

initiated. On the east bank, there was another group of tribesmen. There wasn't any conflict with them. In the Bhar-El-Ghazal Province, they were Dinkas. Dinkas are tall, slim people. Most of them go naked. We didn't have any problem with them. In the Upper Nile Province, the land wasn't too conducive for agriculture, but most people lived on the Nile River where the fish were plentiful. We encouraged that.

*Q: Large nomadic livestock herders?*

BROADNAX: Oh, yes. On the east bank, livestock was used to buy a wife. They had large herds, and when you got married, you had to give so many heads of cattle for a wife. Ambassador Rountree and I visited a wedding where this was evidenced. We were invited to the village engagement party. The wife was there and the intended husband and all, and the cattle. It was a wonderful experience. We were fully accepted. We took pictures. No problem. But we knew there was this undercurrent because there had been a mutiny there during the British rule. A lot of southerners and northerners were killed. A lot of people had never forgotten that. We were aware, but we couldn't let them know that we were aware. I think one of my successes was that I never did get into their politics. I couldn't dare get into it. In spite of what the Russians said about me, and the Egyptians at the time, and the Chinese, the Sudanese didn't buy it.

*Q: What did they say about you?*

BROADNAX: They told them I was a spy because I remembered faces and things too well. I never did go out by myself. That was one of the things. I told Wadie Habashi, Director of Agriculture, "When I go anyplace, my counterpart has got to go with me. You've got to give permission for him to do that. We can't do it by hanging around offices here in Khartoum." He said, "I'm glad to hear you say that." I said, "Okay."

*Q: How did you find traveling throughout that area?*

BROADNAX: Found it okay. I had to fly from the north to the south because that's 1200 miles. But we got transportation. We bought vehicles for extension personnel. I want to tell you this. One of the last programs I conducted before I transferred to Korea, was to teach boys and girls elementary agriculture at the Tang school. That's in the Bhar-El-Ghazal Province. I was there for a week. I had 30 students and a counterpart. We got along very well. We'd organized the class around an acre of land. I had seed varieties of crops that they ate. On a Friday evening, the Sudanese rebel army went in and massacred every northern merchant in that town...sixty-seven

*Q: Northern merchants?*

BROADNAX: Yes, that's what they did. Like carpetbaggers, they were in charge of all commerce, police, the Sudanese club and the Post and Telegraph - everything of a business nature.

*Q: This was the southern army?*

BROADNAX: This was the southern army.

*Q: Rebel groups?*

BROADNAX: Yes. They cut off communication by capturing the Post and Telegraph. They slaughtered every Northern Sudanese merchant, gate guards, and prison guards. I was about two miles away in the rest house and I heard volleys. In the city and about half an hour later I heard one right outside my rest house at the prison. That was a guard at the prison. In about ten minutes, I heard another one. They knocked off that guard and freed all of the prisoners for their army. They went out and harvested peanuts and joined the southern army. That's how they got their food and forces. So the next morning, there were four of us alive in that little town--my counterpart, my cook, my driver, and me. I asked my counterpart what happened? He told me. "You remember when we were out there in the field working with the kids? You saw a man going up and down the road?" I said, "Yes." He said, "That was their intelligence officer. He wanted to know who you were, why you were here." So what they did, when they decided to massacre the people in the town, they threw a guard around the rest house to make sure nothing would happen to me.

*Q: Your counterpart was from southern Sudan?*

BROADNAX: Yes. I said, "There's a just God who secured my life then and henceforth." That was my last activity before I left for Korea. But, you know, it's ironic that two weeks before I went there Ambassador Rountree called me to his office. He said, "Mr. Broadnax, we have a problem. My intelligence people can't travel. They are barred from traveling. You are free to travel all over the country. I want to ask you to report to me any intelligence information." After that massacre, I got back to Khartoum. Well before I got back, they heard about it and they called my wife. The Ambassador called my wife and said, "Mrs. Broadnax, where is Madison?" She said, "He's in the south." He said, "I want you to know he's okay. We had some trouble there, but he's safe. I don't know what you heard, but I want you to know he's okay." When I got back to Khartoum, I reported this and he called in his Chief of Intelligence, CIA and all those people. I debriefed them all on what I knew. I told them there were volleys and they said that was the most important thing I could tell them. If there were volleys, they knew the source.

*Q: How did you feel about gathering counterintelligence?*

BROADNAX: Well, I felt that I was trusted to do it. I didn't have any skepticism. If there had been some other ambassador, I would have, because I think they would have tried to sacrifice me because I was popular with the Sudanese.

*Q: Wasn't there something of a gamble if you became known to the authorities?*

BROADNAX: Well, if it had been an established fact, that would have played right into the hands of our adversaries. That's what they were saying all the time. But, as I say, that was the last thing I did before I left Sudan. It was time to go. What made that so interesting, I was in my house one night. My wife and I and some friends had been to a movie. We were sitting there having a drink and a Sudanese knocked on the door--tall, elegant fellow. Had his turban on. He said, "Mr. Broadnax, you don't know me, but I know you. I want to talk to you." I said, "Okay.

Come in.” He said, “You’ve got guests. I want to talk to you alone.” We sat out on the patio. He said, “I want you to be aware of Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Wheeler’s an agent. I work for him. We’ve had a falling out. But one of my assignments was to track you. I don’t work for him any more, but I want you to know.”

*Q: Mr. Wheeler was with?*

BROADNAX: He was with AID in the Program Office.

*Q: What was his first name?*

BROADNAX: I really don’t know. I forgot. You know, that was something I shared with the Chief Officer of Intelligence. I didn’t tell my wife and I didn’t tell anybody in my own shop. But I was aware of it, and I appreciated it. Shortly after that, I got orders for transfer. I knew it was time to go. And I did.

*Q: Let’s go back a little bit and review what you thought were your accomplishments over your seven years there.*

BROADNAX: I think one of the accomplishments was we trained 83 Sudanese in agriculture. I don’t know how many the mission trained in education but in agriculture we trained 83. We sent them to the United States for short and long-term training. They came back and worked in the Ministry of Agriculture until opportunities came for better jobs, salary wise. They wanted to build houses and that sort of thing. Some of them went off to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and places like that. I think that was one of the best things because there’s no substitute for knowledge. They were in the system and when the army took over, most of them had enough seniority to retire. They would not work for the army regime. The goodwill towards the Sudanese at that time was very high. I think for my country and for the Sudanese — in fact, my counterpart said when they gave a reception in the garden of the Minister of Agriculture, the Ambassador and all were there, he said, “I have never seen a person come to a country and learn the culture so quickly as Madison Broadnax did.” The Minister of Agriculture thanked the U.S. Ambassador, through the United States, for my having been there.

*Q: What did you do that made you able to understand the culture compared to what other visitors do?*

BROADNAX: One thing, we were required to learn 100 hours of conversational Arabic. I had a counterpart who was in education. He and I used to sit down toe to toe and talk about it. I mean everything that happened to human beings. I said, “When you get married, what do you do? When somebody dies, what do you do?” And that sort of thing. And I said, “As a visitor, somebody dies that I know, and I want to go to the funeral, what do I do?” I became a student of the culture. I had been told that. Indeed, in education myself, I knew it was a must. I told all my advisors the same thing. I said, “Don’t just work with your senior advisors. You’re going to have people at all levels of the nation including people at the bottom of the ladder; you’re going to have people at the middle; and you’re going to have people at the top. But you’ve got to treat all



of them equally. The same people you think are insignificant may be the same people who will save your life one day.” So that was my attitude all the way through my tenure.

*Q: How do you build up the extension service?*

BROADNAX: It went very well. It went quicker than I thought. However, I must admit it never achieved the institutional level anticipated because of the instability of the Sudanese Government. The Abboud regime was ousted, and Sir al-Khatim, former Director of Education in the south was elected President. When I went back, all of the other junior officers, with whom I had worked in the south, were senior officers, many of them ministers. As I said, the U.S. Team at the time did not take advantage of opportunities available for the U.S. objectives.

*Q: Let's go to that time you returned to the Sudan, so we get the continuity of the Sudanese experience. Then we'll deal with Korea separately. What was the occasion that brought you back to Sudan? What year was this?*

### **Returned to Sudan as AID Affairs Officer - 1972**

BROADNAX: For several years, the USAID Mission was closed and all AID personnel were reassigned to other missions or AID/W [AID/Washington]. But in 1972 the political climate changed, and this prompted some discussions relative to resuming a modified AID program based on some of the critical needs of the Sudan which complemented U.S. aims and objectives. Out of these discussions, it was agreed that the U.S. would send an economic team to Sudan to explore some priority assistance programs vital to the Sudanese Government at that time.

The economic team was formed, and Edward B. Hogan of PPC was designated team leader. As Deputy Assistant Director for Food and Agriculture of the Technical Assistance Bureau, and with previous Sudanese experience, I was asked to join the team. We came away with a consensus on some Food for Peace efforts and the Rahad Agricultural Diversification project. Accordingly, the team made those recommendations which were approved by AID/W.

Subsequently, I was asked to return to the Sudan as the AID Affairs Officer. I accepted the appointment and returned to Khartoum in 1972. My appointment had the approval of Ambassador Cleo Noel. However, he, together with our Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), were assassinated prior to my return to Khartoum. This placed a lull on our duties, but the decision was made to proceed with the development programs as previously agreed. We had to work with a new country team while doing business in an unusual atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the terrorists were incarcerated and were awaiting trial by the GOS [government of Sudan]. They were brought to trial, tried and released. Releasing the terrorists without U.S. approval brought a halt to our normal relations. The terrorists were apprehended in Cairo, Egypt by the Sadat regime whose stock accelerated and diplomatic relations were greatly improved.

*Q: How did you find returning to Sudan?*

BROADNAX: When the Sudanese found out I was on the team, you'd of thought I was the queen of somebody coming in. We had a busy week there, and one of the things the Minister of Agriculture wanted us to do was the project called Rahad. It was a diversified program, not just all cotton. He wanted me to go there and make an assessment of what the possibilities were. In fact, he went with me. That was one of the things we came back and recommended, that we support the Rahad Project and leave the equipment and that sort of thing. We came back and made that recommendation. So then they decided that they wanted to reopen the mission. That's when Sam Adams called me. He said, "I've gotten good reports on your activities when you went back there with the team. I want to know if you'd consider going out as the AID Affairs Officer." I told him I thought that would be an honor, but I have to discuss it with my wife. And I did, and she got along well with the Sudanese, so I ended up going back to Sudan as AID Affairs Officer.

*Q: When was this?*

BROADNAX: It was in 1972. As I said, all the people I knew as junior officers at this time were Ministers and I had an entrée to them.

*Q: These were not military personnel at the time?*

BROADNAX: Some of them were military. There was Numeri. He was a junior officer and he was the President. Two of my former participants were Ministers in the government.

*Q: What about our relations with Sudan?*

BROADNAX: It was at a standstill and finally down hill. We had a new Ambassador at that time. I was the duty officer, and was ordered to go to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to see if I could get the release of documents for those prisoners. I thought immediately that I was possibly being sacrificed because his political people should have done that. I went. The man on duty was a former Ambassador, Sudanese Ambassador to India, whom I met when I took some Sudanese there to a seminar in 1960. So we were set up there and had coffee and tea. He said, "You're not going no where, are you?" I said, "Not that I know of." He said, "We don't want you to go." I said, "Okay. What about those papers?" He said, "I can't release them." I went back and told my Ambassador that.

*Q: They terrorists were in Egypt.*

BROADNAX: Yes. We wanted the paper giving the details of the trial and all that. The Foreign Minister didn't release it. We wanted a copy of it, but I couldn't get it.

*Q: This was a release of the report of the trial?*

BROADNAX: Yes.

*Q: Not of the people?*

BROADNAX: No. Not of the people. The station chief of the CIA there saw the wisdom of my being there. He even told the Ambassador that he thought at this time a junior officer should have been sent. The Ambassador didn't like it but he told him nevertheless. The program was at a standstill and diminished.

*Q: No projects work going on?*

BROADNAX: Nothing. Other than we had the Rahad Project. That's what I worked on most of the time I was there. I wrote my backstop a letter. I didn't send him a cable; I wrote him a letter, and told him that my being in Sudan was too expensive to the government, I wasn't doing anything and that "I recommend that my car and all of my furniture be shipped to Ethiopia for use by the Mission Director." I was transferred to Nairobi.

*Q: When did you leave Sudan then?*

BROADNAX: I left Sudan in 1975. Came back to the United States. Went up to Michigan State University and gave a Seminar on Title XII.

*Q: Let's come to that. Let's go back to the Sudan. You said you had the Rahad Project?*

BROADNAX: Yes, Rahad.

*Q: Tell us about that project.*

BROADNAX: It was one of the large projects - a diversified project with vegetables, peanuts, and wheat. But it needed some equipment.

*Q: Irrigation?*

BROADNAX: Yes. We brought out a Caterpillar [Motors] expert to draw up the specifications for the type of equipment that we needed at Rahad. We sent out bids on it. Caterpillar didn't get the contract, somebody else got it, but the equipment arrived in Port Sudan and they loaded it on boxcars and shipped it to Rahad. When that boxcar came through Sudan, that mammoth piece of equipment attracted everybody's attention. Of course, we had the big AID emblem on it. You could hear the people who went out to see it, say "mauna" - Arabic for American AID. That was what we had called AID. It went well, but I wasn't there. I wasn't there long enough to see how the project unfolded. We had a Project Commodity Officer who went from Nairobi up there. He reported it was being used okay.

*Q: But you don't know what happened to the project?*

BROADNAX: I don't.

*Q: Before we leave Sudan, it might be interesting if you could give an overview of what you understood to be the agricultural situation in Sudan. It's a big order because it's such a huge place and so contrasting, but how did you find the agriculture of the country?*

BROADNAX: I'm glad you asked that because I gave a seminar when I was back there as AID Director in conjunction with USIS on Sudan's potential as a world food supply. And I had their ministers in the various agricultural divisions there as spokesmen. We laid out the possibility of Sudan as the world food supply, especially for Africa with all that vast land they had. All they had to do was organize it and manage it to the fullest potential. They all agreed that this was true.

*Q: What was the potential? How do you characterize it?*

BROADNAX: They had good land. Plenty of excellent land. They had excellent livestock. We set up a dairy and poultry project there in Khartoum North to demonstrate that they could grow cattle, fatten them, and put them on the market, and have beef. They could grow chickens and could produce eggs, commercially.

*Q: What was the main crop?*

BROADNAX: Sudan's main food crop was dura, similar to sugar cane. That's what people were eating. That was their main food crop. But through the International Research Center at IRRI (International Rice Research Institute), we brought wheat and rice varieties. We didn't announce what we were driving at, but we were trying to diversify the diets and did somewhat. We got them to agree to put some of their acreage in wheat to take advantage of the water, because the farmers were wasting a lot of water. That went over very well. The Sudanese started eating wheat flour instead of dura. Bread from dura was altogether different. This was one of the topics that we talked about. Then we talked about the south. The south was a prolific agricultural region for many crops. They had the manpower, smart people, and it was just a matter of setting the priorities. They wasted too much money on the army.

*Q: I guess it was during your time when the Saudi Arabians and others poured enormous sums into irrigated wheat. Was that something they were starting when you were there?*

BROADNAX: They were there. And another thing, the whole north was diversified similar to part of the United States. But when they built the high dam, all that land was inundated. They had to transfer all of those people from that area to a place called New Halfa, in eastern Sudan, which again had a great potential for growing wheat. We provided a Food for Peace Program for some of the families. They didn't eat all of it. They planted some of the wheat. I went out there on a survey with my counterpart and I saw some of the most beautiful wheatfields growing where these people had planted this wheat on irrigated fields. So the potential was there. And we knew that. And that's what this seminar was all about. It's still there. They've still got good land.

*Q: I heard some question whether it was wise to try to irrigate wheat production.*

BROADNAX: Well, as I said, in the Gezira, to make maximum use of the water, the water was already there, so it was being wasted. The people from IRRI came up and said yes. It wasn't just something that somebody thought. We brought the scientists from IRRI. They're the ones who said. It's something similar to the same thing in Egypt, too. Egypt wastes a lot of water from the Nile River. Oh, the Sudan is so big! And good land! We built a farm machinery center right in

the heart of the dura production section, demonstrating the use of machinery and growing dura, and changing cultural practices. They were wasting land there. I mean, growing land and no intercropping or anything. We taught them that they could maximize their production and double yields if they would use farm production compatible with equipment that we were bringing in. That was another demonstration that proved helpful to them. The Minister and the Director of Agriculture saw the benefits. But anytime there was an opportunity for multiplying the benefits, there was a military uprising. You can't do anything in a situation like that. But I wouldn't take anything for my experience.

*Q: Some people describe Sudan as a potential breadbasket for the Middle East. Is that right?*

BROADNAX: Well, that was the theme of this seminar that we put on. They can produce the food, but you've got to have the climate in which to do it. Political climate in which to do it.

*Q: What was your understanding of the issues that kept the country so unstable?*

BROADNAX: Well, the Arab against the south. Very political. The Arab north against the south. President Abate tried to calm the waters when he was President. He brought in a southerner as Minister of Animal Resource, Mr. Francis Deng.

*Q: Francis Deng, yes.*

BROADNAX: He did a good job. We programmed an observation program in the United States for him and when he got off the plane, some of the people back in Washington said, "Oh, my god, he's a southerner." I thought that was the most asinine thing that could have happened for his observation tour. Also, this prevented him from observing animal production practices adaptable to the Sudan. We had learned through village farming practices and research data from the Yambio Research Station, that the climate in the south was conducive for a variety of farm systems.

*Q: Were there any other programs or projects you haven't mentioned that you'd like to make note of?*

BROADNAX: Well, as I said, we were there to help them improve agriculture. We did some other good things too. I mean, as far as getting the Sudanese to know Americans and that sort of thing. When the Russians agreed to build the Aswan Dam, and we knew the farmers' land would be inundated with water, I was invited there as an outsider to go to the northern Sudan with seven Sudanese senior officials to make an assessment of the farmers' holdings and evaluate them prior to their being relocated at what they called New Halfa. I did that, and I'll never forget it because two things happened on that trip. Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands was making a state visit, and he found out that there was this delegation there in the hotel, the Athara Hotel. He gave a State dinner for us and invited me to be his guest of honor. That was an honor I'll never forget. The following day, we drove along the Nile making our assessment, and that was the day that John Glenn made his orbit. We stayed at the rest house at the Second Cataract on the Nile River. I was hosted that night. They were singing the praises of the U.S. for this achievement. I

got all the adulation and everything from that, and I felt genuinely proud in accepting this recognition for my country.

*Q: What about the program? What did you conclude about your survey?*

BROADNAX: We did a lot of good. We had a team out there--research people that didn't mind getting their hands dirty, we had farm machinery people who came and worked with the Sudanese hand-in-hand, and from the standpoint of public relations and the inter-cultural relations, we did a lot of good diplomatically. And we did a lot of good agriculturally too. But a lot of the research and a lot of the practices that we ushered in never got to be made maximum use of due to the upheavals. Due to the southern crises, we transferred our personnel from the southern Sudan to New Halfa where the farmers from the Wadi Halfa area had been relocated.

**ROBERT B. OAKLEY**  
**General Services Officer**  
**Khartoum (1958-1960)**

*Ambassador Robert B. Oakley was born in Dallas, Texas in 1931. He graduated from Princeton University in 1952, and served in the US Navy from 1952 – 1955. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957, and has had positions in the Sudan, the Ivory Coast, Vietnam, France, Lebanon, Zaire, Somalia, and Pakistan. Ambassador Oakley was interviewed on July 7, 1992 by Charles S. Kennedy and Thomas Stern.*

OAKLEY: 1957 was a year when the Department had too many FSOs and not enough jobs for them. In fact, late in that year, a freeze was put on further recruitment. After finishing the A-100 course, I was assigned to French language class in Arlington where I learned little if anything. Then the Department sent me to the language school in Nice, which was superb. Being in a totally French environment 24 hours a day made all the difference. I really learned to speak French there and to speak it quite well.

For all my troubles, I was then assigned to Khartoum. I was called by phone about two hours after our graduation (every one else had an assignment, an unnerving situation) and told to leave within the next two days to go to the Sudan as a General Services Officer. I didn't know very much about Khartoum and even less about being a General Services Officer. That was my first real taste of the Foreign Service. A new position had been created, a General Services officer. That post had never had one. Now, however, the Embassy had been given the responsibility for supporting an ICA [International Cooperation Administration] assistance mission - a first in the annals of the State Department. The ICA staff had not yet arrived, but there I was in charge of general services, not knowing anything about it.

The assignment turned out to be a very interesting one. From the career point of view, I have always maintained that you are better prepared for the Foreign Service profession in the long

term if you start out in a general services or a vice-consul position than in any other first assignment. Such jobs give the opportunity to see post operations from the bottom up.

So for sixteen months, I was the GSO. I had a peculiar boss, the administrative officer, who preferred to sit in his office with the door closed. If he got any complaints about my activities, and there were a lot of them, he would scream at me. Never mind that I had absolutely no training in this function and that I had to learn everything by trial and error. The ICA assistance mission was not to exceed twenty employees; by the time the first year was over, it had reached 85 and was still growing. We had to support all of those people, and the main burden of it was mine. This included wild drives across sandy miles of desert tracks to and from the temporary airfield, an old WW II Royal Air Force base. One night, in addition to diplomatic pouches, I found an ICA family of six. No one at the post had known they were coming. It was a wild time. The Sudan had inter alia placed an embargo on all imports except essentials, to save foreign exchange; therefore there was very little available on the local market. Furniture and furnishings had been sent by Washington for twenty people; it went very quickly and we had to scramble every day to support the growing aid presence; we bought up all the furniture and office furnishings in Khartoum. The number of acceptable apartments and houses in Khartoum were soon also all taken up; I suspect we managed to triple the rents in that city in that one year period of time. So our increasing presence was very useful for Khartoum's economy. But it probably took two years before the assistance staff could mount any kind of aid program. They lived in Khartoum in large houses, air-conditioned, driving big cars, working in big offices - all of which I had managed to acquire, with the help of a few local employees and a few American staff employees, most of whom were almost as inexperienced as I was. Needless to say, this ostentatious American presence with no visible benefits for the Sudan generated a lot of criticism.

After four months, my fiancée, Phyllis Elliott, flew to Cairo where we were married. There had been no time for this earlier because of the suddenness of my assignment to Khartoum, rather than Europe or the Department which we had expected. Khartoum seemed somehow too small, so we decided on Cairo where we had friends at the Embassy. Phyllis' father gave her a one-way ticket as a wedding present.

At the same time, we had a wonderful Ambassador, James Moose, who had spent almost all of his career in the Arab world. He spoke Arabic fluently. The Sudan had just achieved its independence and was in the throes of great political excitement and great optimism for the future. The young Sudanese were returning from the best schools in the West - Oxford and Cambridge. My wife and I were practically the only young people in the Embassy. The Ambassador and Mrs. Moose apparently decided that they wanted to use us to get to know the younger Sudanese generation, who were expected to be in charge of the country in the not too distant future. So Phyllis and I were invited to many receptions and dinners at the Ambassador's residence. Ambassador Moose made it very clear to me that he was depending on me to meet the young Sudanese returnees. So we had a great time; these young people would drop by our house and tell us that their sister was getting married that evening and that they wanted us to join them for the ceremony and the festivities. They would also ask us to go with them into the countryside. We represented to them the younger generation of Americans and we were all anxious to know each other better.

Ambassador Moose was an introvert, who understood the Arab world and the Arab mentality. He viewed the Sudan as another Arab country; he had been disappointed in his career. He compared himself to Ambassador Raymond Hare, then our ambassador to Egypt. I remember Ambassador Moose telling me that most of what you become in the Foreign Service - that is what you achieve and how high you rise - was due to three factors: what you know, who you know, and luck. He thought the "who you know" is best achieved through contacts made in Washington. Moose felt that he could have risen higher in the Service had he had more tours in Washington - he had served there only for two years out of his whole career. But I believe that he did not reach the levels to which he aspired because of his personality rather than his lack of Washington assignments. He enjoyed his overseas stints, but he felt that Hare had done better because he had spent more time in Washington and therefore knew more people who could influence his assignments. I must say that as I look back on my own career, I believe that Moose was absolutely right. An officer can be absolutely competent, but if he or she is not noticed by "movers and shakers", then it will not be reflected in assignments and promotions. If - and perhaps that is the "luck" side of the Moose doctrine - on the other hand, your work is brought to the attention of the Department's senior officials, they will see to it that you are rewarded. Phil Habib and Joe Sisco were the two senior officials who did the most for my career. But Moose did not have a flair for bringing his work to the attention of the right people; he operated by making quiet contacts.

My activities did cause some strains with the administrative officer. One day, he called me into his office and told me that I was not to see any more Sudanese and that my job was that of a General Services officer and not political officer. I told him that I was meeting those that the Ambassador wanted me to stay in touch with and that if he, the administrative officer, had any problems with this, he should take them up with the Ambassador. Needless to say, my first efficiency report was less than stellar; I got a 1 plus on a scale of 1-6 (six was the top). After sixteen months, the Department finally sent not one, but three experienced FSOs to replace me; I guess it figured it would take that many to clean up the mess I had left behind. I was transferred to the political section.

The Sudanese civil service was very good; many of the officials had received excellent training from Great Britain during the colonial years. I would say that the British Sudan Service was ranked between the British Foreign and Colonial Services. The individual Britisher who served in the Sudan would have acquired many friends and a wonderful reputation among the Sudanese, even though the Sudanese were strongly opposed to being a colony. They wanted their independence. The Sudanese, as individuals, have wonderful qualities. We made a lot of close friends, many of whom are still close to us, even after thirty years. But they have never been able to govern themselves well; as a generalization that always has exceptions, they are not very good managers; they are too fractious for that. The North-South, Muslim-Christian/Animist split has made things much more difficult for Sudan. The civil war was going on even while we were there and it continues to this day.

We greatly enjoyed our personal relationships with various Sudanese individuals. Phyllis and I traveled widely in the country and also accompanied the Ambassador on some of his trips. We loved the country. It was an exciting tour for us; we watched the rise of a younger generation of



Sudanese, full of hope and expectations. Unfortunately, the country collapsed later on several occasions and never fulfilled the aspirations of the younger generation. But in the late 1950s, it was a wonderful country in which to serve.

As I mentioned earlier, we mounted a large assistance program - roughly \$100 million - which at that time was a very significant amount. The assistance agreement had to be ratified by the Sudanese Parliament; to our astonishment, we found that the British were lobbying against ratification. They didn't want us to "poach" on their territory. The British showed a lot of animosity at the policy level, even though we had a number of close personal friends among the British. In fact, they were spying on my wife and me which was very amusing. Since we had moved into a house previously occupied by a CIA officer, and I had a background in Naval Intelligence, the British could not believe I was a GSO. To them, this was a cover. Eventually, the British pressure on the Sudanese Parliament did not succeed and the agreement was ratified. The U.S. was not looked upon as the Sudan's savior, but we were regarded as an important player. We viewed the Sudan as an important country in Africa, but not a major factor in our foreign policy scheme. Egypt, to the North, was the important country and the Sudan worried about its relationship with that country. Egypt was the keystone to the Sudan's foreign policy; they were well aware that Egypt had been vexed because it couldn't annex the Sudan. A referendum had been held in 1956 and independence had won. But Egypt viewed itself and was viewed as the "big brother", which engendered a love-hate relationship. While I was in Khartoum, the Egyptians and the Sudanese negotiated, with considerable difficulty, a treaty concerning the Nile water rights, which enabled Nasser to move ahead with the construction of the Aswan Dam. He could not have done so had he not had agreement from the Sudanese on how the Nile waters were to be divided. The close U.S. relationships with Israel were obviously well known to the Sudanese, but they were not an important factor in our relations with them at that time. It was not a big issue; the Sudan was far enough removed from the Arab-Israeli action and had enough domestic problems to be too concerned by events that were taking place far away.

Internally, the Sudanese were concerned with their economic development and the political rivalries between the UMMA Party and the National Unity Party. Not too long after my arrival, the military conducted a *coup de etat* with General Aboud becoming the President. My friends belonged to the established political parties; such as Sadiq al Mahdi - the grandson of the President of the Sudan who was in office when I arrived in Khartoum and who was the posthumous son of the first Mahdi who had defeated Gordon and freed the country for a brief period from the Ottoman and the British, who became a very close friend. President al Mahdi was a very impressive man. One day, his grandson, Sadiq, came to me - this must have been early in 1960 - telling me that we Americans had to assist in getting rid of General Aboud. I told him that in the first place, as a matter of principal, the U.S. does not take that kind of action to interfere in internal affairs. That statement brought a wry smile to his face. I then asked him what planning he had done if Aboud were to be removed: who would take his place, what kind of government, which individuals, etc. He said he had done no planning. I said that after he had completed that task he should come back and we could perhaps talk again.

When I left the Political Section, and returned for an assignment in Washington, I was replaced by a CIA officer under Foreign Service cover. I found out very soon that my contacts with the al

Mahdi family had been taken over by my replacement and the Station Chief. I was concerned not so much that my replacement had picked up some of my contacts, but that his boss, the CIA Station Chief, had done so. I thought that was inappropriate because my contacts were overt, had nothing to do with CIA interests in the Sudan, and was with individuals already friendly to the U.S.. Why get the CIA involved? Those were the days when CIA was very operational and very competitive with the Department of State. CIA operations in the Sudan led to many misfortunes for the latter.

I still vividly remember when I went back to Khartoum on a visit in March, 1967 returning from a tour in Saigon. I stayed in Khartoum for about five days renewing acquaintances. The then President, whom I had known when he was the President of the National Unity Party, received me with open arms; he and my other friends seemed very glad to see me. Strangely, the only person who would not see me was the then Prime Minister, Sadiq al Mahdi. I found out that this refusal was apparently due to the fact the Station Chief didn't want him to see me. All my Sudanese friends told me that it was the Station Chief who was running the Embassy. I asked how they knew that he was a CIA official and was told that it was an open secret. Everyone also knew about his very close contacts with the Prime Minister. My friends, who had worked diligently and consciously in getting rid of General Aboud and had supported Sadiq al Mahdi for the Prime Ministership, were very disillusioned. Many of them hoped for a return of the military because they found that he was not doing what they had expected of him; in fact, the Sudan was in bad shape. I mentioned this to the Ambassador who pointed out that I had attended a staff meeting that morning when the Station Chief and others said that all was going extremely well in the Sudan. I was staying with Cleo Noel, the DCM, who had been in the Political Section at the same time I was in 1960. I told him that my contacts were saying that the Embassy had lost touch with a lot of key Sudanese and were speculating that the Sudanese government would collapse soon and be replaced by a military dictatorship. Although my friends certainly did not support military rule, under the circumstances existing in early 1967, they thought it would be better than the civilian regime then in power. Cleo said that he was happy to hear what I had to say because he thought that he was the only one who was seeing the situation as I had described it. I had told Ambassador Weathersby the same things I had told Cleo, but it didn't have any impact. Six weeks later, Sadiq was overthrown. That was followed by the Six Day war and the U.S.-Israel relationship then became a very sensitive issue in the Sudan. Ambassador Weathersby was asked to leave and the Sudan broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. in June, 1967. Furthermore, the Sadiq-CIA relationships became public. Sadiq's wife Sarah - whom we had earlier arranged to come to the United States with a college fellowship - went to Cleo, who was then the senior U.S. representative in Khartoum and asked that the U.S. provide assistance to get her husband out of the Sudan. She considered him in mortal danger because of his association with the U.S. government. Cleo was not in a position to help. There was absolutely no reason for the CIA to take over the contacts with the al Mahdi family to begin with. Any sensible judgement would have concluded that putting the Prime Minister on our payroll was just an invitation for trouble and totally unnecessary; he would probably follow our general policy line in any case, but by putting him on the CIA payroll we corrupted him politically and made him extremely vulnerable. In the final analysis, the al Mahdi family and the U.S. paid a harsh price which was completely unnecessary.

I saw the same phenomenon when in 1974 I traveled with Joe Sisco to Greece during the limited war between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. I saw how the CIA had managed to get itself deeply involved in domestic politics there, and Ambassador Tasca was almost completely captured by the Station Chief. In the 1960s and 1970s, the CIA became over-entangled in country's domestic affairs apparently because the CIA saw it as an opportunity in its bureaucratic battles in Washington. I remember when I returned from the Sudan in 1967, I went out to the CIA headquarters to see my old friend, Rufus Taylor - my boss during my Navy service. By then, he had become the Deputy Director of the Agency. We discussed the Sudan situation; I was curious about what CIA thought it was doing in Khartoum. I told him that it made no sense for the Prime Minister to be on the Agency's payroll - it was counter-productive for the Agency and more importantly for the U.S.. Taylor said that he didn't know anything about it. He asked for the file to be brought to his office and read it while I was sitting in his office. After a while, he looked at me and said; "How did you know all this? This information is supposedly very closely held". I told him that my information had come from Sudanese; not from Americans. He was absolutely astonished.

**RAY E. JONES**  
**USAID**  
**Khartoum (1958-1962)**

**Secretary to the Ambassador**  
**Khartoum (1973)**

*Ray E. Jones was born in 1921. His positions overseas include posts in Germany, South Korea, Switzerland, Sudan, Austria, Saigon, Liberia, the Netherlands, and China. Mr. Jones was interviewed on August 23, 1994 by Thomas Dunnigan.*

JONES: In 1958, I had the two years and I was ready for a transfer, and I had my first experience in Africa. I went to Khartoum and I had a marvelous Ambassador there who was a real Arabist, James Moose.

Q: *Oh, yes. He was one of the best Arabists in the service.*

JONES: Khartoum was a sleepy little post and I had four marvelous years there.

Q: *Well, the country hadn't been independent very long then?*

JONES: No, it was a British colony I would say.

Q: *Were you able to travel about the country or not?*

JONES: No, it was impossible. No roads and it was very primitive.

*Q: Most people remark on the heat there. I believe it's one of the hottest posts in the Foreign Service.*

JONES: In the summertime it can go up to 120, but it is a very dry heat.

*Q: I see, unlike some of the West African posts where it ...*

JONES: Yes, it's different.

*Q: Did you get to know any of the local people? Any Sudanese?*

JONES: Oh, yes. Very, very friendly types.

*Q: How important was it for our people to be able to speak Arabic there? Could they get by with English.*

JONES: No. English was the second language.

*Q: It was useful to have Arabic, I'm sure.*

JONES: It was useful to have it, but everything at the Foreign Ministry was done at the English level.

*Q: We all know that in recent years there has been a raging civil war in the Sudan between the north and the south. Was that evident in your day?*

JONES: No, not at all. But they treated the southerners, Tom, like second-class citizens.

*Q: I see. That is the difference in ethnic backgrounds, etc. and religions I guess too.*

JONES: Right.

*Q: What were the main concerns of the US with regard to Sudan, if you could tell us? Were we trying to recruit them as allies? Did we want them to stay away from closer ties with the radical Arabs or ...?*

JONES: At that time, the Sudanese were kind of independent ....

*Q: Since Sudan is a third-world country, we must have been doing something to assist them. Was there an AID mission at that time?*

JONES: When I arrived on the 1st of October, 1958, there was just beginning to develop a large, large AID mission.

*Q: But there aren't many people in Sudan, are there?. It is a very sparsely populated country.*

JONES: No, it's a very, very poor country.

Q: *What was our AID mission trying to do there?*

JONES: To help them get on their feet. Exports they do. It's just like Egypt. They raise a lot of cotton. Some of the world's best cotton. It's not as good as Egyptian cotton, but very good.

Q: *Was the AID mission a success in your view?*

JONES: I would say no.

Q: *Why was that? We didn't put enough money in? Or it wasn't well used?*

JONES: We put a lot of money in, but I would say it was probably for the wrong projects.

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Q: *Now I notice that you left The Hague in 1972. Where did you go then?*

JONES: In 1972, yes. I was due for home leave, having had a direct transfer, and built up time. I had a friend, I guess he was in the Director General's office at that time, (Cleo Noel) who talked me into coming back to Khartoum where he had just been assigned as Ambassador. I returned to Khartoum in 1973 for one day only because during that time he was assassinated.

Q: *Was that on the day you arrived?*

JONES: It was the night before. I was en route to Khartoum but had had to spend the night in Athens because there was a terrible haboob, a dust storm. We could not land in Khartoum that evening. So I had to spend the night in Athens and we took off the following morning. I think this was about March 4th, because I think he was assassinated on March 3rd, 1973.

Q: *So you arrived there at that terrible moment?*

JONES: I arrived there and it was complete chaos.

Q: *Because the DCM had been assassinated too?*

JONES: Yes, you're right. It was Cleo Noel and Curt Moore, plus a Belgian Charge. Cleo Noel's wife, Lucille Noel. They were anxious to know what I wanted to do. Stay in Khartoum or what I wanted to do. I said: "I want to return to the States with the bodies," which I did.

Q: *Tell me. How were the Sudanese at that time? Were there tremendous expressions of regret or were they sullen or...?*

JONES: Sorrowful because Cleo Noel had been assigned to Khartoum two or three times, I think, Tom, during the American interests section which the Dutch were handling during that time. I was always very happy in Khartoum.

*Q: I know, you mentioned that in your earlier tour. I was wondering because the Sudanese allowed the killers to get away, I believe.*

JONES: The killers, the Palestinians, escaped to Cairo.

*Q: So you came back with the body and presumably Mrs. Noel, too.*

JONES: With Mrs. Noel and well, with both bodies I should say. A presidential jet was dispatched to pick them up and actually the one who was handling all these negotiations was very famous in the State Department. It was Bill Macomber.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

JONES: He had been at one time Ambassador to Jordan and during my time, back in 1956 to 1958, he was a Special Assistant to Secretary Dulles.

*Q: So he brought the bodies back?*

JONES: He brought the bodies back, and I was scheduled to return to Khartoum.

*Q: Were the bodies buried in Arlington Cemetery?*

JONES: In Arlington Cemetery. Both of them in Arlington Cemetery. And I was scheduled eventually to go back to Khartoum. Well, friends in Personnel didn't think it was a good idea and at that time we were in the process of establishing diplomatic relations with China which was breaking. That was in 1973. I was chosen to go to Peking, or Beijing they call it today, to be secretarial assistant to David Bruce which I was excited to do.

**ROBERT C. F. GORDON**  
**Chief of Political Section**  
**Khartoum (1959-1961)**

*Ambassador Robert Gordon was born in Colorado in 1920. He received both a bachelors (in 1941) and masters degree (in 1949) from the University of California at Berkeley. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950 and served in locations such as Iraq, Sudan, Tanzania, Italy, and Mauritius. Ambassador Gordon was interviewed on January 25, 1989 by Charles S. Kennedy.*

*Q: Did you go to Egypt or you went to Khartoum?*

GORDON: I went to Khartoum. While in Baghdad I had a brilliant career there as far as promotions were concerned. I had two promotions in nine months. I was there when they created classes seven and eight so I was promoted from class four down to class five. And then eight or nine months later I was promoted back to class four again. So I consider that was two promotions in nine months, one from four to five and one from five to four.

Anyway, I got back to Washington and was poking around. It turned out that one reason they wanted to keep Port Said going was that, after the canal war and all the destruction there, the Eastern Europeans had opened up a lot of consulates there. So I thought that would be fine. And then Gallman told me, you know, you get a post of your own fairly early on you will learn a lot of things that will be valuable to you the rest of your career because you've got to do everything. I said, "Fine."

So I went to French language school which was the principal non-Arabic language spoken in Port Said. I was in the last class of the language school that was in Nice, France. And while I was there I was promoted to class three. My family had come to stay the last month at Nice. About three or four days before we were to leave for Port Said I got a telegram saying I was assigned to Khartoum instead. No consultation, no nothing. Those days they just sent you telegrams. And there I was saying, oh boy, there's my car, everything sitting right on the dock in Port Said. All I've got to do is cross the border, technically, to go clear myself with the embassy in Cairo and everything would be there. Because we had such bad luck with my first assignment; because we arrived in the summer of 1956 there was the Suez War. And that bottled up everything. We couldn't get our stuff through anywhere and we were months getting our stuff. And then we were months getting it out because of the coup d'etat and the revolution in Iraq. So I thought, boy, this was going to be neat. Well, I went to Khartoum and never saw the stuff for another four months.

*Q: Before we move to Khartoum there is something I meant to ask. What was our evaluation of Qasim at the time you were there? I mean, how did you all see him?*

GORDON: Well, we evaluated him as, obviously, an intelligent, effective guy. One measurement, you might say, to your question is his ability to organize this revolution, this coup, so quietly that not one word leaked out anywhere in a land full of people who worked for the king. So, therefore, he was given high marks for planning and knowing how to organize a complicated thing like the coup. He represented a radical Arab point of view, which was not in our interests at all, particularly vis-a-vis the existence of Israel. But, nobody feared that he was going to be like Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. It was nothing like that. I found them a civilized group of people to work with, as I think everybody else in the embassy did.

*Q: So it wasn't as sometimes happens when the military takes over, they have their own agenda but they also don't really understand the niceties of diplomacy and all, and tend often to shut themselves off from contact with foreign groups, particularly ones they feel should be hostile?*

GORDON: Sure. However, they also got rid of practically all of the civilian ministers of the government who had headed up all the departments--most of them were jailed. One minister spent two weeks, at least, as a refugee in the ambassador's residence.

*Q: But this group, did they open up to you? I mean, were you able to go to them or was it pretty difficult?*

GORDON: For what we had to do to get along, there didn't seem to be any real problem. But there was no great friendship at all with us, either, because we had been closely associated with the regime they overthrew.

*Q: Anyway, moving to Khartoum, you were there as chief of the political section. What was the situation, as you saw it, at that time in Khartoum?*

GORDON: Well, the whole time I was there the country was under a military dictatorship. And except for a few ministers, the council of ministers were all military officers. There were some--finance, foreign affairs, education, there might have been a couple of others--civilian ministers co-opted by the military regime. But it was a benign military dictatorship the whole time I was there. And the military officers who were members of the military council, they had nothing to do with any of the embassies. We did all our work through the civilian people. I did what I had to do through the Foreign Office. And when we were negotiating a PL 480 for a program with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we also worked with Finance and Agriculture Ministry civil servants.

Boy, they had some really nice, bright people. Several were Oxford, Cambridge, London School of Economics graduates, highly educated senior civil servants. Whenever we needed to get a decision, rarely the ambassador would go see the Foreign Minister. Usually, it was done at the Director General level in the Foreign Office. That's who we met with if there was anything important.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

GORDON: His name was James Moose. He died yesterday.

*Q: He died yesterday, yes.*

GORDON: I was there April of 1959 to April of 1961. I think he was there 1958 to 1962, it said in the paper this morning.

*Q: How was he as an ambassador?*

GORDON: He was even more of the old type of ambassador, you know, than Gallman.

*Q: I was asking you about Ambassador Moose.*

GORDON: He was very much by the book. I can remember, anytime I would raise the thought of questioning Washington on something, he'd say, "No, they issue instructions and we carry them out." I said, "But I don't think it makes sense." He said, "We carry out what they say." "Yes, sir." And that was the end of that.



I remember one time there was a long telegram. It must have been 12 pages. It was a big thing that we had been asked to do. I remember the head of the code room came to me and he said, "You know, the courier is coming through tomorrow. It's going to take six or seven hours to punch this thing all out and punch it back up." You know, we didn't have scanners and that kind of stuff. It was still just a little better than the one-time pad system. And I went to the Ambassador and he said, "No, they said telegraph the answer." I said, "But this will be in there just as fast." He said, "No, they said send a telegraph reply." So we sent a telegraph reply. I mean, he was very much by the book. You know, the embassy might propose, but the Department disposed, if you will.

We had a great section there. There were four of us for the political, economic and consular sections. Cleo Noel was my deputy. It should have been the other way around.

Q: *Cleo Noel?*

GORDON: Cleo Noel, who was killed by the PLO when he had later become the ambassador. He was my deputy and he had already been there a couple years. He was an Arabist. And just because I happened to have made class three ahead of him, I was head of the section. It should have been the other way around, as I mentioned.

The economic/consular officer was François Dickman, one of the best Arabists in the Foreign Service. He later became ambassador a couple times in the Gulf. And the junior officer, in his first post, was Bob Oakley.

Q: *Who is now ambassador to Pakistan.*

GORDON: And has been ambassador to Zaire, and ambassador to Somalia. So we had quite a section there.

And to show the detail in which Ambassador and Mrs. Moose could organize things, when it came the annual Fourth of July, Independence Day celebration, we were like everybody else. We had a big cocktail party in the evening. There was a big garden out in front of the residence. The ambassador would call Cleo in, Cleo was the protocol officer, too. And they took that big garden and cut it into four equal parts on a piece of paper. Out of the embassy staff a certain number were assigned to each one of those sections so there wouldn't be anybody standing there with nobody to talk to. And the others were to go down this long walk to meet people and escort them up to the ambassador. Highly organized down to the last T.

Q: *Here you had, obviously, from their later history, an extremely qualified political section, but you had a benevolent dictatorship. What the devil were you doing? I mean, what was all this talent working on?*

GORDON: There were demands from Washington like there is all the time for reports on this, what about that, evaluation of the south, what is the situation of the civil war. I went down to Juba, which is right on the border of Kenya. (To show you how big a country that part of the

world is, you got in an airplane at Cairo and flew 1,000 miles directly south and you got to Khartoum. You flew another 1,000 miles and you got to Juba, just on the border with Kenya.)

I flew down there. I got an AID driver, and carry-all to visit the area. I arranged this all through the Minister of Interior and stayed with local governors and sub-governors. But I traveled from the Ethiopian border, along the border of Kenya, Uganda, down into the Congo and back up, and then got out in Western Sudan and flew back with reports on what was going on down there.

*Q: Well, what was the situation because the south is, basically, a black south versus an Arab north?*

GORDON: Yes.

*Q: What was the state at that time?*

GORDON: Well, then there were already rumblings. That was the reason I had to check in so they knew where I was all the time. I would check in for the radio net when I would go from place to place. And if I hadn't appeared, well, then, people would start getting nervous. There was no fighting then, but there were rumblings and so forth.

One of the guys that put me up was a man by the name of William Deng Nhial. He was a sub-governor. He was the only black sub-governor that put me up. All these governors had guest houses and it was all arranged that I would stay there. And we had quite a conversation, one of the most interesting about the roles of blacks, and so on, and so forth. And he later became very active in the independence movement and was ambushed and killed.

There were always demands from Washington. What about this, what about the assessment on that? And we were always concerned about the Egyptians because this was the time of Nasser and we were afraid that Nasser's agents were in the Sudan stirring the pot against us. The Soviets and the Chinese Communists had big embassies. We were trying to assess the power of the civilians versus the military and we tried to influence the military to see things the way we did.

And from time to time the ambassador, very rarely, would go see General Abboud, who was the chief of the military council, sort of the president of the country. It was a military dictatorship and we had to work through them to get things done: AID programs, negotiating what we were going to do and what was feasible, including getting some aid down south and consultation concerning Sudanese positions on many matters in the UN.

And also we were always concerned about University of Khartoum students. Several times they demonstrated against us at the embassy. It seemed every place I went I ended up with rocks and pieces of glass on my desk. I mean, it was very active.

In the economic section, as I say, Bob Oakley would switch over and help Fran on his consular work or take over the consular section when Fran went on leave or something like that. We were kept fairly busy trying to assess the situation and trying, basically, to influence that military

council to act in ways that were not detrimental to our own objectives. And we did that primarily through the civilian side.

*Q: Did you feel you were fairly effective on that?*

GORDON: I think so. And the senior civil servants were all great guys. They would come to our house for dinners and we would sit and argue about this and that, and even the Director General of the Ministry of the Interior, of all things. And then we had the man who is now the Prime Minister. He was a young fellow then and he, Bob and Phyllis Oakley all became friends. The Oakleys helped his sister get a place in an American University. The father thought he wouldn't like this, but finally the old Mahdi said okay. I think Bob and Phyllis had a lot to do with getting her to come to the states.

**DONALD S. BROWN**  
**Program Officer, USAID**  
**Khartoum (1961–1963)**

*Donald S. Brown was born in New York in 1928. He received a bachelors degree from Antioch College in 1952 and served in the US Army from 1946 – 1948. He has served at posts in Ethiopia, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Algeria, Zaire, Morocco, and Egypt. He was interviewed on December 4, 1996 by W. Haven North.*

BROWN: Having passed through Khartoum airport on many occasions, when the temperature was in the high '90s at 2 am, we had some reservations about going to the Sudan after Somalia. However, these were soon overcome by the pleasure we had in gaining many Sudanese friends, in finding so many sophisticated men and women who were well educated and well trained and real experts in their field and who gave us a warm welcome wherever we went.

Bill Wild was the USAID Director. A wonderful, colorful figure who looked remarkably like Yul Brynner (and loved signing Brynner's autograph when asked by people in the street), Bill was well liked throughout the international and Sudanese communities and that made the work of all his team easier. More an activist than intellectual, Bill gave his senior staff lots of room to make their own contributions. That in turn gave me broad scope to work again with technical leadership on a range of programs in health, education, agriculture, geological services and the like, programs which seemed to make reasonable and enduring contributions to these particular activities.

Important funding was also provided in the form of budget support through food aid and commodity import programs. When I arrived we were seeking to reduce this dependence on budget support but Sudan's huge and unending financial problems remain in an even more grave state today than was true at that time. But the circumstances did give me my first opportunity to work closely with the Central Bank Governor and senior Ministry of Finance officials on broad development and financial policy issues. Many of these senior economic officials were

exceedingly able and went on to important functions in international organizations, banks and the like. Yet their ability to bring real change to Sudan was limited, largely I think because there is something in Sudanese culture which resists decision making and problem resolution. It is discouraging to see how the Sudan, whether under dictatorial or democratic regimes, seems to be incapable of real movement and improvement despite these many able people. When I read about Sudan today, virtually all the problems we were dealing with in the early '60s remain largely unsolved, causing continued poverty and misery.

An important Sudanese personage has been Sadiq el Mahdi. Even when we first met him as a young man he was well known due to his father's and grandfather's religious and political roles but he was still only at the edge of the political scene during our period when a military government reigned. I was deeply impressed by his wisdom and his views on how to deal with Sudan's difficulties. I thought it was good when he became Prime Minister many years later. I then had the pleasure of a long conversation with him in Rome when he took part in one of IFAD's Governing Councils. I was once again struck by his understanding and thoughtfulness. His comments on failures of the previous Nimeiri dictatorship and his very sound analysis of Nimeiri's errors in dealing with the problems of dissidence in Southern Sudan seemed very accurate. Unfortunately he became another example of the disappointments one can face in Sudan when some months later he carried out many of the same kind of negative actions towards the South which had been part of Nimeiri's downfall - and also became a part of Sadiq's own downfall.

I have always tried to work in close harmony with State colleagues. However, Ambassador Moose, a fine Arabist but strongly conservative about the usefulness of assistance programs, was difficult. At one point we were called upon to prepare a multi-year major program document (I believe it was Jim Grant who, at the time, designed the format to be used), which was to be submitted to Washington through the Ambassador. I worked very hard on that presentation which projected the need for continued technical assistance in many fields and also called for continuing but diminishing budget support. It was reviewed carefully within the aid mission as well as with senior Embassy staff. It was fully supported by DCM Tom McElhiney and Political Counselor Peter Chase. We presented it at a two hour long Country Team session. Again there was essentially unanimous support among the USOM and Embassy staffs.

At the end, however, Ambassador Moose expressed his view that any aid to the Sudan was a waste of money. He stated we could submit the program but he would prepare and submit his own commentary, which he did in a two page State Department condemnatory message. The result was that our proposals became a Best Seller within the Department -and in the end were fully endorsed by both State and ICA.

*Q: What was the character of that program that you were putting forward that seemed to cause some controversy?*

BROWN: I don't think it caused any trouble with anybody else but Ambassador Moose. Simply put, Ambassador Moose was basically opposed to aid in any form. Ours was a fairly straight forward presentation. We had put a lot of work and effort into the justification and so forth. It was justification for certain types of technical assistance, a small amount of capital aid

particularly in the transport sector which we felt was an important one and a certain amount of financial assistance including PL 480 because of the extreme financial circumstances which were facing Sudan at the time. And I must say have been facing Sudan ever since then.

*Q: Do you remember any particular technical assistance projects that were unique at that time or special?*

BROWN: Again, we were doing a lot of work in the field of education. I must say I found that interesting since I had not dealt very much with educational programs before that time. On reflection I realize that it wasn't a very focused program. To be perfectly frank, I'm not sure just what was the longer term impact.

We worked very hard with the Geological Survey which was important for the Sudan, being such a vast country and so badly charted. It was important for them to have better geological survey information and we did a lot of work with them. There I think we were particularly successful because they had a small cadre of very good people. We also provided a lot of training, along with equipment and new ideas.

*Q: What were they surveying?*

BROWN: They were developing essentially better mapping and geographical understanding. How the country was structured and where there might be various minerals and so forth. Where good agricultural land was located and what this meant for transport systems and the like. It was just basic information which really was a part...

*Q: Was it part of an institution?*

BROWN: Yes. There was in existence a small geographic or geologic service but it was mal-equipped. And while it had some good people in it there was no depth. But it gave us a good structure with which to be able to work and I think we did a lot to bring it along to become really become quite a first class geologic service.

*Q: Any other projects you want to mention at this point?*

BROWN: Well, there were some specific road projects. Again, Sudan was a country with vast distances and vast difficulties. And we provided some help in this area. Particularly connections into the Gezira where the Gezira cotton development scheme was taking place. We did some work in industry and helped to bring about some industrial investments by helping to make connections to the right people and that sort of thing.

*Q: Was the program country wide or mostly south or mostly north?*

BROWN: It was mostly north. Later AID moved the program much further afield and particularly out into the desert areas of the west. It was a relatively new program and really concentrated largely on needs as seen from Khartoum. Before, for several years before I got there, it had essentially been a financial program and not a technical assistance program. So the

technical assistance program was really just beginning. We concentrated heavily on the north and not even the northwestern desert area.

*Q: So you didn't have much exposure to the problems of the south?*

BROWN: No. No. Very little. We were well aware of them of course, because of the conflict that existed even at that time. But, no, I never traveled in the south. Our people did not travel in the south. We knew very little about the real circumstances there.

*Q: You say here that you were involved for the first time in broader policy issues. Do you want to elaborate on what those issues were?*

BROWN: As I say, the Sudan was facing then, as it has ever since, major financial problems—shortages of resources, poor allocation of resources, great gaps in social services and the like. And part of our assistance was in the form of financial aid, direct financial aid, as well as PL 480, and it was a question of trying to assist in developing reasonable policies for budget management and for proper allocation of those resources. It was essentially that. It was not a deep, broad program. But for me who had never dealt in that area, it was a strikingly interesting thing to think about.

*Q: What kind of reception did you get from the Sudanese?*

BROWN: I think certainly from the financial crowd we got a good reception. We worked closely with them and they recognized full well the importance of our resources. They were not disturbed by our taking an interest and a role and working with them on the utilization of those resources. The Sudanese economists, while they tried valiantly frankly had much less success in getting the Sudanese government to keep the kind of discipline that was necessary. And that again, has been a perpetual problem of the Sudan ever since then.

Life in Khartoum was far more agreeable than we had anticipated. While there was much hot weather, the winters were cool and refreshing, a real delight. Year-round dryness made Khartoum far more comfortable than the muggy climate of Mogadishu. We had a modest but pleasant house - with no bugs. We traveled less than usual, partly due to difficulties of transport to many regions. Khartoum was well equipped with wonderful tennis clubs and Micheline and I played more actively than before. A group of us enjoyed night time picnics on the edge of the Nile, hoping we had found locations where there were no crocodiles. Another group enjoyed music and we had a series of musical suppers going on. Downtown movie houses were open air but equipped with boxes and several of us would go together, sharing a form of picnic supper while watching the show. In almost all of these events we were a mixed group of Americans, Sudanese and other nationalities.

One distressing element of the weather, however, were the haboobs or dust storms - storms which would suddenly gust up bringing absolute clouds of dust which filtered into everything and left one blind if outdoors. You could always tell when a haboob was coming, even on a clear day, by a smell in the air and then the first traces of dust. During one of our nighttime Nile picnics, a dozen of us smelled such a storm coming. We rushed back into our cars and headed for

the city - but within a few minutes we were absolutely lost in the sand - barely able to follow each other. We circled around and around, getting even further lost. Finally, someone spotted a well lit "road" and we all started rolling down it, waiting to see where it led. Only when this "road" came to an end did we discover we had been driving down the main runway of Khartoum airport.

We have always had a wide range of pets around the house - a gazelle in Tripoli, a cheetah in Mogadishu, dogs and cats in every post. In Khartoum we adopted for a while a young white mehari (racing) camel who was great fun. We nursed him with milk in a beer bottle with an ingenious kind of nipple. He would wait at the gate when we went out for the evening and then nuzzle his neck around ours when we returned. He later became very famous as an actor on television advertisements for Camel Beer, and drinking his milk from a beer bottle made him a real success.

As a whole we enjoyed our time in Khartoum. We had a good mission and I was involved for the first time in broader policy issues. We thoroughly enjoyed our Sudanese and international friends- Micheline in particular had a much more active interchange with Sudanese than had been possible in Libya and even in Somalia and she particularly enjoyed her time teaching French to young students at the American school. This time we regretted leaving the post.

**ALFRED JOSEPH WHITE**  
**Economic and Commercial Section Officer**  
**Khartoum (1962-1964)**

*Alfred Joseph White was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1929. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1952 and served in the US Army from 1955 – 1956. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and served at posts in Germany, Sudan, Italy, and Austria. He was interviewed on September 17, 1997 by John J. Harter.*

WHITE: I was assigned to South Africa. I went back to Washington for consultations. I walked into the office where the South African desk was, and they didn't know me from a hole in the wall. They said: "There must be some mistake." I went down to Personnel, and some bureaucrat said: "Didn't we tell you?" I said: "Tell me what?" He said: "Well, there's been a change, and you're not going to South Africa. You're going to the Sudan." I said: "Where?"

*Q: That's quite a change.*

WHITE: They said: "The Sudan, the Embassy in Khartoum." That is, "fabled Khartoum."

*Q: Sudan had only recently become independent.*

WHITE: Actually, it was one of the first African territories to gain independence. It became independent January 1, 1956. James Moose was our first Ambassador there. He was a long time Arabist, I believe.

What had happened was that the Foreign Service Inspectors had gone to South Africa. I was told that the position to which I was to be assigned had either been reorganized or eliminated. Anyway, I was going to Khartoum instead of South Africa.

As a filler, until the post opened up, I spent about three or four months translating articles from "Neues Deutschland," which was the party organ of the East German, communist regime. It was deadly and boring work. It wasn't terribly taxing, but anyway I spent four months translating articles from German into English.

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*Q: Was this the least interesting part of your Foreign Service career?*

WHITE: I would have to say so, because what we were translating was utter "junk." I don't know whether you've ever done this, but it was obvious, even then, that whatever intellectual justification communism might have had was long since burnt out. The articles that we were translating were utterly predictable and outrageous and had just been spewed out by communist party hacks. It was all totally ridiculous and implausible. It's hard to believe that anyone, even a German in East Berlin, could have read them with any degree of belief.

Anyway, to return to Africa, the 1950s and 1960s were a time when a lot of people were excited about this area. Many African countries were becoming independent, and there were glowing hopes for the future of these African countries. Sudan was no exception to this tendency. The British, I think, had done an extremely good job in Sudan. When they granted independence to the Sudan, they left a very well trained, civil service in place. Many of the officers in the Sudanese Army had been trained at Sandhurst [Royal Military College at Sandhurst, England], as I recall.

In fact, during my two years in the Sudan [1962-1964] I don't think that I ever heard criticism of the British by the Sudanese. This is a rather remarkable thing to say, since the British had been the colonial power. In fact, in their attitudes toward the British the Sudanese didn't love them, but they respected them. Sudan continued to maintain very close relations with the British. The Sudanese banking system was British, for all practical purposes. Much of the trade of the country was in the hands of the British or with British companies. I think that the most influential foreigner in Khartoum during the two years I spent there was the British Ambassador, even though the United States loomed much larger than Britain in terms of its political and economic power.

*Q: Is there anything that you should say about your preparations for going to the Sudan before you went there?*



WHITE: Preparation? There was no preparation, frankly. It was understood that I would be speaking English, because Khartoum was basically an English-speaking post, although we had Arabists in the Embassy there.

*Q: Was there a Sudan desk in the Department?*

WHITE: There was a Sudan desk in the Department. At the time I left for Khartoum the Sudan desk was headed by Cleo Noel. You know, of course, what happened to Cleo some years later. He was assassinated in Khartoum.

*Q: He was then the Ambassador.*

WHITE: Right.

*Q: Cleo Noel was assassinated, along with Curt Moore, who was a very good friend of mine.*

WHITE: I didn't know Curt Moore. I knew Cleo Noel very well. I think that David Newsom was the Office Director of that particular region in AF [Bureau of African Affairs] at the time. When I returned from Khartoum in 1964, I remember calling on Dave Newsom.

*Q: Were you sort of informally reading about Sudan, including "Chinese" Gordon and so forth?*

WHITE: Of course, I was doing that. Well, actually, I knew a lot of that already. In fact, just about at that time two very good books were being published on the Sudan by Alan Moorehead. "The White Nile," I think, had appeared in 1961 or 1962. It was a brilliantly written book. That was followed by "The Blue Nile," which was published a few years later. I knew something about the country already. However, I don't recall being sent to any program of area studies at the time. I'm not sure that we had them available.

*Q: But were you pleased at the prospect of going to the Sudan and this area, which was relatively far from civilization?*

WHITE: Pleased? Well, I was under no illusions. Khartoum had the reputation of being THE most difficult post in the Foreign Service, if there is such a place.

*Q: Did it deserve that reputation?*

WHITE: I would say that it did. At the same time, at least then, there was a kind of unwritten understanding in the Foreign Service that you had to accept your share of hardship posts. I did nothing to avoid assignment to Khartoum, so that was...

*Q: You still had no family, so...*

WHITE: I had no family. I wouldn't say that I was keen to go to the Embassy in Khartoum, but on the other hand, I decided that I would make the most of it. That's the spirit in which I arrived at the post.

This time I knew what I would be doing. I would be the Assistant Economic Officer and the Consular Officer for the whole country. By the way, Sudan is a big country, amounting to more than 1.0 million square miles. All of the U.S. East of the Mississippi River would fit into the Sudan. Of course, it's a transitional country between the Arab world and Sub-Saharan Africa. Several of our people in the Embassy were Arabists who spent a lot of their lives studying Arabic and knew Arabic countries well. For example, the Political Counselor and his deputy were Arabists.

*Q: What was the political situation when you arrived in the Sudan? You have somewhat touched on it. You have said that it was a newly independent country which didn't have generations of tradition as a sovereign nation.*

WHITE: The Sudan had a very troubled and chaotic past. I think that one of the reasons why the British were rather well regarded in the Sudan was that the Sudanese, when you got to know them, would tell you that the British had at least brought law and order to the Sudan. And it was true that they had done so.

You wouldn't necessarily remember this, but before the British came to the Sudan, there was nearly total chaos in the country. The Egyptians tried to run the country and led it into disaster. The slave trade loomed large in the Sudan.

If you mention the word tradition in connection with the Sudan, if there was anything traditional associated with the Sudan, it was the slave trade.

*Q: I thought that the slave trade was mainly connected with West Africa.*

WHITE: I don't know about that. Read Alan Moorehead's book on the White Nile and you'll learn all about the slave trade. It was historic, it was widespread, it was horrible. The first thing that you have to understand about the Sudan, I would say, is that it is really two countries, lumped together as one. The northern two-thirds of the country are part of the Arab world. The topography of northern Sudan resembles that of southern Egypt. It is desert, rocky, flat, and hot. The language of the people in this region is Arabic. The religion is Islam. The Sudanese, all of them, are black. However, the people in the northern two-thirds of it are Islamic. They are just as much a part of Arab culture as Egypt.

The southern third of the country, or what we call the southern Sudan, or Equatorial Sudan, is totally different. The people living in this area are very primitive, Nilotic tribes, with names like the Nuer, the Dinka, or the Shilluks. They are animists or were. They have their own indigenous culture. Christian missionaries have been active in the southern Sudan for a long time. The result is that almost all of the leadership in southern Sudan is composed of Christians. They were educated in Christian missionary schools. So not only are these people not Muslims, not only are they not Arabic in culture. The leaders are Christians.

In my own personal view, the southern Sudan should never have been connected with northern Sudan as part of one, sovereign political unit. The British did that. Now, why they did that, I don't know. I've never understood why they did it. Put it this way. The British tacked on the southern Sudan to the northern Sudan. I suppose that this was because the Nile River connects the two regions. So there is a geographical logic in it, but it's the only logic.

Regarding our own interests in the Sudan at the time I served there, remember that the Cold War was being waged.

*Q: Were people in the Department afraid that the country would go communist?*

WHITE: Well, it may sound cynical, but I guess that the truth is that we were more interested, not in the Sudan as such, but more in its position in terms of world strategic positions. Remember that Gamal Abdul Nasser was in charge in Egypt at the time. Nasser was moving closer to the Soviets. Remember the Suez Crisis was in 1956. Nasser was riding high when I got to the Sudan in 1962. He had already invited the Russians into Egypt, and they were there in a big way.

By the way, the Sudan had always been regarded by Egypt as a part of that country. I would dare say that, even to this day, if you ask the average Egyptian what he thinks of the Sudan, he'll say that historically it's a part of Egypt. That's not to say that they'd go off and fight a war for the Sudan. However, two of the choices when the Sudan was becoming independent [in December, 1955], and they had a plebiscite on this, was union with Egypt or independence.

*Q: Refresh my memory, Al, Luxor is in...*

WHITE: Luxor is in Upper, or southern, Egypt. Abu Simbel is very close to the Egyptian-Sudanese border, in the southern part of Egypt.

The Sudanese had a choice, between independence or union with Egypt. Colonel Nasser was putting a lot of money into tipping that choice toward union with Egypt.

*Q: So the U.S. political interest, narrowly construed, was to see that the Sudan didn't get connected with Egypt.*

WHITE: We preferred an independent Sudan not ruled by Nasser. Remember again where the Sudan is. Just across that narrow Red Sea is Saudi Arabia. That's the Middle Eastern oil world.

When I arrived in Sudan, there had been a big flap over whether Aeroflot [a major Soviet international and domestic airline] would be given landing or overflight rights in the Sudan. That's the way people were thinking at that time. Aeroflot eventually got landing and overflight rights in the Sudan, with some restrictions.

*Q: Were you involved in that controversy?*

WHITE: No, that had been resolved just before I arrived in the Sudan.

*Q: However, you were mainly involved in consular and commercial work. How did all of this political background affect what you were doing?*

WHITE: Well, it affected me only indirectly. In connection with consular work it affected me more directly because, of course, there were Christian missions in southern Sudan, American missionaries among them.

*Q: Was there quite a number of them?*

WHITE: There were American Catholic and Protestant missionaries there. In terms of numbers, perhaps a couple of hundred.

*Q: That's a good number.*

WHITE: But they owned a lot of property. They had houses, clinics, schools, and agricultural stations.

*Q: Were there Seventh Day Adventist missionaries there? Those missionaries usually did some pretty good work.*

WHITE: There were various kinds of Protestant missionaries. However, their official names were "The Sudan Interior Mission," "The African Inland Mission," etc. One group, the American Mission, was Presbyterian connected.

*Q: Did these American missionary groups have hospitals?*

WHITE: They had clinics and hospitals. There were also Australian and English Protestant missionaries. Regarding the Catholics, I think that they were all Italian missionaries. In fact, there was an Italian missionary order which was very active in the southern Sudan, although some of the Italian missionaries were American citizens.

*Q: Did the missionaries cause you consular problems? More than the routine run of problems?*

WHITE: We saw the missions as a political problem. There was, in effect, a civil war going on in southern Sudan, reflecting what I just described here, the cleavage between North and South.

*Q: So the southern Sudanese wanted their own, sovereign nation?*

WHITE: They wanted independence or at least autonomy. They wanted to run their own affairs. Even before independence was granted to Sudan, the southern Sudanese had revolted.

As a result, there was a bloody, nasty, guerrilla war. It was the worst kind of war, fought in equatorial jungles. I'm sure that I don't have to spell it out for you.

The Christian missionaries were there. They were caught in the middle. The Sudanese Government could never be convinced that they were not aiding and abetting the insurgents. Undoubtedly, if the insurgents came to the door of a resident at 3:00 AM with a machine gun and said: "We want food," well, people would be inclined to give them food, right?

*Q: Personally, I would not ask too many questions in such a case.*

WHITE: Well, the war was getting worse, and the Christian missionaries were more and more on the spot. Now, they always claimed that they had nothing to do with the war, and I'm sure that's true. However, they were there, they were in the middle of it, and that was a problem that preoccupied our Political Section. The Sudanese Government was always trying to put restrictions on the missionaries. It was a very tense relationship between the government, which was, of course, Arabic and Islamic, and the Christian missionaries in the South.

My involvement at first was simply that of a Consular Officer, giving them citizenship services, such as seeing that their passports were renewed and that sort of thing. The missionaries would come into my office all the time, and I would deal with their consular problems. However, the basic problem was considered a political one, which it really was. That was why it was dealt with in the Political Section of the Embassy.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador?*

WHITE: William Rountree was the Ambassador.

*Q: How did you evaluate his performance?*

WHITE: He was a very fine man but rather aloof. I think that he used to say that he was born an FSO-1 [at the time the most senior position in the Foreign Service]. He was a civil servant from Georgia. He came from a very humble family. I recall his telling people, when he was reminiscing, that he and his brothers and sisters ran around without shoes. He came to Washington, got a law degree at George Washington University, I think, after attending classes at night. He entered government service as a very low ranking clerk. He worked his way up and, somehow, came under the eye of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

Rountree was Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at a very critical time. He had also been Ambassador to Pakistan. From there, he was sent to Sudan as Ambassador, after John Kennedy became President in 1961. I suppose that position might have been considered by some as a step down, but it probably really wasn't. In any case, Sudan was an important country at that time.

He was stuck, of course, with the problems of the missionaries. My own situation in the Sudan is that I literally had two bosses in two different offices in the embassy. It was a rather

frustrating situation. In terms of consular work as such, I reported directly to the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], who was Tom McIlhenny. McIlhenny was a very fine and competent officer. He was also very sympathetic to me. He understood the difficulties involved in my situation. He knew that I was working for him but that I was also working for the Economic Counselor, Giles Kelly. We were all good colleagues, but it was frustrating at times.

*Q: It's always unsatisfactory to be split between two jobs and two bosses.*

WHITE: Exactly. In the morning I would show up at the Economic Section, where I had my office across the hall from the Economic Counselor. There I did economic and commercial work. It was an integrated economic/commercial section. We had a small, commercial library. Then, around 11:00 am I would go down the hall to the Consular Section and deal with all of the problems at that end of the building until we closed at 2:00 or 2:30 pm. We worked six days a week.

*Q: You mentioned consular work. How about the commercial work? How did that compare with and how did it differ from what you had done in Bremen?*

WHITE: Of course, the nuts and bolts of commercial work were similar. Commercial work is not always very dramatic work in some ways. You have to have good reference works in the library, such as the "Thomas Register" and all of those basic reference books.

*Q: You had more sophisticated reference works in Germany, of course.*

WHITE: Yes. You can't compare the two situations, which were totally different. What does a Commercial Officer do? First of all, he deals with the problems which the business community brings to him. There are commercial difficulties which need to be solved, and we had a hell of a lot of those. There were problems with the Sudanese Customs authorities, in particular. Sudan was a long way from the United States. Sudan was not a major market, but there was some trade going back and forth with the United States. So all of these trade problems had to be dealt with. These were particularly frustrating in a country like the Sudan.

In terms of dealing with the Customs authorities, I remember that two American businessmen came rushing into my office one day. They were very indignant. A shipment of their product, and I forget now what it was, had been held up in Customs, and the Sudanese Customs authorities were going to slap a high tariff on it. They went to the Sudanese Customs authorities. They were not very tactful, and the answer to every question they asked was: "No, no, no." So then they came to see me. They were very aggressive. Do you remember that novel, "The Ugly American?" Well, these guys were two ugly Americans. They were pushy and condescending. They had leaned all over the Sudanese Customs officials. Well, the Sudanese are very nice people. They're very patient.

*Q: What kind of business were these American businessmen in?*

WHITE: I have long since forgotten.

Anyhow, I had to go down and mollify the Sudanese Customs officials. There's a lot of psychology involved in this.

*Q: Were the Sudanese Customs officials reasonably competent? In some countries like the Sudan they are frankly not particularly competent.*

WHITE: Let's put it this way. The younger officials weren't terribly sophisticated. When I got to Sudan in 1962, the country had been an independent country for, what, seven years. They were essentially still in the throes of setting up their own government. Many of the government offices still had British expatriates working there, sort of acting behind the scenes and providing advice. For example, the Director of Civil Aviation was a South African. Maybe he didn't have any official title, but he was the expert to whom the Sudanese officials all deferred in that kind of work.

In terms of Customs, I don't know. However, when I went over to the Customs office, I could imagine the impression which these American businessmen had made on the Sudanese officials. The best psychology for me was not to identify with the two Americans but with the Sudanese Customs officials with whom, I'm sure, these Americans had been very abrasive. I went in and saw this very pleasant, Sudanese official in his 30s. He was overworked. His office was in miserable, dingy quarters, where the normal temperature was about 100 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. He was trying to do a decent job. I said to him: "You know, you and I have the same problem." He said: "What's that?" I said: "It's these two American characters who are in town." He smiled and sat back. I had established rapport with him, and we were then able to solve the problem. That kind of problem was always coming up.

*Q: Was there an American business group there?*

WHITE: Not a resident American business group.

*Q: Was there an American Club, as you might have in larger cities? Were there enough American businessmen there in Khartoum to form an American Club?*

WHITE: Not resident American businessmen, no. Bear in mind that the Sudan was a very poor country, with a population of about 12 million people. There was only modest trade with the U.S. The big business in the Sudan involved very large projects, like the construction of dams. Two huge dams were being built.

*Q: Were these banks financed by the World Bank, AID [U.S. Agency for International Development], or some other agency?*

WHITE: AID was a major presence. In a word, the AID Mission was huge.

*Q: Did you work with AID?*

WHITE: Of course. I worked closely with them, and they worked closely with me.

*Q: Tell us something about that.*

WHITE: The Program Office of AID in Khartoum had an excellent staff.

*Q: That is fairly characteristic about AID. The program people in AID tend to be pretty good.*

WHITE: They were very good. I found them to be very helpful. Hopefully, I was helpful with them in other ways. As I say, this was a relatively large AID Mission. The Embassy was in what everyone said was the tallest building between Cairo, [Egypt], and Johannesburg, [South African Republic]. This was said half in jest, but it may have been literally true. This was a seven or eight story building.

You're familiar with the pattern. The Foreign Service staff was very small. There was the Ambassador; the DCM; the Political Counselor with one assistant; the Economic Counselor, also with one assistant, namely me; and the Consular Officer, also me. That was about it, except of course for our American secretaries and communications and other staff corps people.

*Q: Was the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] represented in the Mission?*

WHITE: Yes, but I'm talking about the core of the mission, the Foreign Service as such. The Foreign Service component consisted of six or seven FSOs.

There was a USIS [United States Information Service] operation, of course. Some of the attaches in Cairo, such as the Agricultural Attache, had regional accreditation. The Agricultural Attache would come down from Cairo to visit the Sudan from time to time. FAA [Federal Aviation Authority] people would also come down from Cairo. As I said, there was a huge AID Mission in Khartoum.

It filled most of the Embassy building and spilled over into an annex.

*Q: What were they doing? Were they involved in supervising the construction of these big dams?*

WHITE: The AID Mission was basically providing a lot of technical assistance to the Sudanese. Among the AID programs, and the best program, in my view that AID was responsible for anywhere, was bringing people to the United States for exposure to the U.S. and training. The AID Mission in Khartoum did a lot of that.

*Q: Did the AID Mission have an education program?*

WHITE: They had an education program across the board, including bringing people to the United States. This was for short-term, medium-term, and long-term training in any technical



field that you can think of. That was a big operation. In fact, this activity was housed in the annex behind the main Embassy building.

*Q: What was the worst program that AID had?*

WHITE: Well, let's start first with the good things that AID did. The AID Mission had a very good agricultural section which did a lot of good work in terms of agricultural development. One of the things that they were doing was digging wells in the Western part of the Sudan to bring up water from deep underground sources mainly to provide water for cattle. Raising cattle was the economic mainstay of southern and western Sudan.

I think that one of the most questionable things that AID did was to build a road that extended for about 40 kilometers outside of Khartoum, and then stopped. AID also built a textile factory.

*Q: They built a textile factory?*

WHITE: AID provided the funding or part of it. That created some controversy later...

*Q: I would assume so. Do you remember any of the details on that?*

WHITE: No. I think that that project was developed after I left the Sudan, but it was under consideration at the time I was there.

On the whole, my impression was that the AID Mission had too many people and that it was throwing money around too freely and on projects which I wasn't sure had been very well thought out. AID once carried out an end user study of all of the equipment which AID had been sending to the Sudan. It was considered "UNCLASSIFIED" at the time. One of the things found in this study, and I remember this vividly, was that x-ray equipment had been sent down to the southern Sudan. Sending x-ray equipment was very noble and very laudable. However, they found that this equipment was simply sitting in railroad cars on sidings or out in the rain. It was ruined in the equatorial climate. It had never been unpacked.

I remember reading that report and thinking that the publication of this study was going to create a stir. It didn't create any stir, as far as I could see.

As I said, I thought that the AID Mission had too much money available and was spending it too freely and had too many people assigned to the Sudan. Frankly, the AID people conducted themselves as if they were totally apart from the Mission.

For example, here's a silly thing, in a way, but it's very indicative. I remember our Post Reports. Maybe they look better now, but they used to be just amateurish, mimeographed products. The Embassy Post Report in the Sudan was also like this at the time. The AID Mission had a separate Post Report, which I picked up and read one day. It was printed on glossy paper, like "Time" magazine, with pictures in color. AID had its own administrative operation, its own warehouse, and everything of its own. I thought that this was ridiculous, in

a community as small as the official American community in Khartoum. Frankly, I thought that this was rather offensive.

When I was there, the embassy set up something called CAMO, the Consolidated Administrative Management Organization. CAMO was put under an Administrative Officer from the State Department, as I recall. How well CAMO worked I don't know, and I wouldn't want to judge how good it was. Just let me say that I put in a requisition for some furniture that AID had in storage in their warehouse. It was never delivered to my house. But that's a minor thing.

*Q: Did you handle some of the liaison activity between the Embassy and AID?*

WHITE: I worked with them all of the time, although this wasn't a formal liaison arrangement. For example, one of their Program Officers, John Walsh, was a man more or less my own age. I was not a professional economist. John Walsh was a professional economist. I hadn't majored in economics, although later on I took economics here at the Foreign Service Institute. I found him very helpful.

Individually, the AID people were very capable, and I mean to cast no reflection on them. I simply thought and still think that probably, and not only in the Sudan, the AID program could have been better, more tightly managed.

*Q: Do you have any further comments on your experience in Khartoum?*

WHITE: Actually, the most interesting part of my tour in the Sudan came at the end, and it really had nothing to do with commercial work. It had to do with those American missionaries that I told you about.

Ultimately, the Sudanese Government expelled all of the missionaries in early 1964 when the war flared up. They were given 24 or so hours to pack a suitcase, go to an airport, and get out of the Sudan. They had to leave all of their property there, which had to be disposed of one way or the other. The Ambassador, of course, was under tremendous pressure as a result. The missionaries had considerable clout in Washington, far out of proportion to their numbers. You might be surprised at this. Of course, they had very legitimate grievances. As a major foreign aid contributor, we could hardly stand by and let the Sudanese Government treat American citizens in such a rough shod manner and force them to leave all of their property there. What could be done with this property? Leave it to rot in the jungle, presumably.

Well, the Sudanese Government had panicked and hadn't thought this issue through very well. However, they did it, and we were stuck with it.

Anyway, Ambassador Rountree now decided that missionary affairs was a consular, rather than a political matter. So he asked me to go down to southern Sudan and straighten it all out, to the extent that I could.

*Q: What did he mean when he told you to straighten it all out?*

WHITE: Well, we got into his limousine one day and rolled across dusty Khartoum to call on the Minister of the Interior. Ambassador Rountree introduced me as point man on this matter. The Ambassador patched up an agreement with the Sudanese Government, and I was then left to implement it. This is a long story and not very germane to the commercial function.

Anyway, at the end of my tour of duty of two years, when I was supposed to leave for reassignment elsewhere, I went down to the southern Sudan to Juba, Malakal, and Wau, the three provincial capitals in the South. There I met designated representatives from the different mission groups. We traveled through the southern Sudan by airplane, motor convoy, or boat. We used all different means of transportation. I went to certain mission stations. What they wanted to keep, we trucked back to the provincial capitals, to be shipped out of the country. The missionaries decided to leave a lot of the property with their own mission representatives or sell it there. So that was the end of my tour in the Sudan.

In terms of commercial work I learned a few things in Khartoum. As I say, it was not a major market for U.S. goods. Regarding those big contracts for the construction of the dams, the Italians are extremely good at this kind of thing. The Italians won the contracts to build the two major dams. There was also a lot of subcontracting under these large contracts.

*Q: Did the Italians do a good job on the construction of these large dams?*

WHITE: I presume that they did. I never heard otherwise. There were the Kashem el Dirba dam in the Atbara River and the Rozaries dam on the Blue Nile. These were huge projects, but there was a lot of American made equipment involved, such as Caterpillar earth moving equipment and that sort of thing.

The main commercial lesson that I learned in Khartoum was that in that kind of a market you can't really separate the commercial aspect very sharply from the political aspect. The customer for these major projects was really the Sudanese Government. Of course, when you're dealing with the government, you're dealing with politics. This means that you have to know the political scene in a way that you don't have to know it in a country like Germany. It's a totally different kind of environment in which to operate.

*Q: This involves the culture. Was there corruption there?*

WHITE: Well, a lot depended on who knew whom. I'm a little reluctant to use the word, corruption. I've served in other countries where corruption is considered endemic. However, I think that what we call corruption is often a matter of doing things we don't approve of in a different cultural context.

I think that there is also a certain element of hypocrisy when we talk about corruption. For example, you may think it appropriate to pay a commission to an import agent. Now, in one way, that's a perfectly straightforward business arrangement. If I want to sell my house, I pay a man a commission. Say, I pay him 6% of whatever he gets for my house. On the other hand, if the commission is 8%, is that too much? If it's 10%, is this a kind of corruption? Is it

a kind of bribe? I think that this is a difficult area in which to make quick or neat moral judgments.

*Q: I think that this is an issue which we'll want to discuss later and in other contexts.*

WHITE: I'm thinking, of course, of that legislation passed by Congress [prohibiting the payment of bribes by American business firms overseas]. I think that this legislation was unfortunate. It has caused numerous problems for American business overseas.

*Q: I think that we'll definitely want to get into that.*

WHITE: However, with regard to your question about the Sudan, I think that there was real value in doing commercial work, because the Sudan is one of those countries where the main customer is the government. This means that you have to know the politics of the country. For example, who are the real decision makers? The real decision maker may not be, let's say, the Minister of Communications, if you're with AT&T [American Telephone and Telegraph Company] and you're trying to sell something. The real decision maker may be somebody else, and that's what you have to know. What I'm saying, in effect, is that in countries like the Sudan, a Commercial Officer has to have a pretty acute political sense.

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*This is September 24, 1997. I'm John Harter, and this is an interview with Alfred J. White being conducted on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. We are resuming the interview that we started a week ago. Al, I think that we had a good discussion of your assignment to the Embassy in Khartoum. During the week that has passed have you had any further thoughts about anything that we left out or any comments that you'd like to make about Khartoum?*

WHITE: I don't think that I have much to add except that I might say something about my travels in the Sudan. These were often personal, but they all had a great deal to do with my professional development and attitudes.

*Q: As a matter of fact, my general view is that you can't understand a given country solely from what you can pick up in the capital. You have to get out into the hinterland.*

WHITE: I would say that that is true of any diplomatic assignment. I've seen the wisdom of that comment in many different situations.

*Q: Did you see the relevance of that comment in the Sudan?*

WHITE: Of course, the Sudan is a very large country, geographically. It is largely empty in the sense that two-thirds of it is largely desert. By contrast the southern third of the country is very equatorial, very green, and tropical jungle is the rule.

I traveled a great deal. First of all, to Port Sudan, on the Red Sea. This is the only significant port in the country. All of our equipment and household effects came in and out of there. Once I went to Port Sudan for a very unusual purpose, from the commercial point of view. I'm talking now about 1963. The Japanese had come up with the idea of sending a floating trade show around the world. This involved a ship which the Japanese had converted into a large and very impressive, floating exhibition of Japanese made goods.

We had received a cable from the Department of Commerce in the United States about this floating trade show. They were intrigued by this, more as an exhibition device than in terms of specifics.

*Q: They weren't exactly looking for something to import into the U.S. They just wanted to see what the Japanese were doing.*

WHITE: Exactly. The Department of Commerce asked me to go over and look at this ship when it arrived in Port Sudan. It was cruising all through that area, going up and down the Red Sea. It had stopped at just about every significant port between Tokyo and the Mediterranean Sea.

So I went to see the ship. It was extremely interesting. I remember sending a long report back to the Department of Commerce. I picked up all kinds of printed material about the ship and the goods it carried. This showed how imaginative the Japanese were. Frankly, I've never heard of a floating American exhibition hall like that. I'm sure that the Department of Commerce looked at this idea. This showed how assertive and imaginative the Japanese were.

*Q: What sort of things did this ship have on exhibition?*

WHITE: It displayed a lot of consumer goods and industrial equipment. What surprised me was that the ship was packed with people. Port Sudan was a city of, perhaps, 40,000 people in a country that, at that time, did not have more than 12-15 million people. Of course, the whole business community from Khartoum was in Port Sudan to visit the Japanese ship.

*Q: The novelty of it appealed to them.*

WHITE: The novelty of it appealed to the local residents, but it wasn't novelty that brought hard-headed businessmen from Khartoum. I think that I mentioned before that most of the business community in Khartoum was composed of expatriates, you might say. They were Lebanese, Greek, Armenian, some Italians, and British of course, as the Sudan was a former British territory.

I remember that the Japanese exhibitors were distributing almost literally tons of brochures at every single port stop. A lot of that, of course, was more intended for people who came to look rather than to buy. However, this exhibit also represented a very serious trade effort. I think that our conclusion was that the exhibition was very successful, at least to the extent that we could measure these things.

*Q: Do you think that anybody read your report on this Japanese ship exhibition?*

WHITE: Well, I recall receiving a message back from the Department of Commerce. As I recall it, the instruction which led to my writing the report, was a circular message addressed to just about every post along the ship's route. I remember that after it was all over, a circular cable went out, thanking all of the posts for their reports on the event.

Then, when I went back to Khartoum, I was supposed to fly back, which would have taken about an hour or two. However, our very enterprising General Services Officer prevailed on me to escort a convoy of trucks back to the Embassy in Khartoum, in a country virtually without roads. I was young and foolish enough to agree to do that, while he sat in the hotel in Port Sudan and arranged, I guess, to fly back to Khartoum. The contents of the trucks included the household effects of Embassy personnel and equipment which the Embassy had ordered.

There was a railroad which we had been relying on, operated by Sudan Railways, which the British had made into a very impressive rail line. However, by that time the equipment and the quality of the service had already declined considerably. What should have taken five days to reach Khartoum might take five months, or at least a long, long time. So we decided to bring in the effects and equipment by motor vehicle. We had a convoy of trucks, and some American had to be in charge of it.

So I was placed in charge of the truck convoy. The morning that we left Port Sudan, the General Services Officer handed me a revolver with a clip of bullets. I said: "What on earth is this for?" He said: "Oh, well, you know, you could run into trouble up in the hills." We were passing through various tribal areas. Our drivers were from one tribe, and they were passing through what was traditionally "enemy territory" for them. They were afraid. The thought was that they would be more at ease if they thought that an American official leading the expedition had a revolver with him! The trip was an interesting, four-day adventure, but I won't bore you with that.

However, as I mentioned before, I also traveled throughout the southern Sudan to deal with the missionary problems, wrap up missionary affairs, and help dispose of their property.

Farther afield, I traveled in East Africa. I flew over to Eritrea and down to Ethiopia. I spent several days in Addis Ababa. I went on to Nairobi, [Kenya], where I had been invited to stay with our regional Civil Air Attache, a delightful man named Bruce Miller. That was the week when Kenya was getting its independence. This was in December, 1963. There was a week-long celebration. It was a fabulous time to be there. About all that I knew about Kenya concerned the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s. I remember that Robert Ruark wrote a famous book about it, called "Something of Value."

To my astonishment, Jomo Kenyatta was the new President of Kenya. He was an extremely forward-looking man. Instead of finding fear and recrimination in Nairobi, I found a city that was exuberant. Kenyatta had appointed several of the so-called "white highlanders" to

positions in the government. His Minister of Agriculture was a man named McKenzie, or something like that. He had welcomed the former British colonists to stay on. He knew perfectly well that to develop his country, he needed Western capital and know how. I thought that he handled this transition brilliantly.

There's always been some speculation about how deeply Kenyatta was involved in the Mau Mau uprising. The British had actually exiled him to a very remote area in the northern part of the country. Certainly, from what I saw of Kenyatta in action, he was extremely able and shrewd and was a very sensible man. Indeed, for a long time after Kenya got its independence, it was the showcase of Africa. Kenyatta realized at the start that state model business, which became so prominent in other African countries, just wasn't enough. He encouraged the private sector. However, in more recent years Kenya has had real problems. But I would say that for a long time after Kenyatta launched the country, it was the showcase of Africa. It is a beautiful country, of course, and Nairobi was a beautiful, modern city.

*Q: Could you say a few more words about the political situation in the Sudan? I think that you said something about that during the previous interview.*

WHITE: Sudan was founded as a parliamentary democracy. Now, the degree of corruption in that Parliament is another matter. A military government took power in 1958. As I think I said before, the people voted in a referendum on their future. They could have opted for independence or union with Egypt. Of course, union with Egypt is what the Egyptians wanted.

We're talking, of course, about the Nile Valley. Regardless of who is in control in Egypt, the Egyptians have to be vitally concerned about the Sudan, because the Nile River, their life's blood, flows through the Sudan. Indeed, the Sudanese are in a position to control the flow of water in the Nile River.

*Q: When you were in the Sudan, we had good relations with the Sudanese Government.*

WHITE: We had excellent relations with the Sudanese Government. We had a very large aid program.

*Q: I was thinking more in terms of whether we had a formal policy statement which indicated what our objectives and goals were. Or were individual American officials just extemporizing as we went along?*

WHITE: I think that our policy very clearly was to support the Sudanese Government in general. Not any one government in particular, but the democratic system that had been established. We had to bear in mind that most of the people in the country were illiterate. Therefore, you obviously couldn't expect the kind of evolved, democratic system that we have in our country. We supported the Sudanese Government and its internal economic development program because, by and large, it pursued a foreign policy that was not inimical to our interests.

Obviously, Sudan had to maintain good relations with Egypt. That was a delicate relationship, but both of those countries have to get along with each other, given the common interest that they have in the Nile River. Our attitude toward the Sudanese Government was favorable. We supported it diplomatically and in the way that really counts. We supported it with a major investment in aid money. We wanted the country to succeed under a parliamentary democracy, however imperfect it was. And of course we had our own, selfish reasons for supporting it. I am referring to the international situation and the Cold War, which loomed very large at that time.

*Q: That was what I was getting at. In most places where I served the anti-communist element of our policy seemed to me to be too prevalent and too much related to the past. Very often this led to the United States taking the view that, whatever the opposition to the local government was...*

WHITE: No, that was not our attitude. First of all, I would say that the Sudanese Government, while it was pro-Western, was not slavishly anti-communist. The people who ran the government were sophisticated. One of the political parties was descended from the Mahdi [19th Century Muslim leader in the Sudan]. Sudanese political parties were essentially representative of religious currents within the Islamic religion. We enjoyed very good relations with these political parties. The Sudanese Government leaders, for their part, took a rather statesmanlike view in desiring close relations with the United States. They also wanted correct relations with Egypt.

By extension, they also wanted reasonably close relations with the Soviet Union. If I am not mistaken, the first state visit to the U.S. during President Kennedy's administration was that of General Abboud, the President of the Sudan. Abboud was a general, but he was a rather avuncular type of person. He certainly wasn't the typical junta leader. Actually, there had been a kind of coup d'etat in 1958 by which General Abboud came to power. However, his government was a benign kind of regime. I think that we were quite comfortable in dealing with it. The politicians had made a mess of things, and most of the country welcomed the Abboud government. It was a bloodless coup, tacitly accepted by the politicians.

Also, I remember that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia made a state visit to the Sudan during my tour of duty in that country. Of course, Ethiopia was a neighboring country, with some border problems with Sudan. Eritrea was in revolt against Ethiopia.

Chou En-lai, the Prime Minister of the PRC [People's Republic of China] also came for a visit to the Sudan. The Chinese Communists had a great interest in the Sudan. They had a modest aid program. We tend to think that the Sudan, because it was a very poor country, was sort of off the main drag. However, on the other hand, if you look at the map, a large part of the western coast of the Red Sea is in the Sudan, just across from Saudi Arabia. The Sudan is on the old British imperial lifeline through the Red Sea. The Chinese communists were very forward-looking, and they understood that. Communist China had an Ambassador to the Sudan. Of course, the Soviet Union also had an Ambassador to the Sudan.



You know there was a great game being played in the Middle East. I mean the 20th century great game, as distinct from the 19th century great game described by Kipling and played between the British and the Russians. This 20th century great game was being played by many countries. All of these countries had an interest in the Sudan, because of its size and its pivotal, bridge position between Arab North Africa and Sub-Saharan Black Africa.

So I would say that our relations with the Sudan were good. They were subject to some strain because of the problem with the missions. In fact, what relationship between two countries is not subject to some strain? As I mentioned before, Ambassador Rountree went to great lengths to keep the problems with the missionaries under control. For example, that was why I was sent down to the southern Sudan to deal with that problem at the end of my tour of duty there.

*Q: So what did you learn from your service in the Sudan?*

WHITE: I would like to repeat what I said earlier. The Sudan was a good place to watch a Third World economy function and to observe how politics and government played a very key role in all of that. It was unlike Western Europe, where business really can almost be conducted in a vacuum in terms of the political situation. That stood me in good stead in later years. It was that kind of economy. Of course, a lot of economies around the world are fairly similar to that of the Sudan, including a lot of Latin American economies.

As I said before, if the amount of money involved is big enough, a given economic question is no longer commercial. It's political, and this was true in the context of the Sudan. Apart from that, Africa as a whole was in what could be called a very positive phase. I recall going to the Governor General's Garden Party in Nairobi on the evening when independence was granted to Kenya. This was very much like the situation in Hong Kong recently, when the territory was returned to Chinese Communist control, amid pomp and ceremony. In the case of Kenya there was a very impressive ceremony at which the King's African Rifles gave way to the Kenyan African Rifles. I remember that Prince Phillip was there to represent the British Crown.

Attending the ceremony was a kind of "Who's Who of Africa." I remember meeting Kenneth Kaunda, who became president of Zambia; Tom Mboya, who was then one of the leaders of Kenya; and, of course, Jomo Kenyatta. Just about all of the African leaders were there for that week-long celebration.

This was a time of great hope for Africa. It has to be said that Africa has gone down hill since then, for various reasons. This has certainly been the case in the Sudan. The British left a very able civil service to administer the country. I knew these people. I worked with them. I knew some of the Governors in the southern provinces who were appointed from Khartoum. They were part of the elite civil service of appointed Governors around the country. There was great promise in the Sudan, which certainly had, and has, great potential.

There was a small Mobil Oil Company office in Khartoum. I knew that AGIP [Italian oil company] was prospecting for oil, which they never found while I was there. I certainly had

no doubts that there was oil in the Sudan. The cynics used to say that the big oil companies find oil when they want to do so. When they don't want it, they're quite content to leave it in the ground.

Later, and I'm going forward a number of years, the Chevron Oil Company found oil in the Sudan. Sadly, Chevron had to abandon that prospecting effort because of the civil war in southern Sudan. The civil war in the Sudan had actually been going on before the country got its independence on January 1, 1956. It's still going on now, and the amount of hardship it has caused is just unbelievable. The media has not "discovered" Sudan, by the way, in the way that it "discovered" Somalia. To an extent that is rather frightening in its implications. In fact, "the news" is whatever the media says it is. If the media doesn't cover an event, this means that nothing has happened. The media hasn't really "found" the Sudan. One of these days, I suppose, the media will go looking for something and will "discover" the Sudan.

*Q: The media found the Sudan briefly, when Cleo Noel was assassinated.*

WHITE: But that was just for a very brief time, and that, of course, was not under any circumstances which one would want any country to experience.

What happened to Cleo Noel was horrible. A sad aspect of this is that it happened in the Sudan. In fact, it really had nothing to do with the Sudan, although you could blame the laxity of the Sudanese authorities in tolerating the coming and going of extremist groups.

*Q: Apparently, the problem was that one of these extremist groups thought that Cleo Noel was the chief of the CIA Station in the Sudan. They thought that Cleo had organized a lot of things in the Middle East. That was not so. Cleo was an old friend of mine. He was very sympathetic to the Sudanese.*

WHITE: The Sudanese had a great deal of regard for him. He had been there for a number of years in different tours.

*Q: It's the one image that flashes across American minds when the Sudan is mentioned.*

WHITE: Exactly. But to go back to the war in the Sudan, until the problem between the northern and southern Sudan is solved, we're not going to see much progress in that part of the world. If it is solved...

*Q: Could there be a role for the international community? It might be necessary to assemble a group composed of elements from the UN, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], and the U.S. to establish the conditions for peace in the Sudan.*

WHITE: The UN, of course, is involved in the Sudan and has been for a long time, in terms of refugee assistance. I don't think that the UN can do much beyond that. There has to be a political will on the part of both participants in the war in the Sudan to solve this problem.

My own view is that in the Sudan as in Cyprus, the solution lies in de facto separation between the warring parties. Now, you can take a de facto situation and dress it up in all sorts of different ways. However, fundamentally, whether this involves independence or autonomy, or something in between, there has to be a solution based on autonomous arrangements, so that the people in the southern Sudan feel that they are running their own lives. That result cannot be imposed on them, any more than the Greeks and the Turks can impose a solution on each other in Cyprus.

For various political reasons, let us say, everyone pretends that the problem in Cyprus (although I am going pretty far afield in this respect) has not been solved but needs to be solved. I believe that a problem such as that in Cyprus can be solved de facto, but people need to have the political courage to accept it as having been solved. Something like that also has to happen in the Sudan.

*Q: What were your feelings on leaving the Sudan?*

WHITE: I had put in two years of service there. I didn't want to stay any longer than I had. I made the most of this experience. I found the Sudan fascinating. I traveled and learned a great deal. However, in terms of my own professional interest, my time in the Sudan was not part of that interest. My interest was Germany in particular and, by extension, Europe. So, after putting in two years in the Sudan, I was anxious to get back to Europe and get into something that was more related to my own interests.

**ARTHUR L. LOWRIE**  
**Political Officer**  
**Khartoum (1962-1964)**

*Arthur L. Lowrie was born in Pennsylvania in 1930. He served in the US Air Force from 1951 – 1954, and graduated from Allegheny College in 1955. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956 and served at posts in Syria, Beirut, the Sudan, Tunisia, Iraq, Egypt, and Brussels. Mr. Lowrie was interviewed on December 23, 1989, November 17, 1990, and May 22, 1991 by Patricia Lessard and Theodore Lowrie.*

LOWRIE: After Beirut I was assigned as Political Officer to the Embassy in Khartoum where I had the great pleasure of working with Ambassador William Rountree and his DCM Tom McElhiney. Both of these gentlemen represented the very best of the professionalism of the Foreign Service, objective, thorough, sticklers for accuracy and good writing and telling Washington like it is. It was a very exciting period in the Sudan. As a young Second Secretary I was one of the work horses and spent most of my time on the opposition to the General Abboud government and the perennial North-South problem that had been going on since 1955. It was the attempts of the north then, as now, to enforce an Islamization and an Arabization on the Christian/pagan tribes of the South that was creating armed resistance. During my tour, the foreign missionaries got caught up in it and quite unjustly were expelled in toto. This included a

large number of Americans, some of whom had been there their whole adult lives working with some of the more primitive tribes of Africa. And I had the unique experience of visiting some of them in their tribal situation and I came to have the greatest respect for the perseverance and the good works that these missionaries performed, particularly in medical care and education, two areas that both the British and the early Sudanese government had been willing to give them responsibility.

My tour in the Sudan ended very abruptly in October 1964 when I was declared PNG by the Sudanese government. The Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry called in Ambassador Rountree on a Friday and informed him of this. Ambassador Rountree, true to character, said he was quite aware of my activities, I had done nothing improper and that he was not going to send me out until he heard the reasons from the Foreign Minister Ahmed Khair. Ambassador Rountree sent a cable to that effect to Washington, but a NIACT IMMEDIATE came back from the Department telling the Ambassador to send me out of the country at once without waiting for any explanation. I later found out from friends in the Department that Secretary Rusk himself had made that decision; the reason being that the Abboud government was being very helpful in preventing arms and other assistance from getting to the Congolese rebels by air or by land from Egypt or the Soviet Union. We were not about to make a disposable Second Secretary an issue between our two governments. So I left Khartoum on Monday morning for Kenya and the Ambassador's appointment with the Foreign Minister never took place because the Abboud government was overthrown that morning. But by then, my having been PNG and was fairly widely known and it was decided it would not be prudent for me to return.

**JAMES MOCERI**  
**Public Affairs Officer**  
**Khartoum (1962-1965)**

*James Moceris was born in Washington in 1916. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1937, and served in the US Navy from 1944 – 1946. He entered the Foreign Service in 1951 and served at posts in Italy, Taiwan, Sudan, Guinea, and France. Mr. Moceris was interviewed on May 22, 1990 by G. Lewis Schmidt.*

MOCERI: I had learned a lot of things. Evidently Tom Sorensen had decided in his wisdom that I should fill the first available opening in the field, the PAO position in the Sudan, replacing Henry Hudson. Especially after my briefings in the Agency area office and at State I felt rather strongly that my work in my earlier field assignments and my two years of Washington duty had earned me the right to a more important assignment than the Sudan. I knew nothing about that part of the world or the Arab world and Northeast Africa. It was unmistakably clear from my briefings that Washington viewed the Sudan with complacency as a quiet backwater country that was not expected to present any problems. All I really got in terms of briefings and preparation was "You go out there and have an easy, pleasant time of it." This was a State Department officer, Cleo Noel, if I recall correctly, that was his name. Many years later, he was an ambassador in Khartoum and was killed by a terrorist.

*Q: I don't recall his name.*

MOCERI: He was in 1962 the desk officer for the Sudan. And he said, "We're perfectly happy with that regime." [It was a military regime.] "We're perfectly happy. We have no problems. You'll have a nice, quiet time there. You won't have to do a thing. You just put in a couple of years. It'll be nice." It wasn't my idea of what I ought to be doing at that stage of my life in the foreign service. I didn't know anything about the Sudan.

I got there in November of '62 and remained for two years as PAO. Ned Roberts was the area director. In terms of guidance from the remote Washington vantage point, everything was going fine. There were no problems. We had no problems with the Sudanese Government.

Well, I got there and found myself seized with a pretty full set of management problems. The information officer was spending three-fourths of his day editing the wireless file for a couple of Sudanese newspapers. [Laughter] It seemed to me an unconscionable waste of time. You don't spend three-quarters of any day editing the wireless file. That's not the most important thing in the world in any set of circumstances. Sure, it shouldn't take all that time. The cultural affairs officer, who was new to the Agency, enjoyed his assignment--in my opinion because he had so little to do and relished the leisurely pace of foreign service life.

I'd had the previous experience of Taipei and thought that was a disaster--a situation that should never have been allowed to happen. Even if I were the most brilliant man in the world, I still shouldn't have been put into that kind of a situation. Because there are too many problems. One can say, "Oh, but you've got all new people. You can mold them the way you want." No, that's not the way to do business, in my book. And there had been nothing that prepared me for USIS Khartoum.

I knew that I had a lot to learn about the Sudan and our USIS program before I could venture to open my mouth about anything in the Ambassador's staff meetings. The bemused, seemingly indulgent contempt with which senior Embassy personnel looked upon USIS and its activities was quite transparent. The more I learned about the USIS program, the more I marveled at the rationale for its existence. The PAO residence, which I inherited, had fourteen air conditioners used year-round in the desert heat of Khartoum. The cost was unbelievable. I replaced them all and used two desert coolers, consuming about \$30 worth of electricity per month. I looked at our operations. The library was a fairly shabby operation. The magazine that we distributed, the Arabic-language magazine printed in Beirut left much to be desired in terms of program utility. Our cultural exchange resources were almost laughably minuscule in comparison with the joint activities of the Soviet Embassy and the Sudanese Communist Party in sending young Sudanese on four-year study programs in the USSR (an activity on which I reported rather extensively). An attentive analysis of the USIS country budget showed that 94% of a quarter million dollar operation was tied up in fixed costs. For the current fiscal year any new program initiative was virtually impossible, thanks to insufficiency of funds.

So I went about the business of trying to establish contacts with people, find out what was making this country tick, and so on. Thanks to some of the local staff, I met a number of people and most importantly some who had been senior civil servants trained under the British.

Well, one fact I learned that was especially interesting and indicative for me, the Abboud military regime had gotten rid of over 65% of all the civil servants trained by the British. One may say what he wants about British imperialism and British colonial administration, but people they trained they generally trained pretty well.

*Q: They did.*

MOCERI: And these were good people.

*Q: They left a good basis for a logical government.*

MOCERI: And I thought, "Well, something will have to give in this situation. These military people won't really know how to run a government. They get rid of all their trained bureaucrats. And bureaucrats have a function, after all."

And I got in touch with university students. Got to know quite a few of them, including a few university girls. And then southern students, the blacks of southern Sudan. I was really fairly careful at this point, because I realized that, like all authoritarian regimes, this regime could be quite restrictive and very intolerant of certain things.

So I moved rather carefully. I did quietly arrange for people to come out to my house for dinner, music or just conversation. We talked of their problems, and I learned much about their country. Within four months I came to the conclusion that this regime's days were numbered. So I sat down and wrote a lengthy paper on the coming coup d'état, the conditions that were its seed-bed and why it would happen.

By this time I'd become quite friendly with the CIA station chief, in part because of the warm friendship between our wives. One day I said, "Look this paper over because I want to give it to the ambassador. I think it's a good reading of the situation, as I know it. And I want your reaction."

He read it and he says, "You're right. You should give it to the ambassador." And I figured, well, the ambassador will send it in. The ambassador was William Rountree. And I didn't know, before I went there, that Rountree had been ambassador to Pakistan and had been removed at the insistence of Lyndon Johnson, when Vice President Johnson on his swing through the South committed several gaffe's--to the barely concealed delight of the accompanying American press corps.

Rountree had had a remarkable career in the Department and he was very able. But at this point, I think he was gun-shy. He just wanted everything quiet, didn't want to raise any hackles or call undue attentions to himself.

The argument I advanced in the paper was along these lines: "The government has alienated every segment of the public sector, apart from the Army, and that too may be in question. There isn't an element in this country that supports this regime anymore." And I added, "Some incident

will occur. Probably something like a student being killed or something like that. It'll be just like a leaf falling somewhere. The conflagration will take place. And this regime is finished."

Well, my guess is that Ambassador Rountree simply filed the report, buried it. At the time I was still very much the newcomer, our relations were formally correct but just that. Rountree was as always correct, very courteous, and generally quite a reserved Southern gentleman. I hesitated to ask about my paper and he never mentioned it. But word of my thesis did get around. You know, the wife of one of the political officers in needling, "Oh, Mocerri and his revolution." And I was pointedly reminded of this when the revolution took--coup d'état took place. And it happened some 18 months later. The regime just disintegrated when it was confronted by an angry but unarmed mob. Perhaps because it had no stomach for a bloody massacre.

Well, I felt this was simply a question of my objectively trying to read what the climate, political climate, of opinion was. And that this was one of my proper functions. And I felt that the political people weren't doing this. All I was hearing were expressions of considerable satisfaction with the way things were going, in spite of the growing unrest in the South in the spring of 1963.

The ambassador came to me at that time and said, "Why aren't you doing more to persuade the people, the Sudanese people, that we are giving our assistance to them?"

I said, "Because they don't believe it. And there's no way of making them believe that. They see our assistance going to a government, which then diverts the equivalent amount of resources for its own little war in the southern Sudan." The estimates in 1964 were that--when I left--were that already half a million people had been killed in that civil war.

There had been, I think, a total of a couple stories in the New York Times. Hedrick Smith came up from Cairo to cover the unfolding crisis in the South. I gave him a complete briefing on the southern problem, the problem of Arab-black relations in the Sudan of the missionaries and so forth. [Laughter] He said, "Don't give me so much detail. I can only file a 500-word dispatch a day. I can't explain all this in 500 words."

I said, "Well, that's your problem." But he was very good about it. I went at considerable lengths to brief him.

On our wedding anniversary--I'm sorry for introducing this personal note. There always has to be some personal element in this. I was taking Modesta out to dinner; one of the few times we went out to dinner in the Sudan. And there was a restaurant a block away from the Embassy, up on the 14th floor of this new building. I'd made an 8 o'clock dinner reservation, but I got home later than I had expected. We hurried back to the center of Khartoum and drove to a round circle from which we could go directly down a street to the restaurant and Embassy. We were about five blocks from the Embassy, at the time. The street was completely closed. There were tanks all around. Every car parked on that street, as far as the restaurant and the Embassy was ablaze.

Had I gotten there 15 minutes earlier, either we would have been in the car and injured or killed, or the car would have been burned while we were having our dinner. And we would have been

stuck up there. In the meantime, all hell had broken loose; gunfire, a seething mob, tanks maneuvering, troops getting into position around government buildings. Dropping my wife off at a friend's house, I picked up my information officer and circled the city for several hours, gathering impressions and information.

From that moment, the 22nd of October, all foreign missions lost all contact with the Sudanese. Our CIA lost all its contacts with the army and the police. The ambassador lost all his contacts. Things were so bad that the British ambassador was calling our ambassador to find out what he knew. And our ambassador was calling him. Nobody knew. Curfew was imposed. Yet I went out every night, seeking information from my Sudanese contacts.

*Q: This was the coup that you...*

MOCERI: This was the coup that I had foreseen and it had started with a protest staged by university students. Three university students had been killed, by the military, because they were protesting certain government actions. There was sporadic gunfire, and some shots came through Embassy windows. Our flag was pulled down. Large angry crowds milled around our building all day.

But I thought and pointed out to my colleagues, "You know, it's all very methodical. All you have to do is get here at 7:00 and the mobs arrive at 8:00. Then they go off at 3:00. And then you go home. So there's no real danger." But with the curfew, nobody traveled. Yet I went out, for more than a week, every night. And I'd run the barricades and the check points.

I'd come in to the Embassy in the morning and report to the ambassador on what I'd learned the night before from my contacts. Because I still had my contacts, and I thought they were good. My best source was this one person, who said to me, "I'm in hiding. I don't want to be part of the new government because I don't approve. But here is what I'm learning."

So I'd brief the ambassador. He'd call in his secretary and dictate a telegram to Washington. That was the one communication for the day with Washington. After a week, he got pretty nervous about it. And he said, "You know, I don't want you to risk your life just to take..."

I said, "It's all right. If I don't go out you're not going to learn anything. And I'm careful." You know, as I drove down any street I'd make sure that I had a place to turn around if I suddenly encountered something suspicious or threatening.

Well, that was over, and I soon left Khartoum, with the new government installed and taking actions against our interests in the Congo. Six months later, I saw Ambassador Rountree in Washington. He didn't remember that I had been there during the coup. [Laughter] I was appalled.

He had, incidentally, in early 1963 authorized only me to address any Sudanese group on the question of the blacks in America. He wouldn't have anyone else addressing the question about the blacks in America. The Embassy had been invited to address a group of very prominent Sudanese on the problems of the blacks in America. It was not an invitation the Embassy could



refuse. The DCM was designated to speak on behalf of the Embassy. And the Ambassador asked me to draft a speech for the DCM.

And I was honest in developing my account of the nature of the problem and the prospect for the future. I talked about the problem of the blacks, the problem of political power, the riots in American cities; you know, things were burning. I said there would be a lot more burning until the blacks realize they have to organize themselves politically. This is the way you got to power. You acquire power in a democratic country through political organization. And I pulled no punches.

I knew what the problems of the northern Sudanese were, what troubled them. They were afraid, because of their color, that we Americans would look on them as blacks. Well, of course, most of them may well have had...

*Q: Well, they did have black heritage...*

MOCERI: ...in their ancestry, because of the concubines, and so on, and the abuse. In this respect, I had played a really useful role. I had a lot of people out to the house for all kinds of briefings on these particular problems.

My time came, and, as I say, I left.

To go back to the summer of 1964, when tensions were building up, prior to the coup d'état, and the war situation in the south was getting much worse. There was a terrible missionary problem. And I think, maybe, Ambassador Rountree realized the situation was possibly beginning to unravel. I had talked to him about this problem.

I'd said, "You know, I have a number of contacts. I know a number of southern students. I know a number of northern university students. I know a number of northern university girls, which is a particularly special audience for my wife and me." I never could reach them on any significant scale, because of the problem of the Communist Party in the Sudan, which had a very effective campaign going, recruiting university girls over the issue of circumcision. The Party was making a lot of headway with that appeal.

I also knew a number of university professors and, of course, the newspaper people and so on. And I said, "Look, we have to know more about the attitudes of any opposition and the opposing groups out there. But I know that the government will probably become aware of my contacts or activities, and will probably learn to keep an eye on me. But if you want, I'm willing to take the risk and meet as many of these sectors as I can, cultivate them as assiduously as I can, provided you know what I'm doing, and that the day the government declares me persona non grata, you will know how to handle that situation and get rid of me without any damage to my career."

In other words, in that kind of closed society you have to take certain risks. If you have to establish contacts and can establish them, you should and must. Otherwise, how are you going to know, with a controlled press, TV and radio, what is really going on and what people are thinking?

Well, he never really cottoned to the idea. He must have felt it would be too risky. So that went by the wayside. Yet it is a question that we must constantly consider.

I should add that, at the end of my first year, before the end of the fiscal year--that was fiscal 1963--I turned back \$56,000 to the Agency as unexpended funds. I said, "You withdraw these funds because I can't spend them to good program ends before the close of the fiscal year," which was, I guess, a shock in Washington. Certainly, a shock to Ned Roberts and his people. And I never recovered the money or anything. The next year's budget came out and I had \$56,000 less. Well, I didn't believe in wasting money. And I thought, well, this was another lesson to me about how money is used and misused in the Agency. So much for that item.

**WILLIAM M. ROUNTREE**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1962-1965)**

*Ambassador William Rountree was born in Georgia in 1917. He graduated from Columbus University in 1941, and entered the Foreign Service in 1942. He served at posts in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the Sudan, South Africa, and Brazil. Ambassador Rountree was interviewed on December 22, 1989 by Arthur L. Lowrie.*

*Q: Let's move on to the Sudan in about July 1962. The United States was, at that time and had been for a number of years, putting a lot of money into the aid program there, pro-western, largest country in Africa and all, what was the strategy behind the aid program? The overall strategy for developing a backward country like the Sudan? Was there one?*

ROUNTREE: The main strategy was simply to build upon those aspects of the economy giving the best prospects of success, which meant really concentrating largely on agriculture and agricultural industries, and things that support them.

*Q: And infrastructure, dams, roads.*

ROUNTREE: Exactly. Sudan was a country with virtually no roads. Vehicular transport was across the desert. The vast majority of all goods movement was by water. We did endeavor to begin some kind of road system, and in fact built a road from Wad Medani to Khartoum, though not without extraordinary difficulty. It was built, and it established a pattern. Since then there has been some additional roads, but it remains largely a country with a grossly inadequate infrastructure in transport, except river transport. This has always been a factor in the isolation of the southern regions of the country, populated mainly by blacks.

*Q: During this period too, in the Sudan, the North-South conflict heated up again in a major way. Did the United States play a role in trying to bring a solution to this conflict and, if not, why not?*

ROUNTREE: The United States endeavored to play a role, with limited success, nor has it been very successful even today. There has always been very deep-rooted hatred and fear between the blacks of the southern part of the Sudan and the Arabs of the north. The Arabs have always dominated. And following the independence of the Sudan from the British and the Egyptians, the country was ruled by the Arab, Moslem portion of the population.

*Q: What form did the US efforts to resolve this conflict take? Given our great interest in building up the economy, it would be very difficult in an area of civil war.*

ROUNTREE: There were limited means by which we could exercise influence. In the first place, there was no official representation whatsoever in the southern part of the country. The only Americans in the south were a few missionaries, and shortly after I arrived in the country the Sudanese government expelled all missionaries. This meant the closure of all schools, churches, hospitals, clinics, medical facilities, etc., because only foreign missionaries provided those facilities for the people of the south.

*Q: Were there any differences of opinion between you and Washington over what the United States should do, or could do in the Sudan?*

ROUNTREE: I don't recall any substantial differences of opinion, although we did have a continuous, active exchange of views. We both felt that apart from talking with representatives of the government, urging them along specific lines, there was very little that we could do in the circumstances, which at that time were extraordinary. You may recall that this problem was enormously complicated while I was there, and incidentally while you were there, by the fact that the initial government of the Sudan had been replaced in a military coup. From the outset of my assignment, Sudan was run by the army, under the leadership of General Abboud. It was a relatively benign military dictatorship but, nevertheless, one that was resented by people who had been engaged in political activity, and particularly by students. The government mishandled several student protests in the course of which students were injured and a few killed. Demonstrations began, first strictly among the students, later with professors, and members of the court, clergy, and leaders from various political elements. Severe measures were taken by the army against these peaceful demonstrations, resulting in a number of people being killed. Incidentally, these events took place in front of the American Embassy which is in the middle of Khartoum, across the street from the Presidency and next to the Central Square. The demonstrations and the measures taken by the government could be seen from the Embassy premises. So we witnessed a revolution, from beginning to end, over a period of several days. We saw student demonstrations met by very strong use of force. We saw the students being joined by faculty and by members of the judiciary, the clergy, businessmen, and then witnesses additional military action by the government. Finally we saw an all-out assault against the demonstrators in which dozens of young people were killed or injured. All of this we saw from the windows of the American Embassy. The government was unable to continue this kind of repression for the simple reason that soldiers and police refused to fire. The position of the government collapsed and the students and other demonstrators won. Initially, a National Front was organized to assume power. This national front was dominated by communists, however, and eventually the traditional political parties in the Sudan forced the communists out and

established a new government based more on the traditional political structure. This was a fascinating process for me, as I was in contact with the political leadership throughout and was able to provide continuing input into these delicate relations. The transition was very difficult, but in the process of reorganizing the government, efforts were made to bring southerners into positions of responsibility and into the cabinet. This was a highly commendable step. It could have made a substantial contribution to the settlement of one of the biggest problems in Africa, that of relations between the blacks of southern Sudan and the Moslems of the north. Unfortunately, it did not succeed. There were race riots in Khartoum, resulting from baseless rumors that a leading black Sudanese had been killed by the government. Excited blacks in Khartoum created physical disturbances with a very bloody aftermath in which hundreds of blacks were killed. The basic problems have continued, and still present one of the most formidable dilemmas in Africa.

*Q: During your tour in the Sudan, too, President Kennedy was assassinated. And in the Sudan, as well as in many other Third World countries, there was a tremendous outpouring of grief and sympathy over that assassination. How do you explain that?*

ROUNTREE: It came as a surprise to me that so many Sudanese all over the country felt a sense of personal loss in the death of President Kennedy. It became evident, not only in the Sudan but throughout the world, that the impact of John Kennedy had been much greater than Americans had imagined. In the Sudan I was attending a basketball game, an American team playing a Sudanese team, sitting next to President Abboud. One of my embassy officers leaned over my shoulder and told me that my secretary was on the phone saying that the President had been assassinated. I said that couldn't be true, the President was there. He said, "No, she means the President of the United States". I left immediately for the Embassy and turned on the radio to find that the Voice of American already had taken over facilities of BBC, and was broadcasting from the hospital in Dallas. Even as I listened to those early reports before President Kennedy's death was actually confirmed, Sudanese--this was late at night--came to the Chancery door to express condolences. Many of them were weeping. Within hours, every taxi in Khartoum had a black banner on its radio aerial. It was evident that people were not merely giving lip service, but felt his death very deeply and emotionally.

Later, members of the Economic Mission and others Americans who were in remote parts of Sudan told me that wherever they were, they were visited by Sudanese from all walks of life, many of them literally weeping when expressing their admiration of President Kennedy. We had generally known that Kennedy and his philosophies were appreciated worldwide, but I had no idea that the admiration was so extensive.

*Q: What were your own personal impressions of President Kennedy?*

ROUNTREE: I admired him. I saw very little of him personally. I was in Pakistan when he took office. Happily, from my point of view, I was among the first of Ambassadors appointed by the Eisenhower Administration to be asked to remain in office. I returned to Washington on consultation and had the opportunity of talking with him at length about Pakistan and my mission. Later, when Ayub Khan made a state visit to the United States as a guest of President Kennedy, I was present to brief Kennedy and to attend various sessions between the two leaders.

Incidentally, it was on this occasion that the highly publicized and enormously successful state dinner given at Mount Vernon took place. This was the first and only time that Mount Vernon was used for such a purpose. Of course I met with President Kennedy before I left for Khartoum after my appointment to the Sudan, but I never saw him again. This was unlike my relations with the other Presidents under whom I served as Ambassador. I had more frequent opportunities to see them and to know them. Though from what I saw and heard, I was very favorably impressed with President Kennedy.

*Q: What was your view about not so much the missionaries in the Sudan who were expelled, but generally your personal and the Foreign Service view of missionaries generally in Africa and Third World countries?*

ROUNTREE: My admiration of missionaries serving in remote and dangerous parts of the world has always been very great. When the government of Sudan decided to expel all foreign missionaries, including a good number of Americans, my wife and I made a great point of receiving these people in Khartoum and entertaining them and assisting them in any way that we could. I learned more about the real sacrifices of missionaries in Africa than I had ever known before. There was one woman, for example, who had gone to a remote part of Sudan as a young woman and had stayed there for 50 years. Her nearest non-Sudanese neighbor was 50 miles away and her function for all those years had been to run a leper camp. She was the only missionary there. When she was picked up and put on a truck and brought to Khartoum for expulsion, the several hundred lepers were totally without care. I've often wondered what happened to them. Then there was a couple. The wife was a surgeon, the husband assisted her and performed various other functions. The day they were picked up and put on a truck and brought into Khartoum, they had three recently operated on patients, with no one to care for them. The children of these people were truly impressive young human beings. The sacrifices that their parents had made and the extremely limited contacts which they had had with the outside world had given them an aspect of life, of humanity, that I found extraordinarily touching. From the point of view of the contributions that these people made and their personal sacrifices, I simply can't say enough. On the other hand, I believe that very often missionaries operating in such circumstances have been able to achieve so little that their service might be questionable.

*Q: Before moving to South Africa and how that came about, I want to ask, too, how the appointment to the Sudan came about from Pakistan? After all, Sudan was an important African country, but after having been Assistant Secretary and then Ambassador to an important country like Pakistan, it was not exactly a promotion.*

ROUNTREE: Not a promotion. I didn't look upon it at the time as a promotion. When I was completing my tour in Pakistan I had, in fact, expected to go to Australia. I was told by officials in Washington that it was the intention of the President to send me to Australia. That was changed and how the Sudan came to be substituted, I've never really known. In any event, it was a challenge and I was happy to accept the appointment. I found it one of my more interesting experiences.

**DAVID E. LONG**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Khartoum (1963-1965)**

*Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: You went out to Khartoum when, in '62?*

LONG: No, there was a travel freeze. Congress didn't give us any money, so everybody stayed in place for a year, and it wasn't until the summer of '63 that I went out to Khartoum.

*Q: And you were there how long?*

LONG: Until '65.

*Q: Now, what were you doing in '62 to '63 when you were frozen in Washington?*

LONG: I took conversational Arabic for six months, and then they didn't have anything to do with it. There were a lot of us, but there were all these positions that nobody could come and do them. It was a nightmare for Personnel. Two of the most formatively important assignments I ever had took place in that six months. One, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, one of the very few that we have ever had that was really, really good – I can't remember his name now – he poked up his program where incoming FSOs could go up to him. So I raised my hand – didn't have anything else to do – and went up and worked for about for about four months for Sam Gibbons, who was my Congressman from Tampa. It was a fascinating experience. Every FSO should do it. It really gave me a feel for how the Hill works that visitors simply don't have. Then when I came back, the fellow who was in what was then known was POD, Personnel Operations Department, which was the assignments guys, died suddenly and tragically, and the guy who was to take his place couldn't come from overseas. So here was this brand newly minted guy, and they said, "You're going to do Africa until he can get over here." So for about two months I did, and that taught me how the Foreign Service really worked. We assigned everybody from DCM down. The ambassadors obviously are picked in a different system. But here's this brand new guy who is arguing for bodies – of course, AF wasn't a bureau then, it was still with NEA. But in Personnel there was an AF Bureau – and I was the guy trying to get the best I could, and everybody was trying to steal our best guys and nobody wanted to give them to us.

We had a modicum of real Africanists and then we had to beg, borrow and steal the rest, whereas, say, EUR had their Europeanists and then everybody else is trying to get in there. So the negotiating conditions were not good for AF, and you really had to bargain hard. It gave me insight on how this thing really works. I did that for about two months. We were trading bodies and everybody was trying to unload, shall we say, their unproductive officers or less productive officers on me, and I was trying to sell this guy as the greatest thing since sliced bread to them and they all knew he was a dog and that was why nobody wanted him, and on and on and on. So I learned more about personnel than some people learn in 20 years, because if you're in the political or economic cone you're so busy doing political and economic work. Personnel is what the admin people do. Well, to their peril do they not know? I learned very early and, as I said earlier, with my PK cynicism I started learning how this operation worked, and it was a fascinating education.

*Q: This was in the early days. Was there developing a good solid core of Africanists?*

LONG: Somebody ought to do a history about this one. I wouldn't say solid – well, solid in quality but not in quantity. For one thing, with older guys, if you'd spent 10 years in ARA and you know Spanish, you're not going to give up that legacy and you're sort of inducted into the ARA priesthood and you know Latin America, and start from scratch over here. So there are nonsubstantive career reasons why this wouldn't necessarily be a good idea, unless you were just totally fed up, and so you got people that were fed up. But the people from the beginning who wanted to do it, yes, there were a bunch of people coming in or who had just come in or who hadn't been branded with a bureau persona so that they could do it, and that's where you got them. So it took a longer period of time for them to come in and have a few tours – my roommate was one of them – to become the Africa hands. I think this is natural. It takes time when you open up a new thing like that. But at the same time – Soapy Williams was the Assistant Secretary of State – it was absolutely incredible. He played the Administration, which was the Kennedy Administration, like a violin, and all of the hopes and the idealism for “this newly freed-from-imperialism-continent, and we are doing to do great things.” One of the most talented group of people ever put together under Soapy was there, and Sudan was in AF, it was not in Near East. Of course, the idealism reigned over the realism because problems were not problems that you could just have a quick fix for and they're still searching, but nobody has ever really, in my opinion, done a real academic research paper on this extraordinary group of people who in the early '60s were forming as the African countries were getting independence. There was just a lot of talent running around out there. Some stayed, others drifted on somewhere else. Some were political appointees. I'm talking about the whole group at AF, but it was an extraordinary...

*Q: It was a time of really high hopes. This was the new world dawning and particularly the Kennedy enthusiasm, and this was kind of where it was playing. We had a chance to get in there and mold things. The Peace Corps was going to make a big difference.*

LONG: Yes, a combination of naiveté and a little bit of arrogance and a lot of ignorance, but it was a hell of a time.

*Q: Having these quite interesting assignments of the Congressional and the personnel, you were off to the Sudan, and you were in the Sudan from '63 to '65?*

LONG: Right.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

LONG: William Rountree.

*Q: Who was an old hand.*

LONG: Yes, he came up the admin route, but he had been Assistant Secretary for the Near East. He was ambassador somewhere, I think, in the Middle East, and then he went to the Sudan and from the Sudan he went on to South Africa and then to Brazil. He was a lovely person, a very shy person. I always thought he was miscast in the Sudan for his talent. He was a tremendous guy, but this was the frontier. I'm sure he did a marvelous job in Brazil and in South Africa. I liked him very much.

*Q: What was the situation in the Sudan? How long had it been independent? You're a new boy on the block. What were you seeing in Khartoum?*

LONG: I'd never been there, so I had a lot of book learning but I didn't have the touch and the smell and the feel. A Fletcher classmate of mine was the Assistant Director of the Department of Statistics for the Sudan government, which was not Cabinet, but it was a fairly high civil service rank, and through him I met all kind of people. I was out meeting folks and reporting all sorts of stuff, and a lot of the people in the embassy read the newspaper and were sort of desk FSOs. As my first assignment I was to be the consular officer. I was supposed to be rotated after three months, but the guy who would have to come back from the economics section made sure that I was going to stay there until he was rotated out of Khartoum, so I stayed there not quite a year. But I used that period, since it wasn't a heavy consular load, just to go out and meet people, know folks, so I knew lots and lots of people. I had a great time there. Then they had a civil war and they had a revolution and a lot of stuff like that.

*Q: Prior to the revolution while you were there, what was the government like from our perspective, and what were American interests?*

LONG: Well, this is me talking, this is oral history, this is not official. I felt that probably it was a residue of the high hopes – I won't say 'residue' because they were still very much in evidence – for the newly freed continent. We were doing a lot of stuff there. The AID mission was one of the biggest in the world, and they were going to eradicate water hyacinths from the Nile – good luck – and we had all sorts of stuff going. I never really had a sense that we had much in terms of interest there at all except as a part of the new rising continent. That more or less wasn't challenged during my tenure. There were a lot of things that happened previously. It was run by a military government under a guy named Abboud, who was a lieutenant general; it was a bunch of generals that ran the government. And then the government fell...



*Q: While you were there?*

LONG: While we were there, yes. There was a revolution, and during that revolution there was some bloodshed but not nearly as much as when there had been a north-south conflict. The southerners are African and the Northerners are Arab. They're all dark skinned so it's hard to tell them apart if you come from the United States. We had a civil rights guy who came out there to talk to the brothers, and he was talking to these Arabs and didn't realize they were probably more prejudiced than he was. They didn't look that way to him, but there is an ethnic distinction between the largely animists and some Christians in the south and Muslims in the north. There was an uprising along confessional, quasi-confessional lines, and then there was also a revolution. So there was a lot of upheaval, and out of that came a democratic government, but it never really made it. After I left, it was overthrown again, and they had a series of overthrows, of violent revolutions, which has always, I think, been a tragedy. But in terms of US interests other than furthering this struggling country, which is an interest of ours, and furthering democratization, although we had never heard of the term, I can't say we had any pressing interest there at all.

*Q: This was a time when Nasser was riding high in Egypt. In the Sudan how was Nasser viewed?*

LONG: They had sort of a love-hate relationship with Nasser, with Egyptians. It was the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and the Egyptians looked down on Sudanese as jungle people, way down, and they took offense at that. On the other hand, Nasser was an incredibly charismatic person. But it's interesting: there is a branch of the University of Cairo in Khartoum – and to get from point A to point B you'd go by way of D, C, E, F, and X and Y and Z, the Egyptians, and they're always being caught out by the Sudanese, who go from A to B by way of A to B, and they couldn't figure out how come. It was because these guys are not as conspiratorial as they are. So there was this relationship. They really weren't under the spell of Nasser except as an individual and charismatic leader. But the Egyptians were looked at as much as an imperialism force as anything else. In fact, the memories of the British, although they were frustrated with imperialism, were by and large positive.

*Q: Supposedly the British had their A-number-one civil service in the Sudan, so they give it a pretty good government. This was by reputation.*

LONG: They had a first-rate university, Khartoum University. They had a first-rate civil service. They just, once they got independent, have not really had the ability to run themselves. It's a tragedy. And they still haven't, in my opinion, up to now. They've had a lot of trouble governing themselves, but they were left a darn good infrastructure with this university and this civil service. It's a tragic country in that they had so much going for them when they got independence.

*Q: You were in Khartoum and you were up in sort of the Arab portion of the Sudan. Was there much observation, contact to the south, the Nile people, the Black Animist people and all? Was there much contact?*

LONG: There were a lot of them in Khartoum. I knew a lot of them. But one of the things that was fantastic for me: the ambassador we had previous to Ambassador Rountree traveled all over that country. The country is as big as the United States east of the Mississippi River, a big country, and he had this huge travel budget. I was always bugging the DCM for orientation trips, and he'd basically say, "FSOs are supposed to be seen, not heard. When they're your rank, shut up" – not literally but that was the message. All of a sudden one day the administrative officer came in and said, "David, how would you like to take some trips?" I said, "I'd love to. That's why I joined the Foreign Service." He said, "I've been having a staff meeting with the ambassador and I pointed out that if we don't use up our travel money, we're going to lose it." Most of the people in the embassy at the time were sort of deskbound types, and nobody really wanted to get out there much except me. So the DCM called me up, he wanted me to grovel and be so thankful because they have decided as a special favor to me to let me take these trips. I had already known from the administrative officer they were doing this because they didn't want to lose the travel money, but I groveled anyway. I had some marvelous trips. I went all over that country. I went all over the place and just had a wonderful time. I wrote up all these reports that I'm sure were never read by anyone. I've still got copies of some of them.

*Q: What was your impression of officialdom and the reach of the central government when you got down to Juba and other places like that?*

LONG: In the early days work was still running fairly well, but then when the north-south thing blew up.... The civil war really started in the late '50s and early '60s and is still going on.

*Q: But you were there in the early '60s. Was the civil war going on then?*

LONG: It had quieted down. There wasn't any travel advisory or anything. No, it was quiet, but the underneath tension was there and boiled over subsequently in violence. When I went on these trips, there wasn't that much violence, there wasn't any. It was very quiet but you could sense, in the south particularly, the tension. I also went out to the west, which hardly anybody had gotten out to since the British. That was a different thing but very fascinating.

*Q: Were there missionaries scattered around?*

LONG: There were early on, and then they were all sent out. They didn't close down the missions, but they forced all of the foreign missionaries to leave, which was probably a mistake, because if there were a moderating influence in the south, it was these people. But again, this was ethnic, this was confessional. It's a very complicated situation, and I'm not sure whether our lack of interest or our overwhelming interest would have been a greater factor in understanding the country better, I'm not sure either one. I'm talking about Washington. The people out there did, sure.

*Q: How well did you feel the Sudan fit into the Washington African mold? I would have thought that it was kind of off to one side and there would be much more interest in Ghana or Tanzania or what have you.*

LONG: Well, as I said, this was all caught up in the enthusiasm of Soapy Williams, and it was still under that aura when I got there. The ethnic wars and the revolution made it a crisis area. Of course, when there's a crisis area, then there's a lot of attention placed on it. But by the time I left, I think, the bloom was off the rose. It's hard to say, though, because the bloom was off Africa. You don't sort of see it one day and it's gone the next. This is something that you see in retrospect more than you see at the time.

*Q: Was there a feeling that the Sudanese really aren't doing the right things as far as running the government at this point, or were we still seeing the better side of things?*

LONG: This is just a prejudice of mine. I think we were less judgmental in general back then than we are now. I personally decry the term 'democratization.' I think when you say 'democratization' subconsciously we think everybody ought to be a Jeffersonian Democrat. In fact, what we're really talking about is public participation in the political process, how does the public participate, to what degree are they allowed to participate, how effective are they and so forth. I think that by reducing this to little terms like 'democratization' we have oversimplified and made simplistic some pretty complicated things, and we don't have to think much anymore because we have a little slogan that we can use. I think that that has increased particularly in the last 10 years, and if you go back 30 years we were less judgmental. I think the people that worked in these areas obviously were highly aware of it. We were trying to look at the country for what it was through the eyes of the people that were there and see what we could do to help rather than judging where they stood on the scale of human rights or democracy or whatever else. I don't think it was out of ignorance, I just think it was less judgmental.

*Q: Did the British play much of a role there when you were there?*

LONG: A declining role. Habit factor was still there a bit, but after I left, by the late '60s, they had much more bloody revolutions and by that time even the habit factor had pretty much died out.

*Q: When you were there, you say, there was a little revolution?*

LONG: Abboud was overthrown, and they installed a democracy.

*Q: What happened, and where were you on the day it happened or days it happened?*

LONG: At times I was unable to get to the office, at times I was at the office. One time I was running around checking out the revolution and a mob started chasing me. If I'd been timed by the Olympic timekeeper, I would have probably won a world record.

*Q: Why were they after you?*

LONG: Well, it was a mob. Another time I called up my friend Sillaman, the statistician, and I said, "How are things in your suburb?" He said they were quiet and they were quiet in mine, so I induced my wife to go with me around to Sillaman's house. We were going to go way around, not through town, which was kind of hopping. I guess this was during the ethnic uprising. The

mob surrounded us and were jumping up and down on the car. They'd been burning cars and houses and things. This big face stuck into the window and they were all yelling, "*Ai shishab*, long live the people." I have a very loud voice and I was yelling even louder, and he said, "Are you for the people?" I said, "Yes, I'm for the people." He turned around like Moses and said, "Stop," and they all stopped. He said, "He's for the people," and I said, "I'm for the people," and they all started cheering. He said, "Let him by," and they opened up like the Red Sea, and we drove down this corridor of cheering people, "*Ai Shishab, aywa!*" I got about two blocks down the road and had to pull over. I'd just turned to jelly. It didn't happen during the incident but after, and my wife has never let me forget it.

*Q: The Sudan is not the easiest place to start somebody out. At least you're Southern, but it's a moderate climate in Chapel Hill.*

LONG: Well, it's not so much climate, it's society. She was by 10 years the youngest wife in the embassy. The next youngest wife was about 30 with three kids. She was 22. She skipped a grade, so she was a year younger. She graduated from college at 19 and she was going to Columbia Teachers College when she went overseas. A young married person with no children and the youngest American wife with three kids, that's tough. And then, of course, it's a male society. If you're going to learn how to go with the locals in the Arab world, you've got to be able to stay up all night long and drink tea with the men, which I did, and it was tough on her, very, very tough.

*Q: When did you leave?*

LONG: 1965.

**KARL F. MAUTNER**  
**Chief of Political Section**  
**Khartoum (1963-1965)**

*Karl F. Mautner was born in Austria in 1915. He emigrated to the US in 1940. His career in the Foreign Service took him to Germany and, the Sudan. Mr. Mautner was interviewed on May 12, 1993 by Thomas Dunnigan.*

*Q: You were assigned to Khartoum in 1963. That must have been a complete change for you?*

MAUTNER: That was quite a big change. I am not quite sure whether it was a terribly good assignment because I had no experience in the Arabic world at all. I was to be chief of the political section. As it was, I rather enjoyed the assignment, which lasted about two years although it probably didn't help my career. It was an interesting assignment and in many ways rewarding. I also think that I not only learned a little bit but I think I was in a way doing some good there.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador there?*

MAUTNER: The Ambassador was Bill Rountree and the DCM was Tom McElhiney, both of them experienced hands, both of them had been there for three years already. The Ambassador was an old Middle-East hand. He had been involved in Egyptian affairs in the days of John Foster Dulles.

Q: *Yes, he was Assistant Secretary for the Middle East under Mr. Dulles.*

MAUTNER: Was he Assistant Secretary? I think you're right.

Q: *Yes. Did you feel that you were accepted by the regional specialists, the Arabists there?*

MAUTNER: You are talking about the Americans?

Q: *Yes.*

MAUTNER: I don't think I got very close to them. I had some difficulty because as soon as I got aboard, we got information that the locals working for the political section had to be fired because they were unreliable or had contact with Egyptians. We also had a new young officer as an Arabist; he fortunately turned out to be very good and really the backbone of the section later on, Art Lowrie. But the whole assignment was difficult. I had a rather funny introduction to the local scene because one of the important figures in Sudan history was Slatin Pasha, an Austrian who as a young officer joined the Anglo-Egyptian forces, and aged twenty-five became governor of Darfur, the far western province. He got into a conflict with Gordon Pasha, on religious grounds, staged a big long retreat of his Egyptian forces but was finally captured by the Mahdi. He spent eleven years in prison in Omdurman, escaped and became then, after the British victory over the Mahdi's successor, Inspector General of the Anglo Egyptian-Sudan appointed by Kitchener. He stayed on until 1916. Now as it happened, his nephew Heinrich von Slatin went to the same school as I did and on occasion we played with a toy railway in his yard and there I once met the old gentleman, Slatin Pasha, and shook his hand. When I reported this to some of the Sudanese they were quite excited. "He knew Slatin Pasha" and that got me a fine entree with some people. One of them, by the way, made a very interesting remark. He said: "You know the British were good administrators and they were very smart in appointing Slatin Pasha as inspector general because by the time he escaped, he had gotten to know everything that was important in Sudan. He knew all the tribes and where they were supposed to graze or live after the war. When he came back he rearranged the resettlement of the tribes and it showed that the British were very intelligent administrators."

Q: *Did you find that you were accepted by most of the Sudanese? Were they friendly to the Americans at that time, or not?*

MAUTNER: They were very friendly to Americans; they were all together friendly people, and I found that the ones I dealt with were definitely easy to deal with.

Q: *Did you get to travel? The Sudan being the largest country in Africa and...?*

MAUTNER: I traveled a bit. I took one trip out into the west, of course with a military escort which was one way of getting around because there are no roads, or only marginal roads. We had a truck escort and traveled in a jeep. First of all, I flew out to El Obeid which is the regional capital of Kordovan. There we picked up this escort and drove out to Darfur, the mountains of Djebel Mara where they had water and oranges growing in a rather nice part of the country. Then to Niala. We got caught by the rains and one of the escort officers said we'd better get out because if we stayed any longer we'd have to stay there through the winter. That was an interesting trip, and made a rather good trip report I believe. Then I had another trip where we went to Abu Simbel which at that time was not yet flooded, but was still the original Abu Simbel and then came back by famous railway from Wadi Halfa through the desert which the British had built when fighting the Mahdi. That was interesting, but more for sightseeing.

*Q: Could you tell at that time, it was of course many years ago, that there would be the terrible troubles that the Sudan is now experiencing? The regional fighting?*

MAUTNER: The regional fighting? Not at that time when I made the trip, but it became quite clear that there would be trouble towards the end of my stay there. First of all, the Arab Sudanese are just as black as the Southern Sudanese are, but are of a different racial and tribal stock. They claim to be Arabs because they have somehow a family line back to the Arab conquerors who then married local girls. But they certainly dominate the situation, and at that time they began to clean, let's call it ethnic cleansing, part of the South of foreigners by getting rid of the Comboni fathers, the Catholic orders and other missionaries who had split up the territories among themselves to work with the Southern non-Muslim tribes. According to the Arabs the British had given various parts to various missions in order to divide and conquer. Now, that immediately isolated those parts from the outside world. Then you heard of trouble starting here and there and the appointment of fairly powerful Northern Arab generals to go out and take charge of garrisons in the South. It was quite clear that something was brewing. Of course, there had been revolts in '56 when the country became independent but they had stopped somehow. What we could do about it in my days there, I don't know. At that time there were still a few expatriate people in the South. One of them ran a tea plantation and a Greek merchant, sort of a Greek patriarch, ran a big store in Juba, eventually had to give up and leave. So the Europeans in that area began to be fewer and fewer.

I had an interesting trip there when my family and I took a vacation in Uganda. In those days Uganda was still a paradise and we drove around a couple of thousand miles in a little Peugeot which we rented from an Indian, got throughout the whole country, and on the way back, we flew from Kampala via Juba to Khartoum and in Juba I got off the plane. We still had an AID expediter there, and I stayed with him overnight. Went out hunting and shot some game. There we saw herds of giraffes--running free. Then we still visited the old Greek patriarch before I flew back. So I got a little bit of the flavor of the situation in Juba. I went to the Catholic church there which was interesting because the service was all in a strange language (it was already after Vatican II) in a language I didn't understand. I noted that they had a crucifix with a black Jesus on a white cross. I am not quite sure what the local Arab administration reported about me going there but, anyway, that was quite an interesting stopover.

Then later in 1964, suddenly there was an uprising against the incumbent military government. It had become quite corrupt, had lost influence and power. A student uprising in which one student was shot, was seized on by the people who wanted to revolt. They paraded the body up and down the main street and the government just folded, resigned. A new moderate government took over. Very quickly attempts were made by the communists who were ensconced in the trade unions to take over. Fortunately, the communist organization had no mass support at that time and supporters of the Mahdi family, the Ansari, came into town en masse with their clubs and sticks. That was the end of the communists' attempt to move in at that time. Later, the grandson of the old Mahdi, Sadiq El Mahdi, took over as prime minister. He found that governing a country is not as simple as it seems, especially if the country has internal divisions and economic and racial difficulties. A variety of governments followed, sometimes a military group took over. Sudan wound up eventually with a military dictatorship which ran into great problems in the south, a real revolt of southern tribes. General Nimeiri's military dictatorship was eventually overthrown, to be replaced by another military dictator and then for a while there was quasi democracy again under Sadiq El Mahdi. Now a military-fundamentalist Islamic dictatorship rules and is engaged in a genocidal war against the non-Islamic southern tribes.

*Q: So Karl, your time in Khartoum drew to an end in 1965.*

MAUTNER: In May 1965, I left.

*Q: And you were transferred back to the Department?*

MAUTNER: Yes. The children enjoyed themselves in the Sudan, and I enjoyed it actually. The children went to the local schools, to the Comboni Middle School, based on an Oxford-entry system. The American Embassy-run school was not terribly good. I'm not quite sure if I made myself many friends for sending my kids to the local school, but they learned arithmetic, spelling, and English history (with an Italian accent).

**MARTHA C. MAUTNER**  
**African-American Institute**  
**Khartoum (1963-1966)**

*Martha C. Mautner was born in Pennsylvania in 1923. She graduated from Seton Hill College in 1944, and received her masters degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1945. She began her career in foreign affairs in 1945 and has served in the USSR, Germany, and the Sudan. Mrs. Mautner was interviewed on November 7, 1995 by Thomas Dunnigan.*

*Q: Then in 1963 you went with your husband to the Sudan where you worked for Ambassador Rountree in Khartoum.*

MAUTNER: Well, Karl worked for Ambassador Rountree. Ambassador Rountree did not want a husband and wife team on his staff. That was before the days of enlightenment in the Foreign Service, so I got a job with the African-American Institute in Khartoum.

*Q: Oh, please, tell us about that.*

MAUTNER: That is a non-governmental organization based in Africa which arranges to bring African officials to the United States for training or sponsors exchange programs. So, that turned out to be quite a useful experience because I helped with a lot of educational exchanges of Sudanese officials in various technical fields and developed a lot of contacts throughout the academic and technical worlds there. When the 1964 revolt broke out, it was against the military government and started with a riot at the university where a student was killed when the troops intervened. The repercussions led to the overthrow of the government and eventually to the Nimeiri regime, basically a communist-oriented regime. But at first the civilian government was a much more academically run, liberal type of reformist affair, and staffed with many of the people I had been dealing with.

So there was somehow a bit of schaudenfreude on my part. After the revolution, all the people who the ambassador had not allowed us to deal with officially, were the ones I was dealing with outside the embassy. So Karl and I were the ones to introduce them all to the ambassador.

*Q: There were attacks on the embassy at that time.*

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, there were repeated riots. A lot of it had little to do with the political revolution, it was racial. On top of the overthrow of the military government and installation of the new one, there was considerable loss of state control and the racial tensions blew up. In the fall of 1964, you had an episode in which one of the cabinet members who was a southerner...

*Q: Which means a black man.*

MAUTNER: Well, everybody was more or less the same color, but there was quite a racial difference between the Arab blacks and the Nilotic blacks of the South Sudan. There was usually a token southerner in the cabinet. This minister was coming to Khartoum reportedly on a special mission and his plane was delayed. A crowd of southerners--there were thousands in Khartoum--went out to the airport to meet him and he didn't show up and he didn't show up and didn't show up. There was drinking and the rumor spread that something had been done to him and the crowd went on a rampage. They started to march back into the city smashing everything on the way. We were just coming home from church with all of the kids in the car, when we ran into this mob. They threw rocks through the car windows. We pushed the kids to the floor and drove straight through and got out of it. They weren't attacking us directly. They were just going after everything encountered.

*Q: You just happened to have been there.*

MAUTNER: We just happened to have been there. Several other Americans were pretty badly injured accidentally.



Then when the mob got downtown, the real fighting started. The Arabs took off after the southerners, and foreign targets were hit in the process. They went after the Protestant missions because the foreigners sheltered southerners. And a lot of Americans who lived in the vicinity had to take the missionaries in as refugees. Then the Arabs started massacring people, chasing them out into the desert in Jeeps and shooting them down. It was announced later just forty people had been killed, but those forty were Arabs who had been killed in the fracas. About 400 bodies of blacks were dumped in the Nile and floated down the river. It was a pretty bloody affair. The Christian churches were badly hit because of their services for the southerners.

*Q: Were many missionaries down there?*

MAUTNER: Yes, Catholic and other denominations. A lot of their parishioners simply disappeared and never showed up again. It was a very tense time because it was a totally irrational outburst.

*Q: Where did the funding come from for the African-American Institute?*

MAUTNER: I guess a lot of it came from American sources, but frankly I have no idea who supplied it. It still operates and a lot of it is private funding.

*Q: Well, our relations with the Sudan these days are not very warm to put it mildly.*

MAUTNER: They will turn around again eventually. But we stupidly poured much too much money into that place to make it a showcase of development aid, which was sort of silly, because you don't turn around 500 years of history with a quick injection of \$13 billion.

*Q: Were your relations close with the embassy and your job? Usually an embassy has a USIA person doing cultural affairs. Did you work with them?*

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, we worked very closely. USIA would send a representative to sit on the board which was vetting candidates. I am still very good friends with the cultural attaché, an excellent chap. USIA worked with the program and the AID people did as well. It was a very close knit colony because it was such a small one in such a foreign environment. Khartoum has to be experienced to be believed. There were no outside resources like television. The nearest city was about 800 miles away. There is no place to go, no restaurants unless you had your Maalox with you. A lot of Americans went stir crazy unless they were really motivated to get involved. But on the other hand, if you got involved it was quite fascinating what you could learn.

*Q: You referred to the fighting and unrest there. Did that limit your candidates for scholarship?*

MAUTNER: It didn't at the time we were there. They were all in the processing mill at that time, getting out. But later, of course, a big gap developed, bureaucratic difficulties. But as long as somebody else was paying for it, particularly if the universities were sponsoring somebody, there was little trouble.

*Q: Did your candidates come to you or did you have to search them out?*

MAUTNER: They were referred to us basically by groups, such as the university, a government ministry, a social organization.

*Q: From what you said I presume that you couldn't foresee at that time the drift leftward in Sudanese policies?*

MAUTNER: Well, the military government had been in control for almost ten years and was sort of ossified within its own circle. The impact of independence, the growth of the universities and the spread of information was obviously having its effect. You could hear this when talking to anybody from the universities. There was an awful lot of foreign influence as well, because foreign professors were teaching in all of these schools, a number of anthropologists and social scientists floating around the place.

*Q: Was the Soviet embassy active there?*

MAUTNER: Oh yes, very competitive and the other embassies were competing with them as well. The British very deliberately issued invitations for a great affair to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the onset of World War II in 1939 to tweak the Soviets who had been allied with Hitler then. That kind of competitive stuff. The East Germans and the Chinese were even more active. The East Germans were always trying to get official recognition; they only had a trade mission there in Khartoum. But they had a residence right next door to one of the official Americans and, after the revolution, the government put a protective guard house in front of all American residences. The East Germans would move the guard's chair closer and closer to their house so it looked like they were being officially guarded. The Chinese had Zhou En-lai pay a state visit. They and the Yugoslavs played the third world theme. This was the time of the non-aligned movement.

*Q: How strong were the local communists, or were there many of them?*

MAUTNER: Oh, there was a very strong local communist party. After the revolution they came out of the woodwork very quickly. A lot of them were old timers, members of the international apparatus for years, and they were very well organized. They also had a lot of young recruits among the intellectuals. So, they penetrated the government very quickly, and particularly the media. In fact, one or two of them are still around in influential positions in the Middle East. Until the Soviet party collapsed, you would always see the head of the Sudanese communist party at any big Comintern gathering or party congress in Moscow.

But in Sudan there was a big massacre of communists some years after we left, during one of the subsequent upheavals. The government decided to get rid of this problem and executed a number of communists. The Russians made a big fuss about that.

*Q: Were you able to travel around the Sudan at all or get out of Khartoum?*

MAUTNER: I make a couple of trips. Karl made far more because he could make them on official business. He was out in the west at Darfur, and when we went down to Uganda for a vacation, he stayed in Juba for a few days on the way back. I made the trip to Ethiopia, Asmara, where the Americans had a military hospital, and then up north to Wadi Halfa which was in the process of going under water because of the Aswan Dam. We drove from there to Abu Simbel in Egypt. The water had just gotten to the front door of the temple. You could still go inside and see the whole thing. That was just before it was all dismantled and raised. But just driving up through that countryside made one realize how desolate the area was. The German ambassador had a couple of Land Rovers and was a great one for going out on day-long expeditions. We would drive up to the second cataract on the Nile with him and stay there the whole day. Not very far from Khartoum, about a two hours drive was a wadi, a dry river bed where you could find stone axes 200,000 years old. Evidently this was a cradle of civilization at one time. Traveling north on the railroad you could see evidence that the desert had once been a great grassland. There would be petrified trunks of trees. But nothing but desert now.

Q: *That is sad.*

MAUTNER: Yes, sad, but a fascinating country.

**SAMUEL H. BUTTERFIELD**  
**Deputy Mission Director, USAID**  
**Sudan (1964-1965)**

*Samuel H. Butterfield was born in Idaho in 1924. He received a bachelors degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 1949, and completed his masters degree in 1953 from Georgetown's graduate school. He joined the Foreign Aid program in 1958 and has served in locations such as Germany, Libya, Tanzania, Sudan, and Nepal. Mr. Butterfield was interviewed on May 10, 1996 by Harry Missildine.*

BUTTERFIELD: Now I'm going to jump back in time to 1964 and 1965 and very briefly speak to the months in which I served as Deputy Mission Director in the Sudan. I was transferred in March 1964 to a very different mission and a very different scene than in Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salaam was a little mission, Sudan was big. It was firmly established organizationally, the personnel level was high, and it was an interesting opportunity for me to serve as the number two in a big mission and see how that worked. It was somewhat like my experience as the Acting Deputy Director in Libya some years earlier. Sudan was in a political turmoil when I arrived. That calmed down. There were the same conflicts as today, except that radical Islamic fundamentalism was muted. There was strong anti-American agitation throughout the country in the aftermath of the French and Belgian and US military actions in and around the eastern Congo, which as I recall were to rescue missionaries and other Western nationals. This exercise, which was indeed a violation of Zaire's sovereignty, caused outrage throughout much of Africa, and there were frequent demonstrations against the embassy, where USAID was housed, by a combination of Communist and Egyptian support groups in the Sudan.

So it was, you might say, a lively period, in which you often had to check out what the prospects were for a peaceful day before heading to work or before heading home from work. The Sudanese themselves, individually, were hospitable and very pleasant to be with. I think most AID personnel have enjoyed their contacts with the Sudanese nationals, both those from the North and from the South. Ours was a big program for Africa. There was a lot of work in transportation, telecommunications, cartography, education, and agriculture. We made a major push to justify a large commodity import program to generate local currency for construction projects. I believe that failed. Then as now, there was a lot of political attention to the Sudan and the political interests had a very substantial impact on the size of the program and most of the activities that we undertook. I remember at that time, AID provided cover for CIA personnel and as often happened, this was not without its price. Fortunately a change in government policy caused that to decline, if not disappear entirely.

I was in the Sudan for the balance of 1964 and for through 1965, but I had little impact on the program, simply because I hadn't been there long enough really to have what I would consider a responsible view on the activities which we were undertaking. Most projects seemed quite useful. Sudan didn't have a profound impact on me, although I did enjoy it. I will report on advice given to me as I was getting ready to return to Tanzania as Mission Director.

I learned that I was to return to Tanzania as the Director of the Mission toward the end of 1965. The Sudan mission was being inspected then by two former Mission Directors. I asked the senior of the two what advice he would give me as a fledgling Mission Director. He very kindly wished me well, and then he said, "As soon as possible, make the AID program in Tanzania Sam Butterfield's program." I think it was bad advice. The advice reflects an ego-gratifying approach. It was considered by many a fashionable thing to bring new initiatives by a strong Mission Director. It has caused a great deal of premature project cancellation and staff transfers and not-well-thought-out project formulation. It is an approach which does not promote effective policy dialogue with host country officials or with the USAID mission staff. You ought not go in as the great man or the great woman who's going to really turn things around. It's not helpful to needed continuity. It often looked good in Washington. It's interesting to do it. But the result of making the AID program a particular Mission Director's program generally is not beneficial.

**WILLIAM HENRY WEATHERSBY**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1965-1967)**

*William Henry Weathersby was invited to join USIA in 1951. He has served in Egypt, India, and the Sudan. Mr. Weathersby was interviewed on August 1, 1989 by Jack O'Brien.*

WEATHERSBY: I went to Khartoum.

*Q: And your job there*

WEATHERSBY: Ambassador.

*Q: And that was for what, two years?*

WEATHERSBY: Two, not quite two years. My wife, Ruth, and daughter had already left for home leave when along came what became known as the six-day war. Both our Embassy and the British Embassy were under siege day and night. As the war started Israeli war planes pounded Egyptian air fields, and some of the Egyptian planes escaped to be preserved in Khartoum. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt incorrectly charged that British planes from Cyprus and American planes from Wheelus Field in Libya had joined in the Israeli attack. I had assurances from Secretary of State Rusk and President Johnson that the Nasser accusation was untrue, and the Sudanese Prime Minister, Mohammed Mahjoub, wanted to believe them. I'm sure he did believe them. However, pro-Egyptian mobs were organized to surround and attack the embassies with bricks and stones around the clock. This went on for days. Our USIS library and U.S. Marine guard housing unit were attacked and partly burned. I was driven daily to and from the Embassy, and the attackers made room for the car to go through. Sudanese police stood guard around both embassy buildings, discouraging attacks against people but allowing the hurling of bricks at the buildings. Fortunately, the windows had exterior metal shutters. For several days and nights we incinerated papers in a special oven for the purpose and burned papers on the flat roof but only during the days so the flames would not be noticed.

The purpose of the pro-Egyptian mobs was to get the Sudanese government to break relations with United States and the United Kingdom as a number of Arab countries had already done. Nasser was strongly advocating the break by all Arab countries over the powerful communications system of Radio Cairo. Mahjoub told me that he was shaken in his confidence in the messages I had given him from our President and Secretary of State by a report from King Hussein of Jordan. He said that he had received information from the King that the Jordanian intelligence service had confirmed American and British participation in the Israeli attack. Shortly thereafter, both the British Ambassador and I were summoned at the same time in the evening by the Foreign Minister. The purpose was obvious. I was invited first into his office, and the Minister regretted deeply that the Cabinet had just voted to break relations with the U.S. and the U.K. He not only was sorry but wanted a "soft-break" with the necessity of only the ambassadors and the military attachés to leave, and the other embassy staffs, including aid programs, were welcomed to remain. The Nasser claim about U.S. and British planes later became known as the "big lie."

Some of our friends in the Cabinet told us that one of the advocates of breaking relations announced at the meeting that he had assurances from Cairo that all ministers who voted against severing relations would be denounced by Radio Cairo within five minutes.

The Foreign Minister urged us to take our time in departing, and I stayed for several weeks arranging for the Dutch to look after our interests and to make sure that all Americans who wanted to leave the Sudan had an opportunity to do so. That was not easy. The airport was closed to civilian planes. There were desert trails but no hard surface road for egress in any direction,

and there was no regular train service even to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, even though railway tracks between the two cities existed for freight.

With the rupture in relations the mobs left the areas of the embassies. Finally, the airport was opened to civilian traffic and we were able to charter Air Ethiopia flights to take out all Americans who wanted to leave. A friend and former cabinet minister urgently called to ask: "What's this I hear about Americans going home? You're not going to break relations with us just because we broke with you, are you?" I wondered whether he thought the Sudan was developing the habit of severing relations too casually. Only a short time earlier, the Organization of African Unity had condemned an action of the British government and suggested that member nations break relations with the United Kingdom, and the Sudan, I think, was the only one that did. I had been called upon to look after British interests for about six months, and that had included treading on egg shells to get those relations restored.

Our Deputy Chief of Mission, Cleo Noel, an outstanding Foreign Service officer, remained in Khartoum with a few others under Dutch protection. The work of USIS continued, and the library after some interval was restored. AID programs lapsed. Several years later upon the restoration of relations, Cleo, who, was then in Washington, was assigned to Khartoum as Ambassador. As you may recall, Cleo and another able officer, George Curtis Moore, who had been in charge of the staff there, were captured at a reception to welcome Cleo and to say goodbye to Curt at the Saudi Arabian Embassy and killed by foreign terrorists who had penetrated the Sudan.

**C. CONRAD MANLEY**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIA**  
**Khartoum (1968-1969)**

*C. Conrad Manley was born in 1912. He joined the US Information Agency (USIA) in 1955 and held posts in Uruguay, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Sudan, and Libya. Mr. Manley was interviewed on February 21, 1988 by John Hogan.*

*Q: Early in 1968. Well, before the year was over, you were transferred to an entirely different part of the world, Connie. You were transferred to Khartoum, capital of the Sudan. That must have come as quite a surprise to you.*

MANLEY: It was like a bolt out of the blue. I had no idea that I would ever serve outside the Latin American area and I accepted the assignment with some misgiving.

I was assured in Washington that I would have no problem with my zero knowledge of Arabic because I was told, after many years of English colonial rule and guidance in the Sudan, everyone I was likely to come in contact with would know English.

*Q: Well, you were very familiar by that time with Spanish and one, therefore, I suppose, would think you would go to another Spanish-speaking country, but it did not happen that way. You went, instead, from Mexico City to Khartoum.*

*How did it strike you when you first arrived in that area of Africa?*

MANLEY: I found the Sudanese very interesting people. Khartoum is certainly a cosmopolitan place and I enjoyed very much the new experiences of coming in contact with African people, Arab people, the opportunity that this gave us.

*Q: Did anything happen in Khartoum which made a real dent in your imagination or in your memory?*

MANLEY: Well, I was fascinated by the Nile and the mixture of the Arab northerners with the Central African blacks from the south.

They were, at that time, in a constant state of civil war. It was unsafe to travel outside of Khartoum very far and I believe the situation now is still pretty much the same.

*Q: Well, Connie, try to think of anything that may possibly have happened in Khartoum which had a great deal to do with USIS operations?*

MANLEY: I was out of the country attending a PAO conference in Nairobi when a military coup took place in the Sudan Colonel Gaafar Nimeiri threw out the civilian government and set up his own military government in Khartoum.

Not long after my return -- we had had no embassy in Khartoum since the 1967 war between Egypt and Israel and, properly speaking, we were the American Interest Section of the Dutch Embassy - the Dutch ambassador was called to the Foreign Office and told six of his twelve officers in the Interest Section would have to leave the country. No reason was given for the expulsion.

In our case, that is USIS, it meant that I as PAO and John Thompson as my cultural officer, would leave and the entire operation would have to close down without an American officer in charge.

*Q: How did it happen that we had no embassy in operation in Khartoum?*

MANLEY: After the June '67 war between Israel and Egypt, Egypt broke relations with the United States and the Sudanese, as was their custom, followed the diplomatic lead of Cairo and broke relations with us. Our ambassador at that time, Bill Weathersby, was called home and Cleo Noel, his DCM, took charge of the section.

*Q: Cleo Noel is a name I will always remember. He was assassinated, was he not, in Khartoum?*

MANLEY: Noel finished out his second tour there at Khartoum and went back to Washington for three years. He returned for a third tour of duty as ambassador and a short time after his return, he was kidnapped along with, I think, two other foreign diplomats and the three of them were -- this was by a Black September group, if I recall -- the three of them were brutally killed.

*Q: But you were not there at that time?*

MANLEY: No, I left in July of 1969 -- what happened was, I pointed out to one of our local employees, who happened to be a nephew of the Sudan's foreign minister, that when John Thompson and I left Khartoum, we would have to close down the USIS operation.

They did not want that to happen because our library was probably the best in Khartoum and we had a cool, well-lighted place for university students to study at night. So, they did not want to lose the facility -- so they finally decided that Thompson and I still had to go but we could be replaced by the Agency in order to keep the USIS center in operation.

*Q: Well, how long were you in Khartoum actually before you were told you had to leave?*

MANLEY: I was there from October of '68 until July of '69.

**MARILYN A. MEYERS**  
**North African Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1970-1972)**

*Ms. Meyers was born in Virginia and obtained degrees from Southwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. A Japanese and Burmese language officer, she served tours in Tokyo, Yokohama and Fukuoka in Japan and as Principal Officer (Chargé d'Affaires) in Rangoon. Other assignments include Johannesburg, Canberra and Washington, where she dealt primarily with economic matters. Ms. Meyers was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2005*

*Q: Very good! Were we encouraging economic integration among the North African countries in those days? Europe was beginning to coalesce. Did we want to see the Arabs in North Africa do that?*

MEYERS: I don't believe so. Certainly nothing was going on in AF/N. We were fully occupied just handling the events of each day -- crises and protocol such as a visit by the Sudanese Foreign Minister. We had no formal diplomatic relations with Sudan as they had been broken off after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. However, we were attempting to get relations on a better track and trying to make an appointment for the Sudanese foreign minister with Secretary of State Rogers. Well, the Sudanese foreign minister didn't want to see Mr. Rogers. No, he wanted to see Henry Kissinger in the White House. And I remember turning to somebody and asking, "Who is this



Henry Kissinger in the White House?” The minister did get to see Mr. Rogers but I don’t believe he got over to the White House to see Mr. Kissinger.

**ROBERT E. FRITTS**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1973-1974)**

*Ambassador Robert E. Fritts was born in Illinois in 1934. He received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1956 and served in the U.S. Navy overseas from 1956 to 1959 as a lieutenant. His postings abroad have included Luxembourg, Sudan, Rwanda, Indonesia, and Ghana. Ambassador Fritts was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Did you get out much into, I guess, Irian Jaya, Borneo or East Timor?*

FRITTS: Other than several trips to Sumatra, not much. My tour was cut in half to go to Khartoum.

*Q: So you left Indonesia - we're talking about when, mid-'70s?*

FRITTS: A bit earlier - early '73.

*Q: Why were you yanked out so early?*

FRITTS: Totally by surprise. Cleo Noel, the Chief of Personnel, who was going to be ambassador to the Sudan, asked his staff for a list of Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) prospects. He thought he should live by the system he had run. My name was on the list. I had never met him nor was interviewed, but, all of a sudden, I was to be DCM in Khartoum. However, as you know, Ambassador Noel and my predecessor, Curt Moore, were tragically assassinated just as I arrived in Khartoum. I thus became instant charge d'affaires a.i.

The definitive story of the assassinations, the trials in the Sudan and their aftermath is in the book *Assassination in Khartoum* (1993), authored by our former colleague, David Korn. His book is the only public account on which those of us involved cooperated because we agreed earlier not to do so unless the two widows approved. Lucille Noel and Sally Moore trusted David, who had known Curt.

*Q: When did this happen?*

FRITTS: In March, 1973.

*Q: How did this hit you?*

FRITTS: The assassinations or the assignment?

*Q: The assignment first.*

FRITTS: Well, Audrey and I were surprised and pleased, but also somewhat disappointed. We had been looking to enjoy more of Indonesia. As always, the first year at a post is the toughest. You have to learn the work, develop contacts, and start to become productive. Vacations are rare. The first year is also filled with challenges for family members. That period was now behind us. Our two girls were doing well in school; Audrey's and my Bahasa were starting to be fluent. Then bang! We were to yank the girls out of school and go to a totally new continent - Africa.

However, like all Foreign Service families, we knew how to pick up and go. We followed a philosophy that our kids also knew that our "home" was not a place; our "home" was anywhere we were together. When I had a new assignment, Audrey and I would convene a little ritual. Susan and Robin would be asked to get cushions. We would then sit in a circle on the floor zabutan-style. I'd announce our next post and we would discuss the changes. Nothing democratic about it; no options. However, the kids were used to it and, maybe, even kind of liked it. They knew they were losing friends, but also had learned there would be new ones. The March timing was bad - they knew they'd be out of school for awhile. But we made a fast trip to Bali, packed up, and left.

Of course I was pleased to be named DCM. It was a plum career step and I was young for the job. I knew nothing about Africa or the Sudan. Zero. But the country and Nile confluence sounded interesting and even a bit romantic.

It was to be a direct transfer from Jakarta to Khartoum, but I raised a minor fuss that I wanted to go via Washington for Department consultations. Besides not wanting to be ignorant, I also knew I had to know the players at home. Reluctantly, the Department finally agreed. As it turned out, it may have saved my life.

When I arrived in Washington, the State experts said, "Oh, we can't tell you much about the Sudan. Ambassador Noel's the real expert. He'll bring you up to speed much better out there than we can here."

*Q: Well, what did you pick up on consultations?*

FRITTS: That I would be very fortunate to have Cleo Noel as an ambassador. Besides being an expert, he was a respected professional, a man of honor and integrity, and he'd been genuinely welcomed by the Sudanese Government and friends from his previous tours in Khartoum.

Also lauded was the departing DCM, Curt Moore, who was a close friend of Ambassador Noel. He was also highly respected as a person and as a professional. He had been chief of the U.S. interests section (part of the Dutch embassy) in Khartoum for several years until the restoration of bilateral relations a few months before. Ambassador Noel was now the first full-fledged U.S. ambassador in Khartoum since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

*Q: How about the policy side?*

FRITTS: The Sudan, as part of Arab unity, had broken relations with the U.S. in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But now it had become the first Arab state to restore relations. The U.S. hoped Egypt would follow suit. The Sudan was thus viewed as a wedge to reestablish the American diplomatic presence in the Middle East. Our goal was to nurture the Sudanese relationship to serve as a model for other Arab states also to resume full relations with the U.S. The process would entail building mutual confidence via political consultation, initiating an aid program, attracting American private investment, enhancing trade and cultural ties, and otherwise indicating that a formal, working, friendly relationship with the U.S. was beneficial. The Sudan was also not inconsequential in its own right. It's the largest country in Africa, is on the strategic Red Sea near the Horn of Africa, and borders eight African countries, including Egypt, Libya and then-Zaire now the Congo - again.

*Q: Well, how did things develop on consultations?*

FRITTS: Tragically. I was in the Department of Commerce on, I guess, about March 1 when I was called out of a meeting by the secretary on the Sudan desk who said I was to return to the Department immediately, but she was not permitted to tell me why. I said, "Immediately?" She said, "Yes, immediately." So I broke off the meeting, went back, and found out that Ambassador Noel and Curt Moore had been taken hostage by Black September Organization (BSO) terrorists, while attending a farewell reception for Curt Moore at the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum. This was, I think, the first ambassadorial hostage situation of what became a string of hostage and terrorist situations to this day. I found out that the Principals were meeting in the Operations Center, to which I repaired immediately. Bill Macomber, then under secretary for management, had convened a task force there and the ongoing discussion was what to do and how to do it. With all my vast Sudan experience, I was, of course, but a fly on the wall.

Macomber finally said, "Well, we'll leave right away for Egypt and see what develops". The idea was use Air Force transport, fly to Cairo, and determine what to do based on the evolving situation. Macomber envisioned guiding any Sudanese negotiations with the terrorists and wanted to be closer to the action.

Macomber then said, "Who's going to go with me?" He checked off various names of people who were or were not in the room, altogether a small group of about six. He hadn't named me and probably had no idea I was the new DCM. He knew my face from other activities, but no one in the meeting had paid any attention to me - what did I know? Macomber got up briskly to leave. I intercepted him and said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm to be the new DCM - Curt Moore's successor. I need to be on that plane." "Okay," he said, "I'm leaving in two hours. Can you do it?" Of course, I said, "Yes."

Luckily, being in transit, I was staying across the street in the Columbia Plaza apartments. I just threw stuff into a suitcase and garment bag. My wife and daughters were visiting my parents in Florida and due up in a day or two. I tried to call her, but no answer, so I left a note. My brother, purely by chance, was in town on business from Atlanta. I called him to say what was up, that I had hidden the room key in shrubbery outside Columbia Plaza, and to collect whatever I left

behind until Audrey returned. I hustled back to the Department and boarded the van for Andrews Air Force Base.

*Q: So what was your impression at the meeting? As you said, you were a "fly on the wall" at this crisis session. Did you feel the group was floundering or knew what was going on?*

FRITTS: Well, in any situation like that the information is incomplete. There were rumors within rumors from Embassies Khartoum and Cairo, the media, and intelligence sources. Many conflicted with others. What Macomber wanted to do was get in close on the ground, be briefed, gain direct knowledge, and decide how to have an impact - perfectly reasonable. Substance aside, we did not then have the instant communications of today. Our only real time link was a specially setup teletype (TTY) projection onto a wall screen.

*Q: Did the Air Force respond well?*

FRITTS: In truth, the Air Force was not used to being called up on short notice to provide an airplane for a State Department official and team to go anywhere. They said no aircraft would be available for hours. But Macomber was a very impatient, high-profile, hard-nosed person, as you may recall, and raised Cain with the White House. As it turned, the only plane immediately available was the President's 707 Special Command Flight to be used in response to a nuclear attack. One was always aloft, but it landed at Andrews for us. It was quite spiffy, with all sorts of radar consoles, excellent communications, and some very nicely appointed seats. But you can imagine the Air Force was bent out of shape big-time.

*Q: Oh, yes!*

FRITTS: - to have, you know, a group of State Department people preempting their airborne strategic deterrent. And they didn't let it last very long. We flew from Andrews Air Force Base to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, a distance of, maybe, 100 miles? And half the trip was circling and dumping fuel over the ocean. We then sat at Dover for several hours awaiting another plane, but the Air Force could say they had gotten us started. So while Macomber got us up in the air, all right, we didn't go anywhere.

*Q: And then what?*

After several hours, an Air Force C-141 arrived and flew us from Dover to Frankfurt, Germany where, after another layover, we flew on to Cairo. But the C-141 was useless for any planning because of the noise level. They were large cargo aircraft configured with a few passenger benches. We had to wear earplugs. There was no way to discuss issues, to plan, to receive updates or work out plans. Occasionally Macomber would be called to the cockpit, where somebody at State would brief him on the latest with a few sentences. He would return and try to shout to us over the din. He finally gave up on that.

*Q: Was there concern at the time about the White House reaction?*

FRITTS: Not that I knew; all that came about later. The priority was to get into the area, find out the facts, and react. I don't know what Macomber was receiving or doing at that time on White House or State press guidance. The White House issue and other controversies came up later.

But I'll go on with the story. When we arrived in Cairo, our U.S. Interests Section Chief, Jerry Greene (?), was at planeside. He told Macomber that the latest word from Khartoum was that the Sudanese were negotiating with the BSO terrorists and that the hostages - our two plus several foreign ambassadors and the honorary Belgian charge d'affaires a.i. - and the terrorists would be flown to Cairo under safe conduct and all released to Egyptian authorities. Macomber thus decided to stay in Cairo to advise the Egyptians. He didn't want to be en route to Khartoum if the hostages and terrorists were en route to Cairo. In the meantime, to augment the staff in Khartoum, he sent Alan Bergstrom, a former political officer in Khartoum, and me onward to buttress the embassy. A commercial flight in Cairo had been held pending Macomber's arrival. Alan and I boarded and took off for Khartoum.

Unknown to us, a haboob or dust storm, had swept across Khartoum. By the time we arrived in the area, visibility had been reduced to zero with dangerous winds. I realized something was wrong because as we got closer and closer to Khartoum and lower and lower, the plane began to buck violently. I sensed we made several unsuccessful approaches, but after one particular wrenching gyration, we finally landed. An embassy officer, Ed Braun, was there to meet us and related that everyone in the terminal had hit the deck at one point when our plane emerged out of the gloom lined up on the lights of the terminal rather than the runway. We then went to the embassy in downtown Khartoum.

*Q: When you arrived at the embassy, did you know what you were going to do, or was it just to be there?*

FRITTS: Just to be there and play it by ear. The embassy occupied the upper floors of a commercial office building adjoined by others on the main street. Because of the haboob, power was out and also, I think, the Sudanese Government cut power to the Saudi embassy and the area included us. I thus climbed five or six floors up the back steps, carrying my suitcase and garment bag over my shoulder. The only lighting on the stairway was battery-operated dual emergency lights - very dim. I finally came to the floor where the embassy began. The administrative officer, Sandy Sanderson, was standing there with his glasses on a string hanging around his neck. I couldn't quite see his face as he was back lighted by the emergency lamps, but I could tell he was crying. He said, "We've heard there was gunfire in the Saudi embassy. They may be dead. You're in charge."

*Q: Good God!... So what does one do? Out of breath at the top of the stairs?*

FRITTS: Well, I asked whether we had confirmed the deaths and, if not, how could we do it? His answer was uncertain. I said that finding out was the top priority for the embassy and Washington. He then sent a Marine to advise several of our embassy officers who were monitoring events outside the Saudi embassy.

My next thought was how could I be most useful? Others might behave differently, but I decided it was not to come in and take a high profile approach. I told Sanderson to remain in charge as he had been for the past two days, that I didn't know the embassy, the staff or even the city. Nor did I know Sudanese government officials nor they me. The American embassy staff was very small - only a half-dozen American officers, two or three secretaries - all in shock and without rest. Most of our Sudanese FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) were hunkered down at their homes. I decided the best thing I could do initially was just do whatever was helpful.

You'll recall that when I discussed the Operations Center, I said the Department and embassy Khartoum were linked by a crude direct TTY line that printed letter by letter. It was very slow and limited to only several sentences at a time. While talking with Sandy and others, I saw the TTY keyboard and small screen on a table with a chair in the corridor. It was unmanned and only glanced at intermittently when an officer happened to pass by. I knew how thirsty the Department was for information and its frustration with the dead time between questions and responses. So I said, "I'll start with this." Because of consultations, I knew who was who in the Department and thought I knew what they needed or would need. I manned the TTY for most of the next 36 hours. It became our embassy cockpit. It also freed up those who needed to be operational with the Foreign Ministry, the police, the Army, the media etc. I developed an increasingly in-depth dialogue with the Department, including sets of short evaluations, impressions, what next, etc. Versions were also being passed to Macomber who was still in Cairo.

The haboob was still howling. They normally last hours; this one lasted three days. Even the following noon it was black. Dust and grit were everywhere - in your eyes and teeth. Every flat surface was layered. We were covered in gritty dust. The dim embassy lights were still battery powered. It was a scene from hell.

Meanwhile, evidence accumulated that Noel and Moore had been killed, but no one had been inside the Saudi Embassy and actually seen the bodies, so it wasn't definitive. No one at our embassy wanted to accept that they had, in fact, been killed. Finally, it seemed to me time to bite the bullet and I typed out a message to the effect that they were "presumed" dead and future USG actions should be based on that premise. I understand the reaction back at the Operations Center was emotional.

After further negotiations, the Sudanese gained access to the Saudi Embassy and viewed the bodies. The remaining diplomatic hostages were released and the Sudanese took custody of the BSO terrorists. The honorary Belgian diplomat, half-Egyptian, had also been killed, probably, we found out, as part of a past personal issue with one of the terrorists.

*Q: What else do you recall from that awful time?*

FRITTS: One human vignette I recall vividly is that the BSO operatives "permitted" Noel and Moore to write "last words" to their wives, who were together throughout at the residence. The murdered mens' notes, sealed in incongruously embossed Saudi embassy envelopes, were given to Sanderson by the Foreign Ministry. He asked me if I would deliver them? I said, "Sandy, I've never met Mrs. Noel and Mrs. Moore in my life. I'm even here as a live substitute for Moore.

They've got enough to handle without factoring me in. You know them well, they know you. It's better if you deliver the letters." He left for the task in tears. He returned to say how appreciative the wives were for all everyone was doing, including me by name. And he commented that neither wife had shown any tears.

A couple other vignettes also stick in my mind, such as the overnight vigil.

After much too long, the bodies were retrieved from the Saudi Embassy basement, where they had been gunned down against a wall. Sandy identified them and he and Braun assisted in the preparation of the remains and putting them into the caskets that every Embassy has for emergencies. They lay "in state" in one of our embassy houses overnight and the next day. We had a Marine Security Guard in Dress Blues in formal attendance plus the American and ambassadorial flags. It was like a wake - embassy officers and Sudanese staff would come and go and come again. I think a few VIP Sudanese stopped by as well, even though the condolence book was at the embassy.

Then there was the departure ceremony. With the haboob over, Air Force One or Two, which had staged to Cairo, arrived with Macomber. We and the Sudanese arranged a tarmac exit ceremony for the coffins and the widows attended by the government and diplomatic corps. In one of those poignant paradoxes you often see in Africa, the coffins, carried by the Marine Guards with the wives, me and the other embassy officers following, were accompanied by Sudanese troops slow-marching to a Sudanese military bagpipe band playing Auld Lang Syne as a dirge. I never hear that tune at New Year's, but what it saddens me. In Washington, there was a memorial service at the National Presbyterian Cathedral, which Audrey attended to represent the embassy. She met Lucille Noel and Sally Moore there.

*Q: What did Macomber do?*

FRITTS: He only overnighted. Of course, he met with President Nimeiri and other key officials. I attended, but Bergstrom did the reporting cables. Nimeiri and the Sudanese were incensed. They felt the attack had besmirched their international reputation and personally insulted them. That Qadhafi was the main force behind the attack, at least in part to punish them for renewing formal U.S. ties. Macomber's emphasis was on the trial and punishment of the murderers and we thought we had firm assurances. A trial and conviction of anti-American Arab terrorists by an Arab state would be a first in the Middle East.

On a personal note, I had a memorable "exit meeting" with Macomber. All of us had been sleeping, such as it was, in the embassy. I used a dust laden sofa in Ambassador Noel's office. With the new arrivals, every sofa and chair was occupied. For Macomber, we rigged up an actual bed (sort of) in our tiny dispensary.

He would leave the next morning. I went to see him just as he was about to nod off after days of precious little sleep. "What guidance do you have for me?", I asked. And he said something like, "What guidance do you want?" And I said, "Well, in these circumstances, how should I approach managing the embassy?" He replied, wonderfully, "However you see fit."

You know, there's an "in box" exercise for Foreign Service applicants where they arrive at a post to replace an officer who's died suddenly. They have to go through the contents of an in-box and determine priorities. Well, I now had two in-boxes and it was for real.

Among the papers in Noel's box was a photo, taken and developed at the embassy, of his taking the oath as ambassador the day of his capture by the desk where I now sat. He had come to the Sudan on an interim appointment and been confirmed by the Senate in absentia. Curt Moore had delivered the oath of office. The two men and their wives were wrapped in laughter and friendship. Hours later, both men were dead. If I had arrived in Khartoum directly from Jakarta, I might have been with them.

I learned later that Moore had possibly been at least vaguely aware of being under surveillance, but had discounted it. Noel had also been advised to be cautious, but, with his deep experience in Khartoum, had said that very day, "Nothing will happen to me in the Sudan". He was right about the Sudanese, but wrong about the BSO, Libya and, maybe, Yasser Arafat.

Among the papers in Moore's box was a hand-written welcome letter to me. It ended with "So at the close of three and one-half of the finest years of my life, I welcome you to Khartoum and hope you will be able to make the same statement when you leave."

*Q: So how did you decide to approach managing the embassy?*

FRITTS: Carefully. The small embassy was in psychological shock and depression. Although the Americans did not know Cleo Noel well, they knew his reputation. His few months at post had been impressively reassuring. They virtually revered Curt Moore. The Sudanese FSNs appreciated both men as friends of the Sudan and everyone knew that Noel and Moore were as close as brothers. The embassy was shattered - absolutely shattered.

As noted, I'd never before been in the Sudan or Africa nor had anything to do with the Arabic world or Israel-Palestine. I'd had only a few shallow days in Washington. I had no presumed credibility by country or regional experience. But I was now the senior officer at post. I spent nights going through Noel's and Moore's working files and the embassy files in-depth back six months to a year. A good deal of the sensitive stuff had not been shared with others and I could piece some of it together. What was most irreplaceable, of course, were their contacts and access gained over the years and previous tours. The political officer, Sam Peale, was outstanding. He had become a close friend of Moore and was devastated by his death, but soldiered on. Next senior to me was Sandy Sanderson, the administrative officer, who had a lot of people skills, but hadn't handled policy matters. The USIS director did great work with the influx of Western media. He also felt and expressed readily and often that he should be Charge as his USIS rank was higher.

The first week or two was just terrible; each day worse than the one preceding. Aside from lack of knowledge and contacts, it was a challenge to resuscitate and inspire officers from such a trauma. I set initial personal and embassy goals, at first day to day and then longer. I soon realized the American officers found solace in focus. They also had been bonded by a crisis that encompassed me. It was March and they began to respond to my game plan of rendering honor



to the fallen by having the embassy rebound as a fully functioning professional entity by July 4, 1973. If successful, we could top it off symbolically with the first formal July 4 celebration in an Arabic state since 1967. If we could do that, I would have done what I could as Charge. The embassy would then be a proven, ready and able vehicle for a new ambassador with shoulder patch to move forward. Sounds rehearsed, but it was embedded in my mind and recallable today.

In retrospect, I consider Khartoum the formative period in my Foreign Service career. It justified the approach I had always taken of wanting responsibility and across-the-board experience. Frankly, when I left the Sudan, I felt I could handle any task the Foreign Service could assign.

*Q: Did you modify policy?*

FRITTS: Circumstance modified policy. Our top goal was for the Sudanese to try and convict the murderers. I knew that task over time would become complicated and as a new Charge, I wouldn't have much clout with the Sudanese. But I did represent the USG and the Sudanese knew that my reports would influence Washington. I also knew we were handicapped in not having the contacts to keep track of what we didn't know - the crucial behind-the-scenes stuff. We'd have to build, drawing in part on the receptive sympathy of many top Sudanese. Officially, our "carrot" was a USG willingness to build a mutually rewarding "example" of U.S.-Sudanese relations. The implied "stick" would be to render the Sudan again an outcast from the West, a recent situation sufficiently unpleasant that the Sudan had broken ranks and reestablished U.S. relations.

However, my first task was to reconstruct the captures. I interviewed as many participants as I could, including Sudanese officials, army and the police, plus the diplomats at the ill-fated reception. The Saudi ambassador had decamped to Saudi Arabia and the Jordanian charge, as I recall, was disappointing. Scared, I think. In contrast, the Soviet ambassador was very forthcoming and detailed, including his escape over the garden wall. He surprisingly and outspokenly guaranteed the full support of the Soviet Government to punish the violations of diplomatic immunity and embassy sovereignty. Didn't happen.

*Q: How did you find President Nimeiri?*

FRITTS: As a newly arrived charge, I never had direct meetings with him, although I met directly with the Vice President, the Army Chief of Staff and a cluster of others. My main contact was with the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Fadl Obeid, and occasionally with the mercurial, somewhat anti-American foreign minister, Mansour Khaled. Fadl Obeid and I were not personally close, but we grew to respect each other. He was a decent man trying to do decent work under difficult circumstances. Nimeiri, of course, was caught between an American hammer and an Arab anvil.

*Q: Well, you said the number-one issue was what to do with the assassins.*

FRITTS: Absolutely. Our goal was for the Sudanese Government to put the terrorists on trial, convict and punish them. It was an issue of principle and retribution, but also considered useful as an international precedent, particularly for other Arab states. The Sudanese Government

started out strong and ended, over a year later, compromising and weak. Although finally convicted, the punishments didn't fit the crime. By that time, I had been reassigned to Kigali, Rwanda.

*Q: We'll come to the punishments, but tell us a bit about the trial first.*

FRITTS: It was a tortuous process. The Sudanese's Government's initial chagrin and outrage became progressively modified by internal and foreign policy concerns. The first step, which took months, was a magisterial inquiry, sort of like a grand jury. After fits and starts and a series of our demarches to the government, the magistrate finally lodged charges of murder against the principal BSO assassins.

We covered the inquiry indirectly. I thought it better not to have me or an American in the room to monitor it. At that time, English was still acceptable and widely used professionally. But even for Arabists, trial language would be specialized. Instead, an FSN attended and our reports drew from his notes, plus surprisingly good coverage by the media, some of it Western. I also debriefed selected Sudanese attendees and other sources, sometimes while ostensibly playing tennis or other innocuous activities. However, our FSN was threatened several times and we needed an expert fix on the Sudanese legal system, even though it was still quite British. We wanted to know how to challenge the continual delays which were often couched, true or not and increasingly not, as procedural rather than political.

I thus hired a Sudanese lawyer who attended the process privately. He would visit me at home on the legal issues and background maneuvering. He would also suggest occasional initiatives I could undertake and sometimes did.

Inconceivably, the Department wouldn't authorize me to pay him for some reason and told me to void the contract! He was, of course, in personal jeopardy should his role become known. I ignored the Department, told him to trust me, and we'd work it out. As it turned out, I was reassigned and found out only months later he had never been paid. I was incensed and made it my business from Kigali to hype the shame aspect. Eventually, it was done.

*Q: And the conviction?*

FRITTS: Months further, after I had gone to Rwanda, they were convicted in a trial on charges of murder. The good news was that our foremost policy goal had been met - the conviction of anti-American terrorists in an Arabic state. The sentence was life imprisonment, which the Sudanese Supreme Court commuted to X years. The bad news was truly bad. They were eventually turned over surreptitiously to the PLO to "impose the sentence" and spirited out by plane to Cairo. I think then-Ambassador Brewer only found out about it after the fact. The USG pressured the Egyptians not to release them and they were put in a form of progressively loose house arrest in a Nile mansion. Eventually, they evaporated. A travesty!

One of the controversies in later years was that the White House and State eased the pressure, partly for Middle East foreign policy reasons and partly because the major State principals were progressively transferred in a normal career sequence. Kissinger is cited as having a bigger

picture in mind and State as viewing the matter as "an" issue, but not "the" issue it had been. I can't speak to that as I was in Kigali well before the trial ended.

*Q: As for controversies, I earlier asked about the role of President Nixon...*

FRITTS: It's argued that President Nixon's public announcement, while Noel and Moore were still held and alive, that the U.S. would not negotiate with terrorists for hostages precipitated their execution.

I have no proof either way. Nobody does. However, my slant is different. I think they were doomed at the outset in that the operation was undertaken expressly to kill Moore as a way to reestablish BSO credibility in the wake of a BSO fiasco in the takeover of the Japanese embassy in Kuala Lumpur several months previously. Those hostages had been successfully released and there was widespread international media comment that the BSO was a paper tiger. In contrast, Cleo Noel was taken by chance. The BSO attacked Moore's farewell reception and Noel just happened to be there. The BSO found that they actually had two Americans rather than one. If I had not argued for consultations in Washington, it might have been three.

I also think Moore was a victim of mistaken identity. As the terrorists ran through the Saudi Embassy, I understand they were shouting for "Moore from Jordan, Moore from Jordan". I think they confused him with a Curt Moore who had been an AID accountant in Jordan when the PLO and BSO were rolled up by King Hussein. In their CIA conspiracy world view, they assumed the Curt Moore in the Sudan had been under cover in Jordan. Either they made that mistake or their superiors conjured it up to justify the operation and murder.

*Q: How about the role of Yasser Arafat?*

FRITTS: Another continuing controversy. About a decade later when I was in Consular Affairs, the Rand Corporation was commissioned, possibly by a Congressional committee, to do a study on Yasser Arafat, including his and the PLO's role in the assassinations, as a prelude to a U.S. policy decision on whether or not to grant a visa for Arafat to attend his first United Nations General Assembly.

The terrorists were in touch with their headquarters by radio and one belief is that Yasser Arafat personally gave the order to execute Moore and Noel. Others say the information is inconclusive. Some aver he was possibly in the room and could have nodded. I don't know. We'll probably never know, unless someone who was there talks and, even then, we won't be sure.

In contrast, there's no controversy about the role of Qadhafi and the Libyans. The arms were brought in through the Libyan pouch in Khartoum. The Libyan charge helped plan it and departed Khartoum hurriedly the day before the operation went down. Several other Libyans were also involved.

*Q: The very soft treatment of the assassins - what did this do to the embassy? I only met Curt Moore a couple of times when we were in Personnel at the same time - but I know that for years*

*I felt very bitter about Nimeiri and his role in not coming up... Just as a Foreign Service officer, I just felt he had proved to be unfriendly to the United States.*

FRITTS: I think the widely held view in the Foreign Service was not so much to blame Nimeiri, but to blame the Department and, particularly, Kissinger for not keeping enough pressure on the Sudanese. But I was gone and don't have any personal knowledge.

*Q: Did the embassy function normally during the trials?*

FRITTS: Yes, we pursued our policy of demonstrating that the restoration of full relations with the U.S. was a useful thing. We ratcheted up our official presence and programs. We assigned an AID officer as the precursor of an AID office. A number of State-DOD delegations began to negotiate military assistance agreements. Our USIA operation expanded. We had several Congressional (CODEL) visits, which had not occurred for years. We encouraged American private foreign investment and the Sudanese doors were open. General Electric (GE) looked things over as did several smaller American exploration oil firms. We initiated closer and more sensitive political exchanges. We thus began to restore and do the panoply of political, economic, commercial and public diplomacy kinds of things that go with friendly bilateral relations. We wanted Sudan to serve as a model for the area.

*Q: Were you augmented by anybody from Washington?*

FRITTS: Not really. A security guy came in from our embassy in South Africa. He revamped our security effectively and sensibly. But the then-embassy, in the top floors of an adjoined downtown office building, was completely indefensible. We had occasional troublesome hostile surveillance and military escorts. We didn't travel much outside Khartoum. We couldn't travel south to Juba, for example. We were very chary in our public activities, but the small staff measured up extremely well.

*Q: Was the south in revolt?*

FRITTS: Providentially, no. A big plus was that the Sudanese and the Southerners had just signed an agreement in Addis Ababa to end the conflict and integrate the Southerners into the Government and the army. Hopes were high. We were involved in trying to make the agreement work. Sam Peal was in close touch with the Southerners. And initial signs were quite positive. As I made my official rounds, there were high-ranking Dinkas, including, I think, a Dinka Minister of Economic Affairs, whose name I've forgotten, Bol, maybe. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was in Khartoum not long afterward to bless the agreement. I remember at the airport ceremony being surprised at how short the Lion of Judah was in person.

*Q: What was the Sudanese Government like at that time?*

FRITTS: The Nimeiri government was more moderate than it eventually became. In restoring relations with the United States, Nimeiri took a lot of heat from the radical Arab states and from militant domestic groups, such as the Islamic Brotherhood. The Sudan needed an opening to the West to restore economic momentum and the U.S. was responding readily.

As a people, the Sudanese have a very high sense of personal honor and the government felt its national honor had been besmirched. Thus, there was a high sense of acute embarrassment. Moore and Noel were also widely respected and known. Indeed, there was a gratifying initial outpouring of Sudanese indirect public expressions of embarrassment and bereavement, especially from those who had known the two men for years. The government believed the assassinations had been designed specifically to embarrass it. The Sudan and Libya had had difficult relations for years, including border clashes. On the other hand, the government did not want to be perceived as giving in to the Americans in any way that could be used further against them. The regime felt itself already exposed and vulnerable to overthrow by conservative Islamic groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the charismatic Sadiq al-Mahdi. Anti-government demonstrations were periodic. Several occurred across the roundabout from us. If large and serious enough, the Sudanese Army would fire live ammunition over the demonstrators' heads. They'd flee leaving their slipper shoes behind which we'd count and divide by two for crowd size.

*Q: How about the Sudanese Government? What was your impression of their abilities? The Sudan had been the crown jewel of the British colonial service, and I was wondering how—*

FRITTS: Well, the tragedy of the Sudan is the continuing saga of what might have been and should be a viable, prosperous and accomplished country. Although mostly desert, there is massive irrigation potential from the Blue and White Niles. It has excellent tourism prospects by evoking its African-Arab meld, Victorian imagery, ancient monuments in Meroe, and the Red Sea coast. And there's some oil. Plus a huge territory - the largest in Africa. And, at that time in Khartoum, the still functioning remnants of a good educational system, and fairly wide knowledge of internationally useful English. Many Sudanese agronomists and engineers were proud of their training as graduates of the University of Arizona and Arizona State. The peoples were impressive in character as well as skill. I've often said that of the countries I know something about, the Sudanese and the Burmese are the two that least deserve the governments they've got. But the Sudan just never has worked.

*Q: How about some of the more militant Arab countries, like Libya, Syria, and all? What sort of roles were they playing in the Sudan?*

FRITTS: With the exception of malevolent Libya, not much. Khartoum was a somewhat disdained African backwater by the "pure" Arabs. I had limited contact with militant Arab diplomats since we had no official relations. The militants were actively working against our interests in general and on the BSO trial.

*Q: What about Egypt? What sort of role was Egypt playing?*

FRITTS: Egyptian-Sudanese relations are historically strained, probably since Pharonic times and, more recently, from the Sudan being the junior partner in the colonial Anglo-Egyptian condominium. Egypt was closely watching the Sudanese-U.S. resumption of relations. If it worked out in Khartoum, then Cairo would probably be next.

*Q: But then at that time, Egypt wasn't playing... We didn't look upon Egypt as being a partner in helping us get somewhere.*

FRITTS: Well, Egypt was a big Middle East player and, even though we had only an Interests Section in Cairo, it was a big operation.

*Q: Well, how long were you there?*

FRITTS: Ambassador Bill Brewer came out later in the fall and I took my station as DCM. After a few months, it was time for home leave. I took receipt of a powerboat from Beirut to use on the Nile on our return and put it unused on skids in the front yard. Audrey and I got on the aircraft with our children at the usual midnight cooler hour so the plane would have enough lift and we flew off towards the United States. We anticipated a wonderful home leave with the crisis and tensions behind us. Our family was always quite firmly bonded together. As the plane took off, Audrey and I held hands, said how much we liked the Sudan, and we would have a lot of fun on our return.

*Q: What happened?*

FRITTS: We arrived in Washington and went to a Foreign Service cocktail party at a friend's house. We hadn't been there more than five minutes when the FSO hostess gave me a squeeze and said, "Congratulations." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because - well, don't you know? You're becoming an ambassador." I said, "Where?" She said, "Rwanda." I said, "How do you know?" She said, "I saw it in Personnel." I said, "Beats me." That ruined the party and our night's sleep.

The next day I went to the African bureau executive director who said, "Welcome back, you did a great job," all that stuff, and I said, "What's this I hear about Rwanda?" "Oh," he said, "You're being nominated as ambassador to Rwanda." I said, "I don't want to be ambassador to Rwanda. I want to go back and be DCM in Khartoum." And he said, "Well, you'd better talk to David Newsom about that." David Newsom was the assistant secretary for African affairs. I had only met him to shake his hand during consultations. I couldn't get an appointment with him till the next morning. He was one of the most respected and admired senior officers in the Foreign Service and later became undersecretary for political affairs. But I was angry, thought a transfer dumb, and that I was needed in Khartoum.

Audrey and I had another sleepless night.

Newsom is, by nature, calm, contained and poised. I went through my litany more-or-less professionally. "Well," he said, "You're being named ambassador because of your wonderful work in Khartoum." I said, "I don't want to be ambassador in Kigali. Khartoum needs me. I've put the embassy back together. There's a new ambassador there. Things are shaped up. I want to go back there and do my job as DCM." And he said slowly, "You're going to be ambassador to Rwanda." And I said, "What if I refuse it?" And he said very slowly, "If I were you, I would think rather hard about that before doing so." And I said, "Well, when does the request for agrément go out?" He said, "Agrément is back already." I think my jaw dropped. "Agrément is

completed and I've never even been informed?" "Well," he said, "I guess there was some oversight."

**WILLIAM D. BREWER**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1973-1977)**

*Ambassador William Dodd Brewer was born in Connecticut in 1922. He graduated from Williams College in 1943, and received a masters degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1947. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947, and held positions in posts including Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Mauritius, and the Sudan. Ambassador Brewer was interviewed on August 2, 1988 by Malcolm Thompson.*

*Q: Very good. Then in 1973 you were assigned as Ambassador to the Republic of the Sudan. Was that a surprise to you again or would you think of that in a kind of...*

BREWER: Well, this was much more of a surprise. I knew, of course, that there was a vacancy because as you know my friend Cleo Noel had been assassinated, and I was not clear whether the Department was going to fill that position or not. But I was ready to leave Mauritius and so when they asked me if I would go to Khartoum, why I thought that was a perfectly appropriate next move. Because although it was in the African Bureau, in fact the Sudan had been part of my parish when I was in charge of Egyptian affairs, and it is an Arab-speaking country. The majority of the population regards itself as Arab, rather than African. So I felt I was returning to the Arab world, and this, I think, perhaps was the reason for my appointment.

It was, however, a very much different assignment from Mauritius. The climate is unpleasant, it is terribly hot, one is surrounded by desert, the Sudanese are entirely different from the relatively sophisticated Mauritians. It was nice to get back to the Arabic but there were lingering tensions as the result of the assassination of Ambassador Noel and his deputy Curt Moore four months, I think, before my arrival. So it was in every way a difficult but a very challenging assignment.

The reason I was sent--the reason an Ambassador was sent--was that the Department had decided that the position to take, because of our overall interests in the Sudan, was that we would continue relations on a normal basis on the understanding, which we had been assured was correct by the Sudanese government, that justice would be done to the perpetrators of these assassinations who had been captured by the Sudanese. They were Palestinians, as you know, members of Black September, and were going to be brought to trial, and presumably to be sentenced. And as long as this was being done there didn't seem to be any reason why we should not continue a relatively normal relationship. So that was the basis on which I was sent out.

However, I remember having a discussion with Assistant Secretary Newsom, I think it was, before I went out. And I said, "Suppose, of course, that something happens with respect to these people?" And we agreed that the first thing that ought to happen is that I should be summoned

home for consultation. We would then see what we did. And during the fall, and during the winter we watched the progress of the trial very closely. We had a Sudanese lawyer who was advising us and who was observing the trial-- they would not permit officers from the Embassy to be present. And things went normally. I was concerned, however, that in the end President Nimeiri, with whom I had developed a relatively good relationship, would come under tremendous pressure to either pardon the defendants, or somehow commute the sentences, or do something of this kind. And I therefore felt that we had to weigh in with the President personally as soon as the verdicts were announced by the court. And I even prepared a long telegram of instructions to myself which I then sent to the Department and asked for their authority on a contingency basis, because I didn't know how much time we would have to carry out these instructions with the President once the trial court had announced its verdict. Well, we all underestimated the speed and cleverness of the Sudanese when they wished to act. The Sudanese had indeed decided that they had to do something, that these people represented a hot potato. They did not want their missions abroad subject to attack by Palestinians and all the rest of it. They were on the horns of a dilemma, they didn't want the Palestinians to get away scot free, but on the other hand they really didn't want to hold them in Sudanese jails for extended periods of time. So what they did, obviously carefully coordinated in advance-- and one of the things that we didn't do, and I blame myself for this--we did not think that the Sudanese machinery would be capable of doing this at the speed with which it did. I think it went something like this--the trial was concluded in late June, 1974, and a verdict of "guilty" was brought in about 10:00 in the morning. This was then appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court was convened at about 10:30, and the Supreme Court found in about 30 minutes that they confirmed the sentence which was then referred to the President for ratification, and the President then confirmed the sentence but ordered that it be carried out in Egypt-- they having had some contact with the Egyptian government, and the defendants were then put on a plane under escort with a senior man from the Foreign Ministry, and flown to Cairo, all by 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon. And we did not hear of this until that evening because everything in the Sudan shuts down about 2:00-- they have these long siestas, you see. And the idea of anything like this being done at that hour of the day simply never occurred to anyone. And the Sudanese had obviously acted in order to avoid the type of appeal that I was in fact hoping to be authorized to make.

So the next thing was that I had to get orders to come home and after some backing-and-forthing with the Department, because Secretary Kissinger, I think, wanted to be personally involved in this, why I did receive instructions to see Nimeiri, and read him the riot act for this action, and then tell him that I was being recalled, and I had no way of predicting when our relationship might be returned to a normal basis. And I can still remember seeing the President. I had great difficulty getting an appointment because, of course, they wished to avoid the appointment, but I insisted and they finally made him available. And I saw him the next morning and he said they simply couldn't face the heat that would be generated if they had hung on to these prisoners. They didn't have the facilities and so forth to protect them. And I said to him that I recalled the motto of President Truman, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen". I said it had been a source of astonishment to me that the Sudanese government, which had been so upright and prided itself on being such a courageous and independent outfit, would take this craven-hearted action after being courageous enough to hold these people for the better part of ten months, and sentence them to seven or eight years, or whatever it was, in jail.



Well, I don't think he had been well advised by his advisers. I don't know but I have the impression that he had been told that the Americans would make a fuss, but they wouldn't make much fuss, and that this therefore was the thing to do. And I think he was somewhat shaken, and he seemed subdued, by the strong reaction that we had.

So, anyway, I went home and had a discussion with Secretary Kissinger about where we would go from here in our relations with the Sudanese. And, of course, there were points on both sides. On the one hand the Sudanese had had nothing to do with the original crime. Their only blunder had been that they had handed the defendants, once proclaimed guilty, off to Egypt where the Egyptians were assuring us they were being held in close confinement. I was always a little uncertain about that, but in any case that was the assurance from a regime which was at that time fairly close to us. And it seemed to me that one of the objectives of the Palestinians in staging these assassinations had been precisely to drive a wedge between the United States and the relatively friendly government of President Nimeiri, and I therefore thought that we should do all we could to avoid having a wedge driven between us. And I took that position with Secretary Kissinger, but on the other hand, he pointed out that obviously certain steps had to be taken to show our displeasure, and I fully agreed with that.

The net result was that we froze the relationship at that point. We cut off any further Export-Import Bank assistance, any prospect of any cultural exchanges, all of the normal things that go into the web of relationships of two states that have good relations. We suspended those, and I was instructed not to return to Khartoum until further notice. And I did, in fact, not return until mid-November of that year so I was away I guess it must have been four months.

When I got back I then began a campaign slowly, with the Department, to try to get our relations back to normal because it seemed to me that we had certain interests which were important in the Sudan, and that we were to some extent cutting off our nose to spite our face by having ostensibly normal relations, an Ambassador accredited, present and the Embassy functioning, but, at the same time, having all sorts of special niggling bars on the type of exchanges and the type of assistance, and so forth, that could be worked on. And I was concerned that we might be getting into a situation similar to the one I had found in Egypt when I took over the Egyptian desk where we had all these little niggling things set up that I told you about. It didn't seem to me that that was very useful. That is, either you lower the boom, you pull your Ambassador out, you close your Embassy and you say we're going to have nothing to do with you, I mean, you know forget it. Or you make the best of a bad job and you try and work with what you've got and build a positive relationship.

Well, over time I think I was able to achieve that and one of my proudest achievements is by the time I left the Sudan was that our relations were again very good. We had arranged to have President Ford receive Nimeiri when he made a private visit to the United States. I'd arranged some special functions in Washington while he was there, took him to the Marine barracks to see the Tattoo. He was very pleased with that as a former military man. We introduced a small AID program, it just began to get started but it was something that was coming forward. In their turn they agreed to one or two naval visits that we had over in Port Sudan. We hadn't had any for a long time. In particular, and this is something that I should mention, President Nimeiri and his immediate staff were personally exceedingly helpful to me in my efforts to get the release of ten

American hostages who were held over a period of months and even years by the Eritrean Liberation Front in Eritrea. I don't know if this is generally known, but it's not secret. The Eritreans grabbed a number of Americans, presumably to put pressure on the United States Government to end its relationship with the government in Addis Ababa. And, of course, we were reluctant to do that. At the same time this was after the change of government in Addis Ababa and we had very little influence there, at least in my judgement, and therefore the only possibility of getting these people out was to get the Sudanese involved because the Eritreans derive most of their support through the Sudan. I don't believe this necessarily came directly from the Sudanese government, but the Sudanese government either was unable or unwilling to block the support and their supply lines came across the Sudan. So that, to put it very crudely, the Eritreans had a very basic reason to keep the Sudanese government sweet. And I made a very strong pitch to President Nimeiri about the desirability of his playing a role in the release of these American hostages. He obviously agreed and over a period--I forget--it was a long time because these people were captured at various times and held for various periods, but over a period of about a year, I guess, we secured the release of all ten in groups of two or three. And they were all released by the efforts of the Sudanese government.

*Q: Who were these people? Were they AID personnel, Peace Corps, or what?*

BREWER: My recollection is that almost all of them were private citizens working for American contractors in Asmara and the area around, but one or two of them, I think, were working for oil companies that were prospecting. But I'm not now sure about all of them. I don't believe any were American officials. But anyway, this also showed that the Sudanese were able and willing to play a useful role. And one reason that I felt we could collaborate with Nimeiri was that Nimeiri had been the architect of the Southern settlement.

There had been a civil war in Sudan for a dozen years I think almost. And Nimeiri had been the one to end it on the basis of a compromise settlement which permitted considerable autonomy to the South, and there was a Southern regional government, and they had a southern cabinet, and so forth. And in theory this looked like an acceptable way to resolve this long-standing bitterness between the Arab north and the African south. And as long as I was there this worked, and Nimeiri was the glue that held the country together because he was the only Northerner that the Southerners had much use for because the Southerners realized that he had been responsible for this compromise settlement. Now after I left, of course, the whole thing came apart and now we have another civil war apparently going on out there. But during this time the situation improved very much.

I think there's something else I should say about that period in the Sudan, and that is that while we were developing relatively good relations it seemed clear that the Sudan could not soon develop on an upward track economically. I remember when I first went out there I thought, "this country has absolutely no limit to which it cannot go in economic development." But it turned out that I was mistaken and I remember my staff advising me saying, "Well, look Mr. Ambassador, everybody arrives with these rosy ideas because the Sudanese have 200 million acres of under-used arable land, 90 percent rain fed, and there's no reason they can't turn into the granary of the Third World, etc." And in theory this is true, but given the hugeness of the area of the country, and the disparity of its people, and the inadequacy of its basic infrastructure, this

was simply not likely to occur anytime soon, and, of course has not in fact, occurred. And there were just not the resources available. Certainly not in the Sudan but not outside the Sudan either to come in and build the roads and finance the port development and various other things. Had this occurred, it would have then made investment in agriculture and other schemes really worthwhile. So I think the Sudan still has tremendous potential, but it is going to take an awful long time, and an awful lot of money, and an awful lot of effort before the country can develop.

One last item of interest about the Sudan has to do with the coup attempt in July, 1976. This was an effort by the Ansar sect, the conservative western Sudanese, many of whom were in exile in Libya, to creep back into Khartoum and capture Nimeiri, and presumably kill him, and take over the government with the support of the Libyan regime of Colonel Qadhafi. And how it came about was that Nimeiri was returning from his private visit to the United States, that I mentioned. He had stopped off in London, and I had returned directly so I was back in Khartoum to greet him on his return and he was arriving--let us say at 6:00 in the morning. About 11:00 p.m. the night before I was called by the Foreign Office to say that Nimeiri would actually be arriving at 5:00. And I've always wondered whether this reflected some knowledge that they'd picked up, or not, and I don't know. But in any case, he came in early and we were unclear whether he was going to go to his home or simply stay at the airfield and then go on because we did know he was leaving later that day to go on to either India or Ceylon for a meeting, I think it was the non-aligned group. So we met him, and I had a little conversation, and he then disappeared into the V.I.P. lounge to give an interview to the Sudanese press. And we waited outside and after five minutes I said to the head of the Foreign Office, "Well now, are we supposed to stay here until the President leaves?" "Oh," he said to me, "He's already left." Well, I was sort of astonished because he must have gone out the back way. And I then returned to my car and on the way back to the car I heard what sounded like celebratory shots, or perhaps fireworks, coming from the direction of Khartoum itself. And I thought, well the Nimeiri partisans are going all out to welcome their leader back after his visit. And when I got to the car my driver said, "I think we're having a coup d'etat." And I said, "Well, let's drive by the General Staff Headquarters (which was near my residence), and this will give us an idea." And he said, "all right." So we drove by there, and things seemed pretty quiet, but as we drew abreast of the General Headquarters there was this fusillade of shots, and I said to the driver, "You're quite right, there is a coup d'etat. Let's go back to the residence as quickly as we can." And this inaugurated three days of street fighting in Khartoum which reminded me of nothing so much as World War II. Files of troops crept down by the walls of buildings, and opened fire at buildings across the street and this kind of thing. We kept the Embassy open and some spent the nights there because they didn't want to risk going back and forth to their homes, but I preferred to sleep in my bed so I did go back and forth using back roads and trying to avoid anything that might draw fire. We did have a couple of shots but fortunately no damage. The final day of the coup as it was winding down, one of the dissidents--and there turned out to be about a thousand of these people who had infiltrated into Omdurman from Libya across the desert with their weapons, and they had captured the radio station, and captured some of the other facilities and virtually captured the airfield which was only about a block from where my residence was--fortunately the Sudanese reacted very swiftly and Nimeiri went into hiding so they were unable to find him. There was a rumor later around Khartoum that he left the airfield in the American Ambassador's car. That was not the case, as I say, he slipped out the door but I think he must have had some advance word that something unfortunate was brewing. So he got out of the way and at the end of it one of the last of the

dissidents got on the roof of our building because we were next to a hotel and he was able to come across the roofs, and he fired a shot at the government troops from the roof of the Embassy. We had the top two floors of a downtown office building, and I always thought that he did this on purpose to draw fire on the Embassy. And whether he did it on purpose or not, that's exactly what happened and the first thing I knew I saw this line of troops drawn up across the street and leveling their guns at my window and I got out of the way just in time, and this fusillade of shots crashed out and broke most of the windows and the glass flew all over the place. And they fired again a couple of times and I don't think that they realized what they were firing at. I think they thought they were trying to get this character who'd just fired a shot from the roof. Fortunately we had no casualties, although there was a good amount of broken glass, and the government forces proceeded to take over.

Our support for Nimeiri continued unabated during this time and one of the ways it was shown was legitimate, but also amusing. The Sudanese government had the very nice custom of permitting a Chief of Mission to record a message on radio and television to the Sudanese people which would be broadcast on that country's national day. And they'd asked me if I wished to do that, and I had said, yes. So I had gone over to the studio in Omdurman in June and recorded a message to the Sudanese people which was to be played on July 4. Well, the Sudanese did not recapture the radio and television station until about noon on July 4th, and the first message to come across it about 3:00--and, of course, everybody was home because we had a curfew imposed, nobody was permitted to move in town, and so on, and most diplomats were simply sitting by their radios and TVs trying to figure out what was going on--the first message was from Nimeiri himself, saying that he was all right and everything was under control, and the situation had returned to normal which wasn't quite true but it was getting there. But the next message that appeared was my Fourth of July message, and my colleagues all greeted me afterwards with due respect because they said it must have taken great courage to go over there so soon after the radio station had been relieved to deliver this message. And I couldn't resist, I sort of said, "Well, you know, it's all in the line of duty." But obviously the Sudanese government broadcast that message on purpose in order to give the impression, which they did, that the United States Government strongly supported the Nimeiri regime, as in fact we had during this failed coup and we completely opposed any attempt by Qadhafi to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighboring country, which is what he had tried to do. Fortunately he had failed.

So, I think as I said, by the time I left the Sudan that the combination of our efforts and Sudanese efforts, had put our relationship--our bilateral relationship--on a very good basis and we were starting on a phase of very close and mutually beneficial collaboration. And I felt very good about that when I left for home in 1977.

**RICHARD W. BOGOSIAN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)**  
**Khartoum (1976-1979)**

*Ambassador Richard Bogosian was born in Massachusetts in 1937. He graduated from Tufts University in 1959 and received his law degree from the University of Chicago in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1962 and served at posts in Iraq, France, Kuwait, Sudan, Niger, Chad, and Somalia. Ambassador Bogosian was interviewed on April 1, 1998 by Vladimir Lehovich.*

*Q: Dick, I wonder if you can sort of set the scene for how you started to go off to the Sudan, what you had on your mind, and what you thought was on your plate, because it was not an easy place to go to, as I recall at that time.*

BOGOSIAN: There were two, if you will, lines leading to Sudan. One was personal, and one was, if you will, substantive. Substantively, in Kuwait, this period of the early '70s, particularly after the October War with Israel, which the Arabs deemed that they had won, and also following the quadrupling of oil prices, which meant a tremendous flow of money into the Arab world, there was a great feeling, if you will, of creativity in the Arab World. They felt that they could do things that were never possible before. And in that context, they looked upon Sudan kind of the way we looked at our West. It was open; it was virgin; and in contrast to much of the Arab World, it was or at least could be agriculturally productive.

*Q: Excuse me, when you say "they looked at it," who are you-*

BOGOSIAN: I mean the Arab World generally, and particularly those Arabs, like the Kuwaitis, who had money to invest. There were a couple of notions they had. One was they had money; the Sudan was a place where that money could be usefully invested - and I should note parenthetically that there was a sense in Kuwait and in some of the smaller Gulf countries that their own countries simply couldn't absorb all that they had to invest. They did start aid programs to the Third World. Of course, they wanted to invest in the developed world, but there was a sense that they should invest in the Arab World. And the problem was that many of the Arab countries were either unstable or were seen to be unfriendly to foreign investment, and so a country like Algeria, which was thought to be relatively stable, was not particularly friendly to foreign investment. It was not a capitalist country in the sense that they were looking for. Sudan, in contrast, was wide open. They wanted investment, and so forth. At the Kuwait Fund, which at that time was headed by Abdullatif al-Hamed, who was one of the most creative thinkers in the Arab World in economic terms, they were coming up with what they ultimately called the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAID), which was meant to be a multi-billion-dollar investment scheme that would transform Sudan into what they called the breadbasket of the Arab World. And so I can remember in Kuwait as an economic officer talking to people like a man called Khalid Tahsin Ali, who was an Iraqi, at the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, which was based in Kuwait, and Khalid Tahsin Ali, who I might note was married to an American and who we had known in Baghdad when we were there, was a trained agricultural person - I think an agronomist, but some form or another of agricultural specialist - and he ran something called the Abu Gheib Dairy, and he was one of these Arab technocrats who was doing interesting things. And I can remember him pressing me - and you'll see later why I'm mentioning him - pressing me to urge Washington to pay attention to what was going on in Sudan. And the reason why that point is being made is at the time we had very poor relations with Sudan. What happened was that in 1967 the Sudan was one of several Arab

countries that broke with the United States. When Nimeiri came to power in 1969, he was backed by communists, and he was, if you will, left wing. He gradually became more moderate, and by the early '70s he was pressing for a resumption of relations with the United States. However, shortly after relations were resumed, our ambassador and our deputy chief of mission, Cleo Noel and Kurt Moore, were murdered in Khartoum. They were murdered at the Saudi embassy by a group that I think was called Black September in those days, a radical Palestinian group.

*Q: 1973, isn't it.*

BOGOSIAN: I think it was '73. I think relations were restored in '72. Now Nimeiri wanted to attack the Saudi embassy. As far as we know, he had nothing to do with that. If anything, he was appalled by it. So, that it took place in Khartoum did not necessarily put the Sudanese in a bad light. Where Nimeiri made a mistake was having made promises, I understand, to us that he would keep the culprits in jail. I don't know all the details, but I believe what he did was release them to the Egyptians, who then put them in jail. But that cast a pall on our relations. What was happening around 1976, which is the period we're talking about, was that an American company - I think it was Tenneco - had some people in Eritrea who were kidnapped, and Nimeiri, who was supporting the Eritrean Liberation Front at the time, was able to use his contacts to secure the release of those hostages, and through various other means he began to appeal to the United States. Now I visited Khartoum on my way home from Kuwait in 1976 in May, and a fellow at the embassy said to me, "By the time you get here to begin your assignment in July, the last person in the embassy" - that is, the last American - "who was here when the murders took place will have left." And he said that sadness and negative feeling will then be gone. And while I was in Khartoum, in that week in May, a message came that said that President Ford was willing to receive Nimeiri in June of 1976, and what that meant was we were prepared to resume friendly relations with Sudan.

I'll get to that in a minute. In response to your initial remark, 1975 was the year that the State Department began what they called "open assignments," where they would send a list of all the assignments that were available. So among the assignments opening was Econ counselor in Cairo, where Herman Eilts was the ambassador. And I went to Ambassador Stoltzfus, and I said, "You were Eilts's DCM. Would you put in a good word for me?" He said, "Well, what is this?" And I explained to him what the open assignments situation was. And he went over the list and he said, "It says here DCM, Khartoum." I said yes. He said, "I know Bill Brewer, too" - who was ambassador - and I said, "But that's Africa." "Oh, Dick," he said, "you never turn down being a DCM." So I put in my bid for Khartoum, and then my question was whether I'd be promoted, because I was what was then called an FSO-4 and you had to be a 3. I did get promoted, and I always wondered if they wanted someone so badly in Khartoum that they were willing to promote me just to get me there. As it happened, I got promoted, and that meant I could go to Khartoum.

*Q: That's an intriguing story. Open assignments openly arrived at, I remember.*

BOGOSIAN: That was the theory, with about as much success as that original notion.

*Q: But let me ask, you were not keen at that time to go to Africa, and the Sudan looked very different from Egypt as an assignment.*

BOGOSIAN: There was this notion that somehow Africa was over the edge, and frankly, in some ways it was. I made a speech last week in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where I admitted that I was uneasy about serving in Africa; but of course, having served there it looks different now, and in many ways the Sudan assignment was one of the most satisfying professionally.

*Q: Over the edge in what sense?*

BOGOSIAN: Dangerous, unpleasant. The other thing was - part of it was bureaucratic - Sudan is covered by the Bureau of African Affairs, and I thought of myself as a Middle East specialist, and therefore, I was a little nervous about getting away from my home bureau.

*Q: Sudan is a country of two cultures.*

BOGOSIAN: It's a country of many cultures.

*Q: There's an Arab culture, and there's a black African culture.*

BOGOSIAN: It's more complicated than that. It's got an African culture, it's got a Nilotic culture, it's got a Bantu culture - and in fact, that's part of the problem is it's ethnically very diverse, which is true about just about every African country.

In fact, just this morning I was with a very knowledgeable Mauritanian man. He said the Sudanese don't know where they are, and what he meant was they're both African and Arab and in some ways neither. And I think the way to realize some of the problems in Sudan: one time with Chet Crocker, who at the time was assistant secretary for African affairs - this was years later - I was in Khartoum, and President Nimeiri complained that the white Arabs, the Arabs from the Peninsula and so on, he says, "They call us '*abid*,' meaning 'slaves,' which is to say they look down on the Sudanese, and yet in the same conversation or another one soon thereafter, Nimeiri referred to the southern Sudanese and said, "You know, really, they like to sing and dance, and all they want is a car and a house; they're not interested in power."

*Q: That's what Nimeiri said.*

BOGOSIAN: That's what Nimeiri said. The fact is that in their own way the Sudanese were among the most respected Arabs. I know that from first-hand experience in Kuwait. That's because they were not troublemakers. Some of them were highly capable. The British developed what was called the Sudan Service, and the University of Khartoum in one of the oldest, if not the oldest university in sub-Saharan Africa. So the Sudanese had a developed civil service that was quite capable. The problem when I was in Sudan is they went through their own public school system, and then when the government of Sudan was ready to get a payoff, they'd go to Saudi Arabia and make a lot of money. And it was a classic brain drain situation.

*Q: Is there a special relationship with Egypt?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, I would say the relationship between Sudan and Egypt is roughly analogous to that between the United States and Canada. Egypt is a more developed country. It's a bigger country. It's a more advanced country and so forth, and Sudan is a big, empty country next to it. And on the one hand, they share the Nile, they've got numerous historical, cultural, family, social connections, but on the other hand, there are times when the Egyptians are seen as somewhat overbearing on the Sudanese. And it's one of those things that as similar as they are, they're different as well, and there is a point where the Egyptians can't seem to comprehend certain aspects of the Sudanese character. And there are times when the Sudanese chafe under that; on the other hand, a Sudanese will tell you that "When I go to Cairo I feel like I'm still at home." So I think that's probably somewhat similar to the way a Canadian feels about the United States or some other small countries next to big countries.

*Q: I thought Egypt ran Sudan for a big chunk of time.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, of course, you recall that in the colonial period it was referred to as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and I think a more accurate way to say it is that it was run out of Cairo, but in effect you had the British over the Egyptians, or the Turks under the Ottoman régime. Ironically, in ancient times some of the pharaohs were from Sudan. So if you go back far enough, they each have run the other.

*Q: Right. What did you find when you arrived, Dick?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the other thing about my arrival - I said that in June Nimeiri came to the United States and saw Ford, so in that sense, there was a significant event just before my arrival that turned our relationship around. Now it's interesting to note that at that meeting our Ambassador was not permitted to be in the meeting. I believe he sat outside the room, but what that meant was that nobody knew what happened and we had to rely on what the Sudanese told us.

*Q: Who was our ambassador at that time?*

BOGOSIAN: Bill Brewer.

*Q: Bill Brewer? Oh, the old heel-cooler.*

BOGOSIAN: The other thing, though, the Sudanese ambassador to Washington was Francis Dang, an incredibly cultivated man. He was a Dinka, which is to say, not Arab, but he was not from the southern Sudan in terms of the autonomous region; he was from Kordofan, which gave him a kind of in-between status. He spoke fluent Arabic, and Nimeiri used him at times to translate or to interpret. In addition, he was a graduate of Yale, with both a degree in anthropology and, I think, a degree in law. His wife is also American, by the way. Deng became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, so as deputy chief of mission or chargé, I was often in touch with him. And he would tell me what Ford promised, and I was in no position to know whether he did or not. And so Francis Deng said, "Oh, yes, he agreed to expand the aid program, and he agreed to military assistance." And the fact is that is exactly what happened. And so when



I got to Khartoum, our embassy consisted of 12 Americans, including one American in the AID mission, and no military people at all. By the time I left, we had the largest bilateral economic and military assistance programs in Africa. We also had a defense attaché and a security assistance office, a high-powered AID mission which had its own building, and so forth. So what that means is that during the time I was in Sudan, it was a period of simply excellent relations between the United States and Sudan, a period during which our assistance programs grew and our cooperation intensified.

Now there were two things I would note that, to some extent, set the stage for what happened while I was there. On July 2, 1976, about three weeks before I got there, there was an attempted coup that the Libyans were behind, and it was bloody. In fact, when I got to the embassy, there was a broken window. Our embassy was one floor higher than any other building, and where the Ambassador's office was was on that eighth floor. And they tried to get him. They shot through the window. My predecessor said to Ambassador Brewer, "Get down and duck behind the desk." And Brewer said, "Gee, my back is hurting," and Alan Berlin said, "For God's sakes, get down." So Brewer ducked just before the bullets went through the window behind his desk.

That was at a time when our concern over Libya was becoming very, very strong, so if you will, Sudan was on the front line of this effort to contain Qadhafi, who was at his worst at that time.

*Q: Was this Sadiq who was leading that rebellion?*

BOGOSIAN: He was implicated in it. He was implicated. I frankly can't remember just who was the ostensible leader of it. At that time Sadiq and the rest were out of town. But the other thing that happened - and this gets back to Kuwait - I got there, and ten days later Brewer and his family left, after he had just been through the coup. And so one of the first things -

*Q: His back hurt.*

BOGOSIAN: One of the first things I did, which kind of shows you what you can do if you're a chargé - nobody asked for this, but I did it anyway - I wrote a cable defining what I thought was the strategic importance of Sudan, and the points I made were that it was the largest country in Africa; that it was the back yard of both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where our relations were getting bigger and bigger in the aftermath of the oil crisis; the Arabs were planning to invest, we thought, billions in Sudan, and they wanted us to be there with them. I would note that Chevron had discovered oil in Sudan, and a serious exploration program was underway. I would also note that at that time there was peace in the country, and Nimeiri was one of the most respected leaders in Africa. The Sudanese took moderate positions on most of the issues we cared about, whether it was South Africa or the Arab-Israel issue, and of course the Saudis and the Kuwaitis and the Egyptians urged us to have good relations.

That meant that the stage was set for a good relationship, and then what I would note are two things. One, I think it was around that time - I may be wrong - but the Central Command was created, and there was this question -

*Q: This is the U.S. Central Command.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, the U.S. Central Command, based in Florida and it included in its area of operations Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, as well as the Arabian Peninsula, as far as Pakistan. They had no base. There was no place where they could actually -

*Q: They still have that problem, Dick, as we know.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, so one of the questions was, where could they do certain things? And without getting into details, the Sudanese were prepared to be very cooperative. The other thing that happened was, in this period, '77-78, Anwar Sadat started to make increasingly public overtures to Israel, and he increasingly said he wanted peace. And at one point he made a speech where he said something like, "I'll even go to their Knesset." And as everybody knows, he did that, and that was a major breakthrough in the Arab Israel crisis. Most of the Arab World turned their back on Sadat, but not Nimeiri. And in fact, I was chargé when he said that he would support the Camp David process, and I had the pleasure of sending that cable to Washington. What that meant was that there were not only the potential economic benefits and then the geographic aspects of it and so forth, but you had a leader who, on the one hand, was highly respected - and I would note that during that period for a year he was the chairman of the OAU - but he was doing things we wanted. He was extremely cooperative in almost every area we cared about. Now he was no democrat, but by and large their human rights performance wasn't bad. This was the Carter Administration by then, and so it was, to use this phrase, pushing on an open door, and the net result, as I said, were increasing programs.

*Q: You mentioned earlier that the AID program when you left was the largest one in Africa. How large was it?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, frankly, I can't remember how large it was, but there was-

*Q: A lot of people or a lot of money?*

BOGOSIAN: It was probably on the order of \$100 million. In fact, I'll tell a little story. There was a period there when the mission was reporting that Nimeiri might be overthrown by a coup, and there was a little bit of nervousness in Washington, and they sent a cable saying "What do you think?" and "What's your recommendation?" And I sent a cable back that said, "I think there'll be a day when he's overthrown, but I don't think it's going to happen this week." In fact, it happened in 1985. But I said, "I think we need a gesture that demonstrates our support for Nimeiri." And so I was asked to go in and see him and pass a letter from President Carter. And there was some aid. There was food aid and I don't know what-all, some military assistance. And when one went to see Nimeiri, you sat in an outer office, and they'd usually offer you candy and coffee and things like that. And then you went in, and you sort of walked in and then turned left, and he would be waiting for you. Now the Sudanese have a way of greeting where they put one hand on one of your shoulders and you put one hand on one of their shoulders and you don't exactly kiss but you sort of pull each other towards each other. So I went in, and I wanted to be sure my suit was buttoned and everything, and by God, here's a television camera, and it's live, and I look up, I greet Nimeiri in Arabic, and here comes his hand for my shoulder, so of course I reach for his shoulder. And the next day, my Egyptian counterpart called. He said, "Well, we

saw you embrace on TV.” He says, “We figured that embrace was worth about \$100 million.” And I did a little arithmetic, and I said, “Yes, that’s about right.” The program was about \$100 million.

*Q: That’s wonderful. I’m getting at that because it had come from much less, right?*

BOGOSIAN: It came from virtually zero.

*Q: And that was in 1979.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, by then it was maybe ’78.

*Q: And now what is it? Now we’re in 1998 and it’s virtually zero.*

BOGOSIAN: We have terrible relations, but what I was going to say a moment ago is - now that was roughly between ’76 and ’79 - I was a way from Sudan for three years and then I became director of East African Affairs, by which time, if our period there was baroque, then by 1982, when I became director of East African Affairs, it had become rococo. I mean, it had become, frankly, absurd. We were at a point where we were providing assistance that was almost useless, tanks that couldn’t move in the desert and so forth, because by then Nimeiri had developed such a reputation that there was almost no holding back, and by then there was this sense that-

*Q: Almost no holding back in what sense?*

BOGOSIAN: In the sense of the leadership in Washington wanting to help him - “Give him whatever he wants.”

*Q: Yes, give him whatever he wants.*

BOGOSIAN: I would say the high point was probably around ’81-82. Then different problems began to emerge, and I can get into that a little later. The other thing, though, to note about the Sudan during the period I was there was that the AAAID never quite got off the ground, and in a sense it was a victim of Arab politics. While we were in Khartoum, at one point Khalid Tahsin Ali, the Iraqi, came down, and we spent a day looking at houses because he said, “You know, I think I’m going to come and be put at the head of this.” Now, Khalid Tahsin Ali was a U.S.-educated agricultural technocrat whose vision, if you will, was behind the whole AAAID idea. In fact, there was an interesting example of this Iraqi technocrat and the Kuwaiti financier, knowing about relations between Iraq and Kuwait, how if you could subtract the politics they could do great things. But at that point, I guess, in some inter-Arab organizations there were too many Iraqis, and so the Egyptians said, wait a minute, this has to go to one of our guys. And so some utterly forgettable Egyptian with simply no inspiration at all was picked for the AAAID, and as a result that spirit that Khalid Tahsin Ali gave it evaporated, and it never achieved its promise. And then, of course, as the political situation in Sudan unraveled, it simply - I don’t think it exists any more. So in that sense, that was one of the first things that, if it didn’t go wrong, at least it didn’t go right. I mean, this promise that Sudan has has never been fulfilled. There was an economic officer in the embassy who had served in Latin America, and he began a report once that said

something like this: "As they say in Brazil, Sudan is a country of the future - and it always will be." And in a way, that's part of the problem.

*Q: I bet they say that in Brazil quite rarely.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I don't know about Brazil, but he claimed they did.

*Q: Very interesting account. Dick, what was going on then? What were other agencies doing in Sudan at that time?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, first of all, as I said, we had a big AID mission, and the thing that was interesting about that was - as I say, when I got there the AID mission was very tiny and not doing much, and as we were there it expanded, and the ambassador at this point was Don Bergus - in our naïveté we thought what they'd do was come in and maybe build roads and do other things - high-profile projects - and the new mission director, a fellow named Gordon Pierson, who was an excellent officer - he had been in Jordan - he said, "Well, we don't do that any more; we do basic human needs now and integrated agricultural projects." The dilemma we had was that the Sudanese were pushing for demonstrable assistance because, as is true with many AID recipients, this was highly political - that is to say, in a domestic political sense. They needed to demonstrate that they had friends who were doing things that made a difference. AID, in its wisdom, had to study things, it seemed, for ever and ever and ever. And in fact, one day, on a rather minor project, I had a temper tantrum with the deputy AID mission director, and he opened up a book with very fine print, and it went down the whole page, and these were all things that they had to do, and he said, "Our hands are tied; we have so many steps we're simply required to go through." So it was frustrating for us that were looking for ways; on the other hand, there was a substantial amount of food aid, which could be delivered rather quickly. There were intermittent crises where you could come in with disaster assistance for flooding or what have you. And we were beginning to get a fair amount of economic support funds, which as you know is probably the most liberal type of assistance. So in that sense, it was a large enough program so that there was plenty to do.

We had a USIS office that did the things USIS offices do, the visitors and the exchange programs. As I said, we had a military assistance program. While we were there, we delivered the first C-130s. In fact, I was there when they sacrificed a sheep and a bull, I think, and the Sudanese military stuck their hand in the blood and then put the hand on the plane to bless it. We were talking about F-5 aircraft. We were talking about whether the Saudis would pay for them. Some F-5s were ultimately delivered.

Oh, I need to tell one little incident here, because I think it is kind of interesting, but first let me say that Ambassador Brewer said to me one day he wasn't sure whether it was a good idea to provide F-5s to Sudan. Mind you, at the time, Ethiopia was going increasingly communist, and there was what we thought was a genuine threat from Ethiopia, not to mention Libya on the other side of the country. And I said, "Well, do you know what the function of an F-5 is?" And he said, "No." In fact, it was a defensive aircraft, although Brewer was not altogether wrong in understanding the potential provocative nature of these planes. But I said to myself, here is an ambassador who is making a judgment on whether we do this plane, and he doesn't even know

what it does. In short, what I was getting at was that as time moved on, I think it was incumbent on our ambassadors to have a more developed knowledge of such things as economics and so forth.

Q: *Very good point.*

BOGOSIAN: Now the thing that's interesting here is that as Brewer was leaving, and I believe he retired after this assignment, he said to me, "Dick," he says, "it's time to move on," and what he meant was the issues were becoming a little too complex.

What I wanted to say about military assistance was that the turning point occurred with a visit by Senator Javits. Senator Javits, from New York, was of course keenly interested in Israel, and he had heard that Sudan was, in effect, taking the right position, but he wanted to talk to Nimeiri himself, and he did, and he was satisfied that Nimeiri was sincere. And therefore, he went back to Washington and threw his weight behind supporting what they called "grant map," which is to say, money with no strings, virtually. And that was really the start of what became the really large military assistance program.

Q: *Which was actually a grant program.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. I think we may have had some other programs. We certainly sent soldiers to the United States for training. Typically they did very well. They were happy with us. They had had assistance from the Soviets. They said it was very useless - the machines wouldn't work. So in terms of while I was there-

Q: *Dick, there's no comparison.*

BOGOSIAN: I would hope so, frankly. But the thing that's interesting is that, given how bad things have gone in Sudan, all I can say is during those years, '76 to '79, we didn't just have big programs; they really were a partner that you didn't have to apologize for working with. And frankly there were other times when that was evident more in the next assignment, the director of East African Affairs, but that period was very satisfying because it was such a positive relationship, and it permitted, frankly, great creativity.

The other thing that was interesting from a Foreign Service point of view was to be deputy chief of mission in an embassy where, when I got there, I gave the language tests for IMET, I helped with administration, I did the political reporting (because there was no political officer), I was the Ambassador's representative on the school board and the Ambassador's representative on the commissary committee and so forth and so on. What that also meant was that, in effect, I had direct dealings with virtually the whole embassy. But while we were there-

Q: *How big an embassy was it?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, originally it was just 12 Americans. I frankly don't know how many we were when we left, but by the time I left, AID was in a different building and I didn't know everybody who was in the AID mission. We had a political officer; we had a defense attaché

office; we had a security assistance office; and we had a very deep relationship with Sudan. And so it was a very different kind of job being DCM in that kind of a mission.

*Q: Was there a Peace Corps program?*

BOGOSIAN: No, the Arabs don't like Peace Corps.

*Q: How was mission management? How was managing a mission like that?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, first of all, it was very difficult. For all our good political relations, the fact is that Khartoum is deep in the interior of the country. It's not on some sea lane that we use much. Terrible electric power problems. We'd often go three to five days without electricity. When I was leaving, people said to me, we want to have a party for you but there's no meat in the city. This is a country that exports meat. There were times when the morale was terribly low because of the hardships. One man said to me there's no electricity, there's no kerosene, there's no water - how am I supposed to feed my family? Somehow we always managed, but you just never knew in Khartoum when the lights were going to go out. And sometimes they'd be on across the street. I would say that of all the assignments I've had, it was the most difficult in terms of day-to-day living. It was difficult on its own terms. There would be no water. You'd turn the faucet on. You'd forget it was on. Then the water would come, and your ceiling would fall because there was a flood upstairs. It was a hundred degrees or more. It was dusty. There wasn't much in the way of places to go or things to do. You wouldn't want to swim in the Nile because there were crocodiles. There was, you know, an alien culture, not a particularly attractive city. And so in fact, I'll tell you that the staff chafed under Ambassador Brewer. He liked a six-day week. They wanted a five-day week. So I managed to persuade him to change the hours so that it was a five-day week, and then everybody wanted to work overtime, and he got mad at me.

*Q: Everybody wanted to work overtime?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, they asked for a five-day week, and then they said they had to work every Saturday.

*Q: Was there six days of work in a normal week?*

BOGOSIAN: In the beginning, but we went to a five-day week. We worked from seven to three without a break, and that's what people seemed to like. They'd grab a sandwich at the snack bar and so forth. But we played softball every Thursday in a place called Donkey Dung Stadium, and somehow we got through it.

*Q: Donkey Dung Stadium, right.*

BOGOSIAN: One of the other things that happened, Vlad, was when I began the assignment, it was still unusual to have household effects and so forth flown in. There was still this notion that you had to ship it all the way to Port Sudan. And while we were there, that began to change. We had an interesting thing happen. At one point it became intolerable, the electric power problem,

so the administrative officer said, "I think I'm going to get us generators." That was considered quite provocative. He said to me, "I know that the way I'm doing this is not allowed, but let's see what happens." So he sent in the cable. The answer was, "You know this isn't allowed, but we're going to let you have them anyway." So that, to me, was very imaginative management, and I would note that this guy's going to have a very good career.

*Q: That's very good. Who is this wonderful person?*

BOGOSIAN: Ted Strickler.

*Q: Good, yes.*

BOGOSIAN: He's now working for the under secretary for management.

*Q: Well, that's wonderful.*

BOGOSIAN: But that's what you had to do, frankly. This was one of the things about serving in Africa. It was hard. It wasn't easy. You were far away and all the rest. Now the African Bureau traditionally has always gone the extra mile to help its people, but whether it was getting them to fly things in from Antwerp, not from the States, or to give us generators, the first time you presented the idea it was kind of unthinkable, and then gradually they would do it.

*Q: Dick, you're by now an old Africa hand. Can you just comment, how was the Bureau equipped at that time with resources and with things to support programs and things to support people - then, as opposed to, say, now?*

BOGOSIAN: I think the Bureau has, over the years, had a succession of fairly good executive directors, who have, for one thing, managed money very carefully and, as a result, probably have a little more financial flexibility than otherwise. The notion that these are tough posts and you need to be sympathetic to them has become almost a philosophical fundamental. Those notions were present then. I don't know that they were quite as deeply embedded. As I think you know, there is kind of a perverse sense that you know where you're going, you've got to expect to suffer. This isn't the same thing, but in Kuwait - I was in Kuwait at a time when that post grew rapidly as well, and there were some real strains, and our administrative officer reported that, and the people in Washington said he's lying; "we were there two years ago, and we know it isn't that way." What Washington had difficulty understanding was what it's like at a post that's rapidly expanding. It's difficult to keep up with it. Even if they understand it, by the time you get the budget, by the time the money comes, by the time whatever it is you've ordered gets there, it can be months and months and months. I had to entertain the dean of the diplomatic corps, the Nigerian Ambassador, who was leaving, at a time when the roof was leaking and we had pails all over the Ambassador's office.

In fact, one of the things I did was to select a new building for our chancery. We wanted to build a building, and the Sudanese wanted to build a building in Washington up on Van Ness, but it fell through, and we ended up renting. And I got a building that was rather nice, but in those days we weren't that concerned about security, and so it was right across the street from the

University of Cairo in Khartoum, and the front was right on the sidewalk, and it's been a security nightmare ever since.

Q: *Very interesting account of the hardships at that post.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, it was a hardship post, and yet we had a school. It's funny. I remember the hardships. I remember literally reading cables by candlelight and various kinds of camping lamps and so forth. There was also a psychological strain. I mean, even if you had electricity, you didn't know how long it was going to last. If you had food, it spoiled, because after three days... So in a word it was tough. It really was. But I think Khartoum, even though in effect it's north, is one of the most difficult places in Africa to serve.

Q: *Intriguing.*

*Thanks for that account of Sudan, and we're now in 1979, and you're about to go back to Washington, if I'm not mistaken. First, can we just go back to Sudan for a moment? Can you tell us a bit about what your family was doing and how they liked it or didn't like it?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, this will, to use a modern word, segue into the next part.

Q: *Okay.*

BOGOSIAN: The thing about Sudan from a family point of view is, first of all, just in a word, they liked it well enough. I mean, like all of us, they didn't like it when the electricity went out, but our children were happy enough in Khartoum. As I said, we had a school there. It went to the eighth grade. My son was in the eighth grade the first year we were there, so he was there full time only one year. Now my son, at one time or another while we were there, worked for the embassy in General Services, and they'd go out on the truck and he'd want to be in back with the laborers, but they said, "No, no, Mr. David, you have to sit up front. You're the DCM's son." But he grew to find it very interesting to go to the houses where he met these rather comely Eritrean maids-

Q: *Oh, yes.*

BOGOSIAN: -and so, you know, every cloud has a silver lining, I guess. Anyway, David then spent the second year we were there in school in Rome, in Notre Dame, and the third year we were there he spent at Lawrence Academy in Groton, Massachusetts. My daughter, Jill, was seventh grade, so she did seventh and eighth and she spent her third year at Concord Academy in Concord, Massachusetts.

Q: *Not to put too much on it, but did your kids like the notion of going off to boarding school, or did they think they were being kicked out of their house?*

BOGOSIAN: Between you and me, I think they were sort of neutral. They just took it, I think they just understood it, as something that had to happen, and it was kind of understood that there was no adequate or appropriate school for them in Khartoum. Our daughter Catherine did three



years there, so she did three years throughout the school, and she was very friendly with the daughter of the AID mission director, so that after her brother and sister left she was with them. Now we had a dog that we named Shaykha that we had from Kuwait. This dog was black, and the Ethiopians were petrified of black dogs. And most of the dogs just live in the street, and they're sandy colored. So this one day I was walking Shaykha in the neighborhood. There were these different vacant lots, and this Sudanese Arab came by and he said to me in Arabic, "Where's that dog from?" What he meant was we don't see too many black dogs around here. I said, "Well, he's from Kuwait." He said, "Oh, yeah, they're rich. You can get anything you want in Kuwait."

But on the children. I think the point I would make is - and I think many Foreign Service families have gone through this, this question of seeing a 14-year-old go off to another place far away - on the one hand, it can tear you to pieces. On the other hand, Concord Academy is one of the foremost schools in America, and frankly, my daughter loved it, to the point where a year later when we were home, we kept her there one more year. I used to get educational allowances that were three times my starting salary in the Foreign Service. It was an opportunity that was tinged with sadness. The interesting thing was many of us were in the same boat, and when those kids came home at Christmas, it was one of the most joyous times, and we were all waiting for the kids. And Mrs. Bergus, the Ambassador's wife, hands me this sign in English that says "Welcome Home," with all the kids names. And this Sudanese security guy came up to me and said to me in Arabic, "What's that sign say?" And he thought I was demonstrating against Nimeiri, and so instead of greeting my kid, I was sort of arguing with this security guy.

And then when they all left it was sad, and you'd feel down in the dumps. But the thing is that one of the things that was going on that whole time was what do we do with the kids, where do we send them, will it work, won't it work? Frankly, my son had some problems at both schools, and in that context, this was one of the most difficult times of our life. Now my wife said that we probably would have had problems no matter where we were, and I think it's that philosophy that lets you get through it. Ours was not the only teenage boy that had a few growing pains in his mid-teens. To put it another way, it was difficult to be separated from the children at an early age, but it was not without its advantages, and if I accept my wife's philosophy, there probably would have been difficult times no matter where we were just because of their ages. The children themselves liked Khartoum. They made friends. They did things like go swimming and play tennis, and they had their parties and so forth. I don't think the children complained once about being in Khartoum, and so that's the way it was. I've been fortunate in having a wife and a family that simply liked the Foreign Service life.

By the way, they traveled around the country a little more than I did. They went to certain places and got involved in some things I didn't. As DCM I always felt I had to be around the embassy, and in fact, toward the end of my assignment, they made me go to Juba, just so I could see somewhere different from Khartoum.

*Q: Did you see any AID projects close up? Did you get any sense for it?*

BOGOSIAN: Right now I can't remember any. Vlad, I was kind of stuck in the office. Perhaps rightly or wrongly, I'm not turned on by African provincial towns, and I didn't go out of my way

to travel - I'll be honest with you - plus, I saw my role as keeping the embassy running, and if the Ambassador was away, I had to be there because I was chargé, and if the Ambassador was there, I had to be there to kind of take care of him.

*Q: Right. What happened next? We're now in 1979.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. It's interesting what happened next in the sense that by the end of the Khartoum assignment...

I should note one thing here. The assignment was a two-year assignment, and we got there and my wife said, "You know, we really ought to stay an extra year," because the idea was it was financially attractive - we were getting a 25 percent differential and so forth. Brewer left and Bergus came, and we were going to go home - this is 1977, we decided to go home and buy a house; that was the other big personal thing in those days - and the question was would he permit us to extend? And I asked him, I said, "Would you be willing to let us extend?" And he said, "Dick, I don't think that's a good idea." I later learned that he had been DCM in Ankara, and I later learned that he had promised that job to another person. Then, as it happened, the promotion list came out, and the other person didn't get promoted, and so he couldn't come. Then Bergus walked into my office, he said, "I want you to stay." And he said, "I'll never make that mistake again of making a promise before I know what I'm getting into." The net result was that we stayed a third year, and I turned down an opportunity to go to the National War College. I said I'll try it next year. They said, well, we can't be sure that you'd be offered it next year. So at the end of two years, I was offered the National War College; I turned it down, and Bergus agreed to our staying a third year. So we had home leave in 1978 and came back for one year. During that final year, the country director for East African Affairs came out, and Ambassador Bergus said to him, "See what you can find for Dick." And the word was, "Nobody remembers you any more, and there's nothing for you."

*Q: You were the forgotten man.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. At one point I was supposed to take over the Economic Policy staff in the African Bureau, and its incumbent, Carl Cundiff, was supposed to come and replace me. Carl chose not to go to Khartoum, and that particular deal fell through. What I didn't realize was that the senior deputy assistant secretary, Bill Harrop, felt that he owed me something, and without my knowing it, he kind of engineered an assignment - talk about open assignments - he engineered at least the offer of a job in the Economic Bureau. So I was home in March of 1979 because of something involving my son, and I called personnel and they said we have nothing for you, don't you worry, we'll take care of it. And then a few weeks later I was offered the job in Aviation. Of course, I had no idea what it was.

**KEITH L. WAUCHOPE**  
**Sudan Desk Officer**  
**Washington, DC (1977-1979)**

*Ambassador Wauchope was born and raised in New York, graduated from Johns Hopkins University and, after a tour in the US Army in Vietnam, in 1966 joined the Foreign Service. His specialty being African affairs, Mr. Wauchope served in a number of African posts, including Ft. Lamy, Asmara, Bamako and Monrovia. In 1989 he was appointed Ambassador to Gabon, where he served from 1989-1992. In his several Washington assignments Ambassador Wauchope dealt with personnel, cultural, Latin American affairs and Sudan affairs. Ambassador Wauchope was interviewed by Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: Today is August 9, 2002. Keith, 1977 you went back to AFP, what?*

WAUCHOPE: No, AF/E, East African.

*Q: East Africa. What did you have?*

WAUCHOPE: Well, at that time they wanted to take advantage of my experience in the Horn of Africa having been in Ethiopia, now Eritrea. I was assigned to the Sudan desk. It was at a time when our relationship with Sudan was evolving favorably. They wanted someone who had an appreciation of the political dynamics of the Horn of Africa. AF/E at that time was a very vibrant office; there were a lot of very bright young officers in the office, and a lot of hot issues as well. I very much looked forward to the job and I did have a fine assignment there.

*Q: Well, you were there from 1977 to?*

WAUCHOPE: To '79, yes. A full two-year tour.

*Q: Who were some of the officers you were working with?*

WAUCHOPE: Well, Dick Post was the first office director, and then Gordon Beyer took over from him. Sam Hamrick, and later Jack Whiting, were the deputies. Lou Janowski was the Kenya desk officer. Bob Illing was the Somali Desk, followed by Gerald Scott. . Dick Baker handled Kenya. Pete Smith, who later resigned from the Service, was the Tanzania Desk Officer. Pat Garland came in to take over the Ethiopia Desk. It was a good crew, a good group of guys.

*Q: Well, when you came, you had the Sudan desk, what was the situation with Sudan and what had been sort of the past?*

WAUCHOPE: In our relations with Sudan, the past was weighing on the present, if you will. The past was that there had been the assassination of the American ambassador and his DCM in Khartoum.

*Q: Cleo Noel and Curt Moore?*

WAUCHOPE: Moore, yes, exactly. The U.S. orchestrated an effort to compel the Sudanese government, despite pressure from the radical Arabs, to transfer the assassins to Egypt where they were put under house arrest; a very loose kind of confinement. The Sudanese government

was disinclined to imprison them in Khartoum because Sudan would be a constant target of radicals seeking the assassins' release. There was a lot of unhappiness about this arrangement, not only in the U.S. government at large, but most particularly in the Foreign Service. As we began the process of improving our bilateral relations and increasing our aid program, we got blowback from the Foreign Service organizations saying they felt it was improper to normalize relations. We responded that it was in the U.S. national interest to do so because of our setback in Ethiopia. These tradeoffs were a reflection of the changing dynamics in that region. Obviously, the Ethiopians had thrown their lot in with the Soviets. As such, there needed to be some degree of balance, and the Sudanese looked to us like they might be able to provide that balance. In addition, the Saudis were pressing on us to improve relations with the Sudanese. They had an interest in stability there. There was a significant Sudanese population in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis were willing to put money into projects in Sudan. They were particularly interested in developing Sudan's potential to produce food for the Arab world. Sudan has the Nile and had a number of irrigation projects had, in the past, produced cotton. International donors had proposed Sudan consider food instead of cotton. They thought that this food could serve both domestic consumption and the export market.

Now, Nimeiri, a former general who had taken power by a coup, was a very pragmatic individual. One of the things that earned our respect and commendation was the fact that he made peace with the southern insurgents, who had been engaged in a long festering war. It was one of the objectives that we wanted to see achieved. In doing so, he showed himself to have the ability to control events and to have the wisdom not to allow himself to be swept away by the more radical Islamic elements within previous governments. He co-opted this group by keeping them on the fringe of his own government. He had an inclination toward modernization, so overall he seemed like a good man to back.

*Q: Well, now had we restored relations by this time?*

WAUCHOPE: We had. By the time I took over we had restored relations, we had sent Don Bergus who had been the DCM in Cairo and an experienced Arabist as Ambassador. Sudan had always been an orphan in terms of where it fit; the Near Eastern and AF bureau. At that particular juncture, we considered it as an African nation for operational purposes, but it was also an Arab, or an Islamic nation, even though there is a very significant Christian/animist in the south of the country. There was a prospect, as we were told by American oil companies, that there would be significant finds of oil in the interior of the country. We also thought that we could help it to transition from a backward agricultural nation to a more modern state; perhaps to fulfill the Saudi vision of becoming the "Breadbasket of the Arab world." There was some hope that we could participate in that process and that the World Bank and the IMF were willing to help out with our encouragement. European powers were involved, as they wanted to see if we could provide the kind of assistance that would keep Sudan out of the hands of the radicals. We had a variety of activities at that time. A U.S.-Sudanese chamber of commerce had just recently been formed under the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and I had considerable involvement with them. Tenneco was a major corporation that wanted to become involved in the agro-business in that region. They went to Sudan and met with Nimeiri, who was the most important point of contact. In fact, when I went out to Sudan on my orientation visit, Don Bergus saw to it that I met with Nimeiri, as well. Bergus was a very intelligent, pragmatic fellow, and the idea was that

if you want to motivate your desk officer, you take him in to see the chief of state, and let him see for himself what the guy was like. Nimeiri was very soft-spoken with an evident degree of determination to what he thought was right for his country. I was favorably impressed and thought he might well have a shot at successfully making this transition.

*Q: What about at that point, what about some of the neighbors? What was Libya doing for example?*

WAUCHOPE: Well, that was one of the reasons why we focused on Sudan, because of our concern about its neighbors. At this particular juncture, Qadhafi was being particularly obstreperous. He was deeply involved in the Chadian insurgency. He was stirring things up in North Africa, in general. He was alternately trying to make friends with Egypt or trying to undermine the Egyptian government. In general, he was throwing his lot in with the most radical Arab elements and was involved financing terrorist activities globally. There was a pro-Libyan faction in Sudan and we were encouraging Nimeiri to keep a close eye on them. There were radicals who would have liked to turn Egypt away from the West. Qadhafi's objective was to undermine Egypt by going through the soft underbelly of Sudan. He attempted to do that through his agents who were Islamic true believers or those who followed of the more radical Islamic approach to government, like the imposition of Sharia. If they had been successful at that time, as it proved to be the case later, it would have thrown the south into rebellion again, which ultimately did occur.

Other players in the region included the Israelis who wanted to see moderate Arab nations encouraged in their moderation. The loss of our strong relationship with Ethiopia had been a big factor in state of flux in the Horn. When Ethiopia threw its lot in with the Soviets, the Somalis decided that, while they had been very close to the Soviets, if the Soviets were going to side with the Ethiopians, then they had to look for new friends. The Somalis had longstanding designs on the Ogaden, region in southeastern Ethiopia. Clearly, with the Soviets backing the Ethiopians, the Somalis' plans were going to be thwarted. While we were trying to build relations with the Somalis, and the AF Bureau was preparing a decision paper to send to the Secretary. Yet we were really not clear in our own minds where we saw this going. Who know what would happen if you threw the U.S. and other western powers behind Somalia. Would that encourage them to move against Ethiopia? Initially we didn't think that was likely. We thought that we could trust Siad Barre, the president, to stand by his word that he had no intention of using force to extend his territorial claims. Of course, there are three areas outside of Somalia they sought to control; Djibouti, parts of northeast Kenya and the Ogaden in southeastern Ethiopia.

*Q: I was thinking of the five star flag.*

WAUCHOPE: Exactly right. The original two points are English and Italian Somalia.

*Q: The other three are Ogaden, Djibouti & northeast Kenya.*

WAUCHOPE: Exactly. We were concerned about Somali irredentism. Given that this was a tumultuous area we had to navigate fairly carefully. The Carter administration was just coming in. I'd been tossed out in April and my wife was serving in Nairobi. We'd been married less than

a year. From Athens I communicated with the embassy Addis and suggested that it would be useful if I could have the opportunity to travel there to debrief on how the evacuation went in Asmara. They thought it was a fine idea. I could then travel on to Nairobi and see my wife and then head back to the United States. They went to the Ethiopian government to get me an entry permit and I found out that I was PNG'd from Ethiopia, so that was that. As a result I didn't see my wife for about seven months, so I went back and set up housekeeping back in Washington.

In any event, I reported to AF/E in June and one of the early issues was the sale of F5s to Sudan. We were considering the sale of just 12 F5s which seemed like a reasonable and modest number. The rationale for the sale was these aircraft would constitute a minimal deterrent to the Ethiopian air force which the Soviets were beginning to provide significant numbers of aircraft. The Ethiopian air force pilots were a pretty talented group, mostly trained by Americans. The Soviets had supplied almost 100 jet aircraft. The focus of the Ethiopians air force was Somalia which had claims on the Ogaden. There were Sudanese exiles in Ethiopia, and there were Eritrean exiles in Sudan, and there were frequent cross border friction and clashes. We could see these escalating into a wider clash and possibly a clash in the air. We felt that 12 F5s would be just enough to provide a deterrent to any attack, especially one directed at the capital.

*Q: The F5 at the time was considered sort of called the Freedom Fighter I think. It was a very good, but not terribly sophisticated jet plane, which we use to sell to foreign powers.*

WAUCHOPE: Right, it was sort of a standard unit of military assistance that we couldn't provide because we had limited avionics on it so that it couldn't challenge American aircraft, but we were using them in the United States as a replacement for the MIG21 because they had many similar characteristics. They were capable if properly handled and certainly challenged the MIG21s.

*Q: We used them I think in our training, weren't they?*

WAUCHOPE: That's correct, they were always the aggressor.

*Q: Because they did have these Soviet characteristics.*

WAUCHOPE: Yes, that's right. On the surface of it, Andy Young had signed on as to the Carter administration as their ambassador to the United Nations had passed through Africa having a continuing interest in the region and he had met with Nimeiri and they talked about the sale. Young came back and he said to Carter and to the administration that he thought it was legitimate to sell these F5s. I thought this deal is golden, in addition to which we had a commitment from the Saudis to pay for them. So, it wasn't even a contribution, we would get repaid for the sale of these aircraft which is oftentimes not the case. All the factors had fallen into place and as we began the process of actually working out an export permit for this transaction, we ran into all manner of opposition to it. Ironically, a large part of it came from within the Carter administration at that time. They felt that it was improper and it was reflective of previous Republican administration policies to interject weapons into areas and the concept they said they wanted to retain was not to be the first to interject a new level, a higher level of air capability or any capability, military capability in a given area because that would look like we

were encouraging people to escalate the arms race, the regional arms races. We tried to point out that the F-5 was really not an escalation and that the Soviets had already provided the Ethiopians a level of aircraft. The Libyans had the French had purchased French aircraft with their oil money which were much more sophisticated in many ways than the F-5, but we could not move this thing. It went on interminably; I came to AF/E in June and the issue had just been initiated and it was still going on after I left two years later. The transaction was never concluded by which time the Saudis had withdrawn their offer to pay for the aircraft. So, then we had to do it under an FMS program. Sudan is one of the poorest nations in the world and the great miraculous transformation has never occurred in Sudan. It certainly wasn't on the horizon two years later, and their having to pay for the F-5s was just not rational.

It was kind of indicative of how things went in that administration. Here you have Andy Young and the president conceptually, saying this sounds like a reasonable thing to do, and at two years later you still don't get it done. Now, eventually the transaction was concluded, by which time the Ethiopians had overwhelming air superiority, but thank God, the conditions on the ground never led to clashes that would have brought both nations to their knees.

*Q: Where within the Carter administration was the opposition coming from?*

WAUCHOPE: Well, I'll tell you from the human rights people. I'm trying to think of the woman.

*Q: Derian.*

WAUCHOPE: Patt Derian, yes, her representatives and AID people as well. AID types thought that our assistance ought to be exclusively developmental variety which is fine in its own way, but we didn't see them understanding the threats in the immediate region. In point of fact, 12 aircraft are not going to change the balance of power in the Horn. We tried to make that case over and over again, but they just felt it was symbolically wrong to do it.

*Q: Well, were you thinking of the aircraft in a way of being symbolically like a security blanket or something? It wouldn't change.*

WAUCHOPE: Yes, a deterrent. It would not have changed anything militarily. They were too few in number to be used aggressively. At this particular evolution in the Carter administration, and it may have occurred under the Nixon administration, when a sale was challenged by Congress, State and DOD came up with this concept of defensive military assistance. So you ask yourself, what's defensive military assistance? Well, its things like anti-tank weapons, its anti-aircraft weapons, anti-aircraft missiles. All well and good. Obviously, these all can be used in an offensive role if you choose to do so. But that is for example what we were talking about in Somalia. We wanted to back the Somalia regime, but in a manner that would not give them any signal that we would support their assuming an aggressive role. Likewise, these F-5 aircraft didn't have a long-range capability to operate over Ethiopia for any period of time, but they could serve well as a local air defense capability of the capital regime and the Nile Valley. But even that argument failed in these various councils on Sudan. We couldn't get these people to understand the limited nature of this modest military sale. They kept coming back to the

symbolism and we kept trying to hammer in the realities of the situation. When the transaction eventually occurred, it was in the most disadvantageous way for both the U.S. and Sudan. It was a foreign military sale, for which we were never paid back because then the regime changed. They abrogated their predecessors' responsibilities, and the aircraft fell onto disrepair, by which time Ethiopia was preoccupied with its internal problems. There was no longer the threat that there appeared to have been before. Now, maybe we didn't need to do it at all, but the sense was that in order to secure and maintain a relationship with Nimeiri and his military leaders it was important to give them a sense that we were (a) behind them in the transition process, and (b) providing them this minimal deterrent. That was the rationale we tried to use with very limited success. It seemed that we could win some of the various battles, but we seemed to be losing the war. Each time we would seem to persuade certain representative of human rights and AID, it would get blocked somewhere else. Then we'd have to go back to square one and start over. It's sort of indicative of how things operated in the early Carter days, and to some extent throughout the administration.

There is another incident, which I'd like to record, although I was only on the periphery of this, but I certainly was an observer. In the early Carter days one of the things he insisted that we do was to be open to the press. So, for example, AF/P, the public affairs office, would route telephone inquiries from the press directly to desk officers. This had never been the case before. They would be provided guidance and they would try to respond to the extent they could. So, we were often times confronted by press people asking about certain specific issues. Carter himself was as good as his word in this concept. He invited, I think it was Time Magazine correspondent, to spend the day with the president in the Oval Office. He would have complete access to the White House and the president's schedule, and would sit in on the president's meetings. One of the documents that crossed the president's desk that day was a NSDM about our policy on the Horn.

*Q: NSDM?*

WAUCHOPE: National Security Decision Memorandum. The subject was shifting our alliances away from Ethiopia, where it had essentially been booted out, toward Somalia. The idea was to try to provide the Somalis a level of military capability to defend against a rearming Ethiopia. The Ethiopians had many grievances against the Somalis and there was constant friction along the border. So, we proposed that we would provide Somalia defensive weapons. The president allowed the reporter look over his shoulder, and the substance of the NSDM made it into the Time article. Somalis read Time and they learned that the United States was going to sift its support to them. Now, granted, we had told them to a certain extent what we proposed to do. But, they thought, the U.S. will back us in all things. At least that's how they interpreted it. In a matter of six weeks or so thereafter they launched an attack into the Ogaden. I don't think that they had received any of our weapons by that time, but they had what they had received from the Soviets. They figured the sooner we move the better because the Soviets have not yet provided that much military wherewithal to the Ethiopians. So, they attacked. We had egg all over our face because they had apparently misinterpreted the NSDM and they saw an envelope of time in which they had to act, if they were ever going to act at all. So, they did. They quickly occupied a large part of the Ogaden. Their actions accelerated the Soviet response, and the Soviets brought in more weaponry, and military advisors and eventually Cuban troops. They had three brigades



of Cuban troops as the spearhead; we figured about 15,000 Cuban troops. They drove the Somalis back out of the Ogaden over the next several months making the whole region much more unstable. Of course, now we are stuck with the Somalis who have just been badly clobbered in the Ogaden for this rash involvement. Ethiopia has ten times, well, not quite, maybe eight times as many people as Somalia. It's not going to be a fair fight at the best of times. Not that that would have deterred the Somalis, but it weakened their government and it led to its eventual collapse thereafter.

In any event, we had decided that we had wanted to continue to play a role in the Horn. It was important to back that up with assistance that would give people some degree of assurance that we're not just making verbal commitments, but were prepared to follow up with both military and development assistance. Sudan was to be a player in that effort on the Horn as well. For the remainder of my time in AF/E we were involved in a variety of opportunities to try to set up commercial relationships, and cultural relationships with Sudan, and to fend off the radical elements that were there. In point of fact, during my visit to Khartoum I saw Sadie al Mahdi, a leader of the former regime, who was one considered to be the radical bad guys. He'd been allowed to return home, but he was sort of under close surveillance by the government. Because of his following, Nimeiri felt that he couldn't quash him altogether. They had to accord him some degree of respect, which they did. Of course, he later came to power and Turabi, of the Muslim Brotherhood, became the philosopher of the fundamentalist regime. I saw him as well, a very bright guy, a very capable guy. He was educated in the West, but very dedicated to the Islamic cause. In any event, Nimeiri tried to play this right, he tried to not crush these people, but at the same time keep a close eye on them so they not get the upper hand. Of course, in the long-term it did Nimeiri in. The military people they put in were more radical in orientation than Nimeiri. I thought our approach to Sudan was quite a reasonable given the situation. Maybe we oversold the concept of the breadbasket, more than was warranted. Sudanese infrastructure was very weak and when they did find oil in Darfur province in the west central region. It's far away from anywhere, and of course building a pipeline from the wells to Port Sudan would be a logistical nightmare. There was another massive project being contemplated to shift Nile water from Sudan to Saudi Arabia. Water had always been a critical element in Saudi Arabia. They talked about building a pipeline from the Nile across the desert to the coast, and then pipe it across the Red Sea and bring it to Saudi Arabia. Needless to say, nothing ever came of that, the symbolism of shipping water from Sudan to Saudi Arabia would be disastrous.

*Q: The Egyptians would probably howl, too, wouldn't they?*

WAUCHOPE: They would. The whole flow of the Nile is critical.

*Q: Did the Nile play any role, I mean, who controls the Nile while you were there?*

WAUCHOPE: Yes. As the Egyptians became more moderate in their approach to Israel and expressed their willingness to talk with the Israelis, the more important Sudan was to protect Egypt's southern flank from Arab radicals.

*Q: But you were there during the Camp David process?*

WAUCHOPE: Right.

*Q: The visit to Jerusalem with Sadat?*

WAUCHOPE: Exactly. As a result, there was a sense that we had an obligation to protect Egypt's southern flank from Qadhafi. As a result the Egyptians also understood this. If you go back in history, the Egyptians and the British in colonial times always felt Sudan was vulnerable to outside pressure, you recall the Fashoda incident, and it was susceptible to manipulation by radicals. So the Egyptians encouraged us to play this role. They didn't have the wherewithal beyond some technical assistance that they could put into the pot, but they wanted very much that we play a role to keep things quiet. This was one more source of pressure on us. So, when you looked at it, it was in our own interest to maintain stability in the region as the equation between Ethiopia and Somalia was shifting. You had the Qadhafi dimension, the Egyptians interest in stability, and the Israelis looking for a moderate regime as well. So, all of this militated that we become more aggressive in our overtures. Our assistance program went from about \$10 million to a projected \$100 million a year, which would have made it one of the largest programs in Africa. I don't think that it ever reached that level, but that was the direction that we certainly were headed.

The Sudanese account was very interesting, but while I was handling that, the office decided that I should also take over Uganda at least as far as the issue of emergency evacuation because of my experience in Asmara. Idi Amin had been a problem for us for some time. We had closed our embassy in Kampala in 1973, when Amin was becoming increasingly obstreperous. There had been threats and incidents against Peace Corps volunteers, and they had been removed. After that there was an incident involving embassy personnel in which they were clearly threatened. Idi Amin's government did nothing to protect our people. So, we closed down. Now, at this time the Uganda account was pretty quiet, there wasn't much going on in Uganda and it was just as well. Idi Amin was doing all manner of outrageous things hoping to provoke a media reaction. . He was viewed as a clown on the periphery of the process. While there some regional concerns like the southern Sudanese insurgents who had taken refuge in Uganda, it was never a significant issue. There were opponents of Amin who had been taken refuge in Sudan and in Ethiopia as well, but they posed no threat to stability. Despite this, the volatility of the regime and the growing hostility of his neighbors, it made sense to review the entire E & E plan for Uganda. So, I was tasked to do that. Our protecting power was West Germany, so I went to Bonn with a small delegation and met with the German officials. We worked on the plans and tried to determine whether they were realistic.

*Q: What did we have there? Did we have many people?*

WAUCHOPE: We had about 250 missionaries constituting most of the American presence. There were a few odd teachers and dual nationals, but basically it was the missionaries. They had been advised that we did not think it was wise to remain in Uganda, and they knew that and they made their according to their consciences. Our focus was on how we would get them out. We were in contact with the missionary organizations here in the U.S. We had a reasonable idea what their numbers and locations. They were pretty good at keeping us apprized of changes if they took people out and moved people in. They were uncomfortable working with our

government on the one hand, while on the other they had made this commitment apart from our concerns. The missionaries knew what was going on in general terms, and thought they could get along with Amin's folks, and that the U.S. would protect them if Amin went bonkers. We weren't so sure. So, after the stop in Bonn, we went to Nairobi and met with the German and French ambassadors resident in Kampala, and several other foreign residents, to find out about the situation in Kampala and the country at large. The German ambassador was fairly pragmatic and he said there were terrible things going on. The French ambassador, by contrast, seemed almost oblivious to the atrocities. He said he lived not far from the central prison. He said, yes, at nighttime you heard people screaming, but said, "I just turn the air conditioner up." He didn't know what all the fuss was about. Of course, after the fall of Amin, we found out a great deal more about the atrocities he had committed. But the French ambassador seemed not to want to know about it. Nonetheless, they gave us useful information and promised assistance in terms of communication and, to some extent, support.

*Q: Were the German and French having trouble with their citizens or did Idi Amin only pick on the American Embassy?*

WAUCHOPE: He picked on the Americans because we had suspended relations and were unfriendly to him. In addition, there was a Congressional effort to impose an embargo on Uganda. The more provocative he became, the more American politicians saw an opportunity to make some hay because who is ever going to support Idi Amin? Don Pease of Ohio, who I see recently died, took up this legislation. Pease was like a country school teacher in a lot of ways and in the world there were either rights or wrongs, or at least that's how he played this. He thought Idi Amin was a bad man, which Idi Amin definitely was. So he felt that there should be a legislatively imposed embargo. They felt that the administration's willingness to acknowledge Amin, or even tolerate his existence was unacceptable, and that we ought to hurry the collapse of his government by imposing embargoes. The U.S. should suspend commerce and restrict Americans from moving in and out of the country. Department representatives testified against this effort, and got clobbered by this congressman from New York, a very bright guy.

*Q: Solarz?*

WAUCHOPE: Right, Solarz. Steven Solarz.

*Q: I've interviewed him.*

WAUCHOPE: Did you? He took apart Bill Harrop, who was the PDAS in AF at that time, about State Department policy. He drew parallels to State Department's failure in the pre-war period, when Jews were being killed in Germany while we sat idly by. I thought to myself, this is so outrageous. I had carefully prepared Harrop's testimony. I had tried to stick to the legal and policy aspects of a Uganda embargo, but, all of a sudden we were being crucified by what predecessors two generations removed had done. Then afterwards Solarz and Harrop, who knew each other quite well because Solarz had a special interest in Africa, were all buddy-buddy. Solarz just had to exploit this issue in his report to his constituents that he beat up State for its past sins. I, as a relatively naive young man, thought to myself, this is so God-damned

outrageous. Of course, he's grandstanding for the purpose of having it appear on the congressional record. He's taking us to task where the parallels were nonexistent.

One of the things we tried to explain to Congress was that, if you legislatively impose this embargo, when the day comes, which it probably will given the fragility of this regime, you're going to have to pass legislation to remove it and it's going to take a long time. The much more effective way of achieving it's goal was to have it as an executive order which can be lifted by the stroke of a pen. We said we were looking into how we would do that, but the Congress was absolutely unmoved. They had their teeth into this one and they weren't going to let go. Sure enough they passed the Goddamn embargo. Sure enough within months thereafter, having no relationship at all to the embargo, Idi Amin's troops got in trouble with Tanzania, which invaded and Idi Amin was overthrown. While we had closed our embassy in Kampala, we did not break relations. Therefore the Ugandans had representation at the Chargé level in the U.S. because it was a nice place to be, and they wanted to keep tabs on U.S. policy. The Congress held three days of hearings. It was typical congressional show. The first day they had a lot of academics and the academics would tell you the history and background of the present situation. The second day was the good stuff where they had the Uganda victims testify about all Amin's horrendous atrocities. For example, about how they lined these people up and each guy had to batter out the brains of the next one in line. Somebody else said they drilled a hole in his stomach and they put a firecracker in his stomach. There were all kinds of atrocious tales to get the headlines and their political juices flowing. Of course the piece de resistance was Bill Harrop. He was the last to testify. He followed Commerce and AID representatives who were noncommittal on the embargo. Eventually they got to Bill Harrop and he was clearly the main course. They scrubbed his head from the beginning. He barely started reading his statement when they said, "We'll enter that into the record," now answer this question. They started hammering on him about all the atrocities and how could the U.S. defend Amin. They got what they wanted; media profile. Idi Amin was definitely a bad actor, and there wasn't going to be anybody standing up for him except the hapless State Department that only wanted some rationality in our policy.

In any event, what brought Amin down was a border conflict in the southwestern part of Uganda on the Agar River. The Ugandans alleged that some local Tanzanian farmers had come across the border and stolen some cattle. The Ugandans organized an attack across the Kagera and stole back cattle and anything else there was to steal. The conflict exploded into charges and the counter charges as to who had started it. Then the Tanzanian army slowly and methodically organized a punitive expedition against the Ugandans in the immediate area where this incident had taken place. They were going to cross the Kagera River and go to the town of Mbarara, about 25 or 30 miles from the border. They made it to this town with little resistance and burned and dynamited it to the ground. In that process they realized that the Ugandan army, once well trained, had degenerated to a bunch of thugs. They didn't have any military cohesion, and were no longer an organized military force. So, the Tanzanian army stopped in this town that they had destroyed and came to realize that they could take this all the way to Kampala and overthrow Amin and solve that problem once and for all. They reorganized and resupplied themselves, and then started a slow, very methodical, very African advance toward Kampala. They brought to bear their artillery, which would lay down in a barrage for a day or so and then they'd slowly advance to see what was left. They'd find that the Ugandans had long since withdrawn, and the Tanzanians would repeat the process. In this way they progressively moved forward toward

Kampala. Finally, as they approached the capital, they began to realize that there were all kinds of possibilities now. Coming from the southwest, there were two avenues, one toward Kampala and the other toward Entebbe and the airport. At the point about 25 or 30 miles between the two, they would make a rush for the two objectives. They were able to do this because by now the Ugandan army had collapsed completely. They advanced for the capital and hoped that with the others going to Entebbe, they would catch Idi Amin before he could fly out with all of his treasure. But Amin beat them and he flew off to Libya. The Tanzanians had taken the capital and the airport, and they basically had thrown the rascal out. They went to the central prison and they found the execution grounds. Among other things, they found buckets full of heads and many corpses. At Idi Amin's residence they found a refrigerator with the heads of people who had been his opponents. He had them in the freezer and allegedly he used periodically take the heads out and lecture them on their misdeeds.

Meanwhile, as this process of Idi Amin's downfall was unfolding, Ugandan exiles came to AF/E wanting to discuss the successor government. Godfrey Binaisa, the former attorney general under Obote, was among them. There were three or four serious contenders. Binaisa came in with a group of five or six retainers. He started out by asking for American military assistance. He wanted arms, military training, aircraft and anti-aircraft weapons, and, of course, he needed money. I said I didn't see how we could meet his needs. We did not agree to do any of this. Their demands began to winnow down and they said they were absolutely determined to return to Uganda when the government collapsed. We wished them the best of luck. I suspected they had already received assistance from other groups. Finally after about an hour of discussion, recognizing that they were not going to get anything out of us in a tangible form, they asked if they could we get visas to re-enter the U.S. in case their endeavors didn't work. I thought, now there's a serious level of commitment. But in point of fact, Binaisa did go to Uganda and, while he wasn't initially made chief of state, later on he did serve as president of the country for a period of about two years and was then pushed out by someone else. He was a relatively decent guy. He was educated in the UK and seemed to have his head screwed on properly. Basically he was looking for a boost to give his faction the edge over the others. In any event, Idi Amin was driven out, a new government comes in and we have the struggle to try to restore assistance to Uganda by obtaining the repeal of the legislatively imposed embargo. Congress said, yes, we see that, that's fine. Could you tell us about the new government? We told them what we could. They said, okay, that's fine, but we've got a legislative bill, then we have to put it on the calendar, it has to go through the committee, it has to go to the floor, etc. It took the Congress six months to lift the embargo so we couldn't provide assistance to the needy Ugandans during this time, precisely as we had testified would be the case if they went ahead with the embargo, which, of course, they did. We thought we were on the side of angels in doing what we had and found out that we were just hapless victims of a Kabuki theater that Congress devised for us to play.

*Q: Did you find, sometimes the congressmen will get the bit in his teeth as you mentioned, Congressman Pease, was it? But, sometimes you get staff members who've got particular hobbyhorses, did you find that?*

WAUCHOPE: Pease. Yes, there were several of them as a matter of fact. What their job seemed to be was to identify and feed to their congressmen issues, in this instance in Africa, that would have no downside risk and should return maximum favorable publicity. I remember a couple of

staffers who were intense about it, but it seemed that Peace himself was personally driven on this issue. As I say, on a certain level, the embargo makes sense. On a more sophisticated level, there are downsides and they were just not listening to them. They were not prepared to accept them. We had done our best and the U.S. did have a reasonably good relationship with the successor government and eventually were able to provide assistance. There were no other issues, economic or commercial that we needed to quickly resolve. Strategically speaking, Uganda's frontier areas were pretty remote and didn't cause a threat to their neighbors. Of continuing concern was clashes among tribal groups and whether they would take umbrage at whoever got control. That's always been a concern in Africa, and the military leader was always a sort of compromise candidate because their first loyalty was thought to be to the military, and then secondarily to the tribal,

*Q: Did you get involved with the Tanzanian government?*

WAUCHOPE: Remarkably not very much. There are ironies in the Tanzanians playing the role of aggressor against their neighbor. I mean Nyerere had always been an international socialist and a person who believed in the socialist principals and non-aggression. He was a perpetual critic of the West and of capitalism, part of the imperial "hangover" if you will. The successor government, he was no longer the chief of state by that time, although he still had considerable influence, to do this was remarkable. Practically speaking, Amin was a pain in everybody's side and it served all the nations in the region purposes to get rid of him. Tanzania just happened, just by fate of history, to be the instrument for that process. As I say, their military performance wasn't dazzling, but it was adequate because the reality was that Amin's army was useless as a fighting force.

*Q: But they didn't get in there and begin to get hungry or something like that?*

WAUCHOPE: No, remarkably, the Tanzanians pretty much wanted to turn the country over to its people. They had their own candidates to take power, who would be friendlier to them, but they didn't they stay on. They allowed the successor regime to come in, and went home, which is impressive. This is in marked contrast in recent events in central Africa with the Rwandans being in the former Zaire. Tanzania was at least faithful to its principles to that extent, that they didn't see themselves remaining as an occupying force and manipulating the successor regime in Kampala. We were pleased by that. Our relationship with the Tanzanian government wasn't all that great. I mean it was okay.

*Q: Nyerere was not our fair-haired boy particularly.*

WAUCHOPE: No, he wasn't.

*Q: Because the Scandinavians and other sort of the socialists of Europe, the EU poured billions of dollars into these schemes which went nowhere.*

WAUCHOPE: Exactly. You know, the Tanzanians would listen to us, they were always reasonably friendly. But we had tried to block some of their candidates for leadership in international organizations because their orientation ran contrary to our perspective on the world.

As a result the relationship was cool, but correct. When we would ask them about the situation in Uganda, they'd give us just about what they'd give the press and not much more.

*Q: Then back to the Sudan, you haven't mentioned really, I mean I almost have the feeling that Sudan one talks about Khartoum and all that, the vast desert kind of. Then you've got this bottom side where we don't have a post, we've never had a post I guess and I was wondering was that sort of the other side of the moon or something?*

WAUCHOPE: Well, not entirely. We were aware of it because there were a lot of American missionaries in the south. There was a Christian-animist mix. There have been some very promising people coming from that region who came to the U.S. For instance, Francis Deng. He was and may still be a professor at Yale University, and he was for a brief period an senior official in the Sudanese government under Nimeiri as part of his reunification effort and rapprochement with the south. He did put some southerners into positions of responsibility. Juba, the southern capital is pretty hard to get to, I mean it's on the Nile, but in the swamp regions. We had missionaries in various parts of the region. We also had an AID relief operation that operated out of there for food assistance primarily, but it also pursued some level of development as well. There were refugees from the previous period of fighting with the Islamic north. There were significant populations who were in parts of Uganda and Ethiopia as well. There were liberation groups that operated out of parts of southwestern Ethiopia. Then even after Nimeiri's peace settlement, there were elements in the south that were still opposed to Khartoum. They wanted succession. We studied that option because there were a number of people promoting the concept, especially friends of the missionary community both in the U.S. and elsewhere, but you couldn't imagine a more hapless entity than an independent south. They'd be completely landlocked, and, while there was a potential for agriculture in the fertile flood plain of the Nile, there were no roads. Agricultural inputs would have been extraordinarily difficult to bring in and where would they ship their product from? We encouraged southerners to see their fate as tied to a moderate Islamic government in Khartoum as their best outcome ultimately.

*Q: Did you receive delegations to the south and all?*

WAUCHOPE: It was a very tricky business because we were developing a close relationship with Nimeiri, but we received some emissaries on behalf of these groups through missionaries. Likewise I believe our embassy in Nairobi had some contact with these groups as well. Because we wanted to keep tabs on them and you can't just ignore the missionaries either. They always have an influence. They also have knowledge on the ground that a few other people have. We were not unaware of these groups, but these were not at the forefront of our interests because this would compete with our regional strategic objectives. The southerners concerns fell very far short in terms our interest in supporting a moderate Islamic state, particularly given our concerns about Egypt and Libya.

*Q: Well, was there sort of a feeling within the State Department, things were beginning to open up because we are talking about Sadat going to Israel, Camp David, you know, I mean it looked like you're going to end up with peace in the Middle East.*

WAUCHOPE: Well, it's part of our considerations as what we wanted to promote modern governments and sustain them by giving them the economic wherewithal to keep their people happy, and the Nimeiri seemed to have the characteristics that we were looking for in that regard. He was not only a moderate, but a guy who understood the value of making peace even though there were critics when he did. He was able to take them on. Essentially, he seemed to have all the apparent ability to bring about the economic development of his country. He was committed to the idea. All African leaders, to a certain extent or other, have this tremendous temptation to become corrupt. He seemed less inclined to give in to that than many of the others. His lifestyle was modest. Now, I'm not saying there wasn't some back channel of funds to him, but he didn't flaunt the fact that he was the chief of state. He was no Mobutu or anything like that. He seemed like just the kind of leader that we could work with. Other moderate leaders in the region also felt that was the case. As I say, the Saudis were big backers of Nimeiri and his approach to things.

*Q: Did the Falashas come up at all while you were there?*

WAUCHOPE: No, they didn't.

*Q: You might explain who they are.*

WAUCHOPE: Yes, the Falashas are the black Jews of Ethiopia. They became a concern to us when the socialists and Marxist Leninist government in Addis started considering them as potential subversives and they became quite harsh in dealing with them and then the Israelis were successful in getting the American Jewish community and the international Jewish community to support their cause. They were being subjected to human rights abuses and eventually there was an airlift to bring them out to Israel.

*Q: But this was not on your watch?*

WAUCHOPE: No. My two accounts, Sudan and Uganda, kept me plenty busy. The big issue in AF/E was the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict. The idea that the Soviets would aggressively assist Ethiopia militarily and that the Cubans would provide three brigades of infantry to fight a battle in Africa was a potential precedent for some very serious instability and great power conflict..

*Q: But, who was the assistant secretary for African affairs at this time?*

WAUCHOPE: Let's see, Schaufele was there initially, and he was replaced by . . .

*Q: It was Dick Moose.*

WAUCHOPE: That's right. That's quite a story in its own right, specifically regarding the F-5s for Sudan. Dick Moose, as people who were in the Department at that time recall, was appointed by the Carter administration first as the Undersecretary for Management and he filled that job for something like three months. Rumor had it, as it came down to us troops on the AF desks that his tenure as M had not been successful. He was reportedly asked by the Secretary what other job he would prefer in the Department. He had done a tour as, he was an O3 economic/commercial



officer in Bangui, so he apparently asked for the African bureau, and that's where he ended up. Dick Moose came to the first staff meeting, and I remember this remarkably well, because it happened that he commented on something that I was right in the midst of. He was a true reflection of the early Carter administration. He was one of several former Foreign Service officers appointed to senior positions, Tony Lake being another.

*Q: Jim Lowenstein.*

WAUCHOPE: Right. They had all been critical of the Nixon administration's involvement in Vietnam, particularly over the Cambodian invasion. At various points they had resigned in protest, and now they were back. Moose was a reflection of that group. So, at the first bureau-wide staff meeting he attends, he outlines in this sort of touchy feely way, his view of what our policy to Africa should be. He was remarkable also for his penchant for wearing casual clothes. He would show up in blue jeans and a work shirt like shirt you get at Sears. We were amazed and amused. He said he thought that we ought to have a very interested and active, yet benign approach to Africa. We should be very concerned about the potential for further military takeover of governments. We ought to promote the democratic process and encourage democratic movements. Then he said we shouldn't be too quick to approve the sale of military hardware such as aircraft to areas in which they haven't before been introduced. So, here's the head of your own bureau saying that he has serious reservations about the F-5 program. The irony being, that, ultimately he signed on to the F-5 sale, seeing it as a modest contribution to regional stability. More ironic, toward the end of his tenure under the Carter administration, we were up to our ears in trouble in Liberia shoring up the Doe regime. He had to travel repeatedly to Monrovia and then to report to Congress saying we had to provide Samuel Doe more military assistance to fend off the Libyan backed subversive elements that are threatening his regime

*Q: Sam Doe was not a pleasant person.*

WAUCHOPE: No, he wasn't. We'll hear more about that because I was the DCM in Doe's waning years in Liberia. As I say, I had an excellent tour in AF/E, a good group of people, a lot of high profile issues that grabbed the attention of the front office and I had a great time. Lots of changes happened in my accounts during that time.

*Q: Was there in the African bureau would you say that by this time the bloom was well off the rose, do you know what I mean? During the '60s Africa was, it was a new day dawning, fresh winds from the subcontinent and all that, were the African hands, were they realists, I mean, how would you describe them?*

WAUCHOPE: Yes, well, it's an excellent question because we had evolved in our views. In the immediate post-independence period we had programs that were going to be responsive to the needs of all the countries. We set up embassies everywhere, and then after a while we saw the incredible inefficiencies of these governments, and we reduced the number of "focus" countries to ten, to include Nigeria. They got into some kind of a snit with us, and they told us we could take our AID and shove it. So, we were down to nine countries. Then we began to have a regional approach to aid, and we began to expand our activities, and have individual programs again. But the frustration, both on the economic development and the political levels, the civilian

governments in the immediate post independence period were increasingly being replaced by military governments. The military governments showed themselves to be both ineffectual and corrupt. Eventually these leaders were pushed out either by other military leaders or by popular movements, which forced the military to cede power back to civilian authority. By 1977, the bloom was not only off the rose, we considered ourselves to be much more pragmatic about the African reality, but we still felt there was a lot of potential there. This potential was the tremendous amount of natural resources in the region. Even the Africans leaders themselves were beginning slowly to realize that you cannot just plunder these countries. Resources are finite, and now having squandered whatever they had inherited from the colonial powers, now was the time to start creating something on their own. We hoped that they could broaden economic development from a concessional approach, such as existed in Guinea where the American and multinational mining companies strip mined bauxite and exported it through its enclave port and contributed little to the regional economy. There should be a broader range of benefits available to Africans as a result of the capitalist corporations exploiting the natural resources, but no spreading the wealth. One contribution to that process would be in developing people of talent and ability who would then take over positions of responsibility in government and industry. Just the general lifting of all boats by the increasing the economic prosperity derived from exploiting these resources. We still believed that this was possible.

Now, at the same time, looking at Sudan in particular, our policy was also driven by external considerations, particularly Near East considerations. So, this concept of the “Breadbasket of the Arab world,” which we promoted, we recognized was a long shot, but it was possible. If the Americans ran it, we could make it happen, but could the Sudanese make it happen? There was a good deal less optimistic on that score, but the concept was still valid. I remember Don Bergus talking about that and as a true Arab hand without any bleeding heart tendencies. He said if things go badly, the Sudanese can at least eat the wheat which they can’t do with cotton. If they produce cotton they are completely dependent on world prices. He felt there was a logic shifting agricultural production in that direction even if it didn’t have a great impact on Sudan’s export market or in the Arab world. That made sense to me. They grew this long staple cotton, which is very desirable, but the prices were dependent on world production, the cost of inputs and weather. The Sudanese were completely vulnerable on this score. I think that we all learned a fair amount. While we were always a bit cynical, yet we maintained our optimism. Those of us in the African bureau in the ‘80s and later recognized that all the socialist models that Africans adopted post-independence were garbage and had set back Africa for years. At the same time the Soviet Union is falling apart, so that model crumbled. The stress was then on free enterprise and the democratic process and the benefits that derive from them. We began to evolve with this transformation, but we were still cynical, but optimistic and hopeful that good things could happen.

*Q: It also represented one of the few places where we could kind of really do something. Because when you’re looking at Europe or when you’re looking Asia, there’s not an awful lot you can do. Here you can sort of roll up your sleeves, very American. We can make a difference.*

WAUCHOPE: Right. In addition, the cultural constraints that you find in regions such as Asia are not as strong in Africa. I remember when I was in Chad, we were tasked how do you get nomadic herders to commercialize their cattle? Their cattle were their wealth and their prestige.

It was their Mercedes Benz. We explained to them that there was a market for their cattle in coastal Africa where you can't raise cattle because of the Tsetse fly. They would be willing to pay you good money for your cattle. The herders resisted. For them, every cow they had made them a more important person. How do you deal with that? That was about the worst of the cultural constraints we faced, and donors found a mechanism to get them to sell a small percentage of their herd by promising to decrease their losses from disease. The point is that in Asia you find yourself confronting several millennia of cultural constraints. We thought of Africa as a region where, given its struggle to find an identity and the continuing tribal conflict, if they could achieve a bit more prosperity and opportunity, and education for their kids, that we could offer formulas that would allow them to have those things, and that the tribal frictions would melt away over time if they could benefit from democracy and economic opportunity. There were many examples indicating that urbanization in Africa could lead to a breakdown in tribal conflict, but such integration was never complete. Tribalism was always a factor, always in the background, and if Africa is ever going to succeed, it's got to have viable institutions that transcend tribalism, and to be able to feed itself.

**DONALD C. BERGUS**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1977-1980)**

*Donald Clayton Bergus was born in Indiana in 1920. He graduated from the University of Chicago and entered the Foreign Service in 1942, and has served posts in Iraq, Lebanon, France, Egypt, and Sudan. He was interviewed on January 24, 1991 by Lillian P. Mullin.*

*Q: At this time the announcement came out that you were being nominated as ambassador to Sudan to succeed Bill Brewer. Had you anticipated this assignment, and how did you feel about returning to the Arabic speaking world again?*

BERGUS: Well, the Department being what it is, I had been told that I was on a list and so I was very pleased and when it actually came through I was very happy. I was very happy to be going to the Sudan which at that time held the attention of the world, they had just discovered that it had great potential as a food producing country. They had not long before resolved--they thought--the age-old conflict between the north and the south in the Sudan. Nimeiri was the president and he seemed a common-sense sort of fellow. I was close to Sadat and Sadat commended him. Everybody in the Arab states, who are chronically short of food, looked upon Sudan as a place for investment to make the Arab world more independent in food and they had dreamy ideas, so there was a lot of illusion. Not without a base, a lot of it. Chevron of California was exploring for oil in the country and they had considerable hopes of finding some. It was a country that had a lot of arable land that was lying idle, adequate supplies of water, under international treaty they had the rights to quite a bit of the Nile system, which could be put to good use. So it looked like everything was going to come up roses.

*Q: This was the twentieth anniversary of...*

BERGUS: Of their independence from Great Britain, from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

*Q: Did the Egyptian flag fly there?*

BERGUS: It just flew, when Kitchener took the Sudan there were some British troops, but most of the troops were Egyptian, and the Egyptians footed the bill. The British were very good at getting their natives to pay for any imperial role and there had been a severe dispute in Cairo in 1922 between the Egyptians and the British. The commander of the British forces in the Sudan, who happened to be in Cairo at that time, was assassinated. Using that as the reason, the British just froze the Egyptians out of the condominium except in name, and ran the country until it became independent in 1955 or 1956.

*Q: It seems to me that Africa is full of crazy, nonsensical boundaries, drawn in pencil by someone at his desk 5,000 miles away. The Sudan seemed to be one of those.*

BERGUS: I would say yes, but it had the redeeming feature that it is a big country and if you ever managed to paste it together you would really have some to deal with. If you were to divide the Sudan by ethnic or linguistic standards you would have about thirty or forty little-bitty postage stamps that were not worth anything.

*Q: Aren't there basically three large ethnic divisions?*

BERGUS: In a sense you can say two. You have the northern two-thirds being Moslem and the southern one-third is animist or Christian and Nileotic, speaking a host of languages. The others are Moslems--very recent converts - until about the thirteenth or fourteenth century the Sudan was primarily a Christian country because of the Ethiopian influence.

They had a civil war, but Nimeiri had solved that, we thought, and the country had some pretty good days ahead of it. But it did not work out that way.

*Q: What happened?*

BERGUS: All sorts of things happened. For one thing economic promise had been over-blown. The investment was never made. For another, arrangements whereby the north and the south were to live together came apart and that had a direct impact on their oil situation. Just a few months before I left I remember the American people in the oil company had gotten me out of bed in the middle of the night, they had just made some very significant discoveries. But as fate would have it that oil straddled the north-south line and the oil is far enough inland that to get it to world markets you have to use of pipeline. And there has never been enough security in that area to allow such an investment.

Another thing that happened--they say this after I left- -that Nimeiri's mental health failed to such an extent that he became much more fanatically Moslem than he had certainly been in my day. He went along with those in the north who periodically tried to Islamize the south by force so that opened up the civil war again and it has just been a pathetic mess ever since. It is a pity

because this vast area with all these resources, the human resources are also very good, is just foundering there with starvation. It is a country that should be feeding a good bit of Africa and the Middle East.

*Q: Did they ever solve that problem of the irrigation program?*

BERGUS: The canal? I think they got a good start on it and then, I think, it fell a victim to the civil war, the unrest. That was very controversial among hydrologists.

*Q: Who was engaged in the civil war?*

BERGUS: The Moslems and the southerners.

*Q: I don't think most of the rest of the world is aware of what is going on there.*

BERGUS: It is far off. The numbers of people involved are not that great. Fortunately or unfortunately they fight each other with ordinary weapons. You don't have any threat of bacteriological weapons or that sort of thing. Then you have the unrest of the rest of the area. Nimeiri was very much opposed to the pro-Soviet Ethiopian rebels so they would help the southern dissidents in the Sudan to check him. Then you had the Eritreans from Ethiopia flooding into the Sudan as refugees.

*Q: Whom did they side with?*

BERGUS: They just wanted to make a living because the Eritreans themselves are divided between Christians and Moslems.

*Q: I remember the Soviets were involved in something and closed their embassy and left in a huff at one point.*

BERGUS: Well, they pulled their ambassador out. There was still an ambassador there when I left. They had been close to Nimeiri at one point and then he turned against them and they cut off aid and stopped giving spare parts for military equipment.

*Q: How did Nimeiri get along with Nasser?*

BERGUS: He was only in power for the last bit of Nasser's rule. I first met him at Nasser's funeral. He got along with Sadat but Sadat patronized the Sudanese, which they do not particularly like. Despite what they say, and despite the fact that the Sudanese of the north are fanatic Moslems, color within the Moslem and Arab world generally is still a factor. They will say, of course, "We are all brothers in Islam" but color is still a factor and don't kid yourself when they say it isn't.

*Q: While you were in the Sudan were you getting much attention from the United States?*

BERGUS: Yes. First of all Nimeiri was the one Arab leader who gave wholehearted support to Sadat in the Camp David process and all that. That was when the Iraqis first got delusions of leading the Arab world and taking it away from the Egyptians. Nimeiri was Egypt's one close and good friend. So on the basis of that I got a lot of aid out of the Department for Sudan.

*Q: They got \$27 million for special grants from IMF.*

BERGUS: They got quite a bit from us.

*Q: The Dutch canceled their debt at this time. The Sudanese were at that time \$600 million in debt--it doesn't sound like anything today.*

BERGUS: For Sudan that was a lot of money.

*Q: It was said that their development plans were too ambitious.*

BERGUS: Yes, that was right. I got so tired of the IMF and the World Bank. They have a patent compound. They come to all these countries and say, "Stop expenditure, reduce imports, etc., etc." and these are all third world guys themselves living in Bethesda [a wealthy Washington, D.C. suburb] and places like that in fancy houses paid by the international community. Then they immediately become hard-faced bankers once they get to Washington. I don't have too much time for them.

*Q: Now in 1979 were they having trouble with Egypt on the Jomblat canal?*

BERGUS: That was not a real problem. The theory was that once you built the Jomblat canal you were in effect creating an additional amount of Nile water and under the terms of the Egyptian-Sudanese agreement some of that water would go to Egypt. But there was no blood spilled over that issue. It was there, but nobody got very excited over it. They knew that once it was done they would work out something.

*Q: Had things gotten bad economically?*

BERGUS: The debt kept piling up and then the Christian-Moslem thing came up. That was when the Ikhwan (Doctrinaire Moslem Brethren) grew in power.

*Q: Strategically, did we feel that Sudan was part of what we call the Horn?*

BERGUS: No, Sudan is sort of on the edge of the Horn. The idea was that we were concerned about Soviet influence growing in the Horn and a developing, relatively happy Sudan would be a good thing to use against them, to counteract it. I think we expected much too much. It could have been, it had everything. There is so much that could have been done with that country plus they have oil.

*Q: You never hear of the oil.*

BERGUS: The oil companies are not worried--they say the safest place to keep it is in the ground. It is there and they know it. Someday it is going to be used. And the human resources--they are nice people. Their university had very high standards. The Sudanese were very highly regarded in Saudi Arabia and other oil states because they spoke Arabic and they spoke English and they did not mess in local politics. That was sucking away talent from the Sudan, at vast expense training these people in the university and then having them get on the next boat to Saudi Arabia.

*Q: I wonder if they are coming back now?*

BERGUS: Most of the Sudanese are on the Western side of the Arabian peninsula, in the Hejaz. They were not in the oil fields. They were merchants, accountants and the like.

*Q: How were relations with Ethiopia?*

BERGUS: Difficult, while I was there. The Eritrean problem was an issue. The Ethiopians have cause for complaint. The Eritreans were getting help in their military struggle against Ethiopians and they were getting help through Sudan, not so much from Sudan.

**MAJORIE RANSOM**  
**North Africa and Sudan Desk Officer, USIA**  
**Washington, DC (1978-1980)**

*Marjorie Ransom was born in New York in 1938. She received her bachelor's degree from Trinity University in 1959 and her master's degree from Columbia University in 1962. Her career includes positions in Jordan, India, Iran, Yemen, Washington D.C., Abu Dhabi, Syria, and Egypt. Mrs. Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 2000.*

*Q: You left there in '78. Whither?*

RANSOM: We came back to the United States. This was really a result of our inability at that time to come up with two joint assignments. So, we came back to Washington. I went to the Near East Office in USIA and David went to NEA at State.

*Q: You were in the Near East Office in USIA from when to when this time?*

RANSOM: 1978 to... I was desk officer for three years. So, that took up me to '81. I was desk officer first for North Africa and Sudan. The next two years, I was desk officer for Egypt, Jordan, and the West Bank.

*Q: The desk in USIA was really quite different than in the State Department, wasn't it? It's not a policy...*

RANSOM: It's not a policy-making agent. The office provided program, budget, and logistical support to the posts.

*Q: How did you find these three years?*

RANSOM: I loved them. You got to know everybody in USIA in all the different offices by coordinating all the efforts abroad. You got to know your State counterparts.

*Q: This was during the Carter period. Who was the Director of USIA?*

RANSOM: John Reinhardt.

*Q: How did you find his regime?*

RANSOM: John was always mysterious. People felt he could have been more active. He commanded respect for fairness, but not for innovative programs. I didn't get to know him very well.

*Q: What were the major things that you dealt with? Let's start with the North African side.*

RANSOM: We had a lot of administrative and personnel issues in our posts in North Africa. 1978-1981. We had an evacuation during that period of time.

*Q: That would be '79.*

RANSOM: After the hostage taking in Iran, we brought a lot of people back to the U.S. Then we couldn't get those who should have been able to go back to post back. I spent a lot of time on the issues of the evacuees.

*Q: The Embassy in Islamabad was attacked.*

RANSOM: It was awful.

*Q: It was a very difficult time. What do you do with a bunch of people coming back? The Middle East is the one place where when it happens, it happens all over.*

RANSOM: We had evacuees from the whole area. Once you withdraw people, it's very hard to get them back. We had spouses who had jobs at post and they lost the jobs. I remember one in particular who was a teacher. They replaced her and she was stuck in the U.S. The allowances for evacuation were running out and her husband was there, while she had many children to look after here. We spent a lot of time trying to facilitate their return, to figure out meaningful ways to do it that would treat all the evacuees equally. It was problematic, because you had different situations in different countries. It was extremely difficult also to put together public diplomacy programs that would have meaning in the area after all these tumultuous events...



*Q: I've talked to people like David Mack and others who were vehement in not wanting to be pulled out of their posts when and where there really wasn't much of a threat. But it was sort of a blanket pulling out.*

RANSOM: Treating them all the same.

*Q: Yes. Each country was quite different and the threat was different.*

RANSOM: That's right.

*Q: You mentioned you had Sudan at one point. We had our Ambassador and DCM murdered there in Khartoum. That must have meant that we were treating it very cautiously. That was during the Nixon period, the beginning of the '70s. What was the aftermath of that? Those were Palestinian assassins.*

RANSOM: That's right. It was a terrorist group. When I was responsible for Sudan, we had a fairly good-sized public diplomacy program there. We worked closely with the university. We had a Fulbright program. Whether there was an aid presence there at that point in '78, I'm not sure. It was very frustrating being responsible for Sudan because you couldn't talk to Khartoum very easily by telephone.

*Q: Was Algeria a problem? Later, the fundamentalists caused it to be a very dangerous place. But it was never a very happy post, was it?*

RANSOM: Well, the people we had in Algeria in the later seventies liked it. We had a very large successful English teaching program right near the embassy. When I went there, to mail the post, I lunched with some Algerians from the government. I remember visiting the kasbah. It wasn't a happy place. It was desperately poor. The Algerians were considered dour, but they were very interested certainly in the cultural activities we engaged in. That certainly changed later.

*Q: Egypt was... You were there when the Camp David Accords came out. We were putting tremendous effort into Egypt in order to keep them from fighting the Israelis.*

RANSOM: Yes. And Sadat had a very logical framework to work with the Israelis.

*Q: Sadat was riding high at this point. He was killed shortly after you left, in '81.*

RANSOM: When I was responsible for Egypt, we organized a tremendous cultural program with Egypt called Egypt Today that was done in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution. This was certainly an effort that was meant to bolster a close relationship. It included modern art exhibits, antiquities, movies, costumes, performers, and a whole host of activities. It was very exciting and successful. Jihan Sadat came for the opening event. Charles Wick was the head of USIA at the time.

*Q: Wick took over... What was the initial reaction to Charlie Wick becoming director of USIA?*

RANSOM: I think there was a lot of opposition in the ranks and a lot of criticism. He was visionary in the way he started our television service and got us moving in video. Wick had a tremendous relationship with President Reagan, which he used to get us all kinds of resources. In retrospect, he probably was one of the most dynamic directors USIA has ever had.

*Q: He also could get money, too.*

RANSOM: He got resources left and right. He could get access to the White House any time he wanted to. He was a funny little guy. In diplomatic situations, he never acted diplomatic. He made a lot of social gaffs. He had very little interest in foreign policy as such. He wasn't good at discussing the issues. That annoyed several ambassadors, certainly in our part of the world. It was shortsighted of us. Had we been able to look beyond that, we would have been much more appreciative.

*Q: How did USIA deal with Israel? It was the same area?*

RANSOM: Absolutely.

*Q: In a way, it seems almost superfluous to have much of a program in Israel.*

RANSOM: We devoted a lot of our effort to normalization. We would try to find ways to bring Arabs and Israelis together in our cultural programs. It was extremely difficult. We would organize multi-regional visitor programs, for example. You had people from all over the world. If a PAO were able to send Arabs on multi-regional programs that Israelis were participating in, they would get double the number of programs that they would otherwise get. It was a great incentive for finding ways to do this. It wasn't easy. A lot of times, it would disrupt other programs that we were doing, but the point was to get Israeli and Arab professionals who had similar interests together in various ways. Some of them did succeed.

**HARMON E. KIRBY**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)**  
**Khartoum (1979-1981)**

*Ambassador Harmon E. Kirby was born in 1934 in Ohio. He graduated from Harvard University in 1956, and served in the US Army from 1956 to 1958. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961 and has served posts in Switzerland, India, Belgium, Sudan, Morocco, and Togo. Ambassador Kirby was interviewed on August 31, 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

KIRBY: I came back on leave and had a little bit of training here, and then at the end of the Summer of 1979 became the Deputy Chief of Mission in Khartoum.

*Q: So you were in Khartoum from when to when?*

KIRBY: August of 1979-August of 1981.

*Q: How did you get the job? This was somewhat out of your bailiwick, wasn't it?*

KIRBY: Yes and no. There's a certain logic to it in a way. First of all, I think it had more to do with the old NEA network than anything else. There was a time, long ago of course, when the Sudan was handled out of NEA. More importantly, I thought I wanted to be a DCM and get back to the developing world. I saw that one of the jobs coming open was DCM in the Sudan, and so I applied for it, as did many others. The Ambassador in Khartoum at the time was Donald Bergus, a senior, respected Foreign Service officer who had been our Deputy Chief of Mission in Ankara when I had had the Turkish desk here in Washington. He had been Chargé in Cairo after the 1967 war, and had previously been head of the Egyptian Country Directorate in the mid-1960's. But I had really gotten to know him during our joint Turkish period. When I used to go to Turkey, I would visit with him and so when he saw that I was one of the applicants for the job he very kindly invited me to come out to Khartoum from Brussels and take a look at the place and job to make sure I really wanted to do it. It was a rare and unique opportunity, so I took him up on it. I flew out and saw it visually as a pretty austere place, but I felt that the professional challenge was there and I would like to take it on. In the Winter-Spring of 1979 I had the choice of going to Khartoum or of staying on for a fourth year in Brussels, which I liked very much by the way, far more than I had expected to; I liked the USEC mission enormously. As I said, I had the choice of staying in Brussels or going off to Khartoum. When I opted for Khartoum, as nearly as I remember it, 50% of my colleagues and close friends in Brussels said that I had lost my mind, and the other 50% said that they understood my decision. So with that divided counsel ringing in my ears, I took my family and went off to Khartoum.

*Q: In the first place, how did your family react going to one of the hottest climates in the world? It's austere, the climate is very difficult.*

KIRBY: Well, let me take the last point first. It was probably in many ways the best time to serve in Khartoum in the last 20-25 years. I'll come to some of the hardships later, but at least we had very good state-to-state relations during that 1979-1981 period. We were at that time busy restoring the bilateral relationship. For wholly understandable reasons, relations between Washington and Khartoum had gone into the deep freeze. We had totally broken relations with the Sudan when the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) killed two of our diplomats in Khartoum in 1973. We thought that Khartoum was partly responsible or at least hadn't vigorously gone after the perpetrators in the aftermath. And so things were pretty frigid in our relations through the end of the 1970's. But starting in about 1978 we began restoring relations and during the 1979-1981 period we expanded our presence there: we created a military attaché's office, and an office of military cooperation in the embassy. Our economic assistance went from about two million dollars a year to something over 100 million annually. The military assistance relationship, which had been non-existent, went to over 100 million annually. And President Nimeiri in 1979, very courageously, was the only Arab ruler to support Sadat's signing of the Camp David Accords and suffered in his relationships with the rest of the Arab world because of that. And also, when things went badly in Iran, Nimeiri was openly condemnatory of Khomeini and the Mullahs. Thus, relations were very good between Khartoum and Washington. It was not

a period of high personal risk for Americans serving there. So, in that respect, it was a good time to be in Khartoum.

But, when my family first heard about it, what was their reaction? They didn't quite know what they were getting into. My wife was eager to go. The children were young. I think our son, who was then nine, was excited by the idea of going to what he considered to be far off Africa. Our daughter, I think, viewed it with mixed emotions, because she was 14, and this move would entail her being placed in school in England during our years in the Sudan, with her visiting us on holiday periods. Just to fast forward, let me say that as it turned out, the family liked it enormously. I'd never had any reason to doubt that I was part of a real Foreign Service family, but it really was gratifying nonetheless to see their reactions. In the summer, or spring, I guess of 1981, when I learned that I would be coming back to go to the Senior Seminar here in Washington, my family, all three members, were disappointed. They asked whether I could ask Washington to request a third year in the Sudan. This is amazing in a way because it was a very austere life. Even though at a political level and in terms of personal security there were no problems, we were in an environment where living was hard. There was the extreme heat, which you referred to, electric outages which could go on for 14 days at one period (thank goodness we had generators by that time, but they were loud, noisy and smelly). It was very hard to put a meal on the table. There just wasn't very much food available. There was plenty of good beef available and Nile perch, but that was about it. The market rarely had many vegetables or salads. So, there was a certain sameness to the food day after day. Putting a representational function together when we were having people in, really took some ingenuity; you really had to scramble to get enough food. As in so many things, I take my hat off to my wife in that regard. So, it was a very austere environment, but there was something special, a bit of the frontier spirit. There we lived at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile. Going across the old city and out to the edge of Omdurman to the camel market and the camel races on Friday, or going off into the desert to see the pyramids at Meroe, or 300 miles across the desert to see some animals in a primitive game park--in all this you had a real sense of adventure. Altogether, it was a very good life, and we loved it.

*Q: During the 1979-1981 period that you were there was Nimeiri the President the whole time?*

KIRBY: Nimeiri was President the whole time and still in pretty good shape. The threat from the Islamic fundamentalists was not then as palpable as it later became. He still had his own personal stability and balance. He was, in general, in control of things. We had very good access to him, so it was a government with which you could maintain a good dialogue on issues that mattered. And, we had a lot of issues that mattered. In the Middle East and North Africa, we were able to work with the Sudanese Government on these in a very sensible and constructive way. It was a surprisingly good working environment at the time.

*Q: You were there during the whole period of our difficulty with Iran, when they seized the Embassy. Here you had a government that when the PLO had taken over and killed our Ambassador and DCM Cleo Noel and Curt Moore, had been not a very helpful entity. I mean the Sudanese eventually got the killers out (of the country) and hadn't done really very much to help. And yet here is this Islamic fundamentalist takeover, albeit Shiite, of our embassy in Tehran and yet they seemed to have taken a course somewhat different than most of the other Arab countries.*

KIRBY: That was a very bad autumn all together--the autumn of 1979. You've mentioned the takeover of our facilities and our people in Iran. One Sunday up in Libya that fall they tried to burn our Embassy down, and over in Pakistan they did burn the Embassy and a couple of people got killed. It was a tough time all through the area. The Fundamentalists were underground in the Sudan and a somewhat inchoate group at that time. Nimeiri believed that his and the Sudan's security interests rested in having a good, responsible, constructive relationship with Egypt. So that's why against all the sentiment of the Arab world, he was prepared to back Sadat in his opening toward Israel and peace with Israel. The history of Sudanese domestic politics suggests that there has always been a party that allegedly got part of its political, spiritual and cultural guidance from Egypt, with another group getting its inspiration from other sources, including the Koran directly at times. But Nimeiri, at least during that period--later he was to change--in effect threw in his lot with Egypt. Having brokered the Middle East Peace Process and the Camp David Accord, the U.S. was certainly at pains to nudge him forward to stick with Sadat. Sudan is surrounded by a lot of unlovely neighbors. Unlovely, not as people or in terrain, but in many of their actions, maybe unlovely in their leadership, at least at that time. I think the Sudan is touched by at least eight different countries. As neighbors, Nimeiri had Qadhafi, he had Chad--things going badly in Chad--Idi Amin, with things doing badly in Uganda, and Mengistu in Ethiopia. Also, problem-ridden Zaire touches the Sudan. So, in Nimeiri's place, one looks for zones and measures of stability and I think that's what he did. Anyway, he decided that what he thought the Mullahs stood for in Iran, and what Qadhafi seemed to stand for in another vein, was not what the Sudan needed. We were at pains to encourage that sentiment, as was Sadat in Egypt. This is why Nimeiri was the only one of the Arab leaders to support us on the Camp David Accords and was virtually ostracized at Arab League gatherings for some time after that.

*Q: I take it that you mentioned the growth of our military assistance and our aid assistance, this was all really tied to this, wasn't it?*

KIRBY: Yes, it was. This was the early stage of our restoring relations with the Sudan which came after the many political shocks of 1979 which we mentioned above. Finally, with the Soviets going into Afghanistan in December of that year, this whole area was the cockpit of Brzezinski's Arc of Crisis. Some of our current arrangements in the Middle East military and otherwise, were then just getting started or were just a glimmer in someone's planning. We were thinking about possible needs for the future, e.g., pre-positioning of equipment. While I don't think we contracted for any specific real estate or use rights with the Sudanese in my time, nonetheless as we thought about the Red Sea and the Port of Sudan, we wanted to be sure this big country to the south of Egypt was inclining in a generally favorable direction. And thus, we had a surprisingly large number of Congressional leaders come to the Sudan. A large delegation from the House Armed Services Committee came twice, partly because they liked to travel, I think, but also to get to know Sudanese officials. Frank Carlucci at that time was Deputy Secretary (later Secretary) of Defense, came for talks with the Sudanese. In general, we were trying to move them into a position which, as we elaborated our presence in the Middle East, would be compatible with U.S. interests.

*Q: What was our view of Qadhafi during this time? He was messing around in Chad at that time, wasn't he? He was certainly making things as difficult as he could for Sadat and for Nimeiri. How did we view him?*

KIRBY: I think that all through that period he was viewed with alarm and was seen as a force for instability in the region. I can remember that from the U.S. popular press to the discussions we had with other governments, the notion of somehow finding a way to isolate Qadhafi and keep him in a box, was very much in play. Although I don't have details, I think that feeling of dismay about Qadhafi and the sense of wanting to see his claws clipped intensified after the Reagan administration came to power. I think that in 1981 you began to see attempts to tighten the screws. But, for whatever reasons, he's still there, in Libya, although not much heard from these days.

*Q: What was the reaction to...in the first place...did we have much intelligence about what Qadhafi was doing while you were there?*

KIRBY: I don't know that we had a lot of specific intelligence, I don't remember that we did. We certainly knew that, in his discussions with other Arab leaders, he was running down Nimeiri, that he had a mischievous hand in Chad and that some of that war was overlapping into the Sudan. And then, I've forgotten what occasioned it frankly, but there was the idiotic episode during my time in the Sudan when Qadhafi sent a plane in on a bombing run to drop a couple of bombs someplace in the Sudan. That didn't do any damage but that was seen as a gesture of his dislike of Nimeiri and the Sudan. So it was clear that there was tension, but it wasn't at the boiling point.

*Q: As we were giving military aid was this sort of looking toward giving them some way to respond...?*

KIRBY: Partly, if need be. That if out on the Western borders, Qadhafi began to stir dissonance among the tribes, this would help the Sudanese fend him off.

*Q: What about the Soviet takeover or attempt to take over Afghanistan in December 1979. This was part of the new Brezhnev doctrine. This was the first time they were basically expanding their empire or whatever you want to call it. Did that have any repercussions in terms of the Sudanese?*

KIRBY: In terms of Nimeiri and company, yes. I think the Sudanese government at the time saw it as confirmatory of what they, we, and others thought was going on in the world. That is that the Soviets and their friends were stirring the pot, seeking targets of opportunity and doing what they could to de-stabilize unwary governments.

*Q: What about Israel? How did we view...I'm talking about you and the group there. I mean this was an Arab post and although you weren't an Arab hand, Don Bergus was and others were. How was Israel viewed at that time?*

KIRBY: Well, we all supported the peace process. Bergus certainly did. Out of his earlier Egyptian experience, he had a high regard for Sadat. I, like many others, had been stunned and even exhilarated, sitting in Brussels one Sunday afternoon in the late 1970's watching Sadat on TV on his sudden trip to Israel, going in to address the Knesset and so on. So, I think we all felt, at least at Embassy Khartoum, that things were moving in the right direction. There were many other problems remaining between the Arabs and the Israelis, but at least for the first time since the creation of the State of Israel and all the turmoil that had followed that in terms of Israeli-Arab tensions, at last maybe it was possible to negotiate, to make new land arrangements, etc. So, we were generally very supportive and talked along those lines to the Sudanese and to our other diplomatic colleagues.

*Q: Did you find easy access to the government of the Sudan?*

KIRBY: It was extremely easy. Successively we had as Ambassador Don Bergus, and he was followed by Bill Kontos, both excellent Ambassadors. There was a hiatus of three or four months after Bergus' departure and before Kontos' arrival when I was chargé, but I also had very good access to Nimeiri during my period as chargé. I could get in to see Nimeiri anytime I needed to, and I needed to fairly frequently. Similarly with the two Vice Presidents (there were two Vice Presidents in their system). As DCM, I called regularly on the Foreign Minister and on the Vice Presidents. The two Ambassadors obviously had very easy access. In terms of working relationships, it was a very good time to be in the Sudan.

*Q: A little nuts and bolts. You say you would call on Nimeiri. What types of things would you call on him for?*

KIRBY: There were many issues on which I went to see him--e.g., to get his read-out on Arab summits he attended. Perhaps I can describe the most dramatic matter which I discussed with him. I suggested earlier that he and Ethiopia's Mengistu were very suspicious of each other. Mengistu and his gang of senior Ethiopian government leaders came over to Khartoum on a state visit in 1980 or 1981. This was part of a new effort to relax relations between the two countries. He came over with a lot of "hoopla" for a two or three day visit. In the middle of the night I received a message from Washington saying the Department may well be giving me a "mission impossible" but that they wanted me to try very hard to carry it out. My instruction said by way of background that the U.S. had intelligence that Mengistu was planning to attack Somalia as soon as he returned home from the Sudan. The telegram stated that Mengistu's military arrangements were already in place and that the U.S. had absolutely no doubt whatever about plans to attack. This was over the Ogaden. The instruction was for me to try my very best to see Nimeiri personally and ask him to tell Mengistu that this was a "no go," and that there would be serious consequences if he attacked. I was also instructed to try to get Nimeiri to put the matter to Mengistu in context of Mengistu's attempts to improve relationships with the Sudan. Mengistu was already in town and I thought that getting to Nimeiri directly at that time might be impossible. But I called the Minister to the Presidency and I said, "This is an unusual time, but I have some extraordinarily hot instructions from Washington and I need to see your boss. However, I am perfectly willing to tell you what it is about." He said, "OK, come over to the Presidential Palace. Security is incredibly tight but come over--tell me what car you will be in, and I'll make sure you get in." So, I went in to see the Minister in question. I didn't lay the whole

thing out in detail, but I said here's what this is about, and my instructions are to see the President; I'd really like to do it. Washington insists that I do it." He said, "On something like that, I think you should too...don't go away." He went up and interrupted a Nimeiri-Mengistu conversation by whispering in Nimeiri's ear. Nimeiri allegedly whispered back, "Well, hold on to the American chargé, give him coffee or something, and when there's a break in these proceedings I'll see him." This was highly classified at the time, but I guess I can talk about it now.

In any case, when there was a break in his talks, Nimeiri received me and said, "I'd like you to give me Washington's instruction to you verbatim. What did they say? So they say the intelligence is compelling?" And I said, "Yes, Mr. President, it is compelling...he has the arrangements in place to do it." So he said, "Well, alright, when he and I resume very shortly, I will raise this first thing and here's what I'd like you to report back to Washington...I'm going to tell him it is a silly thing to do...all the reasons why he shouldn't do it but specifically, I'm going to emphasize that the whole purpose of these meetings here in Khartoum will be undercut...this effort to ameliorate relations between us. I will take it as an act of bad faith if he comes here to talk about peace in the region and then does this. I intend to know that, and one way or another, I will confirm to you what I said and of his response." I said, "Thank you very much. We feel it is urgent. Washington wouldn't have asked me to come here if we didn't think this were terribly and fundamentally important." He indicated that he accepted that. All of this occurred in the late morning. When I arrived at the Presidential Palace with my wife that night for the State dinner that Nimeiri was giving for his Ethiopian guests, waiting at the door was the Minister of Presidential Affairs, who signaled me and asked me to follow him. The Minister and I went into a little ante-room, and he said, "You'll get a chance to shake hands with the two Presidents again tonight, but you may not have an opportunity for conversation so the President instructed me to tell you the following." I took out my notebook so he would know that I was taking it down exactly as he spoke it. The Minister indicated that Nimeiri had said that he wanted me to tell Washington that he had raised the Somalia matter very directly with Mengistu in the words that he had used with me that morning...that he had used verbatim what he had said to me that morning and that he had come down very heavily on Mengistu that an attack on Somalia following his Khartoum visit would be a very serious set-back between Sudan and Ethiopia. This was a time when Mengistu and Nimeiri were supporting dissidents in each other's country, so both had something to gain from a stand-down. But Nimeiri, in using the phrase, "This will be a further set-back to our relations", in effect used a bargaining chip in his hands. Nimeiri had the Minister tell me that at the end of his recitation, Mengistu looked at him a long moment and said, "I understand, but Mr. President, I have absolutely no intention of attacking Somalia." Who knows precisely what the cause and effect relationships were in this episode, in the end. We thought our intelligence was accurate. The fact of the matter is, when Mengistu went home, we did notice that some of the troop dispositions were relaxed on the Ogaden front, and the attack did not take place. Again, while I don't know what the full cause and effect relationships were, I had a feeling at the time that we contributed importantly to a stand-down there. In any case, that was probably the most dramatic thing I had to take up with Nimeiri.

*Q: What about internally in the Sudan? One knows about the North-South conflict basically the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south, the more Arabic North and the more black south. What was happening during the time you were there?*



KIRBY: Mercifully and happily, it was a period of stand-down, a peaceful period. The civil war was over, we all thought. Nimeiri had during the civil conflict, been the general in charge of the northern troops and had worked out a deal with the south. It seemed to be working. One could travel in the south, as we did. Sudan had two Vice Presidents from north and south Sudan, and there were prominent southerners in various senior government positions. Nimeiri was sort of the "lynch-pin". The southerners had a phrase they used when they talked about him. They said that he had been--this is not quite verbatim but it will give you the spirit--he had been a hard foe but a generous peace-maker, something of that sort. He was the one northerner they trusted. They didn't see him as an Islamic fundamentalist or as a hard-line Arab, if you will. And he didn't conduct himself as a hard-line Arab vis-a-vis the south. It was a period of calm on that front. The domestic political tensions, such as they were, though they were not extreme at that time, had more to do with the traditional tensions between the major northern political opponents, which I referred to obliquely earlier, the two major political groupings in the north. But the Islamists and the hard-line Arabs were not in a sufficiently strong position to do anything negative toward the south, and the military was quiescent at that time.

*Q: Political reporting...we all want to know how things are going. The Sudan is a huge country but it sort of gets lost because so much of it is untouched, but how do you politically report on an area such as the south? It's important to know what's happening there, but I think it would just be very difficult to get to the right people and to places, the whole thing.*

KIRBY: You've used the key word...difficult. I was going to say with difficulty and with no assurance that you're getting the full story. There was the occasional trip by somebody from the Embassy, but travel is difficult in the Sudan, even when things are normal. Distances are very great and transport is uncertain. When you get down to Juba, the southern capital, your access to other major southern towns like Wau and what have you is limited. And so you made an occasional visit, you talk to the occasional travelers or people coming up to Khartoum. It is an uncertain art but you do it to the extent you can and in the best way you can.

*Q: You are reporting on what? Do you rely on people coming up--aid workers, other people who are working in these areas?*

KIRBY: There were many foreigners working on projects in southern Sudan. But the other thing I would say is that while we did the normal amount of political reporting out of the Sudan, it was not a great flood of reporting. Domestic politics was fairly quiescent during that period. And while this is not wholly true now, what was especially salient politically at that time was happening mostly in the north and you could sort of get at it. But, the Sudanese are fairly closed people. While they are generous with their hospitality toward foreigners, they are very inward looking and close-mouth in their politics. There's not a lot of politics out floating around publicly. There was never a free press where you'd read a lot of things. But by talking to professors at the University, by talking to people in the government administration who had families in various parts of the country, you could put the mosaic together. It would give you a reasonable picture.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the...I'm not sure quite what the term was, the Islamists or the Fundamentalists?*

KIRBY: Yes. Although the Fundamentalists were not rampant, they were still an important force and I myself had very ready access to and a very good relationship with the one who even then was considered to be Godfather of Sudan's Fundamentalists, Hassan Al-Turabi. Half way through my period there, when the Fundamentalists were getting a little stronger, there was an attempt made by the government to coopt him; he was made Minister of Justice. I could call on him at any time I wanted to and I often ran into him at representational functions. There was one other Minister of that same political persuasion, the Minister of Labor or Civil Service or something of that sort...I had very good access to him as well. But these guys, they always spoke with "two voices", just as Hassan Al-Turabi does today, in my view. Hassan Al-Turabi is Oxford educated, he knows what a Westerner wants to hear. So it's always the benign side of what his group is for that he is articulating to you. You know, they claim they wouldn't do anything to harm anybody, but behind the scenes they do some very different, very scary things. But we had good access to them at that level at that time.

*Q: Did you notice any change in how we dealt with them when the Reagan Administration came in? Were you there long enough to have a feel for it?*

KIRBY: Well, I was there only until August of 1981, only seven months into the Reagan Administration. But, no there was no change visible in the Sudan because Nimeiri was still very much in power, still very much in charge of things. As I said earlier, we believed in maintaining good relations with all shades of opinion and so it was in our interest to talk to people like Hassan Al-Turabi. There were no strictures put on the Embassy's ability to maintain that kind of informal dialogue with those whom we thought were prominent in the Fundamentalists movement in the Sudan. And in the Sudanese context, I would say in the first months of the Reagan Administration, there was no visible change. Now when Nimeiri began to slip and the Fundamentalists began to come on more strongly a couple of years later, it may be that our attitudes and how we talked to these people changed, but I wasn't there at the time so I don't really know.

*Q: Before we go to the Senior Seminar, was there any other thing we should cover?*

KIRBY: I don't think so. Those were two good years in the Sudan--two interesting years in an always turbulent area.

**C. WILLIAM KONTOS**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1980-1983)**

*Ambassador C. William Kontos was born in Illinois in 1922. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1948 and served in the US Army from 1943-1946. His career included work for AID in locations such as Greece, Sri Lanka,*

*Nigeria, Pakistan, and Lebanon, and additionally he served as Ambassador to the Sudan. Ambassador Kontos was interviewed on February 2, 1992 by Thomas Stern.*

*Q: In 1980, you finished your tour as Director of the Sinai Support Mission and were appointed as Ambassador to the Sudan. How did that come about?*

KONTOS: As I said, in the course of my Sinai work, I had come to know the Secretary and the other principals on the Seventh Floor. I suppose it was deemed by them appropriate that I be given some recognition for a successful operation and the ambassadorship to the Sudan came open. Dick Moose, then the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, asked me whether I would be interested. Then I got a formal call from Ben Read to ask me the same question on behalf of the Secretary. And I told both "Yes". In fact, there was another ambassadorial vacancy and I was asked which I preferred. I picked the Sudan.

*Q: What was the situation in the Sudan when you got there?*

KONTOS: The Sudan was at that time already under the long term domination of General Gaafar Nimeiri. His regime had started in 1969, following a coup he engineered. He made himself President. He tried to emulate Nasser and the young officers' revolution movement of Egypt. He tried to follow Egypt's model politically, and associated himself with the Soviet Union. In the immediate aftermath of his coup, there was an extended honeymoon with the Soviets, which included a large, in the several thousands, Soviet advisory presence, both in the economic and in the military fields. Remnants of that era still continue today. For example, in the outskirts of Khartoum, there is a large hospital built by the Soviets; there are still Soviet built roads and other manifestations of a close, cordial and important relationship between the Sudan and the Soviet Union. The Sudanese communists with overweening ambition decided that Nimeiri was too great an obstacle to their long term objectives and attempted to remove him through a coup in 1972. The coup was aborted in a few days and thanks to some fast footwork, he was able to escape their clutches, although he had been incarcerated by them for a couple of days. Nimeiri escaped and mounted a counter-attack with some loyal troops. When he returned to power, he proceeded to eliminate the presence of both Soviets and local communists. He executed a number of the ring leaders; the Sudan's relationship with the Soviet Union became cold and distant and ultimately the whole Soviet aid effort and its special programs were ended. The U.S. at the time had been in something of a limbo; we had an Embassy and an Ambassador, but relationships were very strained. It was also during this period that Palestinian terrorists took over the Saudi residence during a farewell party being given for our departing Ambassador, Cleo Noel. He and his DCM were imprisoned in the Saudi residence; valiant attempts were made to negotiate their release--Bill Macomber was despatched to Khartoum to free Noel, but a sand storm delayed his arrival. In the confusion and in the absence of good communications, the terrorist apparently felt that they had been double-crossed or not given the necessary assurances and proceeded to assassinate Cleo and his DCM. The relationships between the U.S. and the Sudan were already rocky; this episode turned them sour even though the terrorists were captured and incarcerated. Later they were transferred to a jail in Cairo, where they still languish, as far as I know. After Nasser's death in 1970, the Soviet influence waned considerably in Egypt and Sadat threw them out soon after taking office.

By the time I arrived in 1980, U.S. relationships with the Sudan were beginning to warm up. I arrived during a transition from the end of Soviet influence to a growing acceptance by Sudan of the U.S. That resulted in a growth in our aid program, both economic and military. By the end of my three years there, the Sudan had one of the largest aid programs in Africa, well over \$150 million including military and economic assistance.

The Sudan is astride the Nile River which gives life and sustenance to Egypt. At least a neutral and preferably a friendly Sudan is very much in our interests. Sudan borders on seven other countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Zaire, the Central African Republic, Chad and Libya. So it is surrounded by a number of volatile neighbors. That Sudan can be a bastion of stability inclined favorably to the West, is very much in our interest and of vital importance to Egypt.

We also viewed Sudan as an offset to Libya. There was a growing estrangement between Qadhafi and Nimeiri. In fact, during my tour, it turned into a vitriolic hatred; they would call each other harsh names. This was also the period during which the Libyans moved into the Chad, with elements of Libyan armed forces trying to sustain rebels in Darfur, the most western province of the Sudan. That certainly further inflamed the tensions between Libya and the Sudan.

In the civil war in Ethiopia, the Tigreans and the other opposition groups to the Mengistu regime were given sanctuary and sustenance by the Sudan. The Sudan greatly helped the Mengistu opposition. Our basic objective for the Sudan was to induce an Arabic speaking country to take moderate positions on Middle East issues. Only Egypt, the Sudan and one other Arab country--Morocco,--publicly supported the Camp David accords.

We did not have any economic interests in the Sudan. An American oil company--Chevron--made an intense effort to find oil and was successful. It was finding more when the current civil war broke out in the Sudan in mid-83. The Sudan was then well on its way to becoming a respectable oil producer--something comparable by conservative estimates to Tunisia. There were indications that potentially sizeable reserves might be found. There was considerable speculation that the large area called the Sudd, which is a gigantic swamp through which the White Nile flows, might well contain very large pools of oil. That was our major economic interest. Most of the oil found by Chevron was in the south. Some of it was in the border area between the north and the south and Nimeiri, in one of his less felicitous moments, tried to redraft the maps by extending the north to include the areas of Chevron's finds. That caused a great uproar in the south. We were mindful, of course, of the fact the Sudan shares the Red Sea with Saudi Arabia which made Port Sudan a marginally important strategic asset. We had finally reached agreement with the government to preposition military equipment in Port Sudan for use by American forces in case of any hostilities in that part of the world.

*Q: The Sudan is not a homogeneous country. It is divided into several parts. Tell us something about the internal political issues.*

KONTOS: There is west Sudan--the provinces of Kordofan and Darfur--which, although nominally Muslim, has very distinctive tribal identities. Then there is the rather exotic tribe of the Fur who live in the southern part of Darfur. So the west is a distinct regional entity. Then

there is the south filled by a large number of black tribes--Shilluks, Dinka, Nuer, etc--each with its own sense of identity. There was a growing Christian community in the south because under British colonial policies as conducted by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, proselytizing was only permitted in the south. So both the Catholics and the Protestants were very active in that region, establishing missions and schools. They could not function in Muslim dominated areas. This created the very interesting phenomenon that 15% of the southern population, according to my own guess, including almost all of the southern elite, are Christian--mostly Protestant, but some Catholic as well. The balance of the population are either Muslim or animists, following their own tribal deities. The southern Sudan is a very rich mixture of tribes, cultures, languages, religions and unfortunately, a long history of animosity internally and vis a vis the North.

Our political relationships with the Sudan while I was there worked well. Nimeiri was very helpful to us because he maintained a barrier against Libyan expansionist goals. The French and we were trying to get Libya out of Chad and he supported us in that effort. Nimeiri showed great solidarity with Egypt and with Saudi Arabia. He handled the post Camp David period very well from our point of view by sticking with Egypt when it became isolated in the Arab world. As I mentioned earlier, the Sudan agreed to preposition equipment in Port Sudan and that was very helpful. We held joint military exercises. During my tour, the Sudan became increasingly a close friend to the United States.

*Q: You earlier mentioned the major assistance programs we were conducting in the Sudan. What was their nature and what were we trying to achieve?*

KONTOS: The Sudan has an extraordinary agricultural potential. In fact, it was described by earlier economists as the potential "bread basket" of the Arab world. It has hundreds of acres of untilled land. Some large agriculture areas were irrigated thanks to the major efforts made by the British in building canals and other appurtenances required for irrigation. We, in developing our assistance programs, recognized the high costs of irrigation and the inevitable productivity diminution over time and began to concentrate on the rain-fed parts of the Sudan through various programs like extension work, seed development and other projects designed to increase the productivity of that agriculture.

The Sudan has aquifers, but we did not consider them as an economic source of water, unlike Qadhafi who is constructing a huge pipeline from the aquifers in the southern part of Libya to the north at a tremendous cost that will make use of that water entirely uneconomical.

While agriculture was the main focus of our assistance programs, we did look at the economy as a whole and tried to persuade the Sudanese to shed some of their government corporations, all which were losing money. We were successful to some degree in that effort and they did privatize some of their corporations and they did start moving into a market economy. This was another aspect of our relationship which we considered helpful; they did move away from a rigid socialist dogma propounded by their erstwhile Soviet advisors.

*Q: Did you have enough sufficiently trained Sudanese to work with?*

KONTOS: We had enough; certainly not a surplus, but an adequate number to handle the problems. The ministries were fairly well staffed by British trained bureaucrats, although by the time I arrived, a number had left the Sudan to go to the Gulf states where there were jobs that were much more remunerative. They sent remittances back to their families in the Sudan. So there was a considerable "brain drain" that went on while we were in the Sudan which continues even today. Despite this exodus, there was an adequate cadre of trained Sudanese with whom we could deal. Also the University of Khartoum, which was a respectable academic institution, and a couple of other good universities produced graduates who were competent.

*Q: Did you have to worry about the North-South split in the allocation of aid resources?*

KONTOS: Yes, we did. The South always wanted to have its fair share of the assistance. We were sensitive to its needs. The South covered a large land mass of the Sudan. We established an office in Juba, the southern capital. When I arrived in the Sudan, the South, as a result of the Addis Ababa agreement that ended the long civil war and which had in large measure been orchestrated by Nimeiri himself, operated as a semi-autonomous region. It had its own government, its own Parliament though foreign affairs, defense and finance were handled by Khartoum. The South ran most of its internal affairs. The Parliament was elected regularly. It was the beginning of a government by the South for the South. So the Sudan was in fact a loose federation. The President of the South reported to Nimeiri because Khartoum held the purse strings; the South was poverty stricken with a small tax base; it could not survive without financial assistance from the North. The South ran a third-rate government with very few sufficiently trained people; it was just trying to establish a coherent government apparatus which is very difficult to do under those conditions.

I mentioned earlier the North-South debate over whose territory Chevron had found oil. Related to that debate, was the question of the location of a prospective refinery. The South wanted infrastructure and projects which would employ its natives. Chevron, for good economic reasons, thought that Port Sudan should be the appropriate location because it would be the tanker loading site. The South wouldn't buy that rationale; it challenged the Chevron rationale because it would have deprived the South of an economically rewarding project. So I had my hands full trying to persuade the southern ministers that this was not a Nimeiri power play with Chevron being his "front man". I was able to diffuse to a major extent the deep felt frustration of the South, but there were some tense moments.

*Q: Did you have to get involved in other North-South disputes?*

KONTOS: The South looked for anyone of any importance to speak on their behalf to Nimeiri. More and more, the government's decision making became centered in Khartoum and particularly in Nimeiri. He became an all-purpose dictator. Everyone knew that I had unparalleled access to him and tried to use me as an advocate. Any time someone had a grievance, I would be sure to be briefed on the subject in the hopes that if I had an opportunity, assuming that I saw some merit in the position being put forward, I would be a spokesman for that position with Nimeiri. Access to the key man was absolutely imperative in that kind of a situation and I had that.

As happens historically, persons with that much power tend increasingly to be cut off from reality. Their staffs and entourages tend to speak only about positive developments and become afraid to convey bad news or to paint a true picture of a situation. The dictator is thereby protected from what is happening outside the palace. And that is what was happening to Nimeiri; he was becoming increasingly isolated. I saw my role as a bearer of some reality and an awareness of what was happening in his own country. As Nimeiri's entourage happened to be primarily Northerners, the South did not get a full hearing of its problems and grievances. I must add that there were two or three ministerial portfolios in the central government that were manned by southerners. They were minor cabinet positions--housing and transportation--but not enough to keep Nimeiri fully briefed on events and trends in the Sudan.

For much of my tenure, one of the Vice-Presidents was Joseph Lagu--a southerner. He had been the principal leader of the opposition during the civil war. After the Addis Ababa agreement, Lagu became the head of the southern government and made a mess of that. After a hiatus, he was made one of Sudan's two Vice Presidents. The other one was a very fine professional soldier, Lieutenant General Abdul Majid. As I said, I saw my role as the conveyor to Nimeiri of U.S. concerns and as a reporter of the Sudanese scene of those areas where I felt he lacked adequate knowledge. I particularly concentrated on southern issues because Lagu, while a southerner, was also a member of a tribe that felt that the Dinka majority in the South, including much of the southern leadership, was playing a disproportionate role. Lagu started to agitate for a revision of the Addis Ababa agreements that would divide the South into three equal provinces, one of which would be governed by his own tribe and largely eliminate the single Southern government. Nimeiri had earlier divided the North into three areas. During the early days of my tour, there were four provinces in the North administered by governors, who were well qualified persons and whom Nimeiri had given a fair amount of authority. He asked for our assistance in this process by reducing the power of the center of giving greater authority and self-determination to the provinces. Lagu was arguing for the same scheme to be applied in the South, although there it represented an extremely dangerous political risk. Nimeiri was being lulled by Lagu, who kept bringing him petitions for a division of the South that he had obtained from various quarters. These views all reflected a minority tribal point of view, but since Lagu had access to Nimeiri, the continual belaboring of the point became quite influential.

Nimeiri finally succumbed; he agreed to divide the South into three provinces. That created a tremendous uproar because it violated the Addis Ababa agreements; it destroyed the structure of a semi-autonomous Southern government and contributed to the growing animosity of the southern tribal groupings. There were a number of incidents of growing disenchantment with Nimeiri on the part of the southerners. There was a definite difference between the first and second halves of my tenure in Khartoum. When I first arrived in the Sudan, one of my first visits was to Juba, the southern capital. I saw a lot of people, both within and outside the government. I traveled fairly widely in the South. I received the general impression that although the northerners were not trusted, particularly the elite that ran the Khartoum government, the southerners did trust Nimeiri, who was viewed as the author of the Addis Ababa agreements and as one who understood the South and had in fact befriended it. By the end of my tour, there was a growing antagonism and a deep mistrust of Nimeiri. He was viewed as one who was trying to take their oil away, was skewing aid programs to favor the North; he was no longer seen as one interested in the whole country, but rather as a northern partisan.

Late in my tour, the military took a very key decision with Nimiery's blessings. On the face of it, it seemed a very ordinary move. The military decided to transfer some garrisons that were stationed in the South to the North and conversely, move some of the garrisons in the North to the South. It would seem quite rational that garrisons that had been located in one place for eight-ten years be shifted elsewhere just to shake up the routines that had been acquired. But this was in fact not an ordinary move because Southern soldiers, who had no sympathy or understanding of the North, never expected to be removed from their communities. So the redeployment orders were greeted with great consternation and resistance by the southern battalions. In fact, a mutiny broke out, headed by John Garang, who was then a Colonel, a southerner who had done very well in the military. He had been sent to Iowa State where he had earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics, then was posted in Khartoum and then became commander of one of the battalions in the south. It was Garang's battalion that mutinied. This came as a real shock to his colleagues in the north who viewed him with favor. That mutiny spread throughout the south and, in due course, a full scale civil war ensued. The southern opposition was led by Colonel John Garang who still, eight years later, heads the southern resistance, although I noted recently that some Southern factions have split with Garang. Again tribal rivalries come to the fore. Now the southern resistance movement is fractured.

*Q: I would like to pursue the question of U.S. assistance in a country split by tribal rivalries. What kind of special problems does that situation present?*

KONTOS: First of all, we have to remember that getting around in the Sudan is very, very difficult. There are very few roads; the internal air transportation system is barely adequate, as is the rail system--the trains are very slow. So getting around was a major problem. The AID mission tried at the beginning, with some success, to post Americans in the hinterlands of the Sudan. It managed to get a few so located, but the support costs of keeping an American family going in such circumstances were quite considerable. The support logistics were extraordinarily complicated. Then there was a problem of the Americans posted in the South being linked to the ministries in Juba, which in turn depended on ministries in Khartoum for their resources. In addition, American technical advisors had to have the support and approval of local officials. It became a very complicated administrative scheme with lots of actors in play.

In these situations, the shortage of adequately trained local officials became acute. Sudanese would be sent from Khartoum to Juba, but would only stay for brief periods and then be replaced by others. The Americans had no continuing relationships with a permanent Sudanese project manager. These difficulties led me to the conclusion that local technical assistance projects in the rural areas were not viable. I was more interested in moving the AID mission to a policy that would concentrate on the Sudan's macro-economic issues such as increasing privatization of government enterprises and increasing the U.S. commodity import program that would generate local currency for some creative local programs. I wanted a severe reduction in project activities, although a number that were marginally useful I wanted to keep. It was an uphill battle; the AID Director had an enormously difficult task in trying to reshape the program in a difficult environment.



As I said earlier, we were always concerned about North-South even-handedness and about the West getting a fair share of the assistance program. As strong provincial governors became established, each would lobby Khartoum for his "fair" share of the assistance pie. They would frequently come to see me or the AID Director and we had to pay constant attention to making sure that each of the provinces was given a fair share by Khartoum. Of course, there were other donors who undoubtedly encountered the same pressures: the World Bank, the UNDP, the Scandinavians--especially Norwegians who had sponsored an enormous project in the South which was to provide all of the infrastructure to a wide area--roads, farming tools for that particular soil, seed, extension advice. This was to be a model for development and the Norwegians had made excellent progress. As usual, once the Norwegians left, as they had to because of the civil war, the whole project collapsed because there wasn't anybody to maintain the required impetus or even the roads and the other infrastructure. The churches--Catholics and Episcopalians in particular--were very active. They built schools and provided welfare support, all in the South. The Germans had a large aid program as did the Italians who supported their contractors generously. Italian projects in the Sudan were subsidized by their government--that was the Italian version of assistance. That made for a large Italian presence in the Sudan. The British were also present. A great amount of assistance was going to the Sudan.

There was also cash support from other Arab countries. Initially, the whole "Sudan bread basket" concept attracted Saudi investments, particularly from some of the Royal family princes. They supported a very large project near the Blue Nile that was a major effort to cultivate a massive rain-fed area. They brought in Australian farm managers, farm equipment, etc. It turned out to be extremely costly and the returns on the investment became more and more distant. The Saudis lost heart, which is not uncharacteristic of Arab investors who were always seeking a fairly quick return. In the agricultural field, particularly when you are starting with virgin territory, you face a lot of problems: soil development, infrastructure construction, etc. All of this takes time and the Saudis became impatient. Furthermore, the "bread basket" concept was overdrawn and exaggerated because the soil contained a lot of clay. The proper preparation of the soil was a problem--getting the right fertilizers and seeds. The soil was not good black loam that could be cultivated easily; it was difficult soil that had to be worked properly before it could be made fertile.

I was relatively optimistic about the Sudan's future until June, 1983 (my last year in Khartoum). Nimeiri had assured me that the partition of the South into three provinces would not occur. He told me that as an old politician who had followed the course of events in the South closely he had come to the conclusion that partition would engender too much opposition and too great a political upheaval. Despite having given me those assurances, he nevertheless proceeded. It had already been announced that I would be departing; so in the waning days of my tenure, Nimeiri reneged on his assurances and divided the South. That in effect abrogated the Addis Ababa agreement, which ironically was his main achievement. We left in July.

In September, Nimeiri took the most egregious and foolish action of all in a desperate attempt to maintain power and to keep control; he pronounced Sharia law as the new foundation of Sudanese law. That made the government the vehicle for the dissemination and effectuation of Islamic law; the Sharia became the base for secular law and governance. The early manifestations of this new policy were ugly; Nimeiri set up religious courts which ruled with a

heavy hand. There were other signs that he had become a born-again Muslim. At one point, just before my departure as this new thrust was just beginning, I spoke to him about these trends. While noting that it was obviously an internal matter, I felt constrained to point out to Nimeiri that Sudan's was more than one-third non-Muslim people, which might well react violently to imposition of Islamic law. I mentioned that he had, as I had predicted, already caused great unrest by dividing the South into three provinces. He said: "Mr. Ambassador, every person has been given by God a role to perform on earth. You have your role; I have mine. God had decided that I should be the head of my nation. His word is inscribed in the Koran, and I, therefore, take my guidance in helping my people from it." He viewed himself as a messenger of God. His focus was to be on the south because that area in his view was populated by heathens--only a small proportion, according to him, were Christians; to the rest he would give the benefit of God's word.

How much of this fundamentalism Nimeiri believed and how much was calculated cynicism, I do not know. It was suggested at the time that he did have some kind of mystical conversion. It also could have been that he was on some medication that may have accounted for his state of mind; he had had back aches and other ailments; he had not been able to sire any children and he did take medication to "make him fertile." He was the supreme and unchallenged leader of the country; he may well have come to believe sincerely that he had been chosen by God to invoke the Sharia and not to do so would have been a great sacrilege. I think nevertheless in my last days in Khartoum, Nimeiri was becoming irrational, to put it mildly. Whether it was the medication, his over-weening sense of omniscience, his born-again Islamic fervor, his isolation or whether it was the influence of a newly palace installed Sufi Mullah-- a mystic who had a peculiar view of Islamic ways,--I don't know. In addition, his former Attorney General Hassan Turabi, who was the most sophisticated politician in the Sudan, extraordinarily ambitious, a firm believer in Islam and the head of the Muslim Brotherhood, who had broken with Nimeiri earlier, had returned to favor and had become the President's political advisor. I was in contact with him from time to time. It is very difficult to exaggerate how isolated Nimeiri had become. One of his principal conduits with the outside world was a Mr. "Fix It" named Dr. Baha Idris. He was a Ph.D. in one of the physical sciences. He became the controller of the "gate" and in order to see Nimeiri, you had to go through Baha. He was very efficiently able to orchestrate the whole palace. He controlled Nimeiri's schedule and was particularly helpful to us in scheduling visits by Congressmen, Senators, Bud McFarlane, the NSC Advisor, Frank Carlucci, the Deputy Secretary of Defense and others. We had a considerable number of American visitors. Baha was also very helpful in facilitating the dialogue with the Sudanese on the prepositioning of military stocks, which was a very sensitive issue that we kept under wraps as much as possible. He instructed the Sudanese negotiating delegation on Nimeiri's views. As the gate-keeper, he became a very powerful man. Unfortunately, he was essentially a "yes" man, although he could play Nimeiri as an expert violinist can his instrument. It was alleged that he was Mr. 5% or 10%. My predecessor, Don Bergus, told me that he had a reputation for skimming off some amount from every major investment that was made in the Sudan.

I should make a point about corruption and related matters in the Sudan. Judged against the practices in other Third World countries, I believe it was rather modest. There was not a great deal of open corruption. The Civil Service, following British traditions, tended to be reasonably efficient and honest, although we knew that there were some games being played on the side all

the time. As I mentioned before, the principal graft-recipient was Baha. We could of course never have complete proof, but for example there was a major South Korean investment in which he was obviously involved. There were nefarious activities which gave off strong Baha odors. But Baha was a very important figure and, I must admit, made my life much easier.

I think I have earlier suggested that Nimeiri changed while I was in Khartoum. He became disdainful of the people around him. He came to believe that they didn't have the clarity of mind or the insights that he had; he became more and more convinced that he had become an instrument of God. He had a sense of omniscience and felt that no one else could make the proper decisions. He would not accept any negative views, which was not much of a problem in any case because, by the time Nimeiri had reached this mental state, anyone who in the past might have dared to speak up had been thrown out. Abdul Magid, whom I have mentioned before and who had been the first Vice-President, had at one point, when the military were fed up with Nimeiri's policies, become the steward of a group of senior officers which was discussing whether or not Nimeiri should be relieved of office. It was Magid who persuaded them to continue to support Nimeiri; it was a turning point. In retrospect, Abdul Magid may have made a mistake. It might have been better to let the majority of the generals have their way. It was obvious by that time that Nimeiri was entering his mystical, irrational and nonsensical behavior phase.

*Q: Were there any other actual or potential military plots of which you were aware?*

KONTOS: There were a number of rumors about cabals or plots, but the one I mentioned earlier was the one that came closest to execution; it probably would have been successful. Our intelligence on the military was pretty good; we had a good Military Attaché, we had a small Military Assistance mission. In fact, we knew well what was going on; I think we were the best informed foreign mission in town, and that included the Egyptians, who always viewed the Sudan as a sort of a protectorate. We knew what was happening and had good intelligence on the military.

So it was a pity that Magid didn't throw the rascal out at the time. The growing mysticism, the isolation, the perceived special relationship to God, all made him more and more desperate in an effort to re-galvanize the support of the Sudan's elite and the military, which he understood he was losing.

I used to see him at least once a week, frequently alone or with Dr. Baha as a note taker. Occasionally, I would take the DCM. Nimeiri used me as a confidante, up to a point. I had established a very comfortable relationship with him. We were major assistance donors and Nimeiri had established close relationships with some Washington people. He had met with President Reagan and Vice-President Bush many times and with the Secretary of Defense and frequently with Bill Casey. He was comfortable with them and with me. I would take it on myself to raise issues that may not have been central to U.S. concerns, but were key to the stability of the country. For example, I strongly opposed the division of the South into three provinces, which was so obviously a mistake. I also talked to him about the treatment that southerners were receiving. I wanted to help him with the problems of decentralization, which he felt important; so we discussed that as well. We of course talked about U.S.-Sudan issues such as

the prepositioning of military equipment, events in the Chad, in the OAU and in the U.N. which were of interest to the U.S. Interestingly enough, I rarely saw him socially. On one occasion, he came to our Fourth of July party; that was unprecedented. Once we were invited to his residence, but most of my contacts were during working hours.

I had not been given any particular briefing on human rights issues when I became Ambassador, but it was quite clear that the issue was high on President Carter's agenda just by the fact that a separate Bureau had been established which produced periodic cable reminders of the importance of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. I did discuss the human rights issue with Nimeiri on a number of occasions. He understood our position, but in those days he had not violated our standards in any major way. It was later, after the invocation of the Sharia, that the violations really started and brought the issue to the forefront of U.S.-Sudan relations.

*Q: You became an Ambassador after having spent most of your career in the aid program. Did that create any problems?*

KONTOS: No, it didn't. In fact, in retrospect, I think that all of my prior experiences were ideal preparations for my ambassadorial assignment. I was in a country with a large aid program; I was in a country with sizeable developmental problems; I had managerial and administrative experience. The Sudan Mission was sizeable with all the AID and military assistance personnel and a number of contractors. I never felt that my FSO staff resented my appointment or that it thought I would be unable to perform effectively; that was never an issue.

*Q: You were in the Sudan when we flew AWACs over Libya. Did that resonate in Khartoum at all?*

KONTOS: That was just a passing incident which went largely unnoticed, although it was mounted primarily for Nimeiri's benefit to show Qadhafi that he had powerful friends. But we did have a problem when Libyan planes attacked Omdurman. They dropped a couple of bombs in an effort to hit the radio transmitter. That stimulated the Sudanese to mount a counter-attack which never amounted to much. As I mentioned earlier, Qadhafi and Nimeiri hated each other and that is what probably provoked this minor skirmish.

We were also very active in supporting Chadian troops that were opposing Libyan incursions. We used Sudanese troops to help the Chadians because the border between Darfur--the most western Sudanese province--and Chad was not well defined and border crossings were frequent.

Being an ambassador is one of the most rewarding positions in the U.S. government. I felt very comfortable in the job. I was able to deal with a broad range of activities which cut across agency lines. I enjoyed the challenge and it was in many ways the highlight of my career.

**MARY A. RYAN**  
**Administrative Counselor**  
**Khartoum (1981-1982)**

*Mary A. Ryan was born in New York in 1940. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from St. John's University. Her career in the Foreign Service include positions in Italy, Honduras, Mexico, Ivory Coast, Sudan, and an ambassadorship to Swaziland. She was also a member of the Kuwaiti Task Force during the Gulf War. Ambassador Ryan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2003.*

*Q: Were people telling you, going from the Cote d'Ivoire to Sudan, wondered about your mental stability or anything like that?*

RYAN: No, not really, seeing it was AF doing it, and AF needed it, and it was a challenge, certainly. God knows, it was a challenge. It was the hardest job I ever had in my life. The hardest job I ever had. And it only lasted three months. I got sick and had to come out. I had kidney stones. I had to have surgery. And then after the surgery, they wouldn't give me back my clearance. They wouldn't let me go back. Which was actually God's mercy, because I would have gone nuts, I think. It was impossible, that job.

*Q: What was it?*

RYAN: Because it was Khartoum, there wasn't a lot of talent. The DCM was fabulous – Jack Davidson was wonderful. But the admin staff was not that good. Nobody there wanted the job. And they were moving to a new embassy, so there was all of that. And the previous administrative counselor was leaving and there was nowhere to go. So I was sitting in Abidjan thinking, "What do I do next?" And AF/EX said they needed somebody, so I said "Send me, I'll go." And so I went.

It was the complete opposite of Cote d'Ivoire. There in Sudan, all the talent went across to the Gulf, and worked in Saudi Arabia or the Emirates or Bahrain, or someplace other than Sudan. And so except for a lot of talent, thank God, in the B&F ([Budget and Fiscal] Section in some overseas missions; newer name is Financial Management Office [FMO]) section, there wasn't a lot of talent among the FSNs in Sudan. It was also a joint administrative office, so I had a couple of AID long-time, long-in-the-tooth GSOs, who were very tired and who didn't want to do anything. And then I had a couple of first tour people, who were very eager and very willing, but who didn't know how to do things, and so you had to help them. But one of them was the hardest working man I ever knew in my life. He's just coming back to Washington after the whole 23 years abroad.

And so we had to move the embassy, and you have to pack things up, and there was nobody to pack them, and you have to bring trucks to move stuff, and there are no trucks to be rented. One of my visions that I will take to my grave is this truck that pulled up to the new embassy listing off to the side with all of the embassy possessions on it, and our young GSO, Sam Rubino, on his first tour – he's the one that's just coming back to Washington now – sort of carrying stuff upstairs, with ropes around his shoulders. He was wonderful, Sam, and I would never have been able to do the job without him. But it was a nightmare. It was just awful.

And the embassy itself – we had a very good expatriate working for us, a Brit. Very talented, knew how to do everything, fix the generators, knew how to do all those kinds of things. All of which we needed desperately, even in the new embassy. And we had no RSOs [regional security officer – reports directly to the deputy chief of mission]. Our RSOs came on TDY [temporary duty]. We had the best, I thought, in DS [Bureau of Diplomatic Security], Gary Marvin and Fred Mecke, both of whom are now retired. And I remember Fred saying to me that the embassy was completely insecure. This was before any problems, this was 1980-81. He took me out of the new embassy and he took me to the side street, and he put his hand on the gate of the people who lived across the street from the embassy, and put his hand on the embassy wall. And he said to me, “Do you know what a car bomb could do to this embassy?” And that was the first time that anybody that I knew talked seriously about that kind of threat. But by then it was too late. We had leased this building, or built it, I don’t remember now, and so we moved in, and we had our little ribbon cutting and we had all of that. Everything went wrong. There was sand everywhere. The ambassador’s wife asked me once what I was going to do to keep the goats from eating the plants out of the planters, which I could tell you was like number 598 on my list of priorities. But it was like that.

*Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?*

RYAN: Phil Kontos. And then I got sick. It was lucky I got medevaced, because I probably would have been psych-evaced. I mean, you just couldn’t do it. I had this notepad where I would write down everything that had to be done, and I would write down twelve things and would have maybe crossed out one. So you were constantly adding things that had to be done. It was impossible, absolutely impossible.

*Q: How about the Sudanese government?*

RYAN: Well, it was Nimeiri at that time, so we were friendly with them, and they were friendly with us. That was not a problem. It was not sharia law. The Hilton Hotel was going strong. At the Ivory Bar you could get drinks. It was air-conditioned beyond any bearing, except when you first went in because it was so hot out. It must have been 40 degrees inside in the air conditioning. But it was wonderful. So it was before all of the really awful stuff that happened in Sudan. But there was nobody to deal with in the government. I remember trying to get things done through the government, and it was just hopeless. It really was hopeless. But we did have a wonderful DCM, just the kind of person who if you’re in a post like that you hope you have as the DCM. An African hand, you know. And I said to him once, “I don’t understand, Jack, why these people don’t complain more.” Because there was no water, there was nothing. It was just awful. And he said, “But this is really an NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] post, and they’re mostly NEA people, and NEA people like to suffer.” So I said, “Good, thank God for that!” It was bad enough, but if they’d been complaining all the time!

*Q: Were you under any threat, particularly?*

RYAN: Well, there was one very serious threat to the American Club when I was there. I remember that very well. I don’t know the details. Or I didn’t even know the details at the time, but there was a very serious threat that Gary Marvin, who was our RSO at the time, was very

frightened about. And I know he spent the night in his car near the American Club to try to prevent whatever was going to happen. I don't know. It might have been a bomb, it might have been a grenade attack, it might have been shooting, it might have been anything. Nothing, thank God, did happen. But I do remember that.

*Q: You got med-evaced. Where did they med-evac you to?*

RYAN: They med-evaced me back here. They would have sent me to Frankfurt, but I didn't want to go to Frankfurt because it was a military hospital. I had experienced a military hospital in Naples, thank you very much; I didn't want that again. So I paid the difference to come to Washington. Then I had surgery at GW [George Washington University Hospital]. I was so run down, it was no wonder they didn't clear me. The surgery was fine. I recovered from that all right.

**CHESTER ARTHUR CROCKER**  
**Assistant Secretary for African Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1981-1989)**

*Assistant Secretary Crocker was born and raised in New York and educated at Ohio State University and the School for Strategic and International Studies (SAIS). He served on the National Security Council (1970-1972), as Professor at Georgetown University (1972-1977), and as Director for African Affairs at the Center for Strategic and International Affairs (1976-1980). In 1981 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and served in that capacity until 1989, at which time he rejoined the faculty of Georgetown University. Mr. Crocker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.*

*Q: What about the Horn of Africa? This was still Mengistu and the Derg and all that?*

CROCKER: It sure was.

*Q: Did we just see that as a hopeless cause, or what could we do there?*

CROCKER: The Horn of Africa was one of the more sensitive and important strategic zones of Africa at that time, in part because Sudan had been a key friend on the Camp David process, had provided rare support from another Arab country for what the Egyptians had done.

And so we had a sense this was, if you like, part of Middle East policy, but we felt it very important to bolster Sudan, also to bolster it vis-à-vis Qadhafi.

So that was part of our situation. We also became aware in '83-'84-'85, of course, of the fact that Gaafar Nimeiry was losing his way and was starting to imbibe more of this Islamist Kool-aid

*Q: We're talking about the leader of Sudan.*

CROCKER: Nimeiry was beginning to imbibe, if you like, this religious zeal and raised into question the whole North-South agreement that had been negotiated in the early 70s to end the first phase of the Sudanese civil war.

And Nimeiry reopened that and started the war again in '83-'84 and caused us a terrific amount of pain. So that was a case of a country, Sudan, which was an important partner that became self-destructive to the point that it didn't offer us much in the way of help.

What it offered us was a big headache and we had to figure out how to deal with that, what to do when Nimeiry was replaced, I believe, in '85, how to deal with successor governments, recognizing of course that right next door to Sudan was Soviet-backed Ethiopia, which was actively destabilizing Sudan.

So we looked at Sudan through many different optics: as a troubled friend, as a threatened friend, as a key partner of the Camp David process and as a country that we wanted to keep hopefully in one piece and better health.

That was part of our Horn of Africa policy. Another part was what to do specifically with Ethiopia, which is the big guy on the block in the Horn of Africa, and a very troubled place as well.

Mengistu was, throughout his days, pretty much of a thug. He ruled by the gun. My best imagery for understanding Mengistu Haile Mariam was to remember back to the photographs that were put out in Ethiopian media that would show a cabinet meeting which had a long table and showed you all the ministers. At the very end of the table was Mengistu, but his figure would be blown up five times bigger than life.

It sort of made your eyes pop, to look at this picture of a cabinet and here's this great big guy at the end, who is farthest away and should be smallest, but he's five times bigger.

So Mengistu, a man who arguably came from the underprivileged communities of Ethiopia and had been treated in a way that made him paranoid, with a chip on his shoulder and treated most of the ethnic groups of the country badly, caused hundreds of thousands of death of his own soldiers and the soldiers of Tigray and Eritrea and basically lived on that civil war, because the civil war assured him of Soviet support.

As long as there was a civil war, the Soviets would be there, because the Soviet currency for Africa policy was military aid.

The American currency for Africa policy was our brains, our diplomacy and our foreign assistance, but not that much military aid.

The Soviets accounted in this time period for between 60 and 75 per cent of the military aid going into Africa. We were behind the French. So that puts it in perspective.



*Q: What was our relationship with Sudan?*

One other relationship I should touch on, I think, because it absorbed a great deal of our time, was Sudan, a country which bridges between sub-Saharan and North Africa, between Africa and the Arab world.

Because of Sudan's support for the Camp David peace process and because President Nimeiri, as he then was, was doing some of the right things domestically, we tried to work with him.

He was a major aid recipient. But, frankly, he lost his way and he began in 1983 imposing an Islamist vision on his country, which caused him and us increasing problems.

So by the time he was overthrown, he was actually, I think, here, getting medical treatment when he was overthrown in a bloodless coup d'état, in 1985, from then on that relationship began to sink and it still is sinking. It's been sinking from '85 until today.

Initially his successor was a moderate military officer who was not really very Islamist oriented, but he was weak and he was succeeded by Sadiq al- Mahdi, who was not above playing with Islamists when it served his interests, and then by Omar Bashir, the current head of state, in another coup that took place in 1989.

But I mention this because we spent a lot of time on that relationship. We tried to get the Sudanese regime in Khartoum to avoid this self-destructive policy in the southern Sudan area which they pursued, of trying to break up the south with a divide and rule policy and then to dominate it politically and to exploit the oil resources of the south.

We did what we could, but moving Sudan has always been a real challenge for American policy. I never felt satisfied with what we were able to do. We would open up humanitarian corridors to feed people in the south, but the government would keep trying to close them down again. We tried to get the different presidents of the country to see the point about political Islam being a dangerous game.

But I don't think we ever were able to accomplish everything we wanted. We got some things done. We managed to use our relationship there to extricate tens of thousand of Ethiopian Jews into Israel.

*Q: The Falasha.*

CROCKER: The Falasha community, as it was then called and that was a success, but it was a rifle shot success. It was a humanitarian success, but it was not a strategic success, in the broader sense of the relationship with Sudan and the broad trendlines of Sudan's politics.

One of the reasons we had such a tough time was that Ethiopia was so firmly in the clutches of the Soviets at that time and we were unable to bring any influence to bear from Sudan's neighbors.

So the Sudanese regime in Khartoum would say to us, “Why are you pressing us? The problem is over there.”

And we would say, “We know there’s a problem over there, but you’ve got to also stop being self-destructive right here at home.”

I mention this because I think Sudan has been a difficult challenge for assistant secretaries of state for African affairs and for their colleagues in different parts of our government for a long, long time and it still is today.

*Q: And the Horn of Africa?*

CROCKER: And part of the Horn, yes. It’s a huge, night and day, difference between better governed and worse governed.

*Q: Well, how did the Horn hit you at the time, our concerns?*

CROCKER: We had, I’d say, at least two major concerns. So much time has passed, I have to ignore all that’s taken place more recently and go back to that period.

Item number one was that there was in Sudan a government friendly to the Middle East peace process and supported

*Q: Recognized Camp David.*

CROCKER: Recognized Camp David and had supported the courageous Egyptian decisions at Camp David. We’re talking now about the government of Gaafar Nimeiri, which lasted for a while, but eventually Nimeiri lost his way and began drinking the Islamist Kool-aid.

And then he got overthrown and Sudan had a military government and a not very effective civilian government and then these guys, Omar Bashir and his colleagues, took over in the late 1980’s.

So Sudan was an important client, an important friend, for Middle East policy reasons, but as its leadership began to go down the wrong road on domestic politics, it began listening more and more to the Islamist voice, it was tearing apart its own national unity, in a sense and it became a more and more troubled partner.

By the time I left the State Department we were seeing the beginnings of the real Islamization of Sudanese politics and it was very worrisome. And also there were huge humanitarian issues and problems getting food to people in outlying areas of the country where local militias (often supported by Khartoum) and local disputes disrupted any semblance of normal life.

But even more worrisome was our inability to get the Sudanese to stop trying to impose Sharia law on the South, to stop tearing their own country apart. .

We tried to shift Nimeiri's course, we tried to work with his successor, a general named Suwar al-Dahab, who came into office in the mid-Eighties, we tried it with Sadiq al-Mahdi, who I always thought was a person one could have worked with and he was in office from 1986 to 1989, right before Bashir came in.

For some reason, Sadiq just never got traction politically in Sudan and he lost control of the Islamist dialogue and the Islamist aspect of his domestic policy, so that he was outmaneuvered and he lost power. This was disappointing to me. He was the leader of the important Umma party and had a proud lineage as the great grandson of the Mahdi who fought against the British and Egyptians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but he failed to master the scene.

It's been downhill since then. We've seen the results over the last twenty plus years in Sudan. To be frank, this is a part of Africa that's been hard for anyone to get a handle on, back in the Eighties and since.

**WILLIAM A. PIERCE**  
**Chief Political Officer**  
**Khartoum (1983-1985)**

*Mr. Pierce was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Davidson College and the University of Georgia Law School. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he was first posted to Surabaya, Indonesia, followed by a tour at Damascus, Syria. After completing Arabic language studies in Washington and Tunis, Mr. Pierce was assigned as Political Officer to a number of Arabic speaking posts, including Khartoum, Jeddah and Riyadh. In Washington, Mr. Pierce dealt primarily with Middle East Affairs. His final post was Surabaya, where he was Consul General. Mr. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Who was the DCM?*

PIERCE: The first DCM was Jack Davison who later went on to be ambassador in an AF country I forget. He was replaced shortly after I got there by David Shinn.

*Q: What was his background?*

PIERCE: David was an Africanist. I think Jack was as well. David went on to be ambassador in a couple of places – I think most recently Ethiopia and he's just retired.

The other side of the story – the international aspects of this at the time – which helped obviously solidify our approach to Sudan is that it was reamed with difficulties. Reamed may be too big a word. There was the very strong resistance in Ethiopia, especially the Eritrean resistance movement. On the other side there was the Chadian war, the Chadian rebellion, which was on and off all the time, and then of course Libya with its long-time extreme fascination with Sudan.

Oftentimes Libyan attempts to undermine stability there, to create national resistance movements within Sudan and in effect to try to bring off as much instability in the country as possible.

*Q: When you look at the Sudan it's got nine neighbors.*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: It's the African equivalent to Brazil really.*

PIERCE: Absolutely.

*Q: Big and all these neighbors, and of course a lot of them are not the most easy to deal with. You were dealing with the internal side. How did you deal with, in the first place, the North – the Arab portion? I mean these are the ruling people.*

PIERCE: Well, firstly, there's a qualification here. The so-called Arab portion is mainly Arab oriented. They are of mixed descent and as it came to be known to me over a period of time, they thought of themselves as being looked down upon by Arabs because they were Africans, although so-called mainstream Africa – black Africans – tended to see them as Arabs. They were a mixture. While Arabic was the lingua franca of the north, and to some degree in the south, almost always as far as I can recall, North Sudanese were not raised initially on Arabic, but on a local dialect which I don't believe there were a lot of Semitic features to. You had ethnic groups cross the north, but they all had a common bond of being so-called Arabs, of speaking Arabic in great degree, and of being Muslim which set them off from the south, which, although there's a tendency to look upon the south as Christian to a degree, to a large extent was animist, and very definitely part of black Africa. Several, several linguistic groups there – many of them mutually antagonistic.

And then, geographically, topologically, the south had a distinct, decidedly different aspect. The north was dry, the north was quite arid, not unlike the Sahel, basically desert and rock. The south was in large degree a slough, the point where the White Nile river basin and adjoining rivers ran through a large flat plain and created a tremendous swamp. That's the reason why it was so hard for European explorers to penetrate the source of the Nile from that direction. And with the very tip of it, southern Sudan, being very verdant, not unlike Uganda in some way – a very, very beautiful lush area; equatorial.

*Q: In this '83 to '85 period, was there an actual war going on between the north and the south or was it a subliminal level of violence?*

PIERCE: Shortly before I got there, as I said, a colonel of some stature in the Sudanese military was so alienated by Nimeiry's policies in the south that he basically deserted and began forming the SPLA. I think prior to that the south was always permeated and penetrated by local gangs, and weapons were increasingly easy to obtain. Suddenly the SPLA became first among equals amongst these gangs; and with an announced political position was in a position to capitalize on Nimeiry's stumbles. Most notably the announcement of the beginning of implementing Islamic law in Sudan.

*Q: Sharia law.*

PIERCE: Sharia law. Their version of it; it's not Sharia law. It was certainly a tremendous boon to the growth of the SPLA. Within a very short time the SPLA or related gangs, with very, very quick ease, cut off two of Khartoum's major initiatives in the south. There was an attempt to straighten the White Nile with a gigantic cutting wheel that was going to vastly increase the amount of water going up north, ultimately into Egypt, and bring about – in somewhat perhaps questionable forecasts – an agricultural revolution in the south. It was a gigantic wheel under contract of a French firm but it was attacked. As I recall perhaps several people were killed. The Europeans were able to get out safely after a lot of close brushes, but the project was in effect dead.

Farther north on the border between South and North Sudan on another river – again an area of the White Nile – Chevron was in beginning exploration mode for oil drilling in the area. A very sensitive issue since earlier attempts by the Khartoum government, i.e. Nimeiry, to take the area affected and redraw the map making it part of the north. They had a large ferry positioned on the river which was their base camp, and in the middle of the night a group of armed resistance leaders, or gang, got onto the boat, killed several of the expatriates there and basically shut down the operation. So very quickly two promising projects for the future were put on hold. Indefinitely in the South, more likely forever; and in the North, temporarily, which was to last two years.

*Q: Was this sort of “Damn you up in the north, no matter what you do,” or was there a purpose in these attacks?*

PIERCE: That's hard to say. Whether at the time there was enough cohesion within southern resistance to see a grand design. Following, over the two years, the ebbing and flowing of combat, of attacks, sometimes you'd get the impression of cohesion, other times you didn't. Certainly over the years it's obvious that the SPLA had primarily Dinka tribesmen at its head, although it reached out and sought to embrace other significant tribes. Nuer and Shilluk which were closer to Ethiopia and farther north than Dinka. You never got the impression of how totally cohesive they were within the SPLA cause, simply because of the ethnic issue of Dinka versus other significant tribes. It was very difficult to put a finger on it. There were Nuer and Shilluk that you could meet in Khartoum, but the predominant Africans that were there that were political contacts were either Dinka or, on the other side of the coin, from the far South. From Equatoria. The equatorial area was filled with large numbers of tribes – several – and there was no predominating people from Equatoria.

In large part, Nimeiry co-opted southerners in the '70s to become part of his regime and was oftentimes in position to use them to give his regime a sort of legitimacy throughout Sudan. By and large, by the time I got there in '83, the vast majority of these co-opted southerners who were still within the government were equatorial. Very few from the heartland of South Sudan, very few Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, although they were significantly seen throughout the city. One of the things I did in cultivating the opposition, or in trying to talk with people holding disparate views, was to cultivate ties to ex-politicians, mostly southerners at the time. I found very

attractive, very articulate people with, in many cases, a very broad view of what the problem was in Sudan. Most preeminent amongst them was a man named Abel Alier who had been Sudan's vice president at one time. He just had extremely good vision about the problems that Sudan was going to face. At the time it was more difficult to find northerners who were outspoken about Nimeiry with the ambassador. Ambassador Horan wanted very much to cultivate other political types who were in or just around the government, or who was in opposition to it. And with his name I would set up meetings which he and I would go to, most notably with Hassan Turabi who at the time was not in government and was reasonably sharp and critical of Nimeiry.

*Q: Were we trying to act as an intermediary in maybe an informal way between the north and the south and trying to say, "Come on fellows, get your act together" or...*

PIERCE: That's a hard question to answer. I did not have any dialogues with Gaafar Nimeiry and you know our policy in Khartoum in terms of its internal affairs was set by Gaafar Nimeiry and no one else. His vice president, the deputy prime minister Omar al-Tayib, had little influence, as far as I could tell, over how he managed internal affairs. We – again, I never did – had frequent meetings with him. I'm not sure how much of an impact any dialogue that we had with him made on the overall approach. But I think there were some attempts to steer Nimeiry or to question him, to probe the wisdom of his policy, but he was hell bent. Also he was a survivor essentially. He had gone through the revolutionary councils and one by one the other partners were weeded out and he had twisted and turned and shaped personalities within his government so that he was the one who knew how to handle things in Sudan. It was very difficult, I think, for anyone to convince him of anything regarding the wisdom of how he ran the internal politics of the country.

*Q: Later we were inundated by pictures of tremendous starvation. Was that happening at that time, which seemed to be a result of the war?*

PIERCE: Two different starvation situations. The first one, which is the inundation, was the Eritrean problem where you had the Eritrean refugees coming out and setting up camps all along the eastern side, primarily along the Red Sea coast.

*Q: Was this during your period?*

PIERCE: Yes it was. And the second one, which was happening just as I was leaving, was a massive shortage of food mainly in central West Sudan, across Sudan, which was internal. And as I was leaving, AID was in the process of setting up massive supplies of food. Now the Eritrean refugee issue – the one that got all the prominence – we had an awful lot of special delegations, primarily from Congress, coming in essence to look at the Eritrean imbroglio. But it had little effect on stability or on politics. I do know something about it because we did have a refugee officer who later got into some notoriety as I was leaving and my wife worked for him during the Eritrean crisis in the refugee office. They also had a number of refugee officers on TDY who came out and stayed in Khartoum for long periods of time. People were dying; it was a tremendous tragedy. But it was not a focus that I had. It had really no political effect except along the immediate border, and also obviously our relationship with Sudan and with Ethiopia at the time.

*Q: What about along the Red Sea and towards that area of Sudan, what was happening there?*

PIERCE: Well, this again was near the border with the Eritrean homeland and a favorite point of where refugees came out, where many of the groups who were interested in kicking Ethiopia out of Eritrea had contacts and some supplies. So that was the main issue along the Red Sea, south of Port Sudan.

*Q: Was the Sudanese government playing any role in the Eritrean-Ethiopian war?*

PIERCE: I touched on that very slightly. There was some support that was allowed by the Sudanese, but it was an issue more associated with Ethiopia than it was with Sudan.

*Q: You mentioned that the head of refugee operations for us gained some notoriety. What happened there?*

PIERCE: This is the famous evacuation of Falasha Jews out of Ethiopia and the use of Sudanese airfields to cart them off, which occurred in April or May, of 1983 and was done apparently with the okay of Gaafar Nimeiry and was facilitated in large part by the refugee officer in concert with other offices.

*Q: Did this cause any political ripples within Sudan when it became known?*

PIERCE: Ultimately it did. In the waning days as Nimeiry began to get weaker and weaker, this issue was just one more that his critics used to make the case that he was unable to rule and was erratic. It was also seen as making more obvious what had always been the case – you always heard Sudanese say this – that he was a tool of the U.S., and of Israel, and therefore no longer should be running the country. I think it also had the effect of making it more difficult for Nimeiry's friends in the Arab world to come to his defense.

*Q: What about relations with Egypt at this time? Is this something that we were watching?*

PIERCE: We always watched it, especially from Sudan. It was quite obvious to me over the years that Egypt has always been the Sudanese big brother, has always been in a position to try to guide Sudan – from time to time perhaps not so skillfully and looking awfully clumsy in trying to impose its guidance on Sudan. Then at other times to be more cautious when some of their actions look excessive and they run the risk of hurting the relationship. It struck me shortly after I got there, once when Mubarak came to visit Nimeiry, Nimeiry gave an address to the speaker of the house in Khartoum – the legislative body – and it was interesting because you saw Nimeiry giving the speech and behind him, one step up on the podium, was a place where other people were sitting and behind Nimeiry, almost immediately over his head, was the big, large face of Mubarak. It seemed to me to sort of tell it all. The relationship went up and down, and the Egyptians quite often were very cautious and worried that they would strain the relationship too much.

*Q: What about Libya? I mean this must have been something everybody was looking at.*

PIERCE: From time to time, there would be so-called Sudanese resistance, or Sudanese opposition to Nimeiry, who, because they had no other way of expressing their opposition, ended up in Libya and were trained, funded, and ultimately came back to carry out whatever wicked plans they had cooked up. Quite obviously these were purely initiatives funded by Qadhafi, even to the degree in many cases that the so-called formation of these groups was not spontaneous at all. I am not aware of how close any of these so-called operations might have come to success. There were a couple of attempts against our embassy – ultimately they were basically neutralized. It didn't seem that it was a very competent group of people.

This whole intrigue issue with Libya started off much earlier. Libya had always been seen as a source of refuge – Sadiq al-Mahdi, who was president in the mid-'60s and deposed, used Libya as a refuge for a long period of time. This is one reason why Sadiq, who was certainly around when I was there, was looked upon with great suspicion by Nimeiry and for most of the time was in jail.

*Q: What was your impression and maybe the embassy impression of Nimeiry at that time?*

PIERCE: That's an interesting question. I think the embassy was interested primarily in assuring our continued relationship with Nimeiry because the consequences of his elimination were difficult to envision. At the same time it became increasingly apparent that Nimeiry was more and more erratic and losing touch with reality. Furthermore, that this was being reflected by most Sudanese. That attitude was just very pervasive. You could see in this in terms of looking at Nimeiry and his characteristics. His fascination with Islam persisted throughout the two years that I was there until he was toppled in, I think, May of '85.

He began to embrace a form of Sufism. Sufism is very strong in Sudanese Islam and that began to invade and taint his policies. He elevated a number of so-called Sufi leaders of not great repute in local circles to become his palace advisors. They had little or no political imagination whatsoever. He instituted a new constitution for the country in which he calls himself – the term in Arabic is "Ameer El Mo'omineem" – the prince of the believers, which is a title more relevant to the 7<sup>th</sup>-century than it is to the modern world. In essence, despite his protestation that the south had nothing to worry about in terms of Islam, he began a step-by-step process of making them worry even more about what the position of the south would be under Islamic Sudan, and also making more people worried about his sanity.

The other thing he did was his so-called implementation of Sharia law, which to him was Islamic punishments, most notably, the cutting off hands for thievery. Shortly after I'd gotten there he'd outlawed alcohol, had a big ceremony throwing several hundred bottles of booze into the Nile River. And indeed it dried up. Then he began to study and ultimately implement the Islamic Sharia law. Once it was fully implemented it was taken on with a real passion. There is a major prison just on the outskirts of Khartoum, which I seem to recall was circular or it might've been square, in a plain area, and in the middle of that there's a yard and they constructed a large platform and off the top of the platform was going to be the place that you would implement Sharia law. This came to be ultimately a Friday showplace, where anyone who had been caught and sentenced under Islamic court which he had set up, by Islamic judges that he had set up with a little training in Islam, where the hands would be severed. On Fridays you would have



thousands of people gather around the prison to view the severing of hands. And it got to the point that the platform had to be raised higher so that the more people who came in on Fridays to watch could have the view. And at least on one or two occasions, if not more, every Friday as the hands would be severed, the severs or a functionary in that group of office would take the severed hand and parade it around the wall. This was an extreme great sport for people who came to watch on Friday.

Another interesting part of this was the execution of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha who was called an Islamic brother. He had been a thorn in Nimeiry's side since even before Nimeiry took over in his coup. He's always been an Islamic revolutionary who was interested in seeing more of the ecumenical aspects of Islam, looking at greater toleration, and over the course of years had developed a theology of Islam that was not mainstream. He was always a sharp critic. At the time he was 70-years-old there was a decision made that he had to be arrested, and he was, and charged with apostasy and convicted in one of these special courts in Khartoum. A 70-year-old man for his apostasy and his heresy was convicted and sentenced to death – that was death by crucifixion – and the saving grace under this Sudanese criminal process at the time is that they were not going to crucify Mohammad Taha, the 70-year-old man, at Kober Prison. What they did was they took him out and they hung him and after that they were supposed to hang him on a cross and let his body stay there for a period of time. Apparently Nimeiry wasn't, as I recall, in the city at the time – he might not have been in the country – and after they hung him some of his two Sufi presidential advisers were there and the prison warden was going to bury him and the little Sufi advisers came up and said, "But you can't do that; you have to hang him on the cross," and to his credit the warden said, "No, we've done enough to Mr. Taha. We don't need to do any more." And he was not left hanging for a while on the cross.

The human rights situation in Sudan, specifically, was unimaginable. I had done human rights reports in Saudi Arabia and at the time just shortly after they were implemented I felt they were a waste and a bother and a nuisance, and put myself in a reasonably good position to defend the way the Saudis approached their version of human rights at the time. But it was looking at these excesses and just the sheer disregard for human dignity that changed my entire attitude on human rights. The human rights movement was not sufficiently advanced enough to make this a strong source of pressure.

*Q: While this was going on was there any diminution of our contacts with the Nimeiry government? I'm thinking particularly from Washington or anything like that.*

PIERCE: Not that I'm aware of. Ironically our long dialogue with Nimeiry culminated with his visit to Washington for a Reagan meeting just as he was losing power. In fact the day he fell he was on his way back from that Washington visit. Again, I think throughout this time there was pressure, on Nimeiry, in dealing with the South, and to some degree in terms of human rights. But we were always met with, "I know what I'm doing," and "I've been around." It seemed his emphasis on Islam was a pretext to cover his human rights violations so he would just move on to something else. And we did have a busy bilateral relationship with him in respect to what we would like to see with Egypt, to the general Arab agenda, to Chad, and to Eritrea-Ethiopia, and to Libya.

*Q: I remember around 1948 or so Sudan was the crown jewel in the British colonial system. Really the top colonial officers went there. The Sudanese people responded. I mean it wasn't all British; it was the fact that they had a very receptive group of leaders and all that. By the time you got there in '83, had that all collapsed?*

PIERCE: The erosion of all of that began in the '50s, after Sudan became independent and it was just a very slow grind down farther and farther; political ineptitude, economic grand schemes that never worked – the gigantic cotton schemes that never worked. The horrific amount of world bank loans that had been given to Sudan were obviously part of all of this. By the time I had gotten there, and for some years before, Sudan had been seen as basically down at the bottom. The infrastructure that the British had built up as late as '56, well, after 25 years you've got to do something to it to keep it running. In essence there wasn't a lot of it.

*Q: Well, what about the people? Was there an educated class there – maybe European educated or American educated – that one could deal with, and did they have any role?*

PIERCE: Oh, in the sense of my contacts, the opposition – that's what you first look for. You look for the educated southerner who is a lawyer, you look for the guys who spent time in Saudi Arabia or in Egypt and had been educated there, the politician who was a grantee three years previously in America. These are the people you find. Some of them move very educated, yet there was no sense of common purpose in toppling Nimeiry. The way he ultimately fell was through a combination of economic mistakes and riling up sectors in both labor and students at the same time; ultimately as he was just collapsing.

It was very strange because the day that he left to go to America the ambassador had already gone back – as all ambassadors will – for a presidential visit. I went out with the chargé, David Shinn, to go to the airport to see Nimeiry off. I was going to stand in back and Nimeiry was going to go shake hands with all the ambassadors and with his ministers and leave. Well, the city had already started having problems. The students were in the streets, and there were labor problems. The airport is sufficiently close to town, not that far away. I'm standing near our car while all of the ambassadors line up and the ministers are out there, and Nimeiry drives up. In the background you can see puffs of smoke coming from the city where cars are burning in the streets. And they stand around and then Nimeiry comes up. He comes out in dark sunglasses with a turtleneck sweater on, goes and jokes with all of his ministers, and this smoke is coming up behind him, and then he finally gets on the plane and flies off – never to come back.

It was just a very, very stark, unimaginable situation to me. Then we drove back into the city, which was slipping farther and farther into a ruinous situation. The telling event was when the electrical workers struck, consequently shutting off Khartoum's sporadic electrical supply. When the judges announced that they, too, would join the electrical workers in a massive demonstration in the middle of town immediately other groups joined the opposition, which was growing by the day, announcing that they, too, would join in the demonstration. This was to happen on a Friday. It was on a Wednesday, I believe, when it became obvious that this was going to occur. And Nimeiry's vice president had already announced that he would shoot them all in the streets. There was a parallel between this strike situation and the situation in 1958 where the then elected

president was toppled – almost an exact replication. We sent a cable in saying that Nimeiry's chances of containing his government looked very slim.

*Q: And he was meeting with President Reagan?*

PIERCE: The cable was received two hours before his meeting with the president.

*Q: President Reagan, yes.*

PIERCE: *(laughs)* It didn't matter. I think my cable would not have affected anything. The situation had changed so dramatically when the massive amount of people went on strike, and were determined to have the demonstration. When that all coalesced within three days before the event announced for Friday, the coalescence was so pervasive, we knew it was not going to be a typical crisis like those Nimeiry had weathered in the past. There's been some speculation, I think, that had Nimeiry been there he might've been in a position to save himself – to save the regime – but he lost power because he wasn't there, and his vice president had not been chosen because he was a leader. Nimeiry had basically weeded efficiency out of government, so there was really no one of sufficient skill to manage such a situation. Now, as you might know, on the Friday, that night basically, there was an in-house coup. A revolutionary command council – I seem to recall five top generals – had decided to take over the government. There was no demonstration the next day. The city was dead. Nimeiry tried to get back and was stopped by Mubarak in Cairo and has never set foot in the country again.

*Q: When you say the military could stop it – you know once you crank up a demonstration, I mean were they able to go out and say, "We've done it?"*

PIERCE: Nimeiry's gone. You don't need to demonstrate. I think there was some popular uproar in the city, but no massive protests. It wasn't that difficult, I think, to get the leaderships of these various groups to agree that the reason why they were demonstrating was Gaafar Nimeiry, and Gaafar Nimeiry was no longer there.

*Q: Well now, you were there – just to set the framework – this disposition of Nimeiry happened when? And when did you leave?*

PIERCE: It happened, as I recall, in May. I could be off a month. It might've been in June, but I think it was May. I left in July.

*Q: You had been looking, as one does, I suppose, particularly in a country where you've got a one man government, you take a look at the military to figure out who these guys are and if you can get to them – because they're the most likely people to knock a guy off. Did we have any feel for who these people were, where they were going?*

PIERCE: It's a very slow road, obviously, building up contacts that can give you insights into an issue like that. I think I had a reasonably good appreciation of what every element of the embassy was thinking in this respect, but I also was in a position to develop my own outside capabilities. But the answer is we didn't know that concretely. I think by and large what you had

– the CINC, or their version of the CINC, the commander-in-chief, the head of military there, Suar-el-Dahab, who had no ambitions whatsoever. That was a reasonably sure thing. In that country just like with every other position, Suar-el-Dahab got his position not because he was a dynamic leader; he got it because Nimeiry thought he was malleable. A lot of the other senior military had the same qualities. In other words, that's why they were put into their positions. But you had some indications that there may be some undercurrents or different agendas. At the time the general consensus was that these guys were in a tight spot and didn't know what to do. They could see the entire country falling into chaos – certainly the city – and the city was the country in the sheer sense of politics. They moved to stop that from happening.

It's a pretty reasonable assumption that the threat to shoot down the demonstrators on that Friday by the number two, Oman al-Tayib, would not have been carried out. There was a big question as to whether he even had the resolve to see it happen. But if he had done it, it would've produced chaos and I think the military leaders moved to forestall the chaos. Over the two months, and even afterward as I recall, they gave no impression of having their own agenda. What they were looking at was moving towards transitional rule. The other thing was that they didn't have a nuanced grasp of foreign affairs or an estimation of the threats around them. Their letting Libya open a new page in the relationship – in other words, get close to them – was an extremely difficult issue and one that destabilized the city, destabilized certainly our relationship with Khartoum. Ultimately, as you might remember, it led to the installation of a little Libyan friendship society in North Khartoum, I think, and ultimately into the shooting of one of our employees at the embassy on the streets of Khartoum in the middle of the night. And the evacuation.

*Q: But that was after you left?*

PIERCE: Just after I had left.

*Q: While you were there, what about security? I mean we had had the killing by the PLO of Curt Moore and Cleo Noel. That was when?*

PIERCE: I have to look it up.

*Q: Yes. But that was some years before.*

PIERCE: Much earlier.

*Q: I remember, just as a Foreign Service Officer, sitting off God-knows-where, feeling no great love for Nimeiry because he let the assassins leave.*

PIERCE: Nimeiry's international approach had changed by the time I got there from having a leftist tinge when he first took over and then he became allied with more radical Islamic causes. He then evolved into being a close friend of America, which he was at that time, with a demonstrated desire to stop Qadhafi – a common bond with us. So we had a very different attitude. This earlier history was always a sore spot, but the bilateral relationship had moved much farther beyond his espousal of radical causes. He was very, very helpful and supportive of

us, and saw us as central to Sudan's future. Sudan is not unlike a lot of countries, except that its size is so large and diverse. Not just the south, but also the west, and the east, and the central south. All these areas, some with a greater history of autonomy than others, had their own sense of identity.

*Q: What about personal security while you were there? Was this a consideration?*

PIERCE: I felt no problems at all in Sudan, never. Except in the south, which I visited in a UN (United Nations) plane three times, I think. And that was a problem simply because the SPLA riddled the towns – especially the town of Wau, which I visited twice – with its own people and you just didn't feel overly secure there in the middle of what's called the "tweesh" which is the flat slough of the White Nile there. In a more professional sense, we were all very much worried about security. There were, as I suggested, Libyan-trained Sudanese who were avowedly planning to commit violence in Sudan against Sudanese targets as well as American targets. So, yes, there was a security issue, but personally I did not feel a problem.

*Q: Then you left there in '85.*

**HUME HORAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1983-1986)**

*Ambassador Hume Horan was born in Washington, DC in 1934. He served in the US Army from 1954 to 1956. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1960, and completed his master's in 1963. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Iraq, Jordan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the Ivory Coast. Ambassador Horan was interviewed on November 3, 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Hume, 1983, how did you get assigned to the Sudan?*

HORAN: I got a call at home one afternoon from Andy Steigman. I was upstairs in my bedroom. He said, "Hume, they are thinking of sending you to Sudan. What do you say?" I was delighted. Sudan was the largest country in Africa. The size of the USA east of the Mississippi. Sudan was primarily Arabic-speaking, but its south was very African. The north-south civil war was breaking out again. It was in Khartoum, in 1973, that Ambassador Cleo Noel and DCM Curt Moore were assassinated by the PLO. There is a superb book by David Korn on the assassinations. I thought it would be an exciting adventure to serve there.

*Q: Well, how did it proceed? Sometimes these ambassadorial appointments often have a rocky path.*

HORAN: As a career person, I had no particular enemies or critics, inside or outside of the Department. I was an Arabist, but one who for the most part had been on the fringes of the Arab-

Israeli dispute. My time in Jordan, where the Palestinian radicals were driven out, may even have counted as a small plus. I had good contacts in Israel, I'd done a year of Classical Hebrew via correspondence with the FSI's Dr. Marianne Adams. I was never typecast as a pro-Arab, anti-Israeli Arabist. This not to say that the Israelis were not stiff-necked, even unscrupulous in pursuit of what they saw as their national interest - take the USS Liberty for example! Or those foolish, fish-bone settlements on the West Bank! But you could always count on the Arabs to go the Israelis one better! So I had my hearings. I had had African experience, I was an Arabist, but an "even-handed" one. Not many envied me the assignment. So off I went.

*Q: When in '83 did you go?*

HORAN: It would have been around August, 1983 that I landed at the decrepit collapsing, unpainted airport with its faded, tattered, Sudanese washcloth flags. They might have been out in the wind and the sun since independence in 1956!

*Q: What was the situation within the Sudan in '83? What issues did you face?*

HORAN: Good question. One was strategic. Libya was trying to overthrow Nimeiri, and the prospect of Libya controlling the waters of the White and Blue Nile, and Sudan's thousand-mile Red Sea coast, was a nightmare to Egypt, Saudi Arabia...and us.

One Saturday, a Libyan bomber flew over Khartoum and dropped its bombs on the Khartoum suburb of Omdurman. Another time, we flew in a squadron of F-15s from Langley in Virginia, all the way to Sudan... Another threat had been received, and we were warning Libya not to monkey around too much. It was ironic, I thought, that in Yaounde, as in Khartoum, Qadhafi's trouble-making should have become one of our main concerns. He's seemed to have it in for me, ever since 1969!

We had lots of reasons to worry. President Nimeiri was becoming more and more unpopular. The economy was a wreck. Gasoline was almost unobtainable, and power was something only for the rich...who had generators and political influence. His political base was shrinking. To shore himself up with the Muslim Brothers, he pulled what proved to be his last rabbit out of the hat. He released from prison the head of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi, and declared the Sharia Muslim canon law, to be the law of the land - even for Southerners.

I remember a Sudanese TV news clip, showing Nimeiri clownishly dancing around an enormous stock of alcohol that had been seized from Customs. He was smashing whiskey bottles with a club, and the whiskey was splattering out all over his uniform! Then the bulldozers came and rolled over these forbidden fruits. Most Sudanese viewed Nimeiri's anti-alcohol crusade as a sad joke. They tended to have a relaxed semi-Arab, semi-African attitude towards alcohol. And did this new policy win the hearts and minds of the Muslims? Not really. Muslims remembered that a short while ago he had massacred some 800 followers of the Mahdiyya sect on Abba Island! Sudanese considered Nimeiri a hypocrite, a *munaafiq*.

When Nimeiri imposed *sharia*, he also dissolved the autonomous region of the South. The south was broken into three regions, headed by military Muslim administrators sympathetic to Nimeiri.

Not surprisingly, Southern resistance broke out again. Chevron oil explorers were attacked and chased out of the south. Some of their FSNs, Kenyans, were killed. A French-sponsored agricultural project to dig a huge drainage canal through the White Nile marshes, the “Sud” was shot up and abandoned. The canal would have carried extra water to the reservoir of Lake Nasser - and maybe added to the south’s arable land. But southerners saw it as a way of opening up more of the south to northern military operations.

The stakes, this time were even higher than in the first Civil War (1956-72). Oil had been discovered, just below the demarcation line between the north and the south. The designated oil port was in northern hands, but the oil itself was in the south. Here was more fuel, literally, for ethnic strife!

*Q: Could you tell me a bit before we get into it, you keep talking about demarcation lines, north-south. Could you explain what the situation was in the Sudan that caused this incipient civil war and all that?*

HORAN: When Sudan became independent in 1956, the south right away said, “The slavers are coming back to get us!” They revolted under the leadership of Joseph Lagu - a southern Christian, who years later became Nimeiri’s Vice President. The war dragged on from 1956 to 1972, a stalemate all along. But with titanic casualties on the part of the southerners - especially the aged, the women and children. In 1972, President Nimeiri came to power and signed with the southerners the “Addis Ababa” accords. Basically, they granted regional autonomy to the south. Life went on in Sudan for the next 11-12 years in the usual miserable way. Then came Nimeiri’s decisions on *sharia* and the abrogation of Southern autonomy. This must have been in May or June, 1983.

*Q: That was quite a list of issues. Any more?*

HORAN: Just a couple. One of the world’s great famines was at the door, and, somewhat linked, was the issue of Ethiopian Jewish refugees in Sudan. I don’t use the common term “Falashas” for them; it is slightly derogatory. Jewish lobbying groups were pushing hard to get the USG to support and facilitate their emigration to Israel.

*Q: These were refugees from the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia.*

HORAN: Yes. They weren’t political in any sense; they just totally destitute peasants, fleeing Ethiopia. Was the Mengistu government harder on them because they were Jewish? Mengistu was surpassingly brutal to all his people - but it was the Ethiopian Jews who had the ear of the American Jewish community. These were some of the issues facing us when I arrived in Sudan.

*Q: How were relations with in the last 10 years or so before you went out, between the United States. I mean we had the assassination and all that.*

HORAN: a complete deep freeze in our relations. Should have been deeper, even. Some humanitarian assistance continued to go to the Sudanese even after the Sudanese released Cleo’s and Curt’s assassins. They flew off to Egypt. Nothing really much happened to them. Our

performance was vile. How could you let an Ambassador and a DCM be assassinated, and then maintain relations at the charge level? I found that just inexcusable.

*Q: You know, sitting here on the outside of this whole thing, I couldn't imagine what we were doing. This was Nixon's time.*

HORAN: It was just insane. I later came to Washington, where I saw Lou Hoffacker, our anti-terror coordinator. I said, "You know, I can't imagine why we didn't close shop up and then start getting even with the Sudanese and the PLO. The Sudanese had become almost become accomplices, by releasing the assassins." He said, "Oh, Hume. You know at the time we were discussing this, there were a few hotheads like yourself that wanted to take more extreme action - but cooler heads prevailed." Gak! I'd earlier written to Lou, and I think David Korn mentions my letter in his - again - wonderful book. a respectful monument to some very good colleagues.

*Q: I just choked up; I just couldn't understand it, and I felt as a Foreign Service officer, here was a country that in some way was complicit in killing some of our colleagues and yet we didn't do much.*

HORAN: Why were we so spineless? I suppose with the Libyan threat, we feared the communists could move in and take advantage of what we might do. Of course, the Sudanese were pouring soothing syrup all over us saying, "Oh, you know, just don't worry. We still value our relationship blah, blah, blah. We are really against terrorism." We allowed our focus to be distracted. The next thing you know, the situation drifts a little bit and you have got a new status quo: with a more or less functioning Embassy, at a low level but still an Embassy, with a chargé d'affaires. And so it went. We should have pushed our chair away from the table, gotten up and walked out of the door, while giving them the *bras d'honneur* en route...but that moment was lost.

*Q: Well then, did you have instructions or were you given yourself sort of mental instructions of what you wanted to do in the Sudan when you went out there? You were there from '83 to when?*

HORAN: To '86. Yes, I had one of these letters from the President, you know. I also had a USAA Household Property Floater policy. It was sometime hard to tell them apart. When JFK sent out his first letter to Ambassadors, it was a fine, brief statement that carried authority. "You are my main man in X country, and unless there is an independent military command there, everyone had better bend the knee." Subsequent Presidents and administrations felt the need to improve on it. "Let's say something about helping private business, improving the environment, emphasizing human rights, transparency in elections, etc." Maybe eight pages long! You almost look over the letter for the disclaimer, "This is not a bill." When something becomes totally inclusive, it becomes not inclusive at all.

*Q: Well now, I have heard that the Sudan at one point there, the CIA had been quite active and all that. You had the President's letter. How did you view, I mean, what were you getting, this is obviously an unclassified interview, but time has passed. Was there a problem with the CIA, I mean either...*



HORAN: Yes, of course, of its perhaps "Being out of control?" Actually, I had great Agency colleagues and they did a great job for our country. Sudan was one Africa country where internal matters were important to all U.S. agencies. Liaison with the police and the intelligence services, for instance. Our Sudanese counterparts were often remarkably good. They were there to do the job and keep us safe. I had good relations with my colleagues in the expanded political section. They knew I valued their work and esteemed their profession. I'd urge State officers to show discretion...and compassion for their colleagues. "These men and women," I'd say, "Are our Jesuits. They have taken a supplementary vow of obedience to Uncle Sam. When your day is ending...their second job is just beginning." I would go down to their offices for a face-to-face meeting; I'd get to know their communicators upstairs and watch videos in the quietness of the best, and most secure movie facility in Sudan.

Conditions at post helped. In Foggy Bottom people are cut off from each other. But in Khartoum, all of us - principals and dependants, from all Agencies - were in the same boat. We were all part of a single community. Wives get invited to the residence, kids played together, families went on picnics in the desert together. You can and should build up a good relationship, based on your positive leadership. But if you ever find yourself pulling out the President's letter, boy! you are one big loser. It is like being in the army. If you, the sergeant, order the private or corporal, to "Pick up that cigarette butt." He'll do it, but goodbye leadership. I worked for a kind of openness that would help to get the mission done and preclude surprises.

*Q: Well, I mean this brings up another set of balls we keep bouncing back and forth. What were living conditions in the Sudan, not only for the Sudanese but for us?*

HORAN: I think I got a call recently from my marvelous former Secretary, Maryann Heimgarten. She had been secretary for about half a dozen ambassadors in her life, and has now retired to Fredericksburg. We're getting together. She asked. "Do you remember that house you were living in. That was such a disgrace." And it was all in all one of the worst embassy houses that I had seen. Not just because it was an Ambassador's house but an Embassy house, period. It had a nice garden, but it was really not a satisfactory place at all. I was happy enough in it, though; it really didn't take a lot to keep me happy. I liked the work. The DCM's house, too, was pretty inferior. We eventually moved to a new residence that was as nice as its predecessor had been bad.

When Ron Spiers, our Under secretary for Management came out, I said to him at an Embassy town meeting in the DCM's residence, "The most important, and hardest working, and sometimes least appreciated person at this post is the Administrative Counselor. He is the head of our 'Space Station.' He struggles to maintain an American work atmosphere, in an environment where everything yearns to collapse. Wayne Swedenburg was that Administrative counselor. A magnificent FSO. He was like the Texas ranger. But housing was terrible, and the people had scattered all over town, a security problem. Khartoum was a 25% post when I arrived, and as things got nastier, it became a 50% post. That was after all the families and non-essential personnel were evacuated.

*Q: What about security? After Cleo and Curt, I imagine we must have been pretty security conscious. What prompted the draw-down?*

HORAN: We were very security conscious. Our superb RSO, Pete Galant, would tell us, "If you go to a function, and you hear or see something strange, don't rubber neck. Get the hell out of there. And when you go to a party; look to see where the kitchen is, what the exits are. Think, 'How fast can I get over the wall?'" In Khartoum, you learned always to be in condition "yellow" or "red" whenever you went out. Silly as it sounds, I usually would carry a weapon - as instructed by the RSO - when I'd go to diplomatic functions. The RSO said, "They're dangerous. The bad guy knows that at such and such a time on a certain date, all the game must come to the waterhole. So he sets up his blind, and..."

I'd originally been a heavy weapons infantryman and the Embassy had just an armory of weapons. We'd go out in the desert and shoot and shoot and shoot. I liked it. My children liked it, too. They sent a lot of rounds down range! It was fun. The number of activities you could do was limited in Khartoum. But the Sudanese had lots of deserts. The whole country was one big range. The Department sent us a very fancy, fully armored car, giant engine, plus a little secret button that in an emergency you could press to tell the Marine Security Guard what was going on. "Hello, you are holding this gun too close to my head. Goodness! Isn't that the new Amoco station. Don't we need gas?"

*Q: You heard the story about our Ambassador I believe it was Turkey, who took his car out, dismissed the chauffeur, took his girlfriend out. They were necking in the back seat, all of a sudden the people in our security were listening to panting and all that.*

HORAN: Great, Great. You have got to be really careful with that. Nicholas Thatcher and Beenie Thatcher were once coming back from a dinner in Jidda, and accidentally triggered the button. It wasn't really a big shocker or something weird, but they mentioned, I think, that Ambassador so- and- so was in his cups again... he's told that story now four times..." You have got to be alert.

*Q: Well did you find, did you get around still?*

HORAN: Yes, yes. We had a C-12 there, although we couldn't always fly where we wanted. Of the three southern capitals, Yei, Malakal, and Juba, we could only visit Juba. The guerrillas were close to the other capitals, and if they saw a small plane coming over, they'd try to shoot you down.

Juba had been the old capital of the southern autonomous region of Sudan. I used to fly to Juba pretty often, every two months. Partly to do an *acte de presence* with the Southerners, partly because I enjoyed it. You could leave Khartoum, where all was hot and dusty and the Muslim Brothers guys with their little gimlet eyes looking around. You'd fly across this interesting countryside, and then you would come down into Juba. It was really almost like an H. Rider Haggard novel...the twin mountains at King Solomon's mines! The surface of the airstrip was always dotted with pools of water throughout the year. Gosh, water! The plane would skip, skip, skip, and come to a stop and they would pop the doors open. All of Africa would rush in through the open doors. It was vegetation and humidity and cattle and people and unwashed bodies! There was something very antiseptic about the air in Khartoum. It didn't support odors. But there

was something so organic about the air in Juba! You get out and of course, everyone was black - I mean *really* black. They were relaxed, and were non-Muslims for the vast majority. I'd call on the governor and some of his top aides. All Muslims Arabs. Stiff, some with that little raisin mark on the forehead, the "zabib" that comes from excessive prayer. But the people who actually ran the administration were mostly southerners. Some had studied in the States. They knew that we thought Sharia law and the abrogation of regional autonomy were terrible. They'd invite you to these outdoor night clubs, that featured half-clothed, spangled Southern girls hip-hopping about. The local Kuwait assistance representatives and a few of the Muslims from Khartoum would sit there, their eyes bugging out of their heads.. The Southerners would all be quaffing "Tusker" beer. Some would get up and shout, "Down with Sharia!" to much applause. It was very African, very cheery, very "relax."

I'd stay at the AID mini-compound. It had a tennis court, swimming pool, and nice small houses maintained by AID contractors. Like R&R!

*Q: What sort of AID was in both north and south when you were there? What were we doing? How effective was it?*

HORAN: We had a number of agricultural projects. It was always being said that Sudan would be the breadbasket of Africa. Any country referred to as a "breadbasket" is in trouble. It usually means catastrophe and famine! We were trying to energize southern Sudanese agriculture. We sent a number of southern Sudanese to the States to study agriculture management. Can you develop a region? Can you develop a region with a civil war going on? The answer was no. Most of the AID activities were suspended. Southerners, though, were grateful for our mere presence. It gave them a measure, if not of cover, at least of international recognition.

We could bear witness. "You see this village? It was burned down by the Army last month." We observed a cycle of violence and destruction. The rebels would try something against a government unit. Then withdraw into the bush. The Southern commanders would ask: "Where was it? At village X? Okay, that is one of these hotbeds of resistance." The Army would go in, destroy the village, kill lots of people, kill the cattle, and move on. Who was hurt? Only the tormented civilians.

*Q: There must have been a lot of refugees...*

HORAN: Yes. We dealt mostly with the refugees in Eastern Sudan. Some were Southerners, displaced by the war. Many more, though, were Ethiopians who were pouring into Sudan because of the drought and the Civil War in Ethiopia. Sudan was home to almost 800,000 refugees!

Fatality rates were out of sight. Maybe a hundred children a day would die at Wad Koly refugee camp. You would see all these little bodies being taken out, there would be the muck and dirt and smell. It was not cheery. To Embassy people who'd go there with me, I'd say, "We are not here to empathize with these poor people. How we can help them is by improving sanitation, health, food delivery systems. That is what we are here for, not to wring our hands. We are not doing

our job if we let ourselves become emotionally overwhelmed by the misery.” I vastly admired the “Fransiscan” cheerfulness of the nurses and doctors.

We needed above all to improve the food distribution system in Sudan. Even at the height of the famine, the problem in Sudan was not so much a shortage of food, as a distribution system that was zero and an inability of the afflicted people to pay. AID rebuilt the railroad system connecting the most affected centers. It imported boxcars. It imported locomotives. Poor Sudan! At independence, the Sudanese railroad system had been one of the best in Africa. Now, it transported one tenth of the earlier freight, but was staffed with ten times more people than before! AID even built its own port so that our grain would be delivered in bulk. The Sudanese labor unions, which controlled the regular port, said, “Oh, no. You can ship the grain in these big bulk carriers - but before we off-load it, it must be bagged here, one bag at a time.” The refugees? Tough.

*Q: How did Sudan get into such a mess?*

HORAN: Bad economics and politics both played a role. Here was a country that had everything one could possibly dream of as prerequisites for successful development: water, land, oil even. Why then weren't they developing? Partly because you had a President with a deep-seated prejudice against market economics. What little he knew about economics was all wrong and had been imbibed at Cairo's junior officer's mess, back in the 1950s. In the heyday of Arab socialism, in other words. Nimeiri was a man of very limited intellectual capacity. Some efforts were made, by very able people, to talk him up to “Samuelson's EC 1.” I recall a meeting between Nimeiri and Secretary of State George Shultz during Nimeiri's 1985 visit to Washington. Nimeiri, who spoke rough but very serviceable English, asked Shultz, "Your people always talk to me about market economics. Can you explain to me what they mean?" Shultz, God bless him, gave Nimeiri in ten minutes, a superb compression of “The wealth of Nations.”

*Q: He'd been a professor of economics.*

HORAN: Yes, and he was brilliant. I could watch Nimeiri's eyes as this was going on. It didn't take more than a minute or two before his expression began to suggest he was already thinking of lunch.

*Q: Quite often the leader may have this, but underneath him are the people who often run things, you know, that type of thing. Was there such a thing?*

HORAN: Not really. a few well-educated Sudanese were “in the window” for show purposes. They'd say, “I am really on your side, but what can I do about Nimeiri and his cronies in the Military-Industrial Corporation? This monstrosity is their rice bowl. They'll never fire half the labor force, all related ethnically to them, for the sake of some notional improvement in economics! Their idea is that their side won, and Mr. Shultz can talk 'till he is blue, but it has nothing to do with the reality of running the country.”

How do you educate “The Prince,” if “The Prince” is not interested in education, and the people around him aren't either? We kept trying. Henry Bienen, a senior economist from Princeton,

came out with a bevy of graduate students. a great hydrologist, John Waterbury, also came to Khartoum. They'd have good meetings with civilians. Q: "You seem to have known him before?" A: "Yes, we were at Hopkins together..." Then the meeting would go up one floor. Our experts found themselves talking - through a translator - to a Brigadier who had tatoos or scarifications all over his cheeks! Who all the while was clearly thinking: "Ah! Another of these American lectures. But all is not lost. Pretty soon I'll head off to Omdurman for a nice reunion with all my ethnic buddies."

Then, if we really tried to squeeze them, they retort: "Don't you know? The Communists and the Libyans are at the gates! We are last bastion of the free world for you here." It was a ploy that had its successful moments with the administration of President Reagan.

*Q: Well did you go to see Nimeiri from time to time?*

HORAN: Yes. I saw him a number of times. I saw him quite a lot, in fact. Of course, we always spoke in Arabic - that may have helped him feel comfortable with me. I had a certain respect for the man. He had no intellect, no intellectual curiosity. He was a dictator. He had blood on his hands. But looking at the African and Arab scene, his very limitations were a sort of virtue. They kept him from thinking big. They checked his path to perhaps even greater violence. He used violence, but proportionate to his aims. If you crossed him, you'd be run over. But if you stayed out of his way, he wouldn't go looking for you. He wanted power. He wanted money. Or his wife did. She was supposed to be one of the richest women in the world. Nimeiri wasn't a psychopath. He had no extraordinary vices. He didn't watch kinky films. He didn't have a long line of girl friends. He didn't have a long line of boyfriends. He had, in fact, a rather conventional personal life.

One night I had to pay an impromptu visit on him. He was staying, as was his wont, in the middle of Khartoum's main Army camp. After the gate, I was passed through a series of checkpoints - like getting into the State Department. Finally, I got to Nimeiri's residence. From the outside it looked modest. No better than our DCM's residence. Inside it was totally vanilla. The decor was pure "Motel Six." Very sparsely furnished, nothing on the walls, very sterile. But the living room was dominated by a really big-assed color TV. Nimeiri was wearing a *thawb*. He was watching reruns of his earlier speeches! I thought, "This entire scene tells me a lot about the man."

*Q: How could such a limited man, hold onto to power so long, in such a neighborhood?*

HORAN: There is a wonderful western called The Shootist. I don't recall the author. An old gunslinger was dying of prostate cancer. He had a ferocious reputation, yet the odd thing was, he was never all that fast or accurate. What counted, though, was that everyone knew he would never flinch, and once he went for his piece, he would keep shooting until you or he were dead.

Same with Nimeiri. Everybody knew he was not going to back down, would go to any extremes possible and necessary to stay on the job. Once, a group of coup plotters planned to assassinate him when he arrived at the airport. Believe it or not - this is Sudan - the conspirators arrived late! Nimeiri had already landed. So they tried their coup anyway. And here is where Nimeiri showed

he had not lost the instinct for power. He rallied his bodyguard, and with himself at their head, rooftop-to-rooftop, house-by-house, wiped out the conspirators.

I see Nimeiri as a brave, resourceful, determined...NCO. He and Sergeant Poe would have gotten along well! But he was prepared - and everyone knew it - to go all out if challenged. "Whatever it takes," could have been his motto. He stayed in power because he was the toughest and most resolute guy in a country where people by and large were not all that tough.

*Q: He was there the whole time you were there.*

HORAN: Well, no. He made a visit to the States. And that is how he fell.

In 1985 he came on a visit to the USA. He saw President Reagan, DOD, State, the Agency... As he left Sudan, however, and as a sort of hostess gift to us, he implemented some IMF reforms. The price of gas and bread and electricity all shot up. Washington was very happy. The students and the taxi drivers, however, were not. They began to demonstrate. As the days passed, the demonstrations got bigger. We began telling Nimeiri, "Do you think your presence might be needed at home?" His response was, "Let them agitate. They are all rabbits. I will fly back and you will see, everything will be calm, calm like a lake." But the problem got serious when the agitators closed the airports by driving all manner of big vehicles onto the runways. Nimeiri's way home was closed! Once it became clear the teacher couldn't get back in the room, the "students" found new courage. The Army chief of staff, General Suwar al-Dhahab, was called by popular demand, to the Presidency. His name means "*Gold Bracelet*." He deserves to be remembered not just in Sudan's, but in Arab contemporary history, a decent man. He was and looked the part of a soldier. He had been known and respected for his honesty, good sense, and sincere, moderate religious beliefs.

He accepted very reluctantly. "You know, I don't want the job. It is being forced on me. But it is better to have me than the alternative: chaos." He said, "I will do the job for one year, and then I am turning it over to you politicians. Now you politicians remember, you have not been very active these last twelve years. You have got just one year to pull yourselves together - then I am gone. I'll leave for my farm in northern Sudan. I'll be out of politics. I'll be out of the military. I'll just be a farmer."

Of course, no one believed him. And as the count-down to the one-year mark proceeded, he would remind the politicians: "Five months...four...three..." At year's end he held honest elections, with international observers. After the balloting, the political parties were still in such disarray, they asked him to stay on a few more weeks, while they got their affairs in order. I saw this as a bad omen?

The ultimate winner was Sadiq al-Mahdi, the grandson of the Mahdi of Gordon's time. Suwar al-Dhahab went back to his farm. He is still there, widely honored. Sadiq al-Mahdi went on to make a tremendous mess of the country. He proved wonderful at giving speeches in Wellesley, Mass, but clueless when it came to actually running a country. Might as well have asked him to build a space shuttle! His own L.S.E. economics were about as relevant to the task before him as

Nimeiri's "NCO-socialism." After I left Khartoum, Sadiq was overthrown by General Omar al-Bashir. Another hard, limited man.

*Q: Well, going back to AID. As I recall, wasn't this an area where an awful lot of non-governmental organizations, NGOs were involved?*

HORAN: Those camps were just awash with international organizations. The Lutherans, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, *Medecins sans Frontieres*, Harry Belafonte's "We Are the World." AID, FEMA, DOD, all were pulling together, under the general coordination of the UNHCR. Bob Brown was our able AID representative in this effort. There were a few rivalries - things like "This our camp..." a lot of that was refereed by the international community. The donors would meet periodically, and we, of course, were always near the head of the table. In the end, the famine abated. Many thousands of people lived, who otherwise would have died. *AID was able to deal with a reconstruction problem better than it could with something as imponderable as economic development.* All in all, it seemed as well-run an operation as you could expect. Given the many agencies, corruption by the Sudanese, and the collapsed infrastructures of Sudan. The Ethiopian Jews got out. So, it was, you know, on the whole successful.

*Q: I have the impression, and please correct me if I am wrong, that where our AID organization comes in and as you have mentioned before, builds up a tremendous infrastructure to support itself, the NGOs tend to come in and kind of, I mean you get a lot more bang for the buck with an NGO than you do out of. Was this...*

HORAN: Yes, you find, for instance there might be a particular NGO that has set itself up to do health or nutrition, and they have a very skillful staff. Then in some cases, young men and women who would fly in from the Netherlands or Denmark or Germany or France or the U.S. and just show up at the UNHCR. "Can you use me?" "Oh yes, we can use you. We will pay you some piddling amount." The NGO's really got out into the countryside. They were flexible, and their overhead was vastly lower than AID's. There exists a "disaster freemasonry." You'd hear young volunteers play the "Do you know game?" Or the "Were you there game?" Some seemed not to have missed a catastrophe in years. Addicted, I suppose, to their own adrenalin.

*Q: Well, while you were in the Sudan, how was the war going. Talk a little about who were these people, some of these guerrillas who disappeared in the bush from time to time. What were they after?*

HORAN: They'd say "Southern autonomy, or independence, or rights for Christians." At a more practical level, they were after food, cows, abusing the civilian population, looting, trying to get military equipment from the Sudanese. They also wanted to make sure that no other resistance group improved its position at their expense. The internal politics of the Southern Resistance were shifting and sloppy. Personal and organizational rivalries between John Garang, Riyak Mechar, and others, made it easier for the Army to keep the rebellion off-balance.

*Q: Well, what about getting the Ethiopian Jews out? I would have thought this would I mean, here is a country, Sudan, which was being run on Muslim grounds, at least the top, and putting*

*reinforcements in Israel, albeit maybe unadjustable reinforcements whatever, would still run sort of contrary. How did that work during your time?*

HORAN: Getting the Ethiopian Jews out of Sudan was a very major part of my work. Maybe THE major part of my work in Sudan. Jewish organizations in the States were lobbying with the American Jewish public, they were vying with each other over who was the most intransigently active on behalf of the "Falashas." That's what the Ethiopian Jews were called in the U.S. press. I'll use that term here, just for convenience's sake. In this inter-organizational rivalry, it sometimes seemed to me, that the interests of the Falashas came in second!

Meanwhile, the U.S. government was VERY quietly working this issue with the Israeli and Sudanese governments. Washington was regularly, and unfairly, accused of indifference or worse. But we all knew that if we breathed a word of what was going on to the American Jewish community, the news would be all over the map. We'd never get any cooperation from the Sudanese. Why stick their heads in a noose for Uncle Blabbermouth? But they saw that the Falasha question could have its uses to them. To themselves, they said, "The Americans are always beating on us because of our non-functioning economic system, because of our harshness with the southerners, because they don't like Sharia. But there is one juicy plum we can give them. It may shut them up at least for awhile. Why not give them the Falashas?"

George Bush, then Vice-President, came to Khartoum and discussed this very delicate issue with President Nimeiri. Afterwards, the green light was given for a secret airlift to fly the Ethiopian Jews out of Khartoum. We knew that speed and discretion were essential to the success of the extractions. a convoy of buses would gather the Ethiopians from their camps, drive them in the earliest morning hours to Khartoum airport, board them...and the planes would be gone. The coordination of the various moving parts of this operation was masterfully executed by a wonderful American, Jerry Weaver. Jerry was our refugee officer. Totally resourceful. His exploits were fairly recounted in Robert Kaplan's book, The Arabists. The planes then flew out over the Mediterranean, and turned right. I believe this was so that the flight plans could read "Cyprus" instead of Israel.

"Operation Solomon" was also facilitated by foreign extraction experts carrying a variety of passports. These men struck me as reliable, reassuring, and serious. They spoke English but they just had a kind of gray internationalism to them. I had no doubt that their real nationality was Israeli.

*Q: There was more than one airlift, I believe?*

HORAN: Yes. The extractions were in two parts. The first, "Operation Solomon," was the larger. Many major U.S. papers knew of the operation, but had agreed - unusually - not to publish. They rightly decided that it would be wrong, just for the sake of a story, to close the exit door on these thousands of totally miserable people. Anyway, the story did break in the end in the Israeli press. The L.A. Times picked it up next and carried a very good, objective piece on what was going on. That ended "Operation Solomon."



After lying low for some weeks, we were able to go back to the Sudanese. We said, "Look, we're sorry about the leak. But the damage has been done. 'In for a penny...' So why not follow through to the end. There are only a 5000 or so Ethiopian Jews left. Let us blot them up in one quick extraction." They said, "Okay, provided that this time the operation is run by your sister Agency." "Operation Sheba" was briefer, even more expeditious. It was done by the Agency and with U.S. military C-130s. Maybe 141s? Same convoys, same rush to board the refugees. The facilities this time were even starker. No seats. As soon as the plane bays were filled, the planes took off. One after another. DOD! Imagine! They had security people on the ground to make sure that no refugee tried to hijack one of the planes!

Years later, a group of young Falashas visited Howard University. Their ages were probably between 19 and 22. They all had done their military service. I said, "I may have seen you as children on one of those airplanes. I may have seen your mothers or fathers." They said, "Really?" I said, "Yes, you came out of Sudan on the airlift didn't you?" They said, "Yes we came out in the airlift." I asked, "How are you guys doing in Israel?" They said, "Pretty well. a lot of us become career military. We have found that in the Israeli army, that is a good place for us to be."

From what I heard at Howard, the young people were doing pretty well, but the older ones weren't. They were just lost. If you take adult peasants from the Early Iron Age peasant economy of the highlands of Ethiopia, and throw them into Israel, they will not learn Hebrew. They won't learn the technology. They can't learn how to fend for themselves very effectively. If you were five or six or seven, at the *Alia*, you had a pretty good chance. If you were an adult, you were probably going to fall off the back of the bus.

*Q: What did the Arab media say to all this?*

Double hernias on Arab editorial pages from the Atlantic to the Gulf. "Proof! How the imperialists and the Zionists are conspiring against the Arab nation!" Even the semi-tame Sudanese media was very hostile. The issue often came up when I'd see official or private Sudanese. I'd take the high ground. I'd actually congratulate the Sudanese. "Speaking as a friend of Sudan, don't flinch. Aren't you already overwhelmed with refugees? Do you want more? Isn't someone who takes these off of your hands, actually helping? Besides, you're being cast as heroes and humanitarians by the international media! Here's an Arab state doing something humanitarian and generous to the poorest of the poor. You look like heroes to the rest of the world. You Arabs don't get this kind of good publicity ever!"

I don't think the Operations affected my relations with Sudanese - either official Sudanese or others. Except maybe that when I was about to leave Sudan, the quite nice Chief of Palace Protocol, told me - as if sharing a joke, "Of course there will be no farewell decoration for you."

*Q: Was this the reason for the withdrawal of the Embassy's dependants and non-essential staff?*

HORAN: Part of it. The security situation had been getting steadily worse. I think of two incidents in particular. The first involved an American citizen who had been seized by the PLO and taken to their headquarters.

*Q: That is the Palestine Liberation Army.*

HORAN: Correct. The Amcit was the local representative of the Sun Oil Company. His normal route to work took him past PLO headquarters - and over the months, they had observed this American going by each morning and evening. They decided he must be observing them. He must be an operative of the CIA! So that evening when he was on his way back home, they stopped his car, shot it up, and dragged him into PLO headquarters. He had just enough time to radio the Embassy before he was dragged away.

The Embassy radioed me. I thought: "Do we really want some stupid hostage standoff to drag on, positions to harden, as more and more people are forced to take a stand?" I recalled somebody saying that when stopped by the police, you have to make your case before the officer starts to make his entry in his little book. Once the entry is made, your tail has been caught in the big wringer. So, I asked my station chief to join me immediately. Meanwhile other Embassy colleagues rang every bell they could at the Presidency and in Security and Army headquarters. The Station Chief and I drove right to the front of the PLO headquarters, my flag flying, and stopped there. We passed word to the Sudanese that I would stay there until a Sudanese army officer came and gave us back our citizen. To the Station Chief, I said, "You know, you have got to apply maximum force...before the jaws close. Just as he bounced in...so can he bounce out. But if we just sit around, and send Foreign Office notes, everything will harden and we'll never get our man out."

In the event a very high ranking Sudanese military officer showed up. I told him this "This car is not moving until we get our citizen out of there. You can interview him at the Embassy tomorrow if you want, but this banditry by the PLO is unacceptable to us...and I'd think to you, also." He went in and he brought the American out. The Department sent me note saying "Well done."

*Q: What was the situation then in the PLO headquarters?*

HORAN: Yasser Arafat's brother was the PLO representative there. a bourgeois, quiet man. Not revolutionary at all. The PLO was chastened after the awful Black September stuff. They seemed to be on their good behavior. What happened to our Amcit was unsettling, but there were worse types out there.

*Q: Abu Nidal?*

HORAN: Yes the Abu Nidal organization, and other groups - including the Libyans. This brings us to the second incident, the one that actually sent most Embassy Americans home, brought me two 24-hour a day bodyguards, and raised our differential to 50%.

One night, an Embassy communicator, Bill Calkins, was driving home from the Chancery. a car pulled past him, and one of the occupants opened fire. The round went through Calkins's head. He was immediately taken to our nurse's office. Terrible. Blood everywhere. Calkins was medevaced by a special plane. He underwent frequent, massive surgery in the U.S. He survived,

and his doctors and therapists expressed their wonderment to me at his iron determination to push his therapy as far as he could. Calkins remains highly handicapped, but has been able to take and hold down a job at the Virginia office in Philadelphia in person. I visited him at the trauma center in Philadelphia a couple of times.

*Q: While you were there, there was a book that came out some years later called The Arabists by a man named Robert Kaplan. You figure in that, I mean he talked. Can you tell me about I mean he felt you were the cat's pajamas. Do you recall that?*

HORAN: Yes I do. He is a friend. I am certainly not going to bite the hand that fed! But I admire his work. I very much agree with his realistic, dispassionate point of view on Africa and the developing world. Robert's analyses are solidly undergirded by lots of personal experience on the ground. As an FSO I can relate to that. We both see merit in the Huntington thesis about a clash of civilizations.

I was then working for Sam Lewis at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Sam Lewis got a call saying, "There is this correspondent, Robert Kaplan, who would like to interview Arabists." Sam responded, "We have one right here." To me he said: "Are you prepared to talk to some writer about what motivated you and the course of your career and the like?" I said, "Give me a moment; let me think a bit."

I checked on Robert Kaplan. I asked friends in the Department, "Is he one of these Joseph Kraft types, out to do another hatchet job on us Arabists?" I was told, "No, no, he is a serious person." So, I said, "I will be glad to talk to him."

Then *they* asked me, "Why? Several other Arabists, you know, have declined to be interviewed by Kaplan." I replied, "First, because you say he's a serious person. And second, because the public repute of Arabists is already so low, that there is nothing he could write about me that could make us look worse." So I had a couple of sessions with Robert. I thought his book gave Arabists as fair treatment as I've seen anywhere in the American press.

**DAVID HAMILTON SHINN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Khartoum (1983-1986)**

*David Hamilton Shinn was born in 1940 in Washington state. He attended Yakima Valley College until 1960, and graduated from George Washington University with a BA in 1962 and an MA in 1964. He joined the Foreign Service in 1964 and has served at posts in Lebanon, Kenya, Tanzania, Mauritania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Cameroon, Sudan, Burkina Faso, and Djibouti. Mr. Shinn was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: You left Cameroon in 1983 and went to Sudan.*

SHINN: Right. I joined Hume Horan as his DCM. It was a very different situation. It was an active post in which Washington had considerable interest. I stayed in Sudan until 1986.

*Q: When you arrived in Khartoum in 1983, what was the situation?*

SHINN: Sudan was entering a very interesting era of change. Jaafar Nimeiri was the president and very much in charge. Just months before I arrived, he had made a number of significant changes that led to a resumption of civil war and ultimately to his overthrow. One of the steps he took was to unravel the 1972 Addis-Ababa agreement that had ended the war between northerners and southerners. By changing elements of the agreement, Nimeiri so angered the south that John Garang, then a colonel in the Sudanese Army, fled south and founded the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). At about the same time, Nimeiri instituted a harsh version of sharia law, which was anathema to southerners and some northerners. By the time I arrived, these new directions were well under way. We spent a lot of time thereafter in the embassy weighing the consequences of Nimeiri's new policy and the future of the Sudan.

*Q: Had we by 1983 gotten over the assassination of Cleo Noel and Moore or was there still some lingering resentment about the death and the subsequent mishandling of the crime by the Sudanese?*

SHINN: I think that episode was pretty much behind us by this time. They were killed by the Black September group and not the government. The incident was very badly handled by the government, but in the meantime Sudan by late 1983 was the recipient of one of the largest economic development and military assistance programs funded by the U.S. A couple of years later, we supported in Sudan one of the largest famine relief programs in Africa. The U.S. had taken an interest in the Nimeiri government, which was friendly towards Washington. Our largesse was due in major part to the Cold War.

*Q: What did the embassy believe was behind Nimeiri's new policies?*

SHINN: The U.S. government was certainly concerned about Nimeiri's new directions. The harsh form of sharia was our greatest concern. Early in 1983 the U.S. did not envision return to a severe civil war. But the sharia issue had a dramatic impact. The U.S. wanted at a minimum removal of its harshest aspects. We made demarches and frequently spoke to officials about the problems sharia was creating. By 1984, we became concerned about the stability and viability of the Nimeiri government.

*Q: Nimeiri was a former military officer. What brought him to mix religion and government?*

SHINN: At the time, we attributed Nimeiri's new policy to a religious conversion. In hindsight, I am not sure that was a correct diagnosis. He may have been more motivated by political maneuvering to neutralize the growing Islamic forces in the Sudan. He understood this new phenomenon; I am not sure that foreign observers did. There may have been an element of personal conversion, but I am not sure that was all there was to it. We will probably never know for sure what motivated Nimeiri. At the time, we may have over-emphasized his personal conviction and minimized the political calculation.

*Q: How did Hume Horan run the embassy and how did he use you, as his DCM?*

SHINN: I think he ran the embassy in the traditional fashion. Hume was the “outside” person and the DCM was “Mr. Inside.” He was the face of America in Sudan; he carried out the high level governmental contacts. I was looked to for the day-to-day management of a multi-faceted embassy. I was looked to for the coordination of the various U.S. agencies in Sudan, making sure we were all marching to the same tune. We had a large military assistance program, a large economic assistance program, an active USIS program in addition to the State Department personnel and the Agency. Every major component in the U.S. foreign policy establishment was represented. We also had a small AID office in Juba in the southern part of the country. It was periodically staffed by Americans and sometimes headed by Foreign Service locals.

I did have a special portfolio, contact with the southern Sudanese. It was easier for me to do that because it did not interfere with the ambassador’s contact with the government. The southerners were viewed as the opposition in Khartoum.

*Q: How were the embassy-CIA station relations? I believe that before your time, there had been some serious frictions between these elements. Was that under control by the time you got there?*

SHINN: The relations were excellent during my tour. I give Horan primary credit for that. He, as ambassador, is responsible for insuring that the Station reports to him and does not conduct activities on its own. Horan did delegate a lot of the day-to-day business to me for dealing with all agencies, including the Station. I don’t think we had any problems during 1983-86.

*Q: What were the power centers in Sudan during your period?*

SHINN: There were several. There was the Nimeiri government. Then there were a few political parties that had some independence. Sometimes they were aligned with Nimeiri; sometimes they were in opposition, but we maintained contact with them regardless of their situation at any given moment. One was the UMMA party led by Sadiq al-Mahdi. Another was the Democratic Unionist Party, led by Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani. There was a new element that was growing increasingly powerful. It was the National Islamic Front led by Hassan al-Turabi. We had to work hard to establish contact with that group so that we could understand where it was coming from. We had pretty good contacts with the top leadership, but we didn’t know the people below Hassan al-Turabi very well. There was the southern element that continued to work with Nimeiri. The second vice-president, Joseph Lagu, was a southerner as were some other government officials. Lagu was deeply concerned about the future, but remained part of the government. We saw him regularly. There were also several political parties representing southern Sudanese who opposed the Nimeiri government.

*Q: Was there a religious element in the Sudan which was trying to play an active political role that gave us concern?*

SHINN: Fundamentalist power was within the National Islamic Front. I don’t recall any separate religious element operating in the political sphere.

*Q: For a long time, we have heard and read reports of the miserable living conditions in the south. How did the embassy find it?*

SHINN: During this period, Juba and several other towns in the south were essentially enclaves. If you traveled outside the towns, you couldn't be sure who was in control. Inside the towns, there was relative peace and quiet. The whole area was underdeveloped. The infrastructure was exceedingly limited, which was one of the major southern complaints. It was evident that the government had done precious little to improve the standard of living for southerners. Southern Sudan resembled other parts of Africa below the Sahara, not Arab North Africa. It was clear that this part of the Sudan was not part of the Arab world; one could have been in northern Uganda or northern Kenya.

*Q: What were the southerner's attitudes towards us?*

SHINN: They were very interested in the role the U.S. could play in Sudan. At the time, we had little, if any, contact, with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). They were operating in the bush and were very hard to reach. Our contacts, therefore, were with southerners who lived in or visited Khartoum. Many were clearly sympathetic to the SPLM, but they would not acknowledge that they represented the organization. It was obvious, however, that they were unhappy with the government and were supporting John Garang, the leader of the SPLM/A.

*Q: What was our policy toward this growing split between north and south Sudan?*

SHINN: We were never enthusiastic about Sudan splitting into two parts. We were deeply concerned that if the country split into two, it might splinter into five or six pieces. This possible fragmentation might not have been confined to the south. Darfur in the western part of Sudan might have argued for its independence. There were various parts of the south that might have claimed independence. I don't think it would have been in anyone's interest to have Sudan splinter into many parts. At the same time, we were concerned about Khartoum's neglect of the south, particularly economic neglect.

*Q: What were Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia and other neighbors up to at this time?*

SHINN: Egypt has always had one policy toward the Sudan: no division of the country. It had to remain unified. The White Nile passes through both southern and northern Sudan; after being joined by rivers from Ethiopia, the Nile becomes Egypt's life line. It was not in Egypt's interest to deal with one more country when it came to matters relating to the Nile. That has been Egypt's position for many years.

Libya's policy, on the other hand, has not always been that clear. It is usually close to Egypt's policy. On the other hand, it has periodically had bad relations with Sudan. While I was in Khartoum, the Libyans bombed the radio station in Omdurman. Two Libyan planes dropped a few bombs; there was minor damage. It was an indication of Libya's view of Nimeiri at the time. The Libyans have also maintained fairly close relations with John Garang, using the excuse that

they were trying to help reconcile the SPLA and the Khartoum regime. They have, in fact, on several occasions tried to play the mediator's role. Libyan policy has always been more difficult to understand.

Ethiopia has gone back and forth on the issue of support for the SPLA. The present government in Addis Ababa prefers a unified Sudan. When Mengistu Haile Mariam was in power from 1974 to 1991, Ethiopia gave considerable support to the SPLA. Ethiopia was a refuge for the SPLA, which operated freely out of Ethiopia. This unquestioned support for the SPLA ended in 1991 when Meles Zenawi took power, although some assistance resumed several years later. Ethiopia has good relations with both the SPLM and Khartoum today.

Uganda has also gone back and forth. It has generally been sympathetic to the SPLA, but its degree of enthusiasm has waxed and waned over the years. Kenya, on the other hand, has clearly tried to maintain neutrality. Eritrea has generally been supportive of northern dissidents and the SPLA, but has improved somewhat its relations with Khartoum.

*Q: During 1983-86, the Cold War was still on. How did it affect our view of Sudan?*

SHINN: It clearly played a role. The Soviets were not particularly active in Sudan for reasons that have never been clear to me. I would have thought they might have made a greater effort in Sudan, but they didn't. We had no way of knowing whether they had plans to become more engaged in Sudan; we operated on the assumption that at some point the Soviets would become active. The Soviet Union disintegrated in the late 1980s. They never became as active in the 1980s as they had been in the 1960s and even the 1970s. But clearly, while I was in Khartoum, the Soviets showed little interest or were given no encouragement by Khartoum. Of course, that was our goal. We treated Sudan as a Cold War patron and gave considerable support to Nimeiri.

There was another issue in Sudan which played a prominent role in our relationship - the transit of the Falasha Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. Many of them crossed the Ethiopian border into the Sudan as a result of drought, the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia and due to the fact that they were being treated as third class citizens by their own government. Many became refugees in Sudan living in miserable circumstances. They numbered several thousand. The U.S. played a major role in assisting their relocation to Israel. That was a very sensitive issue for Nimeiri, particularly once he had instituted sharia. His support of Falasha emigration to Israel was dangerous and contributed to his eventual downfall.

*Q: How did you get involved?*

SHINN: My role was relatively minor. The person in the embassy who was responsible for coordinating all embassy activities in support of this emigration was initially our refugee officer, Jerry Weaver. He was an AID employee, but on loan to the embassy and working for me. I followed the process, but this issue became so important that Ambassador Horan took charge and directed the policy aspects of the most delicate parts of the ex-filtration. Jerry had successfully arranged for their movement from the Ethiopia-Sudan border area by bus to Khartoum and then by commercial flights that eventually reached Israel. That operation worked well for several months and most of the Falasha left Sudan in that way.

The American Jewish community then put enormous pressure on the U.S. to move quickly the remaining Falasha because their physical condition had reportedly deteriorated. Vice-President Bush came to Khartoum; he had a number of issues on his agenda. The most important was to get Nimeiri's agreement to a special one-time movement of all remaining Falasha from the border area. Nimeiri agreed and eight or nine C-130s flew to the border area where the Falasha had assembled and took them to Israel. Although there were less than 1,000 remaining, they all left in one day. Soon thereafter, Nimeiri's regime began to crumble. There were many reasons, but his agreement to allow the movement of the Falasha to Israel was one of them.

*Q: What did we think was the reason that brought Nimeiri around to allowing this emigration?*

SHINN: The U.S. strong armed Nimeiri and may have made some promises of assistance. Nimeiri had nothing to gain from this project and a lot to lose, except for the positive support he might get from the U.S.

*Q: Were we concerned about the publicity that this ex-filtration might generate in our or in the Israeli press?*

SHINN: There was no free press in Sudan, so that was not an issue. The story did get out rather quickly after the C-130's departed. That was one of the problems we created for Nimeiri. The rescue operation was reported in such detail by the *Los Angeles Times* that it was clear the story had been leaked by someone in the embassy. It was an embarrassment for the Sudanese government and Nimeiri in particular. Prior to this event, when we were ex-filtrating the Falasha commercially, I was surprised that there was so little leakage about that operation. Later on, of course, the story was told in great detail, but at the time, there was very little media attention.

*Q: Where you still in the Sudan when Nimeiri began to encounter difficulties?*

SHINN: Yes. It was a particularly interesting period because Nimeiri was going to the U.S. for an official visit. This was part of his payoff for helping on the Falasha matter. This occurred at a time when the situation in the country was clearly deteriorating. There were periodic riots and major protests in the streets, some in front of the embassy. Bread prices had increased sharply; gas lines were exceedingly long. The country was clearly in dire straits. Yet Nimeiri decided to go to Washington and carry on as if all was well. Ambassador Horan went to Washington ahead of Nimeiri and was waiting for him in Washington. I can recall going to the airport as the American *charge d'affaires*. It was Nimeiri's style to convoke the diplomatic corps to the airport whenever he left and returned. It was mid-morning. Khartoum is on a flat plain. From the airport you can see much of Khartoum in the distance. As the diplomatic corps was lining up to greet Nimeiri, you could see plumes of smoke rising from various parts of the city. The mobs, knowing that the president was leaving, began to torch cars and a few buildings. By the time the presidential plane was going down the runway for take-off, you could see fires burning in the city. It was Kafkaesque. Here was the president leaving his country for a visit to the U.S. and his capital was burning. Security forces held things together for a while longer, but the country disintegrated several days later. Nimeiri took up exile in Cairo.



*Q: Who overthrew the Nimeiri regime?*

SHINN: It was the mobs in the streets. They exerted pressure, forcing the military to intervene to avoid total chaos. The mobs were huge; the anger was great. Authority completely broke down. Chaos would have ensued. General Suwar El Dahab, the chief of the armed forces, intervened. He was a very religious man. When he took power, he announced he would remain in power for one year; elections would follow. He kept his word and elections took place in 1986. They were generally free and fair, although voting in the south was very limited because the civil war was raging. But in the rest of Sudan, the elections were deemed to be fair and free.

*Q: After Nimeiri's departure, how did you find the Suwar El Dahab's government?*

SHINN: We had a much more formal relationship. We had been very close to Nimeiri as the next government well knew. It wanted continued U.S. assistance and support, but did not wish to be as close as Nimeiri had been. Contacts were more difficult. Suwar El Dahab put civilians in many of the ministerial positions. They represented a variety of backgrounds and political thought, from far right to far left. We had good relations with some of them; others were more difficult to deal with. It was a testy period for us, but it was manageable.

*Q: Were there any armed Islamic fundamentalists in the Sudan?*

SHINN: There was a small Muslim Brotherhood element in the Sudan, but the National Islamic Front (NIF) was the most important fundamentalist group. The Brotherhood, which I believed existed as a distinct group, was not really a factor in politics. The NIF played a significant role in the government.

*Q: I have been told that many of these fundamentalist groups are very hard to reach by Americans? Was that true in the Sudan?*

SHINN: It was hard. Hume Horan had the advantage of speaking outstanding Arabic. At a minimum, he was able to deal with these groups in their language. I didn't speak Arabic and was at a distinct disadvantage. Of course, dealing with these extremists required more than language; it demanded an ability to identify them and to gain their confidence. We spent a lot of time just trying to figure out who was worth approaching. Many of the extremists were very young, just having graduated from the university. They were not people with whom we previously had any contact. They had no incentive or interest in seeking us out; we were probably viewed as the enemy. We had to make major efforts to meet with these elements.

We had good contact with Suwar El Dahab even before Nimeiri was overthrown, but we knew very little about some of the people around him.

*Q: Were the Iran-Iraq tensions evident in Khartoum at all?*

SHINN: I don't remember that being a major issue. I did not follow it myself. There may have been some reflections of those tensions in Sudanese political circles, but I don't remember it becoming an issue.

*Q: Did Saudi Arabia play a role in the Sudan?*

SHINN: The two countries had close relations in the intelligence area during the Nimeiri government. Saudi relations with the NIF were less cordial. There were probably other Sudan-Saudi Arabia activities of which we were not fully cognizant. Saudi funds certainly entered the Sudan, some governmental and some private.

*Q: Did oil play much of a factor?*

SHINN: Yes and No. It was not a factor as an income source for the government because it had not yet been sufficiently developed. But it was a huge factor in our relationship with Sudan because Chevron had the license in the northern border area; other oil companies had rights much further south. At this stage, Chevron was the only company that had found significant quantities of oil. It was excited about the exploitation potential. Chevron sank large amounts in its development and exploitation efforts. It considered Sudan as a major potential source of oil. That complicated our dealings with the southerners because the oil was located either in a border area or in the south. In fact, the SPLA attacked Chevron facilities on several occasions; one resulted in a number of deaths. Chevron was forced to close its facilities, I think in 1984, and pulled its staff back to Khartoum hoping to wait out the southern insurrection. It waited for a long time until it became apparent that the situation was deteriorating. Then Chevron decided to close its Sudan operations. It was replaced much later by non-American companies.

*Q: How effective did you think our assistance - both military and economic - programs were?*

SHINN: One of our economic assistance programs was famine relief and I think that was effective. Development aid, looked at over a long term, was probably not too effective. I would be hard pressed to cite specific results from any project that is still viable today. Some of these projects may be functioning today, but I think the majority have disappeared. Any projects in the south were lost long ago due to the civil war. I would give American development aid a "C" grade at best.

The military aid was effective in that it cemented our relationship with the Nimeiri regime and was probably useful in working with successor regimes. We provided F-5 aircraft, most of which crashed due to pilot error or were shot down by the SPLA in the south. Ultimately, I think all of those airplanes were lost. In that circumstance, it is hard to say whether the program was a success.

*Q: Did our close relationships with Israel cause us problems?*

SHINN: They certainly skewed our policies on the Falasha issue, although most of the pressure to move them from Sudan to Israel came from the U.S. Jewish community, not from Israel. Otherwise, I don't think the U.S. relationship with Israel had much impact on our relationship with Sudan.

*Q: I would guess that there were some elements in Israel which might have concluded that the absorption of the Falasha might be real problem for a small state like Israel.*

SHINN: There were definitely conflicting views in Israel. There were elements that strongly supported the immigration as well as others who preferred that it not take place. The final Israeli policy was to support the ex-filtration and to bring the Falashas to Israel. Eventually, the Israelis arranged to bring the rest of the tribe directly from Ethiopia.

*Q: Did you feel that except for the Falasha issue there was enough interest in the Sudan in the Department?*

SHINN: The African Bureau had sufficient interest. I don't remember that any other part of the Department showed much interest in Sudan issues, but since we received our guidance from AF, I am not sure how we were viewed by other parts of the Department. AF had an interest in Sudan because Khartoum was one of the two largest operations in the bureau. That could not be ignored, even if the issues did not fit well in AF policy concerns. Africanists are not particularly interested in a predominantly Arab country, but you just can't ignore an embassy that employed over 200 Americans at its zenith.

*Q: How did you find living in a predominantly Arab country?*

SHINN: Khartoum was a hardship post; living was not easy. It was isolated, hot and dusty. Occasionally, haboobs or walls of dirt would blow into Khartoum. Fortunately, that did not happen very often, but it was a challenge when it did. Living conditions were harsh.

On the other hand, we found that the Sudanese were wonderful people. They are among the most hospitable people that I ever encountered in the Foreign Service. It is difficult not to like the Sudanese. Even the Islamic fundamentalists tended to be engaging and interesting individuals. They were pleasant people. From that point of view, our tour was most enjoyable. But it was a tough assignment because of the physical conditions and the constant tension due to security problems.

*Q: The British felt that they had left the Sudan in pretty good shape. Did you see much evidence of that?*

SHINN: We saw it in terms of Sudanese who had been educated. As for the physical infrastructure, there weren't many signs of colonial success left. Even when I returned to Khartoum two months ago, it was a city that looks pretty shabby and has experienced minimal economic development. I don't think the British left much behind, but they did leave a talented, well educated group of people in the north. The British pretty much ignored the south with obvious consequences. They can rightfully be proud of what they left in northern Sudan in the way of an educational system. The University of Khartoum is still a vibrant academic institution. There are also some highly regarded private universities. There was a special affinity among the British toward Sudan.

*Q: What about the role of women?*

SHINN: Sudan is a male dominated, Arab society. Women were not particularly noticeable in senior positions. There were some, but not many. That is still true today. The women were generally confined to the home. They do not wear *burkas*; they do wear head scarves. During my recent visit, I was told that 60% of the students at the University of Khartoum were females. Sudan is not like Saudi Arabia or even some of the Gulf States. There is considerably more freedom of movement and opportunity for expression by women.

*Q: Was there any threat to the embassy during the Nimeiri overthrow?*

SHINN: There was always the perception of a threat. The mobs, during the overthrow of the Nimeiri government, passed in front of the embassy to make a point. They knew the Americans were Nimeiri's primary supporters; the embassy was a logical place to demonstrate. I can remember standing on the roof of the chancery watching the crowds go by. It was a mild-mannered crowd even though there might have been an occasional demonstrator who shook his fist at us. There were also a few offensive signs, but there were never any attempts to charge the embassy or to throw stones at it. The embassy was never touched even though it was just a few feet from the main road. I never felt threatened. There was an attempt by Libyan elements to assassinate one of the embassy communicators.

*Q: How about other missions? Did they play any major role?*

SHINN: We were the main player during this period. The British were important; the Dutch, the Egyptians and the Germans had some influence. But that was about it.

*Q: Did we cooperate closely with the Egyptians and the relatively new Mubarak regime?*

SHINN: We had good relations with the Egyptian embassy in Khartoum. Egypt always assumed that it knew more about Sudan and had better relations with it than any other government. There engaged in a certain amount of self-delusion. I don't recall how much interaction the U.S. had with Mubarak on Sudan issues.

*Q: When you left in 1986, what were your views about Sudan's future?*

SHINN: I was fairly optimistic because Sadiq al-Mahdi had been elected prime minister by the new parliament following generally good elections. His UMMA party had won the single largest block of votes in parliament. The government was, as far as I can remember, a coalition of several parties. I overlapped with this new government for about six months. Things were looking pretty good. The new leadership was saying all the right things about ending the war with the south, although it never happened.

On the other hand, as I was about to leave we had to evacuate many embassy staff again. The first evacuation came following the attempted assassination of one of our communicators. We came to the conclusion that the perpetrators were Libyans. The communicator survived, but the attempt raised Washington's concerns. Since we had no way of knowing whether this was an isolated incident or part of a broader campaign, we sent all dependents home and reduced the

size of the staff in Khartoum significantly. Then in 1986 there was a second evacuation, but I must admit that I am not sure today why it took place. We again sent out all the dependents and reduced the size of the embassy. Despite my optimistic view of Sudan's future, there were serious concerns about the stability of the country and our future there.

**FREDERICK E. GILBERT**  
**Deputy Mission Director, USAID**  
**Khartoum (1986-1990)**

*Frederick E. Gilbert was born in Minnesota in 1939. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota in 1961, and completed his Master's degree in 1963 at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts. He began working for USAID in 1964 and has served at foreign posts in Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Tanzania, Sudan, the Ivory Coast, and Mauritania. Mr. Gilbert was interviewed on September 4, 1997 by W. Haven North.*

GILBERT: Well, in 1986 I went to Sudan as Deputy Director. I arrived there on my birthday, May 28. It was a very troubled time. Jaafar Nimeiri, the long-time President and dictator, had been forced from power by popular protests and strikes about a year earlier because he had embraced Islamic fundamentalism and introduced Sharia law. This had caused re-ignition of the civil war in Southern Sudan. The interim government was pretty weak and ineffectual. Extremist Arab groups began harassing the U.S. community. On April 15th or 16, 1986, an American Embassy communicator, who had been called in to deal with a NIAC cable, was followed and shot as he drove home from the Embassy. He was permanently disabled.

*Q: An embassy staff member?*

GILBERT: Yes. Either the same day or the next day, an AID wife employed in the office of the Defense Attaché narrowly escaped somebody with a gun who approached her car in a traffic jam. The ambassador called an evacuation of all dependents and of all nonessential staff.

John Koehring had arrived a few weeks earlier than me to assume his duties as Mission Director. He and I shared a house. Besides John and me, there were four other U.S. direct hires there to manage the AID Mission. The USAID national staff and we six Americans ran things as best we could until the end of October. After that, there was a phased return of U.S. direct hire staff and dependents.

During the evacuation period we essentially mothballed AID development programs. We still took some program actions, but we did so mainly to the extent necessary to enable essential Sudanese Government operations related to our projects to go forward.

But we couldn't mothball our emergency programs. Also, the Sudanese seemed to expect a lot of official and social interaction with us. This was, no doubt, in large part an effort to reassure us

that they valued our presence. It was also a function of Joe Goodwin's having known people like the Minister of Finance when he was a U.S.-trained economics professor at the University of Khartoum. I never before or after experienced so much "face time" with Ministerial level host government officials, and we were about as busy as I've ever been. We had at least four disaster response programs going simultaneously at that time. During the four years that I was there, I think we had 11 declared disasters.

*Q: You were there four years?*

GILBERT: Yes, from May 1986 to June 1990. There were two or three western drought emergencies. I arrived just as the first was winding down. There were two locust outbreaks. There was one rat plague. And then there were at least two declarations regarding the civil war in the south. There was the flooding of 1988. Of the biblical Egyptian plagues, we joked that we had them all except for frogs.

At that time the AID economic program in Sudan was the biggest in the Africa Bureau. It was certainly the biggest mission in the Sub-Sahara Africa. As a result of Sudan's good behavior with regard to Camp David and its cooperation with the evacuation of the Falasha Jews from Ethiopia to Israel, the combined Development Assistance, Economic Support Funds (ESF) and PL 480 Title I budget was pretty close to \$100 million dollars, and maybe more. That involved both non-project and project assistance.

To my recollection, there was never a time during my four years there when we were not managing three or four emergency response programs. In addition to strictly Sudanese emergencies, we were involved in shipping food through Sudan to feed distressed populations in rebel-held territories of Ethiopia, chiefly Eritrea.

*Q: Were you involved in Eritrea refugee support?*

GILBERT: There were large numbers of Eritrean and other Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. I believe the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the PVOs that worked with them on refugee feeding dealt directly with the Humanitarian Bureau of the State Department, an attache of the Embassy responsible for refugee matters and the food aid office of AID in Washington.

I thought and still think that I worked hard, too hard, during the years I spent in Washington on the Sahel program, but I never worked harder in my life than during those four years in Sudan. The workload including the large amount of representation, that we got caught up in combined to pose a major challenge to our physical endurance. This was exacerbated by an accidental factor. The Sudanese workweek ran from Saturday to Thursday. Ours was supposed to be from Sunday through Thursday. But since the GOS worked on Saturday, and Washington worked on Friday, we were often needed by AID/W on Friday and by the Government of Sudan on Saturday. Also, Immediate and even NIAC cables were fairly commonplace both for the Embassy and for AID. And, since lots of people finally got the clearances on Thursday or Friday on the cables they drafted earlier in the week, we seldom were spared dealing with urgent cables on Fridays and Saturdays.

During that whole period Jane always tried to make sure when we went out at night to something that required us to sit for any length of time that we were never placed in full view of other people. This was to avoid embarrassment because she knew that I could not sit quietly for more than five minutes without falling asleep. She worried that people would think I was a drunk.

But it was oddly exhilarating. It was exhilarating and wearing perhaps in the same way that working in a hospital emergency room might be. You had the feeling that if you overslept or screwed up it might cost human lives. Conversely, if you succeeded in your efforts to squeeze 12 hours of work into an 11-hour day, you could have the satisfaction of feeling that it made a real difference to people's lives and livelihoods.

Earlier, in relation to Ghana, we were talking about how many Ghanaian friends we made and how meaningful that made those years for us. Sudan may have run about even with Ghana in terms of the number of Sudanese who became not just acquaintances, but friends whom we got to know in some depth. The Sudanese are extremely hospitable people, and the Sudanese elite is quite cosmopolitan. On the whole, they are very appealing people.

One thing that keeps Sudan economically afloat is their good system of higher education. The University of Khartoum, apart from one or two universities in the Republic of South Africa, is the oldest in Sub-Saharan Africa. It produces well-trained people in a variety of fields in numbers beyond the country's needs. Many Sudanese university professors, physicians, airline pilots, police and military officers, magistrates and judges are employed in the Middle East. They speak Arabic, they are very observant Muslims, they stay out of local politics, they are conspicuous and easy to watch because they are Black and, not really comfortable outside Sudan, they seldom settle permanently abroad. All of these characteristics plus their knowledge and skills make them ideal intellectual guest workers. There are also lower level Sudanese guest workers in many Middle Eastern and North Africa countries. High or low level, they all remit significant shares of their earnings to their families at home, and they mostly return to Sudan with assets to invest in a farm or a business.

And so, an interesting thing about Sudan is that, even though the government was always broke, the country never seemed to be. There was a tremendous amount of production in the irrigated sector (cotton, rice, sorghum, groundnuts) and in the large-scale, mechanized, rain-fed agricultural sector (sorghum, sesame and, I believe, soybeans). Both sectors generated large volumes of exports. Sudan, being a very disorganized country, the Government was not able to collect taxes or control their borders very effectively. Since, with the exception of cotton, these exports passed mainly through private trading networks, only a portion of the earnings flowed through formal channels. This means that large revenue flows were not taxed and only a portion of the foreign exchange earnings was captured by the Central Bank. So the Government was always on the verge of financial collapse. Yet there was an impressive amount of commercial activity. Although there were few modern retail establishments, such as the super markets and department stores that one could find in some of the more market-oriented African countries – such as Kenya, Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire – consumer goods, including appliances, were abundant in people's houses. People somehow got their hands on decent cars. People seemed to have the kinds of foodstuffs that they needed for the national cuisine, which was Middle Eastern

with a few local idiosyncrasies. Just to show how “loosey goosey” the economy was, we used U.S.-controlled local currency to buy Isuzu all-terrain vehicles that were imported for us from Saudi Arabia. The money changed hands in Sudan, but the cars were imported pursuant to our orders.

*Q: What were the main program activities?*

GILBERT: Well we had everything that AID does except for low-cost housing. We had a PL 480 Title I program that supplied wheat and wheat flour for bread making. It was used to encourage the Sudanese to reduce bread subsidies and, later on, to promote use of sorghum flour to reduce the country’s dependence on imported wheat. There were annual Commodity Import Programs. The only thematics that I can recall concerning the CIP – and this would be just for one of them – had to do with getting Sudan away from purchasing crude oil for their refinery on the spot market, which was unnecessarily expensive.

We had some very interesting development projects. There had been a number of such projects for the South, but these had been suspended or terminated months before I arrived. These included a couple of roads and road maintenance projects, an agricultural development project and a large training project. For the North, the main focus was on Western Sudan’s rain-fed agricultural sector. The Western Agriculture Road project consisted of AID’s section of a road to link Western Sudan’s 10 million acres of cultivable land to Khartoum and world markets. This was complemented by the Kordofan Rain-fed Agriculture project, which comprised a cooperative-based agricultural credit component implemented with technical assistance provided by Technoserve plus the construction of feeder roads and the provision of grain storage facilities. The Western Sudan Agricultural Research project focused on developing higher yielding varieties of sorghum, millet, peanuts and sesame. The Agriculture Planning and Statistics project aimed to strengthen agriculture sector planning and policy development functions.

In the energy sector, the Energy Planning and Management project assisted in the management of the Blue Nile Power Grid that served the irrigated agriculture sector and most of the country’s industrial sector as well as the Khartoum urban area. Rural Renewable Energy consisted of grants to increase the supply and efficiency of local fuel wood resources and included improved charcoal-burning stove as well as land cover mapping components.

In the health sector the Rural Health Support project supported an Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) campaign and the Model Family Planning project aimed to consolidate the efforts and approaches supported by a multiplicity of AID centrally funded PVOs and contractors into an AID-supported, Sudanese national program.

We also had a variety of PVOs - including CARE, Save the Children (SCF), World Vision, CRS, Action Plan International and others - engaged in centrally-funded development activities around various parts of Northern Sudan.

As in Tanzania, but on a much larger scale, the Government of Sudan and USAID Sudan programmed counterpart local currencies through the Development Budget in support of AID projects and many other priorities. We had a very collaborative and productive working



relationship with the section of the Ministry of Finance that was responsible for development planning and management of the Development Budget. That group was headed by Mohammed El Kheir el Zubeir, who is now Sudan's Finance Minister.

Maybe it's because the development program was pretty straightforward and managed well by the Mission's technical divisions that my most vivid memories are of our struggles with our various emergency assistance programs. The General Development Office, which ran the emergency programs, was staffed with highly capable people, but they were stretched too thin and their portfolio was inherently chaotic and crisis ridden. We did virtually everything thorough such PVOs as CARE, World Vision, Action International Against Hunger (AICF) the International Rescue Committee and many, many others. And all this relief activity had to be accepted by and nominally coordinated by the Sudan government through a body called something like the High Commission for Relief Coordination (HCRC). This body's posture varied between mildly constructive and loosely obstructionist. Which tendency would prevail at any particular moment sometimes seemed to reflect the Government's attitude toward the current mix of emergencies and its relationships with the donor/PVO community, but at other times appeared at variance with one or the other or both. The HCRC was mainly responsible for monitoring and processing Government approval of all emergency relief-related travel and program funding decisions. The donors and PVOs did the real work of managing the emergency program under the coordination of the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) Resident Coordinator.

The Sudanese government was not a very coherent operation. Some organizations – for example, the parastatals that ran the large irrigation schemes like the Gezira - seemed pretty well managed. Impressive people were in evidence in most of the organizations that we worked with, but the collective outcomes always seemed to fall well short of the arithmetic sum of the individual efforts. A lack of accountability encouraged anarchic behavior. There would be certain people whom you could work with, but then, as often as not, you would find others had undone your work with them. Sometimes people lower down in a structure would overrule their bosses. Sometimes this would result from a breakdown in communications, but at other times it was sheer, bloody-minded waywardness. People could get away with such things since Ministries were often in the hands of, or even divided among, competing political or religious fiefdoms and cliques. It was widely understood that the staff of certain sections of one ministry consisted largely of Communists while that of another were Muslim Brothers.

As a result of all this squirrely business the donor community usually needed to operate on two levels: the managerial and the diplomatic. Managing our resources was the straightforward part. Getting needed cooperation - mostly just a matter of concurrences -required constant diplomatic activity. Given the importance of the relief efforts and the fact that the heads of UNDP and the European Union had ambassadorial status, the American, British, Dutch, French and German missions were involved at that level. This was essential to our success. It added interest to the work because of the camaraderie that developed among the Ambassadors and the managers, including me, who ran the programs. I don't think I ever got to know the senior members of the diplomatic corps or the ministerial level host government officials to such a degree as in Sudan. But it also meant that we spent a huge amount of time in meetings within the donor/PVO community and with the Sudanese. This meant that we in USAID had to work hand in glove with

the American Ambassador and DCM. That worked pretty well under Hume Horan and Norman Anderson and their DCMs (David Shinn and Dane Smith, respectively). I found it a good deal more difficult under their successors, basically because of their personal styles, which were usually, and on occasion breathtakingly, “top down.” I think I managed to prevent that style from overriding the management of AID operations more than was warranted, but doing that was wearing – like being in car driven by a reckless driver.

Running emergency programs generally require a great deal of logistical planning and management. Sometimes it can require investment in essential infrastructure. For example, during the great Western Sudan drought emergency that was just concluding in 1986, the U.S. provided the Sudanese a substantial number, say ten or twelve, railway locomotives.

We usually had one logistical expert planning and tracking delivery arrangements for U.S. emergency aid in coordination with other experts who worked for the UN Agencies such as World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the European Union (EU) and, to a lesser extent, the other bilateral donors. For the most part, this was a question of getting relief off-loaded from ships in Port Sudan and Mombasa for road transport to the South and for road and rail transport to Western Sudan. But, when the situation became urgent in Southern Sudan, we made massive use of airlifts. We also began to use rail and river transport to reach certain Southern destinations. From that point on it became necessary for the relief community, through the UN, to coordinate with the Southern rebels, the SPLA.

*Q: I see.*

GILBERT: When you consider that there were usually at least three operations of this kind going on at one time, we really had our hands full. It wasn’t long before it became clear that either John Koehring or I would have to spend an awful lot of time on relief matters and that it would be quite wasteful if we didn’t agree that one of us would mainly handle relief matters while the other mainly handled development program matters. In early 1988, we decided that I would oversee relief.

This meant that I did a lot of traveling both in Northern Sudan and also to the South. The only way to go to Southern Sudan was to fly. Until late 1988, we generally chartered aircraft from Nile Safaris, a company that operated about 12 twin-engine, pressurized Cessna and Piper aircraft. From Northern Sudan we could only fly to government-held towns. Those that I visited were Juba, Wau, Malakal, Abyei and Aweil. We needed pressurized aircraft so we could fly at 12,500 feet or higher and, thereby, be out of range of the SAM missiles that the SPLA had. We would fly at that altitude to the town and then corkscrew down in tight circles just above the town to land. The idea was that the government soldiers on the ground maintained a perimeter around the town wide enough to keep the SPLA beyond range of the planes as they descended. Nevertheless, I personally know of four such flights that were shot down during or just after my time there. We sometimes heard firing while we were on the ground in these locations.

Before I left Khartoum, I turned over the financial records of the English-speaking Anglican congregation to a Scotsman who was a Nile Safaris pilot. He was shot down and killed about 10 days later. I had flown with him. In most cases the downed planes had failed to observe the

“corkscrew” procedure. In one case, however, the SPLA had slipped a SAM missile launcher into a government-held town and hit a plane while it was doing the corkscrew maneuver. (After the first time or so, I developed a habit of discussing corkscrew procedure with the charter pilots in order to confirm that they understood its purpose and were committed to use it.)

When I left Sudan, I felt a sense of relief and gratitude that my U.S. Mission colleagues, my family and I had gotten through my time there unscathed. It’s the only job I had where colleagues and friends were killed carrying out their duties in the Southern war zone. Perhaps ten or so relief workers or pilots were killed and at least as many more had close calls that could have claimed their lives. I haven’t even talked about the terrorist threat, which remained a concern throughout our four years there. Well after the evacuation period had ended but before we moved into the Mission Director’s house in early 1989, there was a bomb attack by the Black September Group on the Acropole Hotel (where we occasionally went for dinner) and the mainly British Sudan Club. Another time, Iraqi agents assassinated a dissident Iraqi cleric in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel. After they shot their victim, they fired a random shot or two around the lobby, sauntered to the main entrance, got in a car with Iraqi diplomatic tags and drove away. As far as I ever heard the Sudanese never did anything about the Iraqi incident. I think they did cooperate in pursuing the perpetrators of the bombing. There were frequent security alerts. Given our knowledge that various Palestinian, Libyan, Iranian and other Middle Eastern terrorist groups were present in Sudan we took those things seriously. Most of us varied our routes and exercised caution about leaving our cars unattended and about driving and walking around in public places. But that was just a matter of making things a little more difficult for anyone who wanted to get us. There was no way we could go about the business of living without accepting an environmental risk – in effect, that if they really wanted to get some of us they would eventually have their chance.

*Q: Did we have an office in Juba at that time?*

GILBERT: Yes. AID owned a large compound in Juba. It contained office facilities, a warehouse, a maintenance workshop, residences and a swimming pool in a campus-like setting. It was quite a pleasant layout. I believe the last U.S. direct-hire officer based in Juba had departed about a year before my arrival in May 1986. Whenever I went down there I was gratified and somewhat touched by the way the national staff took care of the place. It was always spic and span, the vehicles and other equipment were in good operating order and the houses were well maintained and ready for temporary occupancy by TDYers. They also maintained good communications with the Regional Government that was based in Juba. I don’t remember for sure whether Juba was considered the capital of the Southern Region or only of Equatoria at that point.

*Q: They were running projects out of there?*

GILBERT: No. Our development projects in the South had been suspended for some time. Project commodities (including road maintenance equipment) were stored in Juba and the Juba staff monitored these arrangements. As for relief projects, USAID Khartoum managed AID emergency relief grants to PVOs working in government-controlled areas as well as contracts for the movement of food down to the South from the North. REDSO in Nairobi managed similar

grants to PVOs working in rebel-held territory and contracts for moving food up to Southern Sudan from Kenya through Uganda and/or Zaire. The Juba staff facilitated and supported the conduct of relief work in and around Juba mostly by making the communications and other facilities of the USAID compound available to PVOs and donor agencies. For some time, we had also been allowing the donor/PVO community resident in Juba to operate a recreation club based on use of the swimming pool whose costs they covered.

*Q: Wasn't Juba in the middle of the civil war then?*

GILBERT: Well, it was, and sometimes the SPLA were more or less at the gates of the city, but they never got inside the city of Juba. Most of the time that I was there the government managed to control substantial areas around Juba plus a corridor that ran south to Nimule on the border with Uganda and southwest through Yei to the border with Zaire. The government often had control of the Nile from Juba to the border with Uganda and sometimes for a distance to the north of Juba.

*Q: But this was federal territory in...*

GILBERT: Yes, central government territory. And our compound was U.S. diplomatic property in Juba. We wanted to make sure that its integrity was respected. Even so, there were times when it was damaged by stray bullets on the occasions when the SPLA made incursions close to Juba.

We had a policy of letting the Sudanese staff and their families come out if they wanted to. But most of the staff elected to remain in Juba, although some would come up from time to time for consultations and a breather – especially if things were “bad”. Usually “bad” was a matter of food shortages and electricity outages, but there were a few occasions when it was a function of stronger than usual SPLA attacks. The government forces usually managed to stop these well short of the city, but the SPLA occasionally got so close that fears arose lest they might use artillery despite the risks to the civilian population. Then, in 1991 or so, about a year after I left, the SPLA again came close to taking the city. I believe there was some shelling. The Army or some security forces within the army rounded up a number of people who were suspected of being SPLA agents. Andrew Tombe, who was the senior Sudanese staff member in Juba, and a driver were arrested. Andrew was accused of communicating with the SPLA. Both were summarily shot. Andrew was a very dedicated and squared-away guy. I believe that shortly afterwards the compound ceased to operate as a U.S. Government installation. I don't know what disposition was made of it.

*Q: Anything particular about the emergency operations, any lessons or experience that is instructive?*

GILBERT: Well I learned a lot about PVOs.

*Q: How did you find them to work with?*

GILBERT: Unruly, by donor standards. They were a positive force but working with them could be a bit trying. Most of the PVO field staff were very good as individuals, especially in their

moral dimension. Plenty of them were quite sophisticated and efficient to boot. Some of them were putting their lives on the line on a routine basis, especially those working in SPLA territory and, therefore, subject to indiscriminate government bombing and ground attacks by Arab militias as well as the Sudanese army. I came to have a particularly high regard for organizations such as Doctors without Borders, the Irish PVOs Concern and Goal, AICF (International Action against Hunger) and OXFAM/UK. But still, on the whole, the PVOs represent a much richer mixture of strong and weak and sane and insane and so forth than you have among the donors. One thing that I hadn't appreciated before is the intensity of competition among PVOs. This competition stems from the fact that, while PVOs genuinely do a lot of good in responding to disaster situations, they also have to exploit those situations for fund-raising purposes. This, I believe, lies at the root of some of the unseemly competition for visibility and roles that occurs among them.

*Q: Right.*

GILBERT: Fortunately, because of my experiences in the Sahel drought emergency, I had already learned some lessons that I was able to apply in Sudan. This was the more fortunate because I don't think John Koehring had been involved in the same way – that is with the Washington end of the Sahel drought emergency. I would have to say that I benefited from knowing something of how Washington can sometimes behave when things are going badly in the field during an emergency situation. Being on the ground in such situations can be a bit dangerous because Washington – which in reality is more a field of forces than an operational entity - can hold the field unit accountable without admitting accountability itself.

And AID Washington goes through cycles of attention and inattention, concern and unconcern or even denial. For example in 1988 we were deluged with once-in-a-century rains from Khartoum all the way down to the northern parts of Southern Sudan. There was massive flooding throughout these areas. And, while it had been always been plenty difficult to get food to the areas in and around the South where it was needed, it suddenly became virtually impossible to do so. Khartoum and the surrounding areas were massively flooded, creating one of the all time great crazy situations. I'll come back to that.

All this hit when we were already in a major crisis because the war had been generating large numbers of newly displaced people. We couldn't track these people in the early phases of their movements because they were mostly wandering in the bush until the lucky ones who survived would suddenly begin flooding into government-held areas. We soon began to suspect that there were hundreds of thousands of people on the move. Even if they pitched up where we could in principle get food to them, tooling up for such an effort in a country the size of Sudan with its feeble transport infrastructure was dangerously time-consuming. We had been reporting on this situation and our efforts to deal with it within the context of already declared emergencies for weeks before the flooding hit. But once the flooding occurred, we not only found ourselves managing a new flood emergency relief program focused on the needs of many thousands of homeless people, but also trying to coordinate a southern emergency relief effort that had been pushed by the floods from crisis to hyper crisis status. We continued to react and report as best we could even though the Khartoum floods rendered all but the first one or two floors of our eight story building unusable and forced us to set up eight or so temporary offices around town.

As time passed our reporting and general cable traffic described the locations and the needs of the tens of thousands of southern displaced and the fact that ground transport was falling short and would continue to fall short of meeting the needs of many assemblies of the newly displaced needy populations that were being identified (sometimes only by hearsay). Airlifts were an obvious response in some of the larger government-held towns like Juba, Wau, Malakal and a few others, but some of the displaced were in areas where there were no usable airfields and where the SPLA were so close that the corkscrew maneuver wouldn't work even if the airfields had been usable. So reconnaissance visits, let alone airdrops, were not possible without grave risk to pilots and passengers in the air or to people on the ground if airdrops were attempted without proper advance arrangements.

But in any case, we maintained a flow of reporting on the situation and laid out the options that we could identify for dealing with the needs. We also requested the funding we needed to move forward. The replies we got from AID Washington consisted in large part of requests for more information on the situation plus queries about what other donors and the UN were planning to do and whether we had thought of this and that unrealistic option. And then the press began to show up. Not long after the press began to show interest, I got a phone call from Julia Taft, the Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Relief. The gist of her side of the conversation was something like: "We think it's time to do something and we want to send a team out there since you folks aren't really on top of the situation or coming to grips with it. My response can be summarized as, "We'd like to have that team and we will need the funding we have been asking for. We haven't been twiddling our thumbs. Have a look at the cable traffic." There was a little pause while she considered my rejoinder, but she let it pass without comment. It was all very polite, and I was enormously relieved that OFDA had decided to engage.

A rather large team arrived. I consisted of an OFDA Team Leader whom I won't name, plus the famous and late Fred Cuny, Larry Meserve from Food for Peace (FFP), Ron Libby (an OFDA contract employee), at least one other OFDA person, one or two other civilian experts and a military logistics team. They did some very good work. But it was soon also clear that the OFDA Team Leader saw us as his adversaries in a zero sum game. He acted as though he couldn't look good unless we looked bad. He was smart and very active, but he was an awful poseur. In his briefings of the donor heads of mission group – especially at the beginning before he digested the feedback he received - he would talk to them as if he was the resident who knew the lay of the land and the rest of us were the visitors who didn't know what had been going on or worse yet, didn't care. This wasn't only my own prickly reaction. Members of his own team had problems with him, and he had a knack for making the female members cry. Finally the dialogue between the OFDA team and the donor group brought the former to the realization that most of their good ideas couldn't be accomplished within the current rules which specified, inter alia, that we worked with the Government in Government-controlled areas, that communications with the SPLA were inadmissible and that cooperation with the SPLA was out of the question. This was an important realization and, to their great credit, OFDA concluded that the rules had to change.

Unpleasant as this process was, it turned out to be extremely worthwhile. The result was truly a paradigm shift that gave birth to Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). Julia Taft, a truly remarkable woman, managed to ratchet the political profile of the Southern Sudan humanitarian emergency

to an unprecedented level. Her husband was Deputy Defense Secretary so she could call forth impressive levels of cooperation from the Pentagon and to a lesser extent from the upper echelons of the administration. She somehow tapped the head of UNICEF, James Grant, to be the UN system's coordinator of OLS. She organized a consensus within State, AID and the NSC in favor of a full-court diplomatic press on the Sudanese and, then, the SPLA to cooperate in assuring safe passage for relief food shipments by road, rail and air to the displaced in both government-held and SPLA-held territory. Even so it took some time and arm-twisting to get the Sudanese and, after them, the SPLA to accept this concept. But it was absolutely necessary because each side could use military means to either prevent relief from the others' areas absolutely or to make doing so unacceptably risky to international relief workers. And both sides were exceptionally bloody-minded about the issue. The Sudanese Government was convinced that the international relief community favored the SPLA and would smuggle weapons and ammunition to them in relief shipments. The SPLA was convinced that the Government could and would force the relief agencies to carry supplies for their garrisons. Both sides, as has been said many times, were willing to use food as a weapon.

The developments, including the first OFDA team visit and at least one subsequent one, leading to the launching of OLS took place during the fall of 1988. Somewhere along the line – probably not long after the first OLS team had returned to Washington - Congress began to take renewed interest in Southern Sudan. We got a cable to the effect that AID higher ups were going to have to testify on the situation and that those preparing the briefing materials needed for us to answer a list of questions. And I didn't like the questions – too many of them were snotty and insinuatingly accusatory in tone. But we responded like good professionals, and our people prepared the information that had to be in Washington by COB on a given day. The answers formed two cables that came to me in the late afternoon of the day that they had to be received about seven hours later in Washington. There was just barely enough time to get them over to the Embassy for transmission as non-NIAC immediate cables before the Embassy communications unit closed down for the day. They were very long. I read through them quickly (for me) with one or two of the GDO staff pacing up and down outside my office. (John Koehring's need to deal with problems facing a member of his family in the U.S. kept him away from post during much, if not most, of 1988 until his departure later that year, so I was Acting Mission Director for extended periods.) The cables were fine except for one thing that prevented me from authorizing them. The GDO staffers almost had a collective stroke when I told them that, but when they understood what I wanted they enthusiastically and quickly complied. I had them reference every message that we had sent to Washington over the preceding six months on the matters that each addressed. The references, and the dates on which each was sent, required at least the initial page and a half of each message. This delay required that each cable be transmitted as a NIAC immediate, but that was helpful since it helped to insure the special handling needed on the other end.

I'll never know for sure, but I have a strong feeling that this exercise in low animal cunning made a great and positive difference in the way the Mission was regarded and listened to in the subsequent weeks and months as OLS was conceived, cobbled together and implemented. The tone of our communications with Washington improved immediately. I firmly believe that people in the humanitarian relief offices in Washington and, to a lesser extent, the Africa Bureau had been receiving our cables and not heeding them. And once the fat was in the fire, they were

doing what comes naturally. The French have an expression that sums it up beautifully: “Les absents ont toujours tort.” It’s better than our “It’s always the other guys fault,” because the fundamentally human thing is to blame those who are absent and can’t defend themselves. Another expression that bears on this is “Water (including waste water!) runs down hill.” Washington is uphill from the field.

So the relief operation entered the OLS phase sometime during the fall of 1988. The UN was able to negotiate with the SPLA to allow trains to go from the North to some parts of the South and to send road convoys into SPLA territory from Kenya through Uganda and Zaire. But even so, it wasn’t all smooth sailing. There were nasty incidents. The U.N. Resident Representative at the time, Brian Wannop, led the UN team that accompanied the first train down from northern Sudan to Aweil and, perhaps, to Wau. They came very close to getting killed. The train was unguarded, but the Government and the SPLA had each agreed to facilitate the train’s progress and assure its safety from their own forces. They did what they were supposed to do, and the train off-loaded relief supplies as it passed through both government-held and SPLA-held towns.

But there were progovernment, border-dwelling Arab militias and plain bandits who honored an ancient tradition by raiding into the Northern sections of Dinka country for cattle and slaves. The Government either couldn’t control their activities or didn’t choose to. From what I saw of the way things worked in Sudan, the Government probably couldn’t control them and chose not to incur the domestic political cost of trying. I remember that in the negotiations with the Minister of Transportation (General Burmah Nasser) concerning the use of the train for this purpose, he seemed genuinely worried about the train’s security from “bandits”. As I recall, he wanted to have armed soldiers on the train, but this was not acceptable to the SPLA.

One of these militia or bandit groups stopped the train, took what relief supplies they wanted and abducted the UN party. They took them into the bush for several hours. During that time they debated whether they should hold them for ransom, kill them or let them go. At least one member of the party, a medical doctor, was Sudanese, and he heard the debate. The raiders finally decided to let the UN folks return to the train and let the train continue on its way.

*Q: The supplies got through?*

GILBERT: Yes, that time. I think there was one subsequent train, but that never really became a significant way of moving food. And the main way of getting food down to the south from the North was to fly it into the government-controlled towns (Wau, Malakal, Aweil and Juba). The most common mode of getting food to areas not served by operational airfields, whether SPLA- or Government-held, was by road from Mombasa across the Kenya, Uganda and Zaire borders. These road corridors were chancy because roads were prone to rapid deterioration with increased use, especially during the rainy season. Collapsed bridges were a frequent problem. I can’t remember whether this happened before or during OLS, but there was a report of a convoy of about twelve trucks getting stuck in northeastern Zaire. They couldn’t go backwards or forwards. After a while we heard that the drivers had taken local wives and become part of the Zairian community. Those supplies had to be written off. I don’t know if the owners ever got their trucks back.



To return to the subject of relief logistics, one of the most challenging problems in mounting a large-scale emergency relief effort is off-loading, transporting and distributing relief supplies once they arrive in port. Port capacities are seldom adequate to deal with multiples of the normal volume of imports. The capacity of national trucking firms and railways are, at best, proportionate to the amount of haulage normally required for a nation's business (unless and until, as in Sudan's case, emergencies begin to seem normal). When a large relief operation starts, transportation resources have to be bid away from the normal users. Prices mount accordingly. Sometimes donors and relief agencies have to augment the capacity of national systems as the U.S. did with the locomotives they provided during the western Sudan drought of the mid-1980s. An issue that frequently comes up is whether to finance increased port unloading and warehousing capacity. Another is whether to permit transport firms from neighboring countries to compete for relief business. For Southern Sudan this was a need but not much of an issue given that there was no choice but to use Kenyan trucking operators.

At the advent of OLS, it was necessary to bring in air transport operators for the needed airlifts of supplies and relief staff. AID financed the incorporation into OLS of a PVO called AirServe that specialized in flying relief supplies in humanitarian emergency situations. As I recall, they mainly operated Twin Otters. These guys did a wonderful job and, fortunately, none of them were hurt despite the fact that they operated at the limits of human endurance to maintain a steady stream of deliveries to places where, by then, the displaced were dying everyday by tens and hundreds, depending on the numbers gathered at each location. The Sudanese work gangs for loading and unloading on each end were so organized and so efficient that the planes were scarcely on the ground long enough for the pilots' pit stops and for refueling – and that only when necessary. It seems to me that they mostly didn't kill the engines because, absent those needs, they were on the ground only for five or ten minutes. I believe the work gangs were encouraged to compete with one another. For the larger towns with concrete airstrips, OLS used Hercules C-130s. Commercial contractors may have supplied some of these but Belgian, German and other air forces provided a fair number, if not all. I don't think the U.S. Air Force provided aircraft to OLS. If they did, it was early on and very briefly. As I recall, this was because the Defense Department couldn't allow its planes to be used for nonmilitary purposes without payment. I believe I was told that it would have cost OFDA more to reimburse the Pentagon than to hire the requisite C-130s from a commercial outfit like Southern Air.

One of the exciting things about Cynthia Taft's link through her husband to the Pentagon had been the prospect of their being more forthcoming in supporting the relief effort. But the only concrete manifestation of Defense Department involvement in Sudan relief work that I can recall came before OLS was even a gleam in anyone's eye. Shortly after the Khartoum and northern floods hit, a U.S. air force C-5 Starlifter, a huge aircraft that looks larger than a Boeing 747, arrived at the Khartoum airport loaded with relief supplies and equipment. That was an awesome sight. It came at a time when most neighboring Arab countries – who never made the slightest gesture that I can recall to help with less dramatic emergency needs such as the western drought or those of the southern displaced – had been sending C-130s loaded with relief supplies. The C-5 was, let's say, a striking symbolic reminder of who had been and who would continue to be doing the "heavy lifting" of meeting Sudan's relief needs.

This reminds me of something that bears on the question of the U.S. military helping to meet emergency relief needs. In the build up to OLS we found ourselves needing more and more to arrange transport down to some of the southern towns where the displaced were gathering. Col. Joe Kennedy, our Defense Attaché (DATT) in Khartoum, a peach of guy – was anxious to do anything to be helpful. I believe he was in Army aviation rather than the Air Force. He and another officer in the DATT Office doubled as pilot and co-pilot of the DATT aircraft. He suggested using his training flight budget to fly us to these southern towns. We were thrilled because we had been told “no way” in response to our past requests for use the DATT aircraft (before Kennedy arrived) unless we were prepared to pay in appropriated funds, in which case they might consider it. Somehow it was clear that our interest was not at all welcome. Since we had no dollar budget for such flights, we could pay Nile Safaris in counterpart currency and they welcomed the business, we made the obvious choice. But we hoped that Joe would get an okay when he checked signals with the Pentagon on his training flights idea.

Unfortunately, it was not to be. Joe told us that they wouldn’t let him do it because that would take him into a war zone, and it involved a risk to him and the aircraft that they couldn’t accept. Apparently if one of us civilians had gotten hurt, killed or taken hostage that would be unfortunate but that wouldn’t be the Pentagon’s problem to explain or otherwise deal with. However, if that happened to members of the armed forces it would have wider and more serious implications (and they would have lots of forms to fill out!). Seriously, I think we were told that there was some legal requirement for congressional notifications when U.S. military personnel were sent into a war zone. Joe was very embarrassed, and we were all struck by the irony of it. The National Security Council (NSC) exists in response to a real need!

*Q: Hadn’t some sort of a truce been negotiated between the two parties?*

GILBERT: Yes, but it was termed a “food truce.” It was important because that is what made OLS possible. But it was limited. The initial idea was that it would last six weeks or a couple of months. And the two sides weren’t obliged to cease overall hostilities, but only to respect the OLS food flights, trains and road convoys and the facilities for storing and distributing relief to needy, mostly displaced populations. Also, it’s important to realize that the “food truce” was not fool proof. There were breaches and interruptions. For example, the shooting down of the relief flight by the SAM III that the SPLA had infiltrated into a town occurred after OLS had been in operation for some time.

*Q: Right.*

GILBERT: Maybe this is where I should interject something that happened later on when I was in Abidjan. On my return from a vacation in the U.S., I was invited to a meeting with John Garang, the SPLA leader. He happened to be in Abidjan and a mutual acquaintance had suggested that he meet with me. I checked with Ambassador Ken Brown to make sure it was okay and to see if he had any guidance. The Ambassador said that Garang was going around trying to line up financial and political support. He said that I knew as well as anyone that we in Abidjan couldn’t deal with Garang on those issues, so I might as well meet with him and hear what was on his mind.

I didn't particularly want to meet with "Dr. John", as some call him, because, frankly - unlike some people - I had pretty ambivalent feelings about a guy who would spend so many lives and generate so much misery over the issues disputed between the SPLA and the Sudanese Government. How many lives are they worth? During my time the SPLA had spilled more donor-NGO blood than the Government, and that probably colored my view. But I did go and meet with him in his suite at the Hotel Ivoire. And I did manage to shake his hand. And I did actually have a pleasant conversation with him because he is an affable guy and an excellent raconteur. He has a Ph. D. in Agricultural Economics from Iowa State and was on the faculty of the University of Khartoum for several years. He is quite charming.

Because I didn't want to have a substantive discussion with him, I tried to keep the conversation as general as possible. Somehow I got him started telling me stories about various Sudanese personalities whom we both knew. He did tell me a lot of stories that were really amusing about people who were in high positions in the Sudanese government.

Here's one of the more interesting stories he told me: Garang had been made a Colonel in the Sudanese Army after he came in from "the bush", probably in the late 1970s. Not long afterwards he stopped overnight at the army base near Kassala on his way to a training course in Port Sudan. After freshening up, he went to the Officer's Club or Mess at about the cocktail hour. He walked up to what he thought was a steward and ordered a drink. The man bowed and went off to the bar. When the somewhat crowded room immediately went silent, Garang knew that something was amiss and that it had something to do with him. He guessed, accurately, that he had mistaken an officer in civilian dress for a servant (an easy thing since "Suffragis", or servants, usually wear the same white robes and Turbans as Sudanese male guests). He decided that the best defense was an offense. So he loudly addressed the mainly Northern officers and told them that if he had made a mistake, he was sorry. But being new, he had no way of knowing who was who so it was not fair to use his honest mistake to make him look foolish or arrogant. The "Suffragi," none other than General Burmah Nasser, handed him his drink, welcomed him to the group and apologized for his discomfort. They became good friends. That was only one of the stories he shared over our two or so hour conversation.

He had an idea that I could somehow help him with his wish that AID would provide medium-term development-oriented assistance in SPLA-controlled areas. After explaining that I had no role in deciding about such matters, I gave him a few suggestions about how his movement might make it easier for the U.S. Government to take steps in the directions he desired. For some time U.S. assistance to populations in SPLA-controlled areas has been evolving in the direction he hoped for.

I mention my conversation with John Garang mainly to illustrate that the relationship between Northerners and Southerners in Sudan is much more complex and subtle than outsiders generally suppose. I wasn't in Sudan very long before I began to realize that, despite the war between the SPLA and the government, there were lots of genuine personal friendships that linked people on either side in genuine and significant ways. I first became aware of it when I was in the Minister of Finance' office after his return from negotiations with the SPLM. He had a stack of letters from SPLM people for friends and relatives in Khartoum. The southern leaders had been educated and had worked along side their northern counterparts for years. There were and are

still many southerners in Khartoum working for the national government, including some Ministers. Some SPLA figures certainly had extended family members in Khartoum, and I wouldn't be surprised if some had immediate family members residing in Khartoum. Something else that reflects the complexity of the conflict is that at least half of the national army, including some of the generals fighting in the South, were southerners during my time. I would be very surprised if that has changed much. I saw many examples of northern-southern personal relationships' being maintained despite the war – almost like Democrats and Republicans among us mostly succeed in not letting that difference affect their personal relations.

*Q: Between northerners and southerners?*

GILBERT: Yes, but particularly between rebels and government officials. It would be oversimplification to say that there is racial hatred between the two sides. I don't think that, and I never saw anything to suggest it. After all, most Northerners from the West are as African in appearance as the southerners. But I do think that northerners tend to think southerners are culturally backward – that they would be a lot better off if they were all Muslims, were sedentary herders and farmers, spoke Arabic and adopted Arab folkways. They think that southerners need to be under a kind of tutelage.

Many enlightened people wouldn't necessarily say that, but I think there are these reflexes that are built into the system. And that is essentially what the war was about. You know, it was over the extent to which the southern regions could have their own legal framework, educational system and other institutions as well as equal opportunities and equal status for southerners at the national level. It was also about increasing the South's share of national revenue, including potential oil revenue. As far as religion and religious practice was concerned, it was about the southerners gaining exemption from Sharia law in the North as well as in the South. They were already exempt from Sharia laws in the South. (I remember noticing that liquor was sold openly in retail establishments in Juba and served at official dinners at the Khartoum office of the Juba Regional Government.) The war has not been about secession except that an element among the Dinka bring it up from time to time. The rest of the southerners don't want secession because that would put them under the domination of the Dinka, who are largest tribe in the whole country. The aims for which they are all fighting, and mostly making the civilian population die, are quite complicated, even subtle. In some countries these goals would be pursued by peaceful, nonviolent methods. Before the Islamist government took over in 1989, they probably could have used nonviolent tactics without risking more than jail. But, from that standpoint, the problem for the Southerners is that they don't have much to nonviolently withhold from the northerners in order to get their way. A lot of northerners think secession would be just fine as long as the oil fields wind up on the Khartoum side of the new border.

*Q: Did you have extremists in the north? Were there extremist factions?*

GILBERT: Yes, but they were just a pressure group that the moderate government had to deal with prior to the June 1989 coup. That coup represented a stealthy power grab by the Muslim Brothers who – either covertly or overtly – had been a constant force in both Egyptian and Sudanese politics. Their political party is called the National Islamic Front (NIF) and was headed by Hassan Al-Turabi. They want to establish a Muslim society under strict interpretations of

Muslim law, with either no rights or very slender rights for non-Muslims to live according to non-Muslim laws and precepts. Most northern Sudanese are observant Muslims, but not fundamentalists. It is very upsetting that the NIF, whose supporters and sympathizers apparently never constituted more than about ten percent of the population, managed to gain power through this 1989 coup.

It was similar to what happened in Nazi Germany. In both countries a minority of extremists gained political control. The Sudan case was different in that the NIF came to power by a military coup whereas the Nazis gained power in Germany through a combination of electoral success and political maneuvering. There was another point of similarity as well. As previously in Germany, the Sudanese general public has generally displayed moderation. Unfortunately, they have also been politically passive like the Germans were. What political passions the Sudanese can muster are expended more on questions of personalities and loyalties than on ideas and ideology.

This coup occurred at a point when we were already beginning to plan a scaling back of development assistance. As I recall they were either in danger of falling into Brooke status or had actually done so. It had been nip and tuck for some time.

*Q: How far had you gone with the planning?*

GILBERT: We prepared a phase-out plan, but I can't remember whether we had done that before the coup because of Brooke or only after the coup occurred. As you know, a military coup requires termination of development assistance.

But the coup had a bizarre aspect that I should mention

*Q: Which was?*

GILBERT: At first the coup seemed to be just a conventional African military takeover on the part of a group within the military who simply wanted to end the drift that pervaded government and politics. Their initial pronouncements certainly sounded that way. They talked about creating order out of anarchy and making things work again. And it was plausible since the elected government couldn't seem to do much of anything, let alone anything right. Apart from the Brooke question, we were beginning to question seriously whether we could operate a development program in the climate of lassitude that prevailed.

For a while the conventional wisdom in the diplomatic community was that the coup had been masterminded by the Egyptians in hopes that the new regime would bring the economy under improved management and negotiate an end to the war in the South. But almost immediately, Sudanese contacts of ours began to come by our offices and tell us that the coup makers were known to be Muslim Brothers. They warned us that the coup-makers' agenda was to turn the country into another Iran. These contacts were leading citizens from the University and the business community (including the head of the largest public accounting firm in the country). We in turn passed these assessments on to our Embassy. The Embassy folks basically told us that they were hearing these allegations too, but believed them to be false.

Of course, our informants turned out to be correct. I don't know how long the Embassy held to their position in their reporting to Washington, but I think it was too long. I believe our Embassy held to the incorrect view about the orientation of the military regime longer than most of the Western embassies. I remember being informally asked months after the coup for my opinion on the matter by people in AID and State in Washington who thought that the Embassy's reporting on the subject was wrong.

The only word I can say in the Embassy's defense is that the junta went to some lengths to conceal their true character. Among other things, they threw Hassan El Turabi, the leader of the NIF, in the pokey. They also appointed some southern military officers, and at least one southern civilian, to key positions. As I came to understand it later, the Egyptians had supported a coup plot. They thought they were supporting a bunch of moderate people who were going to put the country on a more businesslike track. But the Islamic Fundamentalists were so clever that, in effect, they stole the coup from the people whom the Egyptians thought they were supporting. And so the U.S. embassy was taking its assurances from the Egyptians who themselves had been bamboozled.

*Q: At some point the decision was made to close out the program.*

GILBERT: Once the coup occurred, no decision was needed about whether the Sudanese were irretrievably in Brooke. There was no question but that there had been a military coup, and, in that event, the law required us to end development assistance.

*Q: I see. I see.*

GILBERT: So for the second time in my career, I found myself directing the preparation of a phase-out plan for the development program. The humanitarian program was unaffected. This plan had a shorter time frame, and I believe it was nearly implemented by the time I left in June 1990. But, either directly or indirectly, we were still responsible for a relief effort that cost on the order of \$100 million annually.

*Q: This was both emergency and program assistance and projects?*

GILBERT: Even before there was any question of phase-out, our development program was declining as humanitarian assistance mounted. I believe our last development program grant was made in 1987 or early 1988. I think we had annual PL 480 Title I agreements at least through 1999. So that was Sudan.

Oh, before we leave Sudan, I should mention one thing about air transport.

*Q: Didn't we have a plane in Sudan at that time?*

GILBERT: Yes, that's what I wanted to add. It was clear that, as the volume of relief activity in the South expanded under OLS, there would be an increased need to fly donor and NGO staff in and out of the relief areas. OFDA had already bought an airplane for some previous emergency

and offered to make it available to USAID Khartoum. Thank goodness someone warned us that it would be a major headache if we managed it, so we got UNICEF, who already operated an aircraft, to take on that responsibility. They took responsibility for operating it as a pooled resource and did an excellent job. As I recall, AirServe supplied the crew and provided the requisite maintenance.

*Q: This was mainly related to relief operations?*

GILBERT: Yes, only for relief use.

I feel very lucky to have had the experience working in Sudan during that period, especially now that it's over. It is one of those things that you wouldn't want to have missed, but you sure as hell wouldn't care to do it again.

*Q: Right. I know exactly what you mean. Was there any lasting effect of this massive program that we had for so long out there? How would you characterize what may have become more ingrained in the...?*

GILBERT: Well, I believe that it had lasting effects on the capacities and outlook of the Sudanese who were beneficiaries or otherwise associated with our programs. We provided a lot of training both in the U.S. and in-country. We trained a lot of economists. There are others whose approach to life and work will always be different because of the interactions that we had, including negotiations over things like CIP or PL480 Title I agreements, or the kind of thinking that we shared in problem-solving situations.

Joe Goodwin and Brian De Silva (a USDA PASA person) had laid out a series of policy-related studies of the economics of irrigated agriculture that involved a model. Most of the time I was there Brian was overseeing a team of ten to twenty young masters or Ph.D.-level economists who were developing and then operating this model. I think it was successful and turned out to be quite valuable on several levels. It engaged these economists in working on a practical Sudanese problem and gave them hands-on experience in applying their training. This is only one example. The same thing happened in other sectors, such as energy sector management. One of the last things we did was work with a team of Sudanese technicians in using remote sensing to prepare land cover/bio-mass maps of Southern Kordofan and Southern Darfur.

Of course there are also a lot of people who were alive at the end of that period who wouldn't have survived without the assistance provided by the U.S. and other donors.

*Q: Relief?*

GILBERT: Yes. Now, I don't know how many died in later crises, but I think in general the relief programs since then have had more success because of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

*Q: It established an improved institutional framework?*

GILBERT: Well, yes. It also elevated the profile of the effort through the engagement of the UN system as well as the donors and NGOs at much higher levels than previously. To take one small example Audrey Hepburn made a visit in her role as special UNICEF ambassador. Mickey Leland, also a beautiful person in my opinion, made several visits to Sudan. Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter made several visits. These visits were partly emblematic of the Sudan emergency's higher profile, but they were also helpful in themselves because they energized all involved. They served to remind us that we were in the spotlight.

That was some ten years ago and relief operations in the South have continued to operate under the OLS banner ever since. Now those operations are mainly operated from Nairobi and are more than previously focused on SPLA-held territory. They have begun to incorporate primary health care, basic education and agricultural interventions as well as conventional relief. Farmers are receiving seed and inputs so that they can grow more food. Surplus food is being bought from these farmers for relief use since this is more economical than shipping it from further away. This is not a very important source of relief food, but it provides an important incentive to the farmers. These interventions have to be limited to avoid signaling support for the establishment for a new African country, but they make sense in terms of both efficiency and humanitarian criteria.

*Q: But these things are being done in SPLA-controlled areas?*

GILBERT: Yes, and it has had institutional development payoffs. The SPLA had a relief arm that operated in the guise of an NGO called SRRA. These guys were impossible. They were little better than a bunch of crude thugs - probably the ones whom they couldn't trust under field conditions. The relief staff who dealt with these guys in Nairobi and southern Sudan just despaired. But the SRRA has become a much better organization. I recently met some SRRA staff and was favorably impressed. The SRRA has gradually turned into an organization that the relief community can work with. Once they have struck a bargain they can pretty much be relied upon to stick to it. Their technical capacity has increased greatly. They predicted the relief needs of 1997/98 more accurately than OLS and the donors.

It strikes me that Sudan was my only experience in a country where the U.S. presence and the U.S. assistance program were heavily linked to Cold War geo-strategic issues.

*Q: Okay.*

GILBERT: And I can't think of a single program that didn't come to an untimely end. It is too bad that we had to play those games. But I'm glad I witnessed one of these cases.

I mentioned that in CAR, where the leadership was about as poor as could be imagined, there were a lot of good people trying to do the right thing. I observed something similar in Sudan. There the quality of the individuals in the public service was quite high, but the overall condition of the civil and military administrations was just amazingly chaotic. Anarchy reigned.

But you know it almost reminds me of these accounts by Primo Levy and Elie Wiesel of life in concentration camps during World War II. Almost everywhere you find people who are working



sincerely and diligently to do the right thing - often in situations where they get penalized for it rather than rewarded. Chaos and crisis bring out the worst in some people and the best in others.

One personality who comes to mind in this context is the Governor of Kordofan whose name I can't recall. He was instrumental in helping to get food down to the Dinka areas of southern Kordofan where large numbers of starving displaced were gathering in 1988. A donor-NGO delegation accompanied by the Governor of Kordofan flew to Babanusa in Southern Kordofan to go from there by train to Muglad and El Meiram. That was a very vivid and upsetting experience.

We had the clearance of the authorities in Khartoum. The Governor of Kordofan went with us to see the situation personally and also, I suspect, because he knew that he needed to be there to run interference. Everyone was very polite, but one didn't have to be very sensitive to realize that we weren't welcome. There was all manner of foot dragging and obfuscation by military officers and railway officials. But finally after a great deal of palaver, including some fairly stern interventions by the Governor, we managed to reach an understanding that the train would leave at something like midnight.

The Governor was from Babanusa so we went to his place for dinner before going to the train somewhat early for the departure. Most of us found comfortable places on the train, and I fell asleep. The next thing I remember is hearing voices raised in anger and noting that the train was stationary. I staggered outside to find the Governor throwing a pea green fit because the train crew had gone home and left word that they would return the next morning. The Governor personally commandeered some railway vehicles, went to the railway manager's house, and, with him reluctantly in tow, went around rousting out the railway crew. We left several hours late, but much earlier than the train crew intended - especially since they probably didn't plan to leave at the hour they had specified. These guys had thought that they could overrule the governor of this province notwithstanding the fact that he represented the authority of the state.

*Q: And they didn't want to go because of the fears of militia or were they just...?*

GILBERT: Maybe the fear of the militia had something to do with it, but the militia in question were progovernment militias and you would think that they would be afraid to disobey the Governor also. Whatever it was, this kind of behavior occurred all the time. No one was indisputably in charge of anything in Sudan. Every service and administrative unit in the public sector behaved as if it were sovereign. I think it's plausible that the railway people wanted to stick to their own plans and schedules. Maybe they just didn't want to take the trip. I suppose they were aware of opposition to the trip. The army probably didn't want us down there looking into the humanitarian nightmare that they had done little to mitigate. We walked into a terrible situation there. A girl about 8 years old girl dropped dead right in front of my eyes and there were all manner of people around who looked a lot worse than she did. You knew that a lot of them were going to die of disease or outright starvation no matter how hard the international community tried to prevent it. I think all of us felt torn between staying there to lend a hand (about all we could have done was hold the hands of the afflicted) and doing what we really had to do, which was to return to Khartoum and do everything we could to engineer a more forthcoming and systematic response.

*Q: And you delivered food on this train?*

GILBERT: We had some food and other relief supplies with us that we were taking to the two or three NGOs who were on the scene trying to do what they could.

*Q: How long a train trip was it?*

GILBERT: Probably no more than a hundred miles through countryside that was supposedly in government hands, but one never quite knew. The train couldn't go very fast because the rail bed was in bad shape from the flooding and it took about eight hours. There were a lot of stops.

But for all the Sudanese who were bad actors or feckless, there were also plenty who were super good individually. I have a hard time understanding how people manage to live in a society like that. It must be pretty trying. I'm afraid they become inured to injustice, misery and plain evil on a scale far beyond any response that they can conceive. Sudanese society is extremely fragmented along ethnic, clan and family lines. This extends into the modern sector where loyalty flows to public service organizations and private sector professions and sectors that people are affiliated with. This fragmentation means that they can only form a consensus on the broadest of issues, and political action is only likely when the modern sector groups (e.g., professional associations of groups like doctors, engineers, teachers, etc.) provide the leadership, as occurred in response to Nimeiri's excesses. It's sad that this leads most Sudanese be politically apathetic about a wide range of issues. The regime's extreme ruthlessness discourages the exercise of leadership, and apathy prevails.

### **G. NORMAN ANDERSON**

**Ambassador  
(1986-1993)**

*Ambassador G. Norman Anderson was born in 1932 in Delaware. He graduated from Columbia University in 1954, and received his graduate degree from the Russian Institute at Columbia in 1960. He also served in the US Navy from 1954 to 1958. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 and has served at posts in Lebanon, Germany, the Soviet Union, Morocco, Bulgaria, Tunisia, the Sudan, and Macedonia. Ambassador Anderson was interviewed on June 18, 1996 by J. P. Moffat.*

*Q: The diplomatic vineyards led to your elevation to be ambassador to Sudan in 1986, a year after the overthrow of Nimeiri and a very difficult time. Could you set the stage for us on your time in Sudan?*

ANDERSON: The situation was somewhat shaky when I arrived out there. The new government had just taken over, the democratic government of Sadiq al-Mahdi who was prime minister. This had been preceded by a year under a transitional military council. During that particular year of

transition there had been some events that hurt relations with the United States. For example, Nimeiri, the dictator, had been quite a friend of the United States. He supported peace in the middle east, he supported President Sadat and the Camp David agreement. He was very anti-Libyan. He was quite an enemy of Qadhafi. In a third area, he'd also been quite helpful, he was secretly involved in smuggling Jews, Falashas, Ethiopian Jews from Ethiopia, by way of Sudan to Israel. Well, this particular airlift became public in the transitional period. So there was a severe reaction against the U.S. and its role.

The transitional military council put on trial various members of the Nimeiri regime for involvement in this airlift of Falashas. During the trials, which were televised, the role of the United states was depicted and this led to numerous anti-American demonstrations. Before I arrived there, in November 1985 the embassy was reduced; there were something like 225 Americans there at the time and that number was cut by perhaps 10%. These were people involved somehow in the Falasha issue.

Then just before I got there, this was in April 1986, Libyan terrorists attacked an American staff member and shot him in the head. He survived, but unfortunately was incapacitated. That led to another evacuation, so when I arrived in Khartoum there was only a skeleton staff of about 52 people. This was way down from the Nimeiri period in which the Embassy had been quite large. The main problem facing me on arrival was the question of terrorism.

One of my first jobs was to look at the security situation and decide whether we could bring back some of the other employees plus the dependents who had been evacuated. It turned out that there were a lot of reports about impending terrorism against Americans but some of the information, as it turned out, had been fabricated. Informants had given all kinds of reports in exchange for money from the US. Some of them had even passed lie detector tests. So I guess the lie detector was not infallible in this particular instance. Because one of these informants finally let it out that he had fabricated all the details, such as what kind of vehicles were going to be used for kidnapping Americans and where they were going to be taken and so on and so forth. Reports about snipers waiting here and there to ambush people. All these things were completely fabricated. Anyway after a few months there we got permission from Washington to bring back some staff members. By the end of the year, this was about four or five months later, we were allowed to bring younger dependents back. So finally toward the end of 1986, we were operating at more or less a normal level again after very much disruption.

Of course the disruption had affected all of our programs there, such as economic aid and military assistance. Without staff there, obviously we couldn't carry on some of these activities and a lot of money in the aid pipeline for Sudan was being held up pending an improvement in the security situation. So finally by the end of 1986 we were able to resume some of these activities.

*Q: Sadiq al-Mahdi was certainly one of the more enigmatic figures. What is your reading of him?*

ANDERSON: I always found him extremely charming and affable, a very polite individual. He was the great-grandson of the Sudanese Mahdi of the 1880's, who was really the first Islamic nationalist in Sudan. He set the tone for the country for many years afterward..

Sadiq al-Mahdi was the leader of the main religious sect in the country, the Ansar sect, these had been the followers of the early Mahdi. The Ansar sect was the basis for Sadiq's political party. Well, no party won a majority in the 1986 elections, so Sadiq al-Mahdi had to forge various coalition governments during his time. The main other sect in the country the Khatmiyyaa sect, had also become the basis for a political party, the Democratic Unionist party. These two parties, Sadiq's party, which was called the Ummah Party and the DUP, the other sectarian-based party, were the main parties in the coalition government. Then, the opposition was made up of the National Islamic Front, which was more militant. The three groups were in intensive competition with one another, which made democracy unstable.

You asked about the personality of Sadiq al-Mahdi. Actually, he probably should have been a university professor, because he liked to talk very much. Whenever I had to go see him, I always had to rush through my talking points, before he started talking, because once he started talking, it was very difficult to insert any ideas. So I had to make sure my presentation was concise and to the point. He was always very good at listening for a very short period of time and he did absorb what was said to him. But then he liked to philosophize and give his point of view at length. He was always very charming. Of course, his loquaciousness made him somewhat difficult to deal with, however.

*Q: Meanwhile the trouble was brewing down south which erupted in 1983 into what became one of the more intractable civil wars. From up in Khartoum were you fully aware of the depth of feeling and the problems that were going on down south?*

ANDERSON: The civil war and then the famine that resulted from the civil war were two of the main issues we dealt with virtually every day. Every single demarche I made in Khartoum had something to do with these issues. The war had been going on for quite some time. It really started in 1955. Then during the Nimeiri period it was resolved for a time in 1972 by an agreement between Nimeiri, who, of course, was a dictator, and the leader of the rebel movement, Joseph Lagu. The settlement was quite a good compromise, and it lasted for 11 years, until 1983, when the war resumed. But Nimeiri himself undermined the agreement by whittling away at it. He undermined southern autonomy. Then also he instituted Islamic law in 1983. The war resumed in 1983, actually it resumed just before Islamic law, but Islamic law was a contributing factor in preventing a new peace agreement. Nimeiri started implementing some of the Islamic punishments, such as amputation of hands, and this made it all the more difficult to reinstate a settlement of the war and the war just got worse and worse.

We were very much aware of it because it had an effect on our relations, of course. In every respect it undermined our aid program. It was very hard to bolster the economy when the economy was being drained by the war, which was very costly. Some people thought it cost about a million dollars a day, which is a terrible drain on a very poor economy. Then also, people were starving in the south. So we instituted a tremendous relief program, but it was difficult to implement it because neither side in the war really endorsed the relief program very much for

one reason or another. So then our military assistance program was affected because we didn't want to provide arms that could be used against part of the population in the south. The United States was very active in peace efforts. We tried to put the two sides together again and again. A lot of people blame Sadiq al-Mahdi but the rebel leader, John Garang, was very difficult to deal with and not particularly amenable to peace efforts.

*Q: What were his motivations? He's a very controversial figure.*

ANDERSON: When the war broke out again in 1983, he was in the Sudanese army. He was a colonel stationed in Khartoum. He's quite intellectual, he'd studied in the United States, went to Grinnell college and the University of Iowa, and got a Ph.D. In any case, he was on leave in his hometown in the south when a rebellion, or mutiny broke out in that hometown, which is Bor, and the rebels asked him to lead the movement. He agonized over this decision for some time but finally decided he should be more loyal to his fellow southerners than to the dictator Nimeiri, so he did take up leadership of the rebellion. This movement was called the SPLM, Southern Peoples' Liberation Movement. The military branch was the SPLA, for army. The SPLA or rebel army became quite strong quite fast. The numbers grew and all during the Sadiq al-Mahdi prime ministership in northern Sudan, the southern rebels took over more and more territory and finally ended up besieging the few southern towns remaining in government hands. The Sudanese army remained in control of several of the larger towns but all the rest of the area was under rebel control. The rebels refused to let food into these towns, so a lot of these people were starving in the towns and in the countryside. Because of the civil war, farmers were unable to grow crops. There were not just the army and the rebels fighting, but all kinds of marauders and tribal militias and what not were rampaging around the countryside. So nobody could provide adequate food for the population either in the towns or in the countryside.

*Q: You were there for al-Mahdi's political demise and his replacement in effect by Turabi, am I correct?*

ANDERSON: That's right. This was in June 1989. It happened that we had been in Washington, my family and I, for consultations and we arrived back at Khartoum airport at two a.m. on June 30. Well, it just so happened that two a.m. was zero hour for the coup. We were just about the last flight to arrive. We didn't notice anything at the time, we got into our car and drove off. But literally minutes later the airport was taken over by the rebels, by the mutineers I guess you would call them, not the southern rebels. We drove past army headquarters on our way from the airport and that was very quiet. Well, moments later the coup plotters took over the military headquarters.

I was called out of bed after a very short sleep that night and went into the embassy. We'd heard on the radio that a coup had taken place. There was nothing very noticeable on the road, everything was very, very quiet. So I drove to the embassy without incident.

We had very good contacts with the Sudanese military. First of all because we'd had a long-term military assistance program, particularly under Nimeiri. Our aid was quite large. Many Sudanese officers had trained in the United States, so we able to contact these people to try and find out

what was going on. We had good sources on what was happening and we also listened to the radio.

Well, it was very surprising that the population seemed to acquiesce in the coup, even though it meant the demise of democracy. Unfortunately, Sadiq al-Mahdi had disappointed people very much. He hadn't resolved any of the country's serious problems, he hadn't resolved the civil war, he had many, many economic problems. He didn't institute reforms, so that the country became poorer and poorer as time went on. Also he had a sort of non-aligned foreign policy which catered mostly to Libya, Iran and Iraq. In the end, everybody was quite disillusioned, so nobody stood up and tried to save the democratic regime.

The military officers who took over imprisoned all the political leaders, including Hassan Turabi, the leader of the National Islamic Front, which had been one of the main opposition parties, but had also participated in the government at various times, too. Turabi had been Minister of Justice with Sadiq and he'd even been Foreign Minister. So he'd been part of the government. One of the problems that Sadiq had had to face was trying to balance between the more extreme Islamic elements and the more moderate elements. He ended up making everybody unhappy. He couldn't really satisfy anybody, so he ended up without very much support. Anyway, Turabi and the National Islamic Front, volunteered to help the military coup leaders as time went on. They provided many of the officials, especially the middle ranks in various ministries. With time they really infiltrated the government and became a very powerful force. But that was not the case from the very beginning.

*Q: A lot of ink has been spilled on Turabi as a somewhat sinister figure in the area. What is your appreciation of him as a man, a leader, an ideologue? How do you come down on him?*

ANDERSON: He was certainly the most impressive political personality in the country. Sadiq al-Mahdi was quite impressive and very well educated himself--he'd gone to Oxford and studied economics. But Hassan Turabi was even more of an intellect and scholar. Really on an international level. He was certainly one of the most clever politicians and impressive ones. He's not at all what you'd expect from an Islamic leader. He's not a mad mullah or anything of that sort, he's very suave and sophisticated. He has a sort of self-deprecating humor and is extremely good at dealing with foreigners. Of course, he's extremely ideological, has answers to every question based on Islamic ideas. During our time there, he really portrayed himself as a moderate. I think compared to say, Khomeini, he was a moderate indeed. He always seemed quite rational.

*Q: But since your time he appears, has he not, to have become more and more involved with the no-goodniks of the international world and to foster terrorism and so on.*

ANDERSON: I'm not sure exactly what the evidence is implicating him in terrorism. I did see him in Washington several years ago and he had not changed very much. He was still expressing quite moderate views. He is more enigmatic, I think, than most of the other leaders there. He never expressed extreme Islam, I mean, he didn't favor wholesale amputations or anything of that kind. His basic platform, I think you'd say, was more in the moderate range than the extremist

range. Now what his role is behind the scenes is very hard to gauge. I don't really know to what extent he may have encouraged the presence of terrorists. I just don't have a basis to judge that.

*Q: Well you were certainly at a post that raised interesting policy questions and they were certainly criticisms as well as plaudits for what we were doing in Sudan. How do you view your time there now, with a little perspective?*

ANDERSON: My main regret, of course, is that democracy was overthrown. We did try very hard to influence Sadiq al-Mahdi in the right direction on various issues such as ending the war, famine relief, economic reform and also foreign policy. Unfortunately, Sadiq was never quite decisive enough on any of the issues. For instance, there was a very good opportunity to end the war. In 1988, one of the coalition parties, the DLF, signed an agreement with John Garang, which was quite moderate. It suspended Islamic law, for example, thereby overcoming one of the most controversial issues. Sadiq al-Mahdi unfortunately did not wholeheartedly endorse this agreement. At the time, he was trying to keep the National Islamic Front in the government. He couldn't have it both ways. He couldn't keep the Islamic extremists in the government and also promote peace, because the Islamic extremists were against any tampering with Islamic law. Yet the agreement with the rebels was reached by one of the other Islamic leaders, who headed the other sect. So if one Islamic leader could accept freezing Islamic law, why couldn't the others? Well, Sadiq wavered between these two elements--moderates and extremists--and he failed to support this possibility of real peace and then it was lost, unfortunately.

Also on the question of famine, Sadiq didn't exert the leadership that was needed. The rebels didn't like the idea of sending food to the south because they felt the army in the towns would benefit and as a result be able to hold on to the towns. Also in the towns were many, many southerners who had taken refuge from the chaos in the countryside. They were the ones starving. These were not northern Arabs, they were southern Sudanese. The rebels were thus willing to sacrifice their own people. The army in the north also didn't like famine relief because it felt that if food went to southern areas occupied by the rebels, this food would fall into the hands of the rebels and strengthen them militarily. So nobody liked famine relief. Sadiq, unfortunately, recognized that the army could overthrow him at any time, so he didn't want to push too hard himself on famine relief when the army was opposed. So that's why it was extremely difficult to get these various relief operations going. We negotiated, for example, for a whole year to get an airlift by the ICRC (the International Committee of the Red Cross). The only reason we finally succeeded was that during one of the five or six cabinet reshuffles, a very good Minister of Defense came into the job. The man had worked for Nimeiri. In any case, this defense minister, was extremely forceful and decisive, and he decided to allow the ICRC to fly relief to both sides of the fighting. But without his forceful decision, even this airlift probably wouldn't have worked out. Famine relief was very difficult to implement because everybody was against it and made even agreements hard to implement.

**HARIADENE JOHNSON**  
**Temporary Duty, USAID**  
**Sudan (1987)**

*Hariadene Johnson received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from University of Texas at Austin prior to joining USAID in 1967. Her career posts included Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Djibouti in addition to serving as Office Director of East Africa for USAID from 1977-1982. Ms. Johnson was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.*

*Q: What about the private sector, not the PVO area, but the enterprise sector? That was a very important priority at that time. Was there any initiative in that area in the African Bureau that you were working with?*

JOHNSON: Very little. The African Bureau had worked quite a bit in the private sector in the '60s. One of the first jobs I had in Central West Africa was working on the private sector, guarantee private sector loans, the OPIC, Office of Private Investment Corporation, what they did, and something called Cooley loans, which was using local currency generated by other P.L. 480 programs to give loans to indigenous businessmen.

PL480 commodity program. Most of those, the OPIC types of things tended to be a flash in the pan. The private sector guys who went looking into Africa in terms of investing something got quickly negative, because of inability to work with local governments who really saw them as real colonialists coming back to grab off assets. The Cooley loans, most of them turned out to be unprofitable and we wound up owning textile plants and shoe factories and anything else. We went back in Sudan and as a matter of fact, one of the first things we had to do was pull them out all the local currency loans that had been made, that for some reason that I never understood, were all shifted to the Asia Bureau. The Asia Bureau had all the records and so we pulled up to find out what assets we still owned in Sudan and if we still had any nationalization issues or expropriation issues. So, by the time, ten years later when I was working in Africa DP, the view was highly skeptical, a lot of the private sector concerns. So, I tended to ask a lot of questions. Mr. Ruddy loved it when I asked questions of socialist governments or other governments. So, I had full support in terms of doing that.

*Q: What did other people think about it?*

JOHNSON: In terms of the comparisons that go on between the Africa Bureau, the Asia Bureau, the LA Bureau, Middle East, what other configuration do you have. You still wind up with the Africa Bureau's papers being the latest to get in; that they had apparently the most difficulty in meeting deadlines; had apparently the most difficulty in recruiting staff, competent to fill positions, because we weren't regarded as being a competitive recruiter. So, that whole management overhead range didn't change that as far as I could see. Both of the Deputy AA's saw their job as getting more resources for their area, which was not an unusual need, but it was just the opposite of where I guess my head was at the time.

I was arguing that it wasn't a question of more resources, that you could pour money into Sudan, I mean it's black hole. You could pour as much money in the sand as you wanted to, but you weren't going to get anything out of it. Essentially, we showed six countries where we had a reasonable chance of having development. The politically hot countries that attracted a lot of



money were the most risky in terms of development results. As a substantive argument under all that, you had a gradual shift of resources from Central West Africa to Southern Africa and from Central Southeast Africa to North Africa. We had more money going into the Sudan and the Somali and into the Zambia and Zimbabwe and less going into the Sahel, that middle belt which essentially were the poor countries. We had some major policy clashes over East African countries with the new Deputy Administrator of East Africa and Somalia. He rolled back and pulled the plug on Somalia. The package of projects that the mission had come in with represented starting up seven new projects in the space of 18 months. And, we had a major, major fight over the ABS budget submission in which Glenn Patterson tried to keep everybody calmed down and under control, but that he treated it as an illustrious ABS. Where I was in the hard head radical fashion pushing for getting Somalis to zero in the budget process, or if you do anything you do it through the economic supporting funds. They simply didn't have a development case. Glenn and then Lois Richards (new DAA and replaced Phil and to my surprise, I worked very well with Lois).

*Q: Who was that?*

JOHNSON: Lois Richards, who I thought would micro manage and she didn't at all. About that time that I decided that my effectiveness in Africa DP had come to an end. I was in too many fights and was losing too many fights. Mark Edelman was the new Assistant Administrator for Africa and Mark really wanted to pick his own DP Director. He was hung up on the fact that I was Civil Service and they wanted somebody from the Foreign Service in there.

So, I decided to make one last push at getting into the Foreign Service. I would take a year off and go down to the University of North Carolina or Duke University Medical Center, which ran a weight loss program and it was tied into basically physiology, medical, exercise and nutrition and see if I could get myself in well enough shape so I could go in to Foreign Service. So, they agreed and gave me leave without pay to go off and do it and I went down to North Carolina and found out that I was right on schedule. It was perfect timing for my mid-career crisis, on the way I want to do it and when I want to go. It turned out to be an extraordinary beneficial time period for me, just in terms of thinking where I stood and what I wanted to do. I lost some weight, but not enough. So, came back to USAID and USAID didn't know what to do with me.

This was 1987. Came back to the Agency; well first of all, I was a GS15 program officer and had been a GS15 at that point almost 10 years. Most of the jobs that I qualified for were filled with Foreign Service Officers. Most of the Foreign Service Officers were Senior Foreign Service Officers, so they had to down grade the job in order for me to qualify for it. When I came back from North Carolina I took the position that that was very flattering, but how about upgrading me rather than upgrading the job. They said, ummmm. So, I wound up doing a whole series of temporary TDY's. Went out to Khartoum for six or eight months. Went from Khartoum to the South Pacific, a regional organization. The Regional Development Organization for the South Pacific was located in Fiji and there handled eight or nine other countries.

I went back to Sudan and I worked on that job, which to this day the job description is classified, Because during the two months I was out there, they had a major flood where Khartoum got, I guess it was 24 inches in 12 hours and the whole place was flooded. I never did the job I was

supposed to do anyway, which the job was bring food into Tigris and Eritrea in order to stop the refugees coming into Eastern Sudan. The government of Sudan supported it, but the Mission Director in Sudan felt that he should not handle it, because he was working with the government on some new programs, so I was detailed to the Embassy. Then, because of the flood you couldn't get any travel, roads washed out, no food moved, anything. So, I wound up doing three months of counselor work with political refugees. It was very interesting, but it was side track.

*Q: Did you ever get involved in delivering food to the refugees?*

JOHNSON: No.

*Q: It never happened?*

JOHNSON: Well, it happened after I left, but during the period I was there it didn't. I left there in July of '88 and went to the South Pacific.

**JOSEPH P. O'NEILL**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Khartoum (1989-1992)**

*Joseph P. O'Neill was born in New York on March 16, 1935. He served in the US Army from 1953 to 1956, and entered the Foreign Service in 1961. His career has included work at posts in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Portugal, Iran, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Eritrea. Mr. O'Neill was interviewed on May 19, 1998 by Thomas Dunnigan.*

*Q: Speaking of Khartoum, that's where you went next after your time in the Inspection Corps. Did you go as DCM?*

O'NEILL: I went as DCM. I worked for Jim Cheek. Jim Cheek replaced Korn in Addis Ababa.

*Q: How did this eventuate? Did you ask for this?*

O'NEILL: I had always wanted to go to Khartoum. So, I lobbied fairly strenuously for it.

*Q: It seems to me that you had nothing but hot posts and you wanted the hottest, I guess.*

O'NEILL: If you're going to try to be good at something, you have to stay there. So, I had three years in Addis. I had a few months in Djibouti. I had been following Khartoum, Sudan, had always wanted to go there. So, now it came up. I arrived, again fortuitously, at a really interesting time. There was a whole change of government. Saddiq el-Mahdi had just been overthrown by General Bashier, who nobody knew.

*Q: Our embassy didn't know him?*

O'NEILL: Didn't know him. We had a terrible ambassador there before Ambassador Cheek. He went to every party. He spoke beautiful Arabic. He didn't know what the hell was going on. He was caught entirely by surprise. I remember coming in and being there a week. I went through the embassy and went through the commissary and went through the rest. I went in and saw a USAID officer in the consular section, saw her near tears. I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "You know, we're \$85,000 in debt." I said, "Did the DCM know about this?" "I sent him the figures." "Has anybody talked to him?" "No." I'm talking about the previous DCM. "Did anybody talk to the ambassador?" "No." So, I do a sweep through the embassy. I find fire hazards, things not in order. I pull out index cards and say, "It says you're supposed to have 85 widgets here. I only counted 20 widgets. A literal mess.

*Q: Run by an American supervisor?*

O'NEILL: Yes, who was very lucky because he got promoted just as I arrived on board and who left shortly after I arrived. He wanted to extend. Wouldn't let him. So, I went up and saw the ambassador. I wrote this all out. I said, "Look, this is what I'm sending down to the administrative officer. I want you to see it. I'm not going to give you a copy because I think, eventually, they'll come and complain, but I don't want you to be blindsided." He read it and said, "What am I going to do?" I said, "I don't know, but we've got inspectors coming out here. I don't know what you want to do." He said, "Do you think I should stay on for the inspectors?" I said, "Sir, you don't have a DCM here who is responsible. Your old DCM is gone. So, he can't be blamed for it because he's gone. You will be blamed for it. I suggest you leave a little bit earlier than planned, as you've done your three years. I'll hang on to the post for three or four weeks when the new ambassador comes in. I know he's ready to come."

*Q: Had we named one already?*

O'NEILL: Yes, Jim Cheek. We had named one already. This guy was on his way out. I said, "Leave on time or early."

*Q: Before the inspectors get here?*

O'NEILL: Before the inspectors. So, what happens? I try to get this thing in order and we find out a whole pile of things. One, there has been a revaluation of the local currency. The administrative officer had "forgotten" to mention it to the allowance division. [Furthermore], people had gone on home leave while still getting their 25% in the States, had gone on annual R&R leave in the States and still gotten their 25%. I again tell the former ambassador. He says, "What am I supposed to do?" I said, "Well, if you're involved in this, if you have gone on leave to the States and still taken the 25%, then I suggest you give it back immediately." He said, "Well, I'm too high grade to get 25% anyway." I forget how it all worked. Eventually, the inspectors came in and fortunately for Jim Creek and myself, I've got all this documented: letters down to saying "You can't do this." The administrative officer went home and never served overseas again. The DCM and other officers had to give money back. It's funny: the DCM went on to be ambassador, and has gone on to be ambassador a second time. It shows you, unless the

inspectors catch you while you're on post... It's regrettable. Eventually, like I say, Jim Cheek and I came out of that smelling like a rose.

But then again, as we come along, I start to meet the Islamic fundamentalists by happenstance. I still haven't got any idea how it all happened, though I give a lot of credit to Bob Downey, who was, regrettably, for only a short period of time my chief of the Political Section. He then went on to Lagos, an absolutely fantastic officer. I start to meet them and then I start to meet the more high ranking ones. I start going out to the mosques on Friday night after prayers to eat "fritur" and drink warm goat's milk. We had a deal. If I went to the mosque, we did not talk politics regarding Sudan and the United States. You'd talk about politics involving Russia, England, literature, anything. So, I got to know them very, very well. I got to know Hassan el-Turabi very, very well. I wrote countless cables on him. I wrote what is, I think, the definitive bio on him that's still in the Department. I got down south to-

*Q: Did you get into troubled regions?*

O'NEILL: Oh, yes. In fact, toward the end of my assignment (I don't want this to sound like a braggart) I had become very influential within Islamic fundamental society. They knew that whatever I told them was the truth. When Hassan El Turabi was beaten up in Canada by some Sudanese, I found out because the chief of intelligence, Nafi Ali Nafi, called me over to his office and asked if this had happened. I said I hadn't heard about it. He said, "How much information can you find out?" So, I went back and I sent a NIACT to Washington and to Ottawa, saying, "Could you please advise?" Then they advised. I went back and I told Nafi. Then they finally got their communications going. All they had was one officer in Ottawa, who was not at the office that day, that week, that month. They were very grateful for all the help. I cannot tell you how happy I was to get the news that it did not take place in the United States, though now there is a conspiracy theory that the CIA arranged to have Turabi beaten in Canada rather than the United States.

*Q: Our friends are always willing to help us with those theories.*

O'NEILL: Right. The other part of this thing was that Turabi wanted to go to the States. Our embassy in Cairo did not want him to get a visa. I fought strenuously that he get the visa, both on consular grounds and political grounds. Frank Wisner was the ambassador in Cairo when this was going on. Finally, we got the visa. But then there was another visa issue to the Sheikh Abdel Rachman, the fellow who was involved in the blowing up of the World Trade Center. That was issued by a member of the Central Intelligence Agency in Khartoum by mistake. We've been suffering from it ever since. The Agency [and maybe others] knew that he was traveling in the area looking for a visa and never told us.

*Q: His name should have been in lookout books and everything else.*

O'NEILL: Anybody who knows that area knew who Sheikh Rachman was. He had been acquitted of complicity in the murder of Sadat. That name should have shown up like a shot. But we had, in the consular section an FSN, a Christian from the south who didn't recognize the

name, didn't go to the lookout book, whatever. I can't tell you what a terrible thing it is that that had happened. It was atrocious. It happened when I was the chargé.

*Q: I remember reading in the paper that he got his visa in the American embassy in Khartoum.*

O'NEILL: There was another one. Then, of course, the most difficult time was when we had to evacuate the embassy during the Iraq-Kuwait war.

*Q: I was going to ask you about the effects of the Gulf War. Sudan was on the other side there.*

O'NEILL: Sudan verbally was on the other side. Of course, our Egyptian friends were doing us no help because they wanted our relations with the Sudanese to be as bad as possible. Irv Hicks was the deputy assistant secretary for Africa. Everybody panicked over this whole damn thing. It was, again, the Powell Doctrine in place. We were having troubles in Somalia. We were just evacuating Somalia over internal events. Jim Bishop was the ambassador there. Schwarzkopf did not want any Marines anyplace, except near Kuwait. He didn't want to let anybody there and he didn't want to let any of his troops away from the Gulf. He wanted the whole bloody place evacuated so it wouldn't be necessary for him to protect it. He saw as his primary duty to defeat Saddam Hussein. First of all, we evacuated all the civilians, all the dependents, and some of the staff. Jim Cheek decided to do this. Then he had put me in charge of making sure the place was absolutely letter perfect to get out in a hurry. At the end, we could have burned everything in about 10 minutes. Everything else, like EXDIS, extra passports had been shipped off to Nairobi. All the bio files were shipped off to Nairobi. Anything that we could. We were down to the Marines, the RSO, the U.S. bodyguards, one political officer, a refugee officer, the embassy doctor, the communications section, administrative officers, and a consular officer.

*Q: And a station chief.*

O'NEILL: And the station chief and his smaller crew. We were ordered to evacuate. Then the question is, "Will they leave anybody behind?" So, it's decided that I will stay behind, live in the ambassador's residence, and work out of the British embassy. So, they bring in a New Jersey National Guard C-147 and we bring out all the Americans that are left who want to go with us, all the Brits and everybody else who want to go. They were all brought down to Nairobi.

*Q: Leaving Joe O'Neill in Khartoum.*

O'NEILL: Leaving Joe O'Neill in Khartoum with some automatic weapons, his Sudanese bodyguards, the local staff, and one administrative officer, Mike Margereaux.

*Q: Living in the ambassador's residence and working out of the British embassy.*

O'NEILL: The residence was right across from the British embassy. It was a very interesting time. I couldn't fly flags. I couldn't go around town. Allen Ramsey was the British ambassador there and he took his job - of making sure nothing happened to me - very, very seriously. But I was still under pressure from Washington to tell them what the hell was going on around. I was really constrained. Once, the British ambassador really got pissed at me for being too active. In

fact, he got so mad that he told me that he was thinking of having me withdrawn back to Washington because he wouldn't be responsible for me anymore.

*Q: Were you able to send cables using his circuits?*

O'NEILL: Only his circuits.

*Q: Through London and into Washington or directly?*

O'NEILL: Yes, London into Washington. It was not an easy time.

*Q: How long did this period last?*

O'NEILL: About a month. Then the Egyptians come and tell me that the Palestinians have a "contract" on me. I tell them, "Absolutely, this is not true." Then the Germans come by and say, "The Egyptians are telling me that the Palestinians have a contract on you." The Russians come by and they tell me the same thing.

*Q: Everybody is putting a "contract" on Joe!*

O'NEILL: That the Palestinians have a "contract" on me. But the Russians do something. I really understand why they did it. They tell Washington from Moscow that they have information on a "contract" on O'Neill. So, the deputy foreign minister calls in the ambassador and the DCM in Moscow late at night to the foreign office. They don't know what the hell is coming off. They come in and they say, "We want to tell you, we're your friend. We want to warn you that your man (They give the name and the name is spelled correctly) who is working out of the British embassy, even though he's got Sudanese bodyguards, is going to be murdered by the Palestinians on orders of Saddam Hussein. Even though we are trying to help you with Saddam Hussein by being intermediaries, we want to tell you about this issue just to show you that we're your friends." These guys went charging back. NIACTS go flying all over. A call goes out to London: Tell O'Neill to come back now, no ifs, ands, or buts. Get him back! So, I have time only to send one cable, which I make sure I put a number of addressees on, saying how bad this is. The Egyptians just did not want anybody there. We have now, again, in 1998, withdrawn our embassy out of Khartoum for security reasons. The French have increased the personnel at their embassy. The Egyptians are there in force. The Germans are there. Everybody's there except us. We are trying to lead a plot against the Sudanese. Let me make a comment about Hassan El Turabi.

*Q: Excuse me. Did you leave then?*

O'NEILL: Yes, I had to leave. I came out and the British ambassador has bodyguards, too. He doesn't use local bodyguards; he uses his own. Eight Royal Military Police. They all accompany us. Again, thank God for Lufthansa. They put me aboard a Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt. I never felt so protected. They almost want to put me in a bullet proof vest, but I wouldn't wear one. So, that went along. Allen Ramsey later becomes ambassador to Morocco, and is Sir Allen. He is now retired, a great officer.

*Q: But the Egyptians got their wish, didn't they?*

O'NEILL: Yes, because they kept saying to Washington. It delayed a carrier because we kept a carrier in the Red Sea longer than we should have. They kept saying that the Sudanese had large numbers of surface to surface missiles, that they were going to let Saddam Hussein use air bases in Sudan to bomb our ships coming through. One, Saddam could not have gotten his planes down to the Sudan. They don't have surface to air missiles. They didn't have surface to surface missiles. [The Egyptians] kept pouring out piles of garbage. We sat there and we listened to it. On the other hand, Downy replaced me. So we never officially shut the embassy. And, of course, we got the full embassy up and running in late April 1991

Let me say one more thing showing how our friends, the Egyptians, tried to do things. Just before the Iraqi-Kuwait war, a cable comes out of our embassy in Cairo suggesting that there be some sort of an alliance in the Red Sea with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and maybe Ethiopia to all work together, have like a small NATO, in which the Americans would put up the money, the Egyptians would put up the army and air force, and the Saudis would put up money. They would then have an entity. I knew what was happening. The Egyptians wanted to suck us in. But then I said, "Who are we going to fight? Israel?" If we use this, what will the Egyptians suggest, that they take back control over the Sudan and the waters of the Nile? I did a really terrible thing on it. I torpedoed that one. You could see what President Mubarak was trying to do. He was trying to be the leader with everybody else's money. He would supply some soldiers and he would get the maximum political gain.

*Q: It doesn't seem to make much geopolitical sense or anything else.*

O'NEILL: No. I'm surprised it ever got by Frank Wisner.

*Q: Any more comments about your time in Sudan? How did the people feel about Americans? Were they hostile?*

O'NEILL: No, they were very friendly the further I went from Khartoum. Under Nimeiri and again under the Mahdi, especially under Mahdi. President Reagan had given bulgur when there was a great famine out in the west. It was called "Reagan bulgur." Everybody knew where it came from. We built a road out there. We did a lot of things. Our reputation with the Sudanese is excellent. A lot of their people have been educated in the United States. The other thing is, when people think about Sudanese fundamentalists, they think of people on camels with bloody swords charging down on Christians. Most of the senior people in the government had been educated in the U.S. Turabi has a degree from the Sorbonne in law and the University of London in law. His chief of intelligence, Nafi El Nafi has his doctorate in microbiology from the University of California. Others had been to Kansas, Tennessee, Yale, Harvard, and various universities in the U.K. and Germany.

*Q: They had been around.*

O'NEILL: They had been around. They had seen the corruption in the west and, like fundamentalist Christians, want to return to the past. With them, they would like to go back to the ninth, 10th, and 11th century, to the bloom and the glory of Islam. They can't do it and they can't move forward.

*Q: It's frustrating.*

O'NEILL: It's frustrating for them and then it's again frustrating for us in trying to put together some sort of an entity that will balance off these people. The southerners are Christians, but they are divided by language, tribe, and interests. They have been fighting each other long before the Muslims ever got there. They are as corrupt as anyone you'll ever see.

*Q: The southerners.*

O'NEILL: The southerners. Garang, who is the "great leader of the south" was a great ally of Mengistu and used his troops to kill Ethiopians on the border between Sudan and Ethiopia. That's why Meles Zenawi, who is currently the President of Ethiopia, and Isaias Aferke, who is currently the President of Eritrea, they would do business with Turabi and some others, but not with Garang. Remember, Africans are like Irish: they never forget. They remember who did the murdering, the raping, the looting, and, with that, the destroying of the water wells.

*Q: It doesn't bode well for other parts of Africa I can think of today either.*

O'NEILL: No. For Zaire. Anybody who thinks Kabila is a democrat forgets that one of his great teachers was Che Guevara. Che Guevara worked closely with Kabila 30 years ago.

*Q: Yes, we forget Che Guevara and days in Africa.*

O'NEILL: That's right.

**DAVID E. REUTHER**  
**Refugee Counselor**  
**Khartoum (1990-1991)**

*David E. Reuther was born in Washington in 1942. He graduated from Occidental College in 1965, and entered the Foreign Service in 1970. His career included posts in Thailand, Taiwan, China, Sudan, and Kuwait. Mr. Reuther was interviewed on August 29, 1996 by Raymond C. Ewing.*

*Q: After you left Beijing you went to a very different part of the world to the Sudan where you were the refugee counselor there. Who were these refugees and what was going on there at the time?*



REUTHER: The refugees were the consequence of the neighboring Ethiopian civil war and the resulting man-made famine that had been going on for years. There were three quarters of a million Ethiopians in Sudan under the protection of the UNHCR. The refugee situation had existed so long that the international community's efforts were rather routinized by the time I arrived. The UNHCR supervised a number of NGOs that were providing the refugees with food, water, and shelter. The American embassy's interest was to oversee the efficiency of the UNHCR's performance.

*Q: We were interested in that because we were a major financial contributor.*

REUTHER: Exactly. That was the reporting side of this assignment. The other responsibility we had was to manage a refugee settlement program from Sudan based on the Southeast Asian premise that if there were refugees in these camps who had a claim to either U.S. citizenship or family in the United States, then we would resettle them. We had a budget that presumed that about 2,000 people annually would be resettled.

*Q: That was far smaller than the Vietnamese resettlement.*

REUTHER: Oh, yes. But, it was substantial and very similar. Associated with my office in the embassy was a contractor of 20 people who processed all these people from these camps. Don't forget, you are looking at three-quarters of a million people and you are going to churn them for people with connections with the United States. It is a very complicated project and I think the International Rescue Committee, which was the contractor in this case, was able to find absolutely fabulous and dedicated administrators who accomplished this job under difficult conditions. IRC's job was to attempt to identify refugees who had a connection with somebody back in the United States. There was a procedure back in the States for checking the claimed relationship. The IRC office would then develop an elaborate genealogy on the claimant. Not only does this verify the claim, but it overcomes the problem that Ethiopian refugees rarely had adequate personal documentation. An interview was an important part of the verification process...if you are claiming you are the brother of someone in New York then one of the questions asked might be "What color was the tile in the bathroom of the family home?" The same response probably meant they lived in the same house. If they both identified a common neighbor, again you are drawing closer to the presumption that they did live in the same house and that the family relationship was established.

Once you had in fact worked this case up where you concluded that the claim was valid, and a refugee receiver in New York stepped forward - Lutheran Church, Catholic Church, some charity - the next step was transportation to the U.S.

Here is where the Sudanese came in. The Sudanese have 183 major ethnic groups in their country. They don't like the Ethiopians, they don't like the international community helping the Ethiopians. They, the Sudanese, are running a war in the South against one of their major tribal groups. So, the whole idea of international maintenance programs for refugees, or resettlement programs was questioned by the Sudanese authorities. To be fair to the government, the Sudanese had at an earlier time cooperative with a very similar resettlement program only to find out that the refugees were being resettled in Israel. That revelation brought the government

down. So, Sudan paid a very high price for an earlier, naive cooperation. As a consequence, by the time I arrived in late 1989, the Sudanese didn't want to be naive and didn't want to cooperate.

*Q: When you say the people running it you mean in the Sudanese government?*

REUTHER: Yes, in the Sudanese government because the Sudanese government issued the exit visa. The Sudanese government meticulously required that all its normal procedures for leaving the country were fulfilled. For example, that you have receipted proof that your taxes had been paid. They had any number of hoops created to make it very difficult for us to execute this program. My predecessor had had a very difficult time with Sudanese obstructionism and had in fact only been able to move about 500 people annually because of all of the impediments.

Little in my Asian experience prepared me for Sudan, which, to my eyes, was the end of the earth. I concluded early on that Sudan and Burma are the two potentially richest countries in the world in which the indigenous leadership has deliberately driven the country into the ground. Some political leaders do it inadvertently; these elites did it deliberately. Khartoum used to be the winter capital for Europe. But by 1989 a drive around the city demonstrated abandoned hotels and open air nightclubs. Sudanese authorities had gone Islamic and closed these facilities. They took a hard conservative Islamic turn. They enjoyed all the money they were making surely, but it just didn't sit well with their values and when the Falasha problem (i.e., the Ethiopians covertly resettled in Israel) occurred. The Sudanese just turned inward. One result was the emergence of obstacles to the embassy resettlement program.

*Q: Were there any Falasha still there in the country? I think there was a subsequent exodus or flight to Israel?*

REUTHER: Yes, but the subsequent exodus was out of Addis Ababa. The exposure of the covert Falasha resettlement to Israel severely damaged the program as the Sudanese had lost confidence in it and it had been very difficult for us to recover.

So, when I got there and made my initial calls on the Sudanese officials, who were my counterparts. I met the General who was in charge. In fact, he had also recently come to his job. We broke the ice when we realized both of us were amateur World War II historians. Recognizing the problems my predecessor had and that because the two of us were new to the job, I made a simple initial presentation to him. I acknowledged the delays my predecessor had experienced and offered that I wasn't there to waste my two years. I had a program that I felt was worthwhile and we would operate it in a transparent manner in which they would have no problems. But I wasn't going to repeat my predecessor's experiences of dashing around Khartoum hours before the midnight airplane departure scouring for last-minute permissions. It all seemed an unnecessary pretense on both our parts. Either we satisfied each other's needs or Sudan had to admit that it wanted us to drop the whole program. Between our common interest in military history and my willingness to operate a transparent program, I thought we had the grounds for a successful, professional relationship. Again, humanity and professional respect goes a long way to build useful business-like relationships.

*Q: So you could establish a certain common language?*

REUTHER: Very much so, and I had him over to the house and had his son over to the house, just the three of us, rummaging through my books and some of the maps. So, we had a respectable and professional, if not personal, relationship. He was very good at what he did and what he did was to guide me, not instruct me but to hint at things, and I began to understand the local environment in which he operated. One of the things that I was working toward correcting was the residual suspicion from the earlier Falasha incident. The Sudanese officialdom we dealt with were suspicious of our program but couldn't quite put their fingers on why. The reality was the Falasha incident but also the Arabic Sudanese didn't like refugees; they didn't like ethnic groups; they were involved in a civil war in the south, so who likes refugees? Why are these Americans saying they will take refugees?

Once I understood Sudanese antipathy toward refugees on one hand and suspicion that any country that accepted refugees must have some ulterior motive on the other, I formed a plan. In fact, during this period the U.S. relationship with Sudan was very strained and would remain so for years. A direct result of the poor relationship was that the embassy's allocation of 7 USIA International Visitors Grants was not being used. Remember in Thailand, the International Visitor program was an important tool in developing Thai sensitivity to things American and identifying up-and-coming Thai counterparts? I obtained the ambassador's permission to use all seven grants for Sudanese officials - immigration, police, tax - responsible for my program. I proposed that we sent these officials on an immigrant/refugee tour of the United States. We took them from the Statue of Liberty to a Hmong and Vietnamese refugee settlement program in Minnesota. We scheduled cities like St. Louis to show them older immigrant communities, such as the German. When they returned, they had changed attitudes about what refugees and immigrants mean to America. The American public got their money's worth out of that IV program because here you took skeptics, people totally uninformed about the United States, and you exposed them to the United States in a very directed way - an immigrant's tour of the United States. Of course, they saw the Grand Canyon and other natural wonders, which was an important part of underlining the parallel geographic diversity of the United States. From then on I had no problems with that program. My Sudanese counterparts provided me the exit visas or whatever was necessary to run a smooth program.

*Q: And the ambassador realized that perhaps this was the key program that could function that had some advantage to the United States that was going on in Sudan, whereas everything else was being frustrated.*

REUTHER: Very much so, and he was very frustrated too.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

REUTHER: Ambassador Jim Cheek.

*Q: Where were the Ethiopian refugee camps located? Were they near Khartoum?*

REUTHER: No, they were adjacent to the Ethiopian border which meant they were quite some distance from Khartoum. The long drive over the desert to the refugee camps was depressing. You have to understand I am from Seattle, Washington, the Evergreen State. God didn't want boys from Seattle to be in places like this. It was absolutely desolate for miles. We would have to drive six or eight hundred miles before we even got to the first camp and even at that the infrastructure in Sudan was absolutely abysmal. Literally there were no places to stay.

Once we flew in the military attaché aircraft, a C-12, to the Red Sea port of Port Sudan. At 20,000 feet you understand how stark the terrain is. One of the pilots said, "Gee if we had to land that would be it." We could land, the terrain was flat in all directions, but you would never walk out of such desolate circumstances. It is an environment that is incredibly inhospitable. What was running through my mind of course was the movie of Lawrence of Arabia that had been done in the early 60s.

*Q: Was that filmed in Sudan?*

REUTHER: No, I think it was filmed in Egypt.

*Q: Similar terrain.*

REUTHER: Yes, similar terrain. I thought the film did a very good job of illustrating the physical demands of living in the desert. But, Sudan was very instructive in other ways. A haboob (dust storm) was one of the things that the city of Khartoum suffered from. These storms would come from nowhere. There would suddenly just be a wall of dirt coming at you, sixty or seventy feet high. Sometimes it was a localized phenomenon. The haboob itself was swirling, brown dust, but to the side of the storm the landscape was clear.

*Q: In the Nile valley there were farms. Was this just dirt picked up off the desert?*

REUTHER: Off the desert. It was incredibly biblical. There is no protection. No houses are sealed against dust. So, all your equipment, anything that is left out...I had a dinner party one night and a haboob hit. An hour later we were standing in the living room in typical conversational groups realizing that the air in the room was so dusty, we could hardly see across it. The other biblical phenomena I remember was desert rain. I was driving to work one typical, sunny, 100-degree day when all of a sudden I realize it is raining on the hood of my car. The rain cloud was small and it was only raining on the small area directly below that cloud. You could see the rain go down the street because it kicked the dust as it went.

*Q: It was very different than Seattle or Thailand.*

REUTHER: Exceedingly. In addition to performing the embassy's oversight of UN activities and managing our refugee resettlement program, I became involved in one other refugee issue. The famine in Ethiopia had gone on for so long that many of the NGOs had been in country for years feeding the people in Ethiopia from Sudan. This program, however, had come on to bad days. The USG and AID in particular had lost interest I think. So, when I arrived there was no embassy involvement in this covert feeding program and there were real coordination problems. Much of

the grain for the program was from American AID stocks, some from European supplies, all purchased by northern European NGOs. Trucking the grain into Ethiopia was easy—during the dry season. American shipments became erratic and arrived during the wet season which enormously complicated the delivery of this vital material. One of the things I did was focus on reorganizing these feeding programs.

As a result of my involvement in the feeding program, the embassy in Khartoum began to take a more active role in opening a dialogue with senior Tigrean and Eritrean leaders that spent some time in their Khartoum offices. The two main leaders were Isaias Afwerki, the Eritrean, and Meles Zenawi, the Tigrean leader. Again, this demonstrates the value of a diplomatic mission overseas. The Khartoum embassy had an increasingly meaningful dialogue with two movements which in time would successfully come to power.

*Q: They were both based in Sudan at that time?*

REUTHER: Actually they were based inside their country and would come to Sudan from time to time for administrative purposes.

I should note parenthetically that our positive relationship with the Ethiopian resistance movements paid an unusual dividend. I think it was early 1990 that we received word that the Eritreans seized a Polish crewed ship. The Polish Government asked for American good services to obtain the crews' freedom. After an initial hesitation, the Eritreans did decide to release the crew into American custody. The turnover would be at the Red Sea port of Port Sudan. The ambassador led a small embassy group in the attaché aircraft. We flew in and established ourselves in a modest local hotel. What I found fascinating was that in one of the briefcases we carried was a satellite radio with which we could talk to a military command in Frankfurt. After the glitches and delays, the Polish crew materialized. They were very happy and clutched the small American flags we presented with enthusiasm. We understand the Polish Government was grateful for American assistance. We were pleased that our favorable relations with the Eritreans gave us the opportunity to be of assistance. You never can tell how friendships will payoff.

*Q: Actually Embassy Sudan probably had a monopoly on contact with the resistance. They probably didn't go into Addis Ababa and had no contact with our embassy there.*

REUTHER: Right. They would have no opportunity to do that because of the civil war they were fighting against the Mengistu regime. It was this civil war which resulted in famine for the people of Ethiopia. To handle the famine the international community engaged in a little slight of hand. The international community also administered a feeding program in Ethiopia to the population under Addis Abba's control. But the central government would not allow that same program to feed the population under rebel or dissident control. So, those people had to be fed by the covert program from Sudan.

Of course, the Ethiopian government had every interest in creating problems for the program from Sudan. So, the Sudan program suffered not only from normal problems, but also from Ethiopian interference from time to time. That is why I think some people had backed away from it and the semi-covert program had fallen on hard times.

As I said, one of the main problems of the feeding program from Sudan was delivering grain to Ethiopia before the rainy season arrived. The Scandinavian NGOs had long established a sophisticated program to handle the grain. Sweden even loaned them an army engineer to operate the logistics of the port of the Red Sea. One of the main problems was U.S. procedures for providing relief grain. American SOP was to respond when a NGOs identified a need within the American fiscal year. This procedure assumes that a famine was a one-time occurrence. You would not presume that you were going to have a famine next year, you had a famine first and then come to the U.S. government and said you needed food. The end result was, with October being the start of the American fiscal year, the NGOs had to present their request in October, survive a vetting process, and hope for expeditious approval. If approved, the NGO had to locate the grain, then arrange shipping and get it into Ethiopia. This complicated procedure created a considerable lag time. Basically the contribution I made was to try to cut down on that lag time because U.S. grain, which was a third of what was feeding the people, always arrived in the rainy season when it couldn't be moved. When it rains in the hills of Ethiopia it looks like the eastern front during World War I, it is just all slush and mud and you cannot move heavy loads. So, you had a situation of where the food was coming in at the most inappropriate time. So, in cooperation with the Scandinavian NGOs I spent a lot of time reminding Washington that the Ethiopian/Horn of Africa famine was not a one-time event and that we should plan for the long haul. After working on this project for over a year, one of the greatest compliments I received was when the AID director sent one of his officers over and told me I was done, meaning he was taking over the program because now it was working. I took that as a success even though it was a turf seizure on his part. There are other parts of this story for future researchers. About the time the AID director relieved me, an inspector came from AID/Washington to review the program. He sent a cable back saying the program was no longer needed, and that I concurred in that judgement. I wrote a restricted cable to my bosses in the Refugee Bureau underlining my strong disagreement with the AID inspector. The upshot was that AID did not take over the program. It was shut down. I have the uneasy suspicion that stopping the feeding program was part of American pressure on the Ethiopian warring parties to stop the fighting. Excellent goal, questionable means.

*Q: You mentioned the Swedish and NGOs and Europeans being active. To what extent were other official representatives in Khartoum involved in both the refugee and feeding programs in Ethiopia? Were the British and other European offices interested too?*

REUTHER: They were interested in them in the same way we were. I would often share notes with my British or Australian colleague on the functioning of the UN, since we were both watching them and seeing that the money was properly spent and that programs were in place. Like ourselves, the Canadians and the Australians and the northern Europeans had refugee resettlement programs so we often shared war stories along those lines. One of those stories of exasperation arose from the fact that our refugee resettlement itinerary was Khartoum to Frankfurt, and then to the U.S.

*Q: By charter planes?*

REUTHER: No, regular commercial flights, Lufthansa, British Airways and Egyptian Air were the only flights to Europe from Khartoum. We would get so many seats on a Lufthansa flight. One of the problems that suddenly arose was that a new young officer took up his posting in the consular section of the German embassy. He stopped issuing transit visas for my refugees. After finally getting Sudanese officialdom on board I was incredulous that the Germany embassy was my next problem. It turns out that, to make up for World War II, German immigration regulations now allow anybody who arrives in Germany to declare that they want to stay.

*Q: And some were doing that?*

REUTHER: Nobody was doing that, it was just that this consular officer presumed that our refugees, going to the U.S. where they had relatives, might decide to take advantage of German law and stay in Germany. By refusing transit visas he thought he was preventing my refugees from choosing Germany. My argument to him that these people had a very attractive situation in the United States and very unattractive prospects in Germany didn't seem to sway him. In fact, I didn't untangle that whole thing until we finally sent a cable up to our embassy in Bonn to engage the attention of the German government which then instructed its consular officer in Khartoum to be a little more forthcoming.

*Q: There probably weren't a lot of choice in routes between Khartoum and the United States.*

REUTHER: Absolutely none. There was a British Airways that came in from Athens and Lufthansa that came in from Frankfurt. The Sudanese airline had regularly scheduled service, but we did not avail ourselves of its services.

*Q: It probably wouldn't take you very far.*

REUTHER: Their destinations were rather limited. I think you could fly to Cairo. The Sudanese were singularly isolated. It was all part of the difficulty of that environment. I don't think I have ever been in a more physically inhospitable environment.

I was also on the employees' welfare board and ran our little commissary. Our little commissary was important to morale because literally there was little on the local market to buy. You couldn't send your servant out and say, "Well, buy some broccoli or squash for dinner." We often had colleagues at the embassy in Nairobi cut a deal with a crew member of the Kenya Air flight that arrived once a week to put a box of vegetables on a plane for us.

Fresh food was such a scarce commodity in Khartoum that hunting for it became second nature. For example, at the Khartoum embassy, Matt Ward, who was the embassy economic counselor, and I had most recently been in China. He came from Shanghai and I came from Beijing. The two of us hung out at the Chinese embassy from time to time because the Chinese embassy grew its own food in its walled compound. By the way, the Chinese diplomats were excellent Arabic linguists. Or so my Arab-speaking colleagues remarked. For Matt and I this was a chance to retain our Chinese language skills and eat.

*Q: Opportunity to get a decent Chinese meal.*

REUTHER: Absolutely, which was literally one of the few decent meals in town. There was a Hilton Hotel, which had a restaurant, but its prices were beyond my pay scale.

*Q: Sudan is almost the largest country in Africa and has a diverse set of ethnic groups. There was a civil war going on in the south when you were there. Were you involved at all in any assistance efforts to the refugees in southern Sudan?*

REUTHER: No, because the refugees in southern Sudan had fled into Kenya, Uganda and southern Ethiopia seeking safety and sustenance. We had no access to them. The UN access was in the countries of refuge. The on-going civil war was a very difficult thing for us and was one of the reasons for a lack of substance in the bilateral relationship. The Sudanese had simply told the embassy to knock it off and would not entertain any attempts on our part at mediation. It was a depressing environment. The western community consisted of a few Greek and Lebanese merchants and the Europeans associated with the NGOs providing services to the Ethiopian refugees. Among our weekly darts companions were two fliers, from Zimbabwe I believe, who flew small amounts of cargo around the country. They were killed in the south and I believe the subsequent investigation suggested that in fact the Sudanese army shot them down because their safe journeys created the appearance that refugee activities for the people in the south could be mounted from Khartoum.

*Q: So, to the extent that any of those activities were taking place they were probably taking place at that time outside of Sudan in neighboring countries.*

REUTHER: Yes. It was really very confusing. The civil war in Ethiopia forced refugees into Sudan where UNHCR and NGOs cared for them. But, the civil war in Sudan pushed refugees into Kenya and Uganda where the UNHCR and other NGOs organized assistance. One had the feeling that the whole horn of Africa was just a disaster at that time. Of course, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 did not improve the situation in the Horn of Africa. With Iraq's invasion, Washington called for a reduction in the size of our already small embassy. This was in part recognition that there was nothing Embassy Khartoum could do for the larger scene. Except for the refugee program, we had little positive dialogue with the local Sudanese authorities. They seemed to be slipping more and more into a conservative Islamic mindset. Anyway, Kuwait had priority and our problems were quite insignificant. Although Washington called for a reduction in the mission, the ambassador resisted.

*Q: I suppose there was always the possibility of a terrorist threat?*

REUTHER: Absolutely, in fact, Khartoum has a violent history. Every time there was a war in the Middle East somebody was shot in Khartoum. In fact, as you recall, there was that major hostage incident where Ambassador Noel and his deputy were murdered.

*Q: That was back in 1973, after the 1973 war.*

REUTHER: Then just four or five years earlier to the time I was there, there was another shooting. So, Washington and we operated on the presumption that Sudanese authorities could



not maintain security. An important corollary was that people associated with terrorism in the Middle East had offices in Khartoum making it a dangerous place when the Middle East boiled over. Our first response to the potential for danger was to significantly reduce our files. As I said, the ambassador kept spurning Washington's instructions to cut back and prepare for evacuation. After experiencing civil unrest in Thailand, then most recently the Tiananmen Incident, the situation 'felt' serious to me. I also instructed my contractor to reduce her files. For security's sake we brought the files and all of the contractor's office equipment into the embassy building. We were taking the initiative to move toward mothballing the program. Two days later we were told we were leaving, the entire American diplomatic mission, any other Americans, and certain other foreign nationals who also wanted to depart.

*Q: When was that approximately? Was it 1991 by then?*

REUTHER: Yes, in fact we departed Khartoum just a few hours before Desert Storm started. Washington had stopped negotiating with the ambassador and ordered him to close the mission and said that a New Jersey National Guard C-147 would be at the airport at 9:00 in the morning. The embassy security alert system worked perfectly and we all arrived at the airport at 9:00 only to find there was no airplane. It could have been a dangerous situation because we gathered all the potential targets in one place. The Marine Security Guards and the Security officer improvised and the evacuees were spread around town in a few safe locations. I was part of the group that went to the Marine House. The plane arrived in that afternoon—after fixing a blown tire. The Western community boarded in an orderly manner. Because this was a cargo aircraft there were no seats, most people sat on the floor of this cavernous vehicle. We were flown south to Nairobi. We cleared Nairobi customs and motored to the hotel arriving about 12:00 midnight. Many were still wired rather than exhausted from the long day and at 1:00 in the morning somebody was still up watching CNN. All of a sudden there was the sound of running feet, banging on doors and loud calls: Desert Storm had begun.

*Q: The embassy was totally closed, the ambassador had left, too?*

REUTHER: While Ambassador Cheek and the staff departed, the embassy was not totally closed. Two volunteers were left behind, the DCM, Joe O'Neil, and an administrative officer. Joe worked out of the British embassy for security reasons.

*Q: How long did you stay in Nairobi then?*

REUTHER: We stayed in Nairobi only a couple of days. We were all sent back to Washington except for the AID mission officers. Because of its separate personnel system, AID Khartoum cut orders for its personnel that meant they did not fall under the general orders to return to Washington, but remained overseas on TDY.

*Q: Were there families in Khartoum before you closed down?*

REUTHER: No. With the August invasion, Washington had decreed that all dependents should leave post. By Christmas, all families had departed. Like post-Tiananmen Square two years earlier, the embassy was at minimal staffing.

*Q: So, when you left Nairobi you went back to Washington?*

REUTHER: Yes, went back to Washington. I was fortunate to land a temporary assignment in an office in the Political/Military Bureau that dealt with foreign military sales. This duty illustrated the changes that had occurred in American attitudes since I entered the Foreign Service. Shortly before I arrived in Washington in the fall of 1990, there was another military-led coup in Thailand. The post-Vietnam Congress rewrote the military assistance legislation to now read that a military coup was grounds for suspending U.S. military assistance. So, for three months I managed the suspension of military aid to Thailand, the country in which I started my career. My first assignment where the military was overthrown. In the 19 years I had been in the Foreign Service, Thailand demonstrated that the road to democracy and economic modernization was a rocky one indeed.

*Q: But that was just a temporary job?*

REUTHER: That was just a temporary job. Administratively, evacuees from Khartoum (and actually a large number of embassy officers from missions in Africa and most of the Middle East that were severely drawdown because of Kuwait) were in Washington for 30 days at a time. Every 30 days the personnel office had to make a decision as to whether we would go back to post. The Gulf War, as you know, lasted a relatively short time, but getting a clear idea of our status was difficult. Of course, no one could tell when things would be settled enough to return to as insecure a place as Khartoum. After about 90 days the Department decided we could go back. I was eager to return because my programs were a success and I had isolated my issues from the general unproductive relations we had with the Sudanese government. In addition, I felt uncomfortable about abandoning those refugees who would have been reunited with family members in the States had we not left.

We finally returned. International Rescue Committee (IRC), the contractor that ran the screening process found new volunteers to staff its offices. We pulled the files out, organized everybody and were back in business. Reestablishing the program was quite an administrative challenge; to mothball the program for three months and then bring it back on line.

*Q: But, you were able to do that fairly quickly?*

REUTHER: Yes. We had the core IRC people and excellent cooperation from the Sudanese.

*Q: They were glad to see you back, no doubt. How long did you stay in Khartoum before you were transferred?*

REUTHER: I believe I returned to Khartoum in April and by mid-May received my next assignment. After almost ten years, I returned to Washington. Building on my previous exposure to Iraq affairs I was offered the Deputy Office Director position in the Office of Iran and Iraq Affairs. In preparation for that assignment I was sent to Kuwait to help reestablish the embassy's Political Section. The war rather inconveniently ended before the State Department's summer transfer cycle, so the Department was assigning temporary duty personnel as an interim measure.

**DONALD PETTERSON**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1992-1995)**

*Donald Petterson was born in 1930 in California. He attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, graduating in 1956, and receiving his Master's degree in 1960. He also served in the US Navy from 1948 to 1952. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960, and his career included posts in Mexico, Zanzibar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, and Liberia. Ambassador Petterson was interviewed on December 13, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Lambert Heyniger.*

PETTERSON: Yes. I had this offer to go to Sudan. Julie and I talked it over. Khartoum was not a place that one would call an ideal assignment. I remember I went to Khartoum on a trip in 1977 with Andy Young. After a day or so there, I said, to myself, "This is one place I would not like to serve in!"

*Q: It's also a place where a previous American ambassador had been assassinated!*

PETTERSON: In 1973 Cleo Noel, our ambassador, and George Curtis Moore, the DCM, and Guy Eid, a Belgian diplomat, were assassinated. They were seized by terrorists at a party given by the Saudi ambassador, and, the next day, they were murdered. In 1985 one of the embassy's American employees was shot by a terrorist and severely wounded. Also in the '80s, a British couple and their children were killed in a terrorist bombing in a Khartoum hotel where foreigners congregated.

Living conditions in Khartoum were far from ideal. It was a hot, dusty place and lacked many amenities. But this didn't really bother us because we'd lived in tough places before.

*Q: You were saying that Julie and you-*

PETTERSON: We weighed the pros and cons of the assignment. We weren't ready to leave the Service, and we were hoping to go back to Africa. Sudan had a fascinating history. Khartoum, situated at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile rivers, was rich in history and culturally extremely interesting. So we decided we wanted to go, but we wouldn't accept the offer unless there was a good school for our son Brian, who by this time was twelve years old. Well, we learned that there was an international school there, called the American School, although there weren't many American kids attending it. I called Jeff and said, "Sure, put my name in the hopper." Strangely enough, there were no White House candidates [laughter] for the job.

*Q: Not surprised.*

PETTERSON: My name went forward, and the slow process of getting nominated and confirmed began. We were back in Washington from Zimbabwe by the fall of 1991. I took an

FSI area studies course on the Middle East, had meetings in the Department on Sudan, delved into Sudan's history and culture, and began to study Arabic. I had a reasonably good aptitude for languages and had learned to speak Swahili and Spanish with some fluency. But Arabic is a very difficult language to learn, and the several months that I was able to study it were not nearly enough to give me a good working knowledge of it. But at least I gained some familiarity with Arabic, which was somewhat useful to me when I got to Khartoum.

*Q: This is while you're in the nomination process?*

PETTERSON: Yes, I'm waiting. The wait came to an end in the summer of 1992. After I was sworn in, Julie, Brian and I flew to Khartoum. This was not a happy land we were coming to. The country was riven by a civil war that had started in 1956, ended in 1972, resumed in 1983, and was still being waged. In the nineteen years since 1983, almost two million people had died as a result of the conflict.

*Q: Before you get into talking about U.S.-Sudanese relations, as opposed to the embassies in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, what was the American embassy in Khartoum like? How big? What kinds of things going on? What were your marching orders from Washington?*

PETTERSON: Before I get into that, let me give some more background on the situation in Sudan. Since becoming independent, Sudan had fluctuated between democratically elected governments and dictatorships. The military seized power in 1958, civilian government was restored in 1965, a military dictatorship under General Gaafar al-Nimeiri was in control from 1969 until 1985. In 1986, after democratic elections, a new civilian government took office. It was overthrown in 1989. Political instability arose from the fact that Sudan's largest political parties were religiously based, and none was able to win a majority of votes, so coalition governments were formed. The coalitions spent much of their energy trying to survive politically and were unable to deal effectively with Sudan's major national economic and social problems. Added to this weakness of the political system, the war in southern Sudan was a constant drain on the resources of the country and a factor of political disunity.

All the governments of Sudan, military as well as civilian, had had an Islamic flavor. From the outset of independence, the two largest political parties advocated a central role for Islam in Sudan's governing process. They favored eventual establishment of an Islamic republic with the *sharia*, or Islamic law, as the basis of legislation. But it took a military dictator, Nimeiri, to actually impose the *sharia* as state law, as he did in September 1983. Later, when heading the coalition government that began ruling in 1986, Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi did not believe that he had an option to overturn the *sharia* laws. However, Sadiq promised to introduce new, less stringent, Islamic laws or revise them in a manner to protect Sudan's non-Muslim minority. His government was overthrown before any changes were instituted.

The National Islamic Front, an Islamist political party, was formed in 1985. It was headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi's brother-in-law and political opponent, Hassan al-Turabi, an Islamic scholar and consummate politician. Turabi and his NIF opposed the negotiating path that the Sadiq government was finally taking to end the war. Working together, the NIF and Islamist military

officers led by Brigadier General Omar al-Bashir overthrew the government in June 1989. Since then, the Islamists have done everything necessary to remain in power.

The Bashir government wasted no time in moving against possible opponents. Hundreds of people were detained and many were tortured. In early 1990 twenty-eight army officers were summarily executed. A purge of the civil service, military, police, and judiciary was carried out. Over the years, the Bashir government systematically did away with democratic institutions and civil rights.

As prescribed by U.S. law, in 1989 Washington suspended all but humanitarian aid to Sudan because a democratically elected government had been forcibly overthrown. The U.S. condemned the summary execution of the military officers. It deplored the detentions of hundreds of people and other gross violations of human rights. Sudan's harboring of international terrorists was another bone of contention. . Sudan had become a haven for Islamic terrorist organizations. In 1991, the United States warned the Sudanese that there would be consequences if they did not stop abetting terrorism. The Sudanese said our accusations were baseless. To add to the problem in the relationship, Sudan had supported Iraq during the Gulf War.

In 1992, when I arrived, the continued detention of political prisoners and their mistreatment, including torture, and other gross violations of human right remained as obstacles to any improvement in U.S.-Sudanese relations. The prosecution of the war in southern Sudan and the excessive use of force against civilians in the course of that war were another serious problem. So too was the Sudanese government's interference with the delivery of humanitarian aid to some places in southern Sudan. Another issue that accounted for the differences that the United States had with Sudan was the Sudanese government's treatment of tens of thousands of southern Sudanese who had come from the south to Khartoum and were living in the city. They were forcibly removed to outlying areas that were barren and lacking basic facilities. There was no water, inadequate shelter, and so forth. These people became totally dependent on international assistance to stay alive.

So we had a number of quarrels about the Sudanese.

When people found out I was going to be ambassador to Sudan, they didn't know whether to congratulate me [laughter] or to console me.

The Sudanese government regarded my arrival in Sudan in the summer of 1992 as an opening for improved relations. In the months and years ahead I would find that the Bashir government tended to misread certain events – like my arrival, or a visit by an official from Washington, or the election of a new U.S. president – to misread these as signs that relations between Sudan and the United States were on the verge of an upswing. On such occasions, I made it a point to caution Bashir, Turabi and others that although Washington did want better relations with Sudan, unless Sudan began to take steps to meet U.S. concerns, relations would not improve.

When I presented my credentials to Bashir, after an exchange of formal remarks, we sat down and had a frank talk. In it, I told him that relations were poor and would not get any better unless

his government improved its human rights record, eased restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid, and stopped harboring terrorists. Bashir pretty much dismissed those concerns as baseless but indicated that he believed relations could be improved.

The chief of protocol was ecstatic afterwards, saying to me that Bashir had not before given so much time to talk to a new ambassador at a credentials presentation ceremony. I told Washington that this was well and good but that the talk with Bashir had broken no new ground. I said it indicated that the Sudanese government did not understand the depth of our differences and that they were not prepared to do anything to meet our concerns.

I made my rounds, meeting with Sudanese leaders and others, spreading the gospel, so to speak, of what was needed if relations were to improve. I said that Sudan had to stop providing refuge and support to terrorists, it had to move toward a restoration of democracy, it had to improve its abysmal human rights record, it had to stop impeding the flow of humanitarian aid to those who needed it, and it had to make a good faith effort to end the war. Despite a real desire on the part of at least some of the government's leaders for closer ties with Washington, they were not willing to admit to any faults, much less change their policies and practices. To do so, they must have believed, would be to jeopardize their hold on political power.

Still, at that time perhaps we could have made some progress in bettering relations had there not been an incident that made things even worse.

Shortly before I arrived in Sudan, Sudanese security forces in Juba, a large city in the far south of the country, entered the USAID compound there and detained the thirteen Africans who were working there. AID had ended its operations in the South, but it had kept the compound open under the care of these thirteen employees to symbolize to the southern Sudanese that we cared about them and to indicate that we hoped to come back. At least that seemed to be the rationale. I never saw it in writing.

*Q: Was it doing anything?*

PETTERSON: No.

*Q: It wasn't distributing food or anything?*

PETTERSON: No. The employees were simply acting as caretakers. The regular radio transmissions from the Juba compound to Khartoum had stopped. Our AID director, Carol Becker, told me that she was deeply concerned. I took the matter up with, first, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking them to look into it. Nothing came of this. I went to see Nafi Ali Nafi. Nafi, who had a Ph.D. in botany from the University of California at Riverside, was a top official in the government's security apparatus and a member of the Bashir-Turabi inner circle. He said that Andrew Tombe, the senior employee at the USAID compound, had been conspiring with the rebels and was going to be tried for treason. Worried about that, I went to other officials. I talked to a man named Ghazi Salaheddine Atabani, who was a junior minister and very influential. A few days after we met, Ghazi told me that the employees were unharmed. Actually, as I would

find out later, Andrew Tombe and three others were already dead, having been executed. We didn't know this.

*Q: Did Ghazi know it?*

PETTERSON: I don't know. After I left had Ghazi's office, I wrote a letter to the president saying I was very concerned that about Tombe and asking Bashir to exercise leniency if Tombe had been tried.

On September 18, Julie, Brian, and I were at the embassy commissary helping others to clean up after a fire there, when I was told I should go to the embassy. Once there, I learned that Bashir had responded to my letter orally through an army officer. Bashir's message was that it had been too late for him to do anything, for the sentence had already been carried out. Tombe had been executed. A few days later, we learned that another USAID employee had been executed. Much later, we deduced that two others had also been executed. None of this came directly from the government. And of course we were never notified that all thirteen men in the compound had been detained and tortured. All this came to light when, in late October, I went to Juba. It took me that long to get there because the government kept delaying permission for a trip to Juba in a UN aircraft, the only way I could get there. Finally, after I threatened to close the embassy's consular section, the necessary permission was granted.

The charge that Tombe was using the USAID radio to communicate with the rebels was utter nonsense. Tombe knew that the radio was being monitored. In fact, sometimes when he made a radio broadcast, he had security people with him. It would have been suicidal for him to have used the radio to talk to rebels. Confronting the head security officer in Juba, I said I did not believe the charges against Tombe. In response, he made the incredible assertion that Tombe had gone to a market with the radio and, accompanied by a UN African employee (who also was executed), began broadcasting, in full view of people there. This was so ludicrous that it just underlined the falsity of all the charges.

When the AID employees in Juba had been detained, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the main rebel force, had advanced close to the town. Suspecting that townspeople were in league with the SPLA, the security forces there embarked on a campaign of terror. There were widespread arrests, and many people were murdered, as was testified to by priests and other witnesses who were in Juba at the time. What happened to the USAID employees was a part of the hysteria of the security forces.

Washington was outraged. The State Department issued a statement condemning the execution of Tombe (the only one we knew of at that time) and noting that there had been credible reports of widespread killing of civilians in Juba by government security forces. Khartoum made an angry response. Relations, already sour, got much worse.

So, this was our introduction to Sudan.

*Q: Wow! How many people were there in the embassy? What agencies were represented?*

PETTERSON: Well before the Bashir government came to power, the U.S. mission in Sudan was one of our largest in Africa. For a time, beginning in 1982, Sudan was the largest recipient of U.S. economic and military aid in all of sub-Saharan Africa. We had a military assistance group, a huge AID program, a large embassy staff, a USIS office, agriculture attaché office, and, of course, CIA station. All this changed, especially after the suspension of economic and military assistance in 1982. By the time I arrived in 1992, the total number of U.S. mission employees had been reduced to 53.

*Q: That still is substantial!*

PETTERSON: Yes, but the number would diminish even more. In 1992, the embassy had a political section, economic section, administrative staff, security office, USIS office, and CIA station. For the first time in my career, I had a full-time security detail. Whenever I traveled anywhere, to work, around town, or out of town, I was accompanied by armed security people. The bulk of these were Sudanese ex-policemen who were armed with automatic weapons. I had an armored van, and an American security officer traveled in the car with me.

*Q: I'm sure Julie loved this!*

PETTERSON: Both of us had to get used to it, and of course one can get accustomed to just about anything. I really didn't like it, and thought about asking Washington to do away with the security detail. They would not have agreed, of course. I remember once telling a Sudanese friend that I would prefer not to have the detail. He replied, "Look, this place being what it is, that would be madness!"

I kicked over the traces twice. We had brought a Honda Accord with us. It sat, unused, inside the wall of the residence. Twice, on weekends, when my security people were off...

*Q: No security on the weekends! [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: They didn't stay at the residence when I had no travel plans. Of course, there was plenty of security at the house, not only our security guards, but also Sudanese police - the British embassy was just down the street from our residence.

*Q: Oh, okay. So you zoomed out of residence in your car and went jogging.*

PETTERSON: I said, "Open the gate. I'm going-" [Laughter]

No, I didn't go jogging. I just drove the car around town for a few minutes, came back, parked the car, didn't tell anybody. The second time I did that, the security guys heard about it, and they said, "Mr. Ambassador, please."

*Q: [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: It was unfair to them, I know, and I didn't do it again.

*Q: Yes.*



PETTERSON: I ran fairly often and played tennis occasionally. In Khartoum, you ran early in the morning because it would be too hot otherwise. I remember running some afternoons when, even late in the day, the temperature was well over 100 degrees. I had joined with a group of serious runners, who did a six or seven mile run at a location outside Khartoum. In trying to keep up with them in that heat, I found that it was no fun at all - my pulse rate went up much too high - and I gave that up. What was fun, though, was participating once again with Hash House Harriers. We ran once a week. Whenever I hosted the after-run festivities, the attendance was very good. The government banned the use of alcoholic beverages, but diplomats could serve them on diplomatic property. So, I had beer for the hashers, most of whom did not have diplomatic privileges, and they were very appreciative.

But, again, except for the Hash runs, I generally did my running in the early morning, when it was cooler.

*Q: A balmy 85!*

PETTERSON: I would go out with a car in front and a car behind and run for 45 minutes, an hour, hour and a half, sometimes, on a weekend, longer.

*Q: Anybody else in the embassy go with you?*

PETTERSON: When I arrived in Khartoum, my security bodyguards were Delta Force members. These guys were really fit, and they ran with me. They were so tough. I remember running down Nile Road one morning. It was early, as usual, and the traffic was light. But a car coming toward us looked as if it would pass somewhat close. The Delta Force guy who was running alongside me ran directly at that car [laughter], by his action saying, "Get out of the way!" It veered off. The State Department security officers who succeeded them as my bodyguards were not nearly as fit. Some of them ran once or twice and gave it up. But others did well. One was a marathoner, and he delighted in going out with me. The marines would come over sometimes in the morning, and occasionally someone else who was into running joined me. My running was, of course, was well known to the Sudanese security and to the Sudanese government. Hassan al-Turabi used to make fun of me. "If Sudan is such a place of terrorism and danger and you have to have all those security guards, why are you out running around in the morning?"

*Q: You could say, "Well, you'll notice that I have cars in front and behind me."*

PETTERSON: Yes.

*Q: [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: Aside from the heavy security, our personal life in Khartoum was similar to our life at other African posts. We had friends from among the Americans, the diplomatic community, and the local community. But many Sudanese felt they could not come to our house. They were fearful of what the government might do to them. Our next door neighbors, for

example, never came to see us. I made it a point of regularly inviting to dinner NGO representatives, with whom we worked on the humanitarian assistance program..

*Q: Did you have a USIS operation there?*

PETTERSON: We did at the beginning.

*Q: Sometimes you can get people to come for dinner and a film.*

PETTERSON: Sure, and we did this. There were times, especially later in my assignment, when Americans could with justification feel a bit beleaguered in Khartoum, as relations with the government spiraled further downward. But we had an active social life and were enjoying our existence there.

In early 1993, I began travels to the south. Outside of a few ambassadors who had gone to Juba under government auspices, I was the first ambassador since the Bashir government came to power to travel into southern Sudan. I don't know why others hadn't done this, but I regarded the entire country as my parish, so to speak. I was ambassador to all of Sudan, south as well as north. I went to the foreign ministry and said that I was going on such and such a date. They told me, "We will get back to you."

But they did not, so off I went. I flew to Nairobi. From Nairobi I went by UN aircraft to Lokichokio, which is in the area where the extreme tip of northwestern Kenya juts into southeastern Sudan. The base camp of the international humanitarian relief program for southern Sudan is located at Lokichokio. From there I would fly into the south of-

*Q: To Juba?*

PETTERSON: Not to Juba, no. I had already gone to Juba from the north. In all I made about ten trips into southern Sudan displaced persons camps and many towns and villages in Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Upper Nile, and Bahr el-Ghazal over the course of the next two and a half years.

*Q: Were these by yourself, or did you take NGO people with you?*

PETTERSON: I often flew with somebody from the United Nations. I had become very closely professionally associated with Phillip O'Brien, an Irishman who headed UNICEF's office in Nairobi and also the Operation Lifeline Sudan humanitarian assistance program. Someone from our AID mission in Nairobi who had responsibility for southern Africa would frequently go with me. Sometimes an official of the humanitarian relief organization of the rebel movement accompanied us, because we were going into their territory.

*Q: The foreign ministry never really gave you a hard time about this?*

PETTERSON: On occasion, after I got back to Khartoum. But, as much as they were unhappy about my trips into the south, they didn't try to prevent me from going.

*Q: And you were going into rebel held areas?*

PETTERSON: Yes, but not exclusively. At times we tried to give balance to the trips by going to government-held areas too. I made the trips into southern Sudan to see what the situation was in the areas where displaced people were congregated, to see what their needs were, to see what could be done to improve the flow of relief supplies. In the bush, NGO and UN personnel would take us around, and we would stay with them at their camps. I was always impressed by the selflessness of relief workers, most of whom worked in very difficult conditions. In either Nairobi or when I got back to Khartoum, I reported to Washington on what I had observed and heard regarding the relief situation and the war. We got very close to the war zone on more than one occasion.

*Q: Yes.*

PETTERSON: To fly we needed to have clearance from the authorities, both the southern Sudanese and the northern Sudanese, which we managed to get. If there were fighting in an area or it was getting close, the UN security officer in Lokichokio might say, "We can't chance it." Once or twice, after we got into the south, a trip to a specific location was scrubbed.

We generally flew in Twin Otters or one or another variety of Cessna, often a Cessna Caravan. The Otters had a pilot and co-pilot, but the other aircraft had only one pilot. In those, I would usually sit up in the cockpit with the pilot. It was more fun to do it that way, and occasionally the pilot would let me take the controls, much to the excitement of the passengers in back.

*Q: [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: I remember talking to the pilots one day during a trip. I asked, "How high do we have to be to not be hit by a missile?"

*Q: To be out of range! [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: Yes. Both sides had hand-held Stinger missiles. And he said, "Well, 12,000 feet should be okay." So, seeing that the altimeter read 12,000 feet, I was reassured. [Laughter]

*Q: [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: When we would get to a place where we were going and where at that time enemy troops were close by, the pilot would very quickly spiral down and land in a hurry on the airstrip.

What I saw at some of the places that I visited remains indelibly imprinted in my mind. Extreme suffering, of the kind that I saw in Somalia, but even worse. Men, women, and children starving, some of them dying right at our feet. I remember once, when I was talking to a rebel commander in a clearing, we were ringed by emaciated, desperate people. Several of them, carrying something, were edging forward. As they got closer, I saw that their bundle was a body. They held it up, in mute supplication, showing us how bad things were.

When I started flying into the south, almost all of the fighting was taking place between two major rebel factions, not between the government forces and the rebels. One faction, then called the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Mainstream, was led by John Garang, a former Sudanese army officer who had been educated, got a Ph.D., at Iowa State University. The other, the Sudan People's Liberation Army/United, was headed by a former lieutenant of Garang, Riek Machar. The worst effect of the fighting was that relief operations were interrupted, and thousands of people were at risk of starvation. The death toll was high and rising. After visiting the area in March and April, in May I met in Nairobi with representatives of the two rebel factions and after a couple of days of difficult negotiations, got them to agree to a cease-fire in the area that had come to be called, "the starvation triangle." Garang gave his okay, but I had to go up-country to see Riek Machar to get his approval, which I did. The cease-fire held only for a short time. It failed because there was no way to enforce it through international monitoring. No government, nor the UN, would provide the necessary monitors. But at least during the days that the cease-fire held, relief operations went forward and some lives were saved.

My reporting cables after a trip sometimes pointed to the need for more food supplies or for other needed improvements to the relief operations. Often, the number of aircraft for delivering the supplies was inadequate. In one cable I sent regarding the need to add to the airlift capability of the Operation Lifeline Sudan, I put it in pretty stark terms. I said, "Either we get more transport, or a lot of people will die." By and large when I asked for something, I got it because there was a great amount of sympathy for the suffering people of southern Sudanese.

When I would come out of the south and fly from Lokichokio to Nairobi en route to Khartoum, I frequently met with journalists and told them what I had encountered during the trip. I did this to try to draw attention to the terrible plight of the southern Sudanese. I had little success, for the media, certainly the U.S. media, were not much interested in Sudan. But occasionally there was some coverage. The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) always did an interview and broadcast it. This was good, in that it called some attention to the southern Sudan issue, but it also got me in trouble with Khartoum. On at least on two occasions when I got back, I was in hot water for having said things that the Sudanese government did not like to hear.

*Q: Yes.*

PETTERSON: But when I met with government officials, described my trip, and explained what I had actually said, which was not the same as the BBC reported it, the Sudanese seemed mollified, and took no action against me, which some were advocating. There were some front-page articles in newspapers saying that I had committed unfriendly acts and should be thrown out of the country. But, again, nothing came of all this.

I don't want to give a picture that I was locked into acrimonious exchanges with the Sudanese officials. Although I paint a picture of a ruthless government, which it was, its members were typically Sudanese. The Sudanese are well known to be among the warmest, nicest people in Africa. I had cordial relationships, by and large, even with those with whom I had sometimes-sharp disagreements. On a personal level, for example, I always got along well with Bashir.

My relationship with Turabi was different. He was an intellectual who liked to joust with anybody who came to see him, who liked to show how smart he was, who held many, and I'm sure I was included among them, in contempt. Turabi was a very interesting man. He was a lawyer and a world-renowned Islamic scholar. He saw himself at the center of an Islamic revival that would make profound changes throughout the Muslim world. Some believed that he was not the man he used to be. In May 1992, just before I went to Sudan, he was on a tour of the United Nations and Canada. While he was in Canada at an airport, a Sudanese attacked him, beat him, and almost killed him. He had a severe head injury, and he was in a coma for a while. People who saw him later said that he was mentally impaired. Be that as it may, I found him to be formidable and quite incisive generally.

*Q: What was he? Was he the foreign minister?*

PETTERSON: No. He did not have a government position at this time. He was the head of the National Islamic Front, the Islamist political party that he had founded in 1985. Turabi was the power behind the throne, the architect of Sudanese policy. He had many followers. His disciples were in key places in the government and the security apparatus.

My talks with Turabi brought out very clearly in the remarks he'd made - which I transcribed (I took notes) and which I reported to Washington - how deep his anti-Semitism was, how ignorant he was of the United States, although he professed to know more about the United States than I did. He was a supremely arrogant, fascinating, complex man whose aim was not only to control the government and to spread Islam in Sudan, but also to be in the vanguard of an Islamic movement that would sweep the world. Many believed that he aimed to displace Bashir one day and become the head of government. But later on, in 1999, he overreached himself, alienated some of his followers who had become high officials in the government, and lost a struggle with Bashir, who turned out to be tougher and more astute than many had given him credit for.

In Khartoum, we in the embassy met with people from the government, with southerners living in the city, with businessmen and professional people, educators, clergymen, with people from many walks of life to keep abreast of what was going on. I had an exceptionally capable political counselor, Lucien Vandenbroucke. I was fortunate, too, to have a good DCM, Larry Benedict. In fact, the staff of the American mission was composed by and large of highly able people. Unfortunately, that staff would soon be cut way back.

Julie, Brian, and I went on home leave in the summer of 1993. When we passed through Washington on our way back to Khartoum, I was told by the State Department that the U.S. government was on the verge of putting Sudan on the American list of state sponsors of terrorism. The Secretary of State would announce his decision imminently. I asked that this not be done until I got back to Sudan. I thought it would be unfair to have my deputy take that message to the government. I felt it was my job to do that and take the flak that would ensue. The State Department agreed, and back to Khartoum we went. On August 15, the cable with the message came in. The Sudanese got wind of what was about to happen - ABC television news had the story - and I was not given an appointment to see President Bashir. Instead, I delivered the message to Omar Berido, the foreign ministry's first under secretary. Putting a country on the list of state sponsors of terrorism invokes certain sanctions, but it meant little to Sudan because

American sanctions were already in force. So it really didn't make much difference in terms of putting screws on Sudan, but it was psychologically and politically damaging to the Sudanese, to their international reputation, if nothing else. They reacted furiously. The government organized some demonstrations, the first of which took place at the residence, the others at the embassy. They were nothing to worry about – I was sure that the government wouldn't let them get out of hand. But a problem arose when we received intelligence information that the government was planning to engineer an assassination of embassy people.

*Q: Good grief!*

PETTERSON: Washington reacted to this message in the belief that the CIA source was legitimate. He had provided some good intelligence before. This latest information was evaluated and found credible. The Department instructed me to evacuate dependents and to reduce staff. Well, I wasn't so sure about the validity of the information, but I had my marching orders. There was nothing I could do. I broke the news to the embassy and, of course, to Julie and Brian. Julie was very upset. She saw no reason for this. She didn't want to go, but, of course, she had to. There was a lot of similar sentiment within the embassy. My DCM, Larry Benedict, had the unenviable job of preparing for me a list of those employees who would go. Once we agreed on the list, we let everybody know.

We had to cut the staff from 52 to 38. Then, about a week later, we got new information that indicated, if not immediate danger, at least a precarious situation for embassy Americans in Khartoum. A decision was made to cut the staff even further, down to less than 30.

In a very orderly fashion, the evacuation took place. I said "Goodbye" to Julie and Brian.

*Q: Evacuate to where?*

PETTERSON: Back to the States.

*Q: Yes, not just Nairobi?*

PETTERSON: No. Those officers and staff who went back to the U.S. waited for a while to see whether they could return, but, as it turned out, none could. They had to arrange for other assignments. Julie and Brian went to Oregon, where we had decided we would retire, southern Oregon. But after a few months she was too lonely and Brian was not happy in his school. So they went to Mexico to be with her family.

For a short time, we in the embassy kept a low profile. More demonstrations took place. The government wildly exaggerated the number of people who were in attendance. They even organized a demonstration of southerners against us and dragooned some southerners into taking part in it. But only a small number of people participated, most of them not southerners at all.

Washington continued to worry about the safety of the Americans remaining in Khartoum. The demonstrations, inflammatory government statements, and an intense anti-American propaganda campaign finally elicited a harsh message from Washington to the Sudanese government and to

Turabi. The message said, in effect, “Anything happens to Americans, we’re going to hit you in a way that will hurt!”

*Q: Wow!*

PETTERSON: Yes. And I was asked to deliver this message, of course!

*Q: Oh, lucky you! [Laughter]*

PETTERSON: I called the Omar Berido at the foreign ministry. He wanted to know what the content of the message was.

I said, “It’s a message from President Clinton.”

He accepted that. Their ambassador in Washington had been reamed out when he had been called into the State Department and should have known that a message from Washington to Khartoum would be quite negative. But he, fool that he was, indicated that it would be something positive. So Bashir and Turabi were expecting something perhaps saying, “It’s time for us to begin to repair the relationship.”

But then I come in with this bombshell!

*Q: Right.*

PETTERSON: They thought that I had duped them into receiving me, for they would not have personally received this kind of a message. I hadn’t (and later on, they came to understand that I hadn’t), but for a while my relationship with the government was in a deep-freeze. I could not see Bashir. But, as always happened during my time in Sudan, before long the Sudanese relented. Because they continued to want a better relationship with the United States, my access was restored, and we went on as before with the same frustratingly fruitless discussions about what they needed to do to have a better relationship with the United States. Because there was little I could accomplish in improving relations, I focused on the humanitarian assistance program. As the ambassador of one of the major donor countries, I took my turn chairing meetings of the weekly donor-country ambassadors and UN agency heads. I held these at the residence. As donor chairman, I accompanied the UN Coordinator to weekly meetings with the Sudanese relief authorities. I also met with NGO representatives fairly frequently. And I met separately with government officials in efforts to get them to be more cooperative on the delivery of assistance to the south and also to the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese who were in these awful camps around-

*Q: Around Khartoum.*

PETTERSON: Khartoum. My efforts on behalf of the humanitarian aid program, and my trips in to southern Sudan, became the most important factor of my work over the time remaining in my assignment, which was had almost two years to go. Julie and Brian, as it turned out, did not get back until just a couple months before we left Sudan. I had, on a couple of occasions,

recommended to Washington that they lift the ban on dependents. In my view there was no great danger. As it was, a year or so after the evacuation, Washington determined that the intelligence report that had caused it was false. Nevertheless, once an evacuation has taken place, the Department is very slow-

*Q: Right.*

PETTERSON: ...to permit dependents to return.

*Q: Yes.*

PETTERSON: Twice when I recommended that the ban on dependents be lifted, my senior staff disagreed with me. I sent their disagreement in to Washington along with my recommendation.

*Q: Your staff thought that the dependents should not come back?*

PETTERSON: Right. I disagree with them. I saw no more danger in Khartoum than was the case when I arrived there, when we had a full staff. There would always be an element of risk serving in Khartoum, but no more so than in some other tight spots in the world where we had full embassy staffs, and where dependents were at post. Finally I prevailed, and a couple of months before my assignment was up, Julie and Brian returned.

I would have to say that of all my assignments, this was probably the most difficult.

*Q: I'm not surprised.*

PETTERSON: We'd experienced a violent revolution in Zanzibar and I had had some difficult times in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Dealing with apartheid in South Africa was no picnic, either. But Sudan was the most difficult. It was next to impossible to make any headway with a government that would not deviate from its intention to maintain itself in power by any means necessary, including force. In addition, it persisted in giving refuge to terrorist organizations. And its gross violations of human rights continued with regularity.

*Q: Before we leave Sudan, I have to ask you one question, Don. After the attacks on the embassies in Nairobi and Dar, I believe one of the steps we took was to send a cruise missile to hit a factory?*

PETTERSON: Yes.

*Q: In Khartoum? From your service there, do you think that terrorist materials were being made there?*

PETTERSON: There was no hint of that while I was there. I left in 1995, the cruise missile attack on the pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum took place in '98. Subsequently, I was asked a number of times, for instance by radio talk show hosts when I was promoting the book I wrote on Sudan, whether the American cruise missile attack was justified. My answer was that I



believed it was a mistake. The administration failed to produce conclusive evidence that chemical weapons were being made at the pharmaceutical factory. The administration had grounds for suspicion, but to commit an act of war, which the missile attack was, the evidence should have been iron clad.

**TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY**  
**Ambassador**  
**(1995-1997)**

*Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: You left there in '95?*

CARNEY: I left there because in October of '94 I got a letter from (Director General) Genta Hawkins saying, "Thank you, you're TIC'ed out, goodbye" and then I got a telephone call from (Undersecretary for Management) Dick Moose saying, "How would you like to be ambassador to Sudan?" I said to Dick, "Dick, that wouldn't be my first choice." I said I'd talk with Vicki and get back to him in the next day. I hung up and my secretary, Sue Shay, had been listening on the telephone and came in and said, "Hmm, all beach, no ocean." Great.

*Q: You accepted this.*

CARNEY: Yes. As Robin said to me, "You know, you're out if you don't do this. I'm not going to quibble about it at all." Gib Lanpher replaced me.

*Q: So you were in the Sudan from when to when?*

CARNEY: I started reading in in January of '95. I had my confirmation hearing in late May. I arrived at post in mid-August and presented credentials September 11, 1995.

*Q: When did you leave?*

CARNEY: On February 7, 1996, the entire diplomatic and administrative and technical staff of the mission was withdrawn. We wound up living in Nairobi at a much reduced level of staff with one consular officer resident in Cairo. We commuted monthly to Khartoum ostensibly because it was not safe to be resident in Khartoum.

*Q: When did this all end?*

CARNEY: For me it ended November 30, 1997, when I left Khartoum to come back and read in in detail and go on to Haiti.

*Q: Okay. Let's talk about the Sudan. What was the situation in '95?*

CARNEY: The situation was bad. As David Shinn, who was then Director for East African Affairs said, there was some doubt that there would even be a U.S. embassy resident in Khartoum. There was doubt on three accounts. The first was, my predecessor had apparently been recommending that we reconsider having an embassy there. The second is that we were about to refuse *agrement* for the man whom Khartoum had designated as ambassador to Washington. The third was, there was an increasing surveillance of embassy American staff by non-Sudanese and some by Sudanese themselves in Khartoum itself, as well as a heightened rhetoric against the United States allegedly seen as arming the (rebel) SPLA, seeking an overthrow of the authorities in Khartoum, and otherwise plotting against the Sudan as shown by the various trials related to events in New York City.

This resulted from the reality that a coup d'état in 1989 had overthrown the elected leader, a modern figure, but from a traditional political movement, Sadiq El-Mahdi, whose millenarian great grandfather had defeated Chinese Gordon, Governor General of the Sudan in 1885. The people who took over were essentially political Islamists with allegiance to the National Islamic Front whose intellectual figure was, and to a degree, remains to this day, Hassan Abdullah Turabi. The coup itself was run by a major general - at the time, he might even have been a brigadier general - Omar Bashir, who is to this day president of the Sudan. The U.S. opposed the coup, as we do with such events against elected leaders anywhere.

The political Islamists thought political Islam was on a roll around the world and began disrespecting American interests, notably by inviting terrorism financier Osama Bin Laden to take up residence, which he did in '93; by becoming a locus of something called the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference PAIC), that held an activist Islamist venting session annually, and by expanding relations with Middle Eastern terrorist groups. The new authorities were also prosecuting vigorously the civil war against the south, whose grievances had long been regarded as legitimate by Americans among others, and violating human rights in Khartoum as well. It was not a happy time in relations.

*Q: Did you go with your wife?*

CARNEY: I did. I told Dick Moose that I would not go without my wife. In fact, my predecessor had figured out that previous withdrawals of non-essentials and dependents were based on information of no real substance. He had gotten Washington to change the no dependents rule in late '94/early '95.

*Q: Was there any problem in getting confirmed?*

CARNEY: Absolutely not.

*Q: So, if you want to go there...*

CARNEY: You can go. Nancy Kassebaum was the only person on the Committee (when a number of us going to Africa went for confirmation hearings).

*Q: What were they telling you on the desk before you went out there?*

CARNEY: Well, I pretty much repeated... I was reading in, so I was seeing the cables as well as listening to David Shinn and Joe Fishbein, the Sudan desk officer. You had a huge humanitarian relief effort underway. The Sudanese government and the main rebel faction had signed an agreement which permitted the United Nations to create an Operation Lifeline Sudan. That operation was flying food and medical relief into an enormous number of destinations in the south except when they would be denied. You had the International Committee of the Red Cross active in both Khartoum and in the south with a several hundred bed hospital at the UN operations base and airstrip in northwestern Kenya at Lokichokio. You had an alphabet soup of NGOs there, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Norwegian People's Aid, the latter was not part of OLS, and is widely regarded as helping smuggle arms to the SPLA. Very complicated.

In the period I was ambassador you saw the resurrection of two issues. One was slavery and the other was religious persecution, both attributed to the intolerance or the active prosecution by the government of Sudan.

*Q: How were you welcomed when you arrived?*

CARNEY: By Lufthansa late at night. We had come from Brussels, where we had stayed with friends, and had picked up probably salmonella poisoning. Very hot summer and there was a very good coq au vin. My wife had a worse case of it than I did. Basically we got into Khartoum and the Chief of Protocol was at the plane to welcome us, the DCM or chargé d'affaires in fact, a couple of staff as well. We went over to the residence, quite a nice residence. A glass of champagne with everybody. Tumbled into bed and went into the office the next day where my wife duly visited the nurse practitioner who is still there, a Scotswoman married to a Sudanese.

*Q: How did you find you dealt with the government, with Bashir?*

CARNEY: When I presented credentials September 11, we did the ceremony not in the presidential palace which had leaked due to a heavy rainstorm, but in a different, modern building. He invited me to sit down and we talked a little bit about some of the issues, including a UN C-130 that had been denied flight clearance by the Sudanese authorities. I suggested that he revisit that issue. I noted US concern with "foreign guests," implying the terrorist groups. He suggested I travel all around Sudan. I promised to keep the Foreign Minister busy with requests to do so.

I got hold of the public affairs officer who was the only real serious Arabist at post; she spoke great Arabic. We began an immediate effort to know the Sudanese press, had them all over to the residence for an evening, including Sudan TV with a camera crew that arrived. Started under, at

her suggestion, small meetings with intellectuals in the National Islamic Front, and was basically in a mode to listen, which these people found refreshing.

I think also they had begun to figure out that political Islam really wasn't on a worldwide roll, and that Sudan had to be more responsible to take its place in the international community. This had been particularly driven home to them because on June 26, not quite two months before I arrived, the Sudanese had been exposed as having been accomplices before and after the fact of the attempted assassination of (Egyptian President) Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, where he had gone for an OAU summit. The hit failed, and three suspects fled back to Sudan and they were traced in flight. They had clearly benefited from serious support by the External Security Bureau of the Sudanese government.

*Q: Was this security bureau acting independently?*

CARNEY: They were not acting independently of Turabi and the party, but it isn't clear to me that Bashir at his level was witting of the extent of support and of the details of the operation. He fired the head of the External Security Bureau and was very short with Turabi. Turabi suggested at one point that Bashir come over and discuss it. Bashir said, "I'm the president. You'll come over and see me." There was a little testiness in their relationship, a testiness that ultimately three years later resulted in Turabi's eclipse politically, and then his being put in prison three more months later.

*Q: What were we trying to do regarding these various terrorist groups which had set up their nests within the Sudan?*

CARNEY: The answer changes over time. In 1995 to start out with, we were trying to get the Sudanese government to monitor the groups that we thought were surveilling our people and bring that surveillance to a halt. That was the first thing we were trying to do. There were several demarches made to that effect.

*Q: Our concern being what?*

CARNEY: Personal security, fear that there would be some sort of terrorist operation against our people. We were also trying to get the Sudanese government to recognize that it was not acceptable to support international terrorism, that terror was not an acceptable way to go about changing things. I think the Sudanese had accepted that by May of 1996 when they asked Osama Bin Laden to leave at our behest. This is a very complicated aspect of the relationship.

*Q: Osama Bin Laden at that point, how did we view him?*

CARNEY: We viewed him as an important terrorism financier resident in Sudan, that's all.

*Q: This was before the bombings of our embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi.*

CARNEY: That (bombing) was '98. Khobar Towers and what have you were in '96. Bin Laden was not implicated in any specific acts of terror or murder except against the Soviets in Afghanistan, where he earned his reputation.

*Q: There was this massive relief effort in the Sudan for the non-Muslim south. What was in it for the Muslim north to let this go on?*

CARNEY: Well, there were millions of (displaced) southerners in the north who were getting relief as well. Clearly, the government then didn't have to provide relief for its own people. That was one. The other thing is that because the government gave the okay on flight destinations, it could to a degree control where that relief went. If there had been no agreement, Katie, bar the door. Anybody could have flown anything in that the Kenyans permitted.

*Q: And the Sudanese didn't have the capability of stopping these flights.*

CARNEY: No. Their air force was minuscule. Since '95, they have acquired helicopter gunships, but no air defense aircraft to the best of my knowledge.

*Q: What was the role of oil there?*

CARNEY: None at that point. The area from whence oil was being pumped - and that pumping began in '98 - had been proved by Chevron before it left Sudan about 1983. That concession had been acquired by a Vancouver, Canada company named after Frank Herbert's favorite planet, Arakis, in his novel "Dune." That company sold out to Talisman, which is itself in the process of trying to sell to the Indians. The exploitation area in the south is an area peopled by the Nuer tribe just south of the political dividing line between north and south Sudan. Since '98, you've been pumping about between 200,000 and 350,000 barrels of oil a day. It's worth about half a billion dollars to the Sudanese government. The Chinese take all the oil that is not actually refined in Sudan for the Sudan's own needs. The Chinese have 40% of the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company.

*Q: But when you were there, they hadn't come on line.*

CARNEY: No, but it was being formed. Occidental was looking into moving there. One of the NSC people basically leaked all the details of that to the "Washington Post," where it duly appeared and helped scare Occidental off.

*Q: The Sudan at one point was a great grain source. How stood Sudan economically?*

CARNEY: Sudan is in an interesting situation. It's a million square miles in surface area. It's the biggest country in Africa. It has 29-30 million people. The Nile forms at Khartoum itself. The two main sources are the Blue Nile and the White Nile, the Blue Nile from Ethiopia and the White Nile from Uganda. Another major tributary from Ethiopia, is the Atbara. You have an enormous potential for grain. Some of that potential is realized in an area known as the Gezira, that is between the Blue and White Nile rivers. The British created a gravity flow irrigation system there which grows cotton and sorghum.

Sudan could do a lot more with the water. There is a sugar enterprise established on the White Nile about 200 kilometers south of Khartoum which is known as Kenana. In the last growing season, they produced 400,000 tons of cane sugar. I was down there in January (2003).

*Q: Was there any feeling that Sudan should concentrate on developing its wealth?*

CARNEY: No, the entire discussion on Sudan was overwhelmed by political Islam, by the terrorism question, by the civil war, and by human rights questions.

*Q: Human rights was completely concerned with the south or was that...*

CARNEY: No, by no means. There were a range of human rights concerns. You had suppression of political rights in the north including abduction into ghost houses, beatings, and interrogations there. You had an element of the sort of fundamentalist approach that's more common in Saudi Arabia where the relatively high position of women was seemingly being put at risk. That never really materialized. You had the issue of abductions of African tribes by Arab nomads known as "slavery" tolerated by the government. You had the question of intolerance towards Christians which took the form in the Khartoum area of the refusal to permit more churches to be built but not actual closing or prohibition of church going; and then a strong effort to create rice or millet Christians among the refugees from the south. Of course, there was no possibility to change the government peacefully. The coup government was in charge. Major set of human rights concerns, all of them in the context of a welcome to this alphabet soup of Middle Eastern terrorist groups.

Action against U.S. interests: Support of Iraq, for example, during the Gulf War. And then our own bad intelligence. In late January of 1996, the CIA formally withdrew 140 reports that had been filed in '93 or thereabouts that had been the basis for reducing staff and withdrawing dependents. The source was deemed a fabricator and embellisher. A second source in late 1995 argued a plot by Sudanese authorities against Tony Lake's life (in the first Clinton administration he was Advisor to the President for National Security Affairs). That source was dropped, ultimately deemed... It was a very complicated situation. When the Sudanese in March of 1996 began to respond to U.S. concerns on the terrorism front, it was not taken seriously in Washington for a couple of reasons that did not become clear for years and years.

*Q: What were the reasons?*

CARNEY: The first one was, the track record was so bad you had to be skeptical whether Khartoum was serious. But in fact, they booted Bin Laden out in May of '96. In late June of '96, they let someone come out from Washington to photograph two (military) training camps that we asked to visit. I was on that trip, so I know it happened. Then in early '97, there was a letter from (President) Bashir to President Clinton and from Foreign Minister Taha to new Secretary of State Albright inviting U.S. counterterrorism teams to come and discuss American concerns with Sudanese officials, none of which were ever seriously responded to. Strobe Talbott ultimately responded as Acting Secretary 2 or 3 months later.

*Q: You were ambassador then?*

CARNEY: Yes.

*Q: What were you getting from Washington? Why weren't they responding?*

CARNEY: The NSC was hard over. Dick Clarke and Susan Rice.

*Q: There wasn't any feeling that there was some give there?*

CARNEY: No willingness to test the Sudanese to see if they were serious. I believe that this was ultimately explained because Ms. Rice and her collaborators genuinely believed the Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Ugandans were going to give enough support to the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army to cause enough victories by the SPLA to collapse the regime in Khartoum. That was never stated policy. Stated U.S. policy was always to get Khartoum to change what it did, NOT to see a change of regime in Khartoum. But in fact, that second agenda seems to have been there. That agenda finally failed when Eritrea and Ethiopia went to war in '98.

*Q: This was a war that killed a lot of people over nothing.*

CARNEY: Exactly. Basically Uganda and Ethiopia in particular were very active and in direct support of major SPLA military efforts beginning about March of '97. Those efforts succeeded in taking some important garrison towns in the south but didn't go as far as Juba, which is essentially the capital of the south. It is to this day in government hands.

*Q: Did you and Washington view this civil war... Did you see a split there that maybe eventually it would become a nation? It seems hard to think that a non-Muslim south and a racially different south was going to take over the north of Sudan.*

CARNEY: That was never going to happen. Anyone who would have thought that would simply not have understood what Sudan's all about. The most that would have happened was, the north would have let the south go, secede. That is a possibility today in the peace negotiations that are going on in Kenya.

*Q: Were we thinking in those terms?*

CARNEY: We were not. U.S. policy has always been, if Sudan can preserve its integrity, so much the better. Creating yet another landlocked state in central Africa doesn't make any sense unless there's no other way.

*Q: Were the Egyptians playing any role?*

CARNEY: Of course. They must. The Nile is so utterly vital to Egypt that Egypt is paralyzed around the question of the Sudan with, too often, Egyptian hopes and fears outriding their analyses.

*Q: What were their relations with the Egyptian ambassador?*

CARNEY: There wasn't one. Their relations were so bad that they did not have ambassadors in each other's countries. The chargé d'affaires was a nice young man but he wasn't important. It was the Egyptian intelligence people on the scene who were the important ones. I would go to Cairo when I was in my offshore phase regularly, as I did to Asmara and Addis Ababa and Kampala and talk with the principals about Sudan: to the head of Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleiman; to (President) Isaias Afwerki in Eritrea; and (President) Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia; and to Yoweri Museveni in Kenya; and of course to Daniel Arap Moi once or twice in Nairobi.

*Q: You mentioned you went to a training camp. What was that all about?*

CARNEY: Washington had questions about two particular camps. The assertion was that not only were these alphabet soup terrorist groups doing R&R in Sudan, but they were also engaged in actual military training. The one camp we went to was the military academy. It was the wrong season. The camp was empty. It's the cool season that the cadets are there. But there were some facilities of interest and they were duly photographed. The next camp we went to had people in training, but they were put to us as being members of the militia, something the National Islamic Front created when they came to power, sort of a popular militia, paramilitary types who backed up the military in fighting in the south. To the extent I could judge - and I do not speak Arabic - they were indeed Sudanese. They certainly didn't look like Arabs from other countries in the Middle East, as dark as Sudanese tend to be. They were field-stripping AK-47s and otherwise engaging in that kind of training.

*Q: What about your relations with non-governmental organizations?*

CARNEY: There were more of them there than there were terrorist groups. Basically we had an AID office there programmed for humanitarian affairs. They were the principal contact with the U.S. NGOs anyway. Naturally I would have them over to the residence whenever I could and would brief them. Every time I commuted in, there would be a morning briefing for the NGOs. Good relationship. I would see their opposite numbers in Nairobi and I would go into the south to look at their operations in the south as well, telling Khartoum that I was ambassador to all of the Sudan and hence I would be going into the south, too.

*Q: How about this? What were you finding in the south? Was there a government there?*

CARNEY: Not really. It was essentially a military government. The SPLA has a political movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement that was created in response to just these questions and criticisms that they don't really have a government, that it's a military government. I'll be there the end of next month, so I'll be able to tell you whether there's one there yet or not.

*Q: Was this a unified movement or was this just an endemic thing that had been going on...*

CARNEY: The rebellion started in 1955. The first phase ended in 1973 with a 10 year hiatus and then it resumed due to some political clumsiness and bad faith on the part of the then dictator of Sudan, Jaffar Nimieri. The movement that helped resurrect the civil war in 1983 became the



SPLA. It's essentially a movement of the Dinka ethnic majority, but has greatly broadened over the past 20 years. They have had considerable difficulty bringing other ethnic groups along with them, a problem of the south, and that is one of the realities of Sudan today.

*Q: When you went down there, what were you saying? "Can't you all learn to live in peace with each other?"*

CARNEY: No. I was saying to the southerners, "If you're going to fight a rebellion against the north to have your grievances, that are legitimate, redressed, it is not effective if you're so disunited. It seems to me that as the largest of the movements, the SPLA has the responsibility to make the compromises that would effect unity." That was my position with the southerners, with the Dinka. (SPLA/M leader John) Garang and I further talked about that in May of 2001. I had a chat with him in Nairobi.

*Q: While you were in Khartoum, what was the embassy doing?*

CARNEY: Let's take the period after February of '96 when we were offshore. The Secretary's instruction was that the embassy stay open with flag up every day and the FSN staff at work. Periodically one of the American members would commute in and stay a week or 10 days. We never were permitted to stagger it in such a way that there was always an American present but at least half the month there was an American present. This was a hell of a way to run a railroad. The AID office director was an American woman married to a Sudanese. She stayed until the cruise missile attack of August of '98 and then she was withdrawn to Kenya, but she's back now. It was very difficult. There is a requirement annually for the chief of mission to certify the adequacy of management controls. I signed it the first year, June of '96. In '97, I refused to sign it. I sent a cable in saying, "I will not sign any such undertaking because I do not believe we have effective management controls in the circumstances."

*Q: Let's talk about this rather peculiar thing of moving out but coming back in. It doesn't seem to make much sense.*

CARNEY: The precedent was what the Secretary's office drew on to fight off the importunities of (CIA Director) John Deutch and (Secretary of Defense) Bill Perry, who wanted the whole mission closed - Perry because he'd have to evacuate it, and Deutch because the CIA station had fled in mid-December already, and the fact that nothing had happened was putting their position increasingly in an impossible situation. The precedent was found in Lebanon when the mission was drawn offshore to Cyprus.

*Q: It sounds like the station, the CIA presence, in the Sudan had been crying wolf and nothing had happened.*

CARNEY: That is basically it, yes.

*Q: And Perry being there as Secretary of Defense-*

CARNEY: Was worried about having to devote assets and fly them more than 1,000 miles to effect an evacuation.

*Q: That's a long way to get people out of there if you're going to do it.*

CARNEY: He was relying on Deutch, his former deputy, to advise him on the politics of Sudan, not willing to trust the State Department's view.

*Q: When you got these orders, did you try to turn them around?*

CARNEY: We had worked against them since November of '95, including a trip back to Washington to talk to Dick Moose and his people, and then to meet in the situation room at the White House on the issue.

*Q: Did you feel that State gave in on this?*

CARNEY: Yes.

*Q: Why?*

CARNEY: Because (Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs) George Moose had no stomach for a fight. Dick Moose was only concerned about protecting Americans, and nobody else was willing to take Deutch on. Deutch changed his mind when I chatted with him in Nairobi in April or May of 1996, and then again in Washington in June of '96.

*Q: It does seem like sort of a write-off of the Sudan.*

CARNEY: Yes, it did. It struck me as not in the interests of the United States. I made the point repeatedly.

*Q: You kept up with this until when?*

CARNEY: I was in Khartoum for three weeks last month.

*Q: But I'm talking about as ambassador.*

CARNEY: Until November 30, 1997.

*Q: Were you replaced by somebody?*

CARNEY: No, I'm the last accredited U.S. ambassador to Sudan.

*Q: Looking at this, you keep going back there. Have things changed? How do you feel about this?*

CARNEY: Things have changed. That's what is interesting about it.

Q: Has it gotten more dangerous?

CARNEY: Far from it. What happened, and again this is partly speculative, once it became clear that the regional allies could not be counted on to cause the collapse of the government in Khartoum, the Clinton administration changed policies. In May of 2000 the Clinton Administration sent an FBI-CIA counterterrorism team with a 6 point agenda to deal with the Sudanese authorities on U.S. concerns about terrorism. When I visited in January of 2001, just before the inauguration, I spoke with the head of the External Security Bureau and his deputy. I was retired at this point for more than a year. They said they thought they had satisfied all 6 of the American concerns. The Bush Administration apparently agreed because in May of 2001, they asked Chester Crocker to be special envoy to the President for Sudan. Crocker turned it down. The Administration several months later turned to Senator John Danforth, who accepted and was rolled out in a Rose Garden ceremony on September 3, 2001. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> caused some to think that Sudan should be a target, but Colin Powell by the end of October publicly said Sudan had satisfied U.S. concerns on terrorism issues.

Senator Danforth began his work and in January of 2002 succeeded in getting the two main protagonists in the fighting, the government and the SPLA, to satisfy his 4 conditions to show willingness to have the U.S. help mediate a solution. In July of 2002, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the government and the SPLA signed a memorandum of understanding at Machakos, Kenya agreeing on the two most contentious issues dividing them. One was the question of the extension of Islamic law which was to be a subject of local/provincial referendum. The other was a timetable after which the south would have a referendum to see if it wanted to stay united or to secede: Six and a half years. After that, beginning in August, when I happened to be in Khartoum on a separate trip, they began the peace talks to operationalize that memorandum of understanding and continue with the next session set for the end of March, along with an interim session on a different track set for the 4<sup>th</sup> of March to discuss the fate of three areas that are formally part of the north of Sudan that want to be part of the south.

*Q: When you came back, what did you do?*

CARNEY: I was a little surprised because I had gone for my confirmation hearing in October for ambassador to Haiti. The Senate approved on November 16<sup>th</sup>. I said "Goodbye" and then went from Khartoum to Washington to start reading in on Haiti.

*End of Reader*