

# Sudan Sets Development Course, Despite Anglo-American Sabotage

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

*The author and Uwe Friesecke of EIR, recently returned from a visit to Sudan and Egypt, where they had extensive discussions with persons involved in economic planning.*

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, and has the potential, in cooperation with Egypt, to become the breadbasket, not only for the entire African continent, but for large parts of Asia as well. It is a political fact that, if Sudan were simply left alone, it could take the necessary steps to bring this about. Instead, the country has been subjected to harassment, sabotage, and destabilization, from British political circles, and their Washington partners, in a concerted effort to prevent this development potential from being realized.

It is the stated policy goal of the Anglo-Americans, going as far back, for example, as the notorious 1974 National Security Study Memorandum 200, authored by Henry Kissinger, that such leading countries in the developing sector are not to be allowed to progress economically and socially. Instead, Africa is slated for extinction, through the combination of wars, famine, drought, and pandemic diseases; Anglo-American policy is to let the populations die, and to prop up local warlords, who will oversee the export of the continent's rich raw materials and minerals.

Thus, the continuing conflicts in the Great Lakes region, in Angola, Sierra Leone, southern Sudan; thus, the devastating "natural disasters," caused in reality by lack of infrastructure, such as the floods in Mozambique early this year and the drought in Ethiopia this year; thus, the species-threatening HIV/AIDS pandemic sweeping southern Africa, literally annihilating entire national populations.

Yet, the fight for development has not been abandoned. On the contrary, certain political forces are redoubling their efforts to beat back the new imperialist onslaught, to establish peace where there is war, and to embark on an ambitious course of economic development.

Sudan is a case in point.

## National Reconciliation

The single most destructive process undermining Sudan, is the war which has been raging in the south, since 1983. The insurgent Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), under warlord John Garang, has accelerated its military offensive in recent months, despite repeated offers by the government

of negotiations, following a cease-fire. Garang has been able to increase his military pressure, not only in the south, but also in the east, thanks to continuing logistical, financial, and political support from Anglo-American and Israeli forces. Humanitarian aid organizations, most notoriously the Norwegian People's Aid, have been involved in ferreting military supplies and food, to the insurgents. The cost of the war is generally calculated as \$1 million per day for the government, but the human cost is much higher and unredeemable.

The government's primary concern, therefore, has been to end the war. The government signed a peace agreement with several rebel groups in 1996, and, in 1997, six of the seven southern rebel groups joined the treaty. Subsequently, the government drafted a constitution, which included the 1997 peace agreement, calling for a referendum in the south, on unity or independence.

Garang has rejected these moves. He has also consistently refused to participate in peace talks, convened under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Development (IGAD), which includes the states bordering on Sudan, as well as "friends" of the IGAD, from Europe and the United States. These latter, in particular, the Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States, have sabotaged any progress toward peace. One major act of sabotage, involved the resignation of Riek Machar, a former southern rebel leader, who had joined the government and chaired the Southern Sudan Coordinating Council. It is rumored that external pressures were also brought to bear to effect this unfortunate development.

The latest initiative, launched by Egypt and Libya in 1999, has aimed at piecing together a peace agreement with the political parties in the opposition umbrella group, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). This group included the Umma Party of Sadiq al Mahdi, the Democratic Unionist Party of Othman Mirghani, the Communist Party, and others, as well as the political wing of the SPLA. In mid-March 2000, Sadiq al Mahdi left the NDA, and entered into talks with the government, which wants to encourage the opposition parties to return to Sudan from abroad, and participate in the political process. One wing of the DUP had done so, earlier. Now, all the parties have been invited to join.

The form this is taking at the moment, is a conference for national reconciliation. Chaired by Marshal Abdel-Rahman



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Suaraddahab, the steering committee of the Preparatory Dialogue Forum was convened on July 28, in Khartoum, to set the stage for a national reconciliation conference, to be held in August. If the process of national reconciliation is successful, a coalition government could emerge, which would provide a broader popular mandate for peace. Otherwise, elections for a new National Assembly and the President, would be held in the autumn.

Most significant is the fact that the initiative is backed by Libya and Egypt, which latter had been the base for the political opposition parties in exile. Egypt's relations with Sudan had been broken in 1995, following the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, which was blamed (wrongly) on the Sudanese. Relations were repaired only after investigations cleared Sudan of any responsibility. Now, full diplomatic relations are to be restored, crowned by a summit meeting of the two Presidents.

Egypt reinforced its support for the national dialogue idea, last December, following an internal reshuffling in the Sudanese political leadership. Differences in approach, mainly personal, had led to a situation of "dual leadership," between President Omar al-Bashir and Dr. Hassan al-Turabi, then head of the main political party, the National Congress, as well as speaker of the parliament. When tensions threatened to paralyze the governing process, Bashir issued a decree, dissolving the parliament, and reestablishing his political leadership. The move was welcomed by the leading political figures

in Sudan, including those closely associated with Turabi, and was applauded by Egyptian authorities, who expressed immediate support for Bashir. Egypt followed up, by mediating or facilitating Sudan's rapprochement with other states in the region, and, reportedly, also intervened in Washington, in an attempt to blunt the aggressive stance of the State Department. The visit of special envoy Harry Johnston to Sudan in mid-May 2000, was one indication that the Clinton Administration might be willing to reestablish contact. When Johnston was in Sudan, he was confronted with the fact of the Egyptian-Libyan initiative, and was challenged to either support it, or, at least not sabotage it.

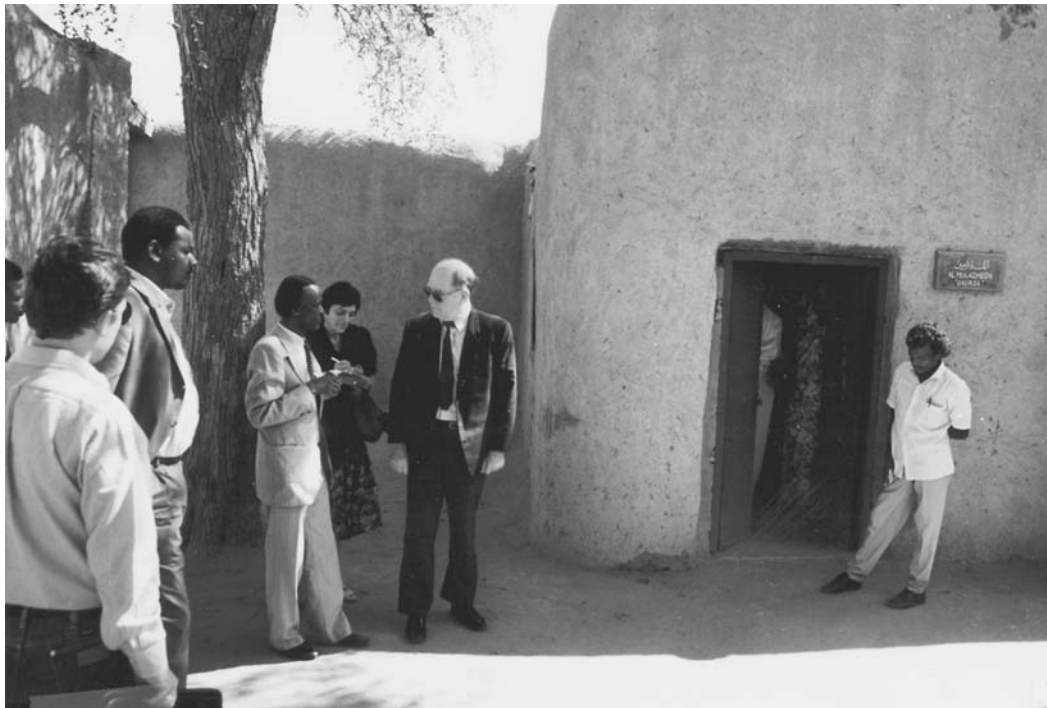
### **Oil for Development**

If Sudan is allowed to pursue national reconciliation, with the active support of Egypt and Libya, the basis can be laid for ending the war in the south, and turning to the happy task of economic development. Here, the recent opening of an oil refinery 70 kilometers north of the capital, has greatly enhanced the country's perspectives for development. The Khartoum Refinery, which *EIR* visited on Aug. 2, is a joint venture between the China National Petroleum Corp. and the Ministry of Energy and Mining (MEM) of Sudan. The agreement for the project was signed on March 1, 1997, construction began May 26, 1998, and the plant started production on May 16, 2000. The refinery's crude processing capacity is 2.5 million tons per year, with an annual output of 2.258 million tons of oil products, including gasoline, diesel, kerosene, fuel oil, and liquefied gas. The refinery was designed and constructed by the Chinese, according to Chinese standards and advanced process technology.

With the refinery, Sudan can cover its domestic consumption, and then export. In addition, the plant has a power station, which provides energy to operate the refinery, and to supply the National Electricity Corp. with power. As for the financial arrangements, China receives 20% of revenues, plus 40%, to pay off the initial investment. Once it has been paid off, Sudan will receive 80%.

On Aug. 4, Sudan began exporting surplus gas. As the Secretary General of the MEM, Engineer Hassan Mohamed Ali Eltom announced to the press, the first ship carrying 2,600 tons of gas, left Port Sudan for international markets. On June 5, it had started exporting benzene, and is continuing at the rate of 40,000 tons per month.

Such new export revenues will be added to Sudan's reve-



*Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. (center) with Sudanese officials during a December 1994 visit to Sudan. EIR's Muriel Mirak-Weissbach is standing behind LaRouche. Despite the assault against Sudan by the Anglo-American financier oligarchy, the national fight for development and reconciliation has not been abandoned.*

nues for crude oil, which it has been shipping abroad via its pipeline to Port Sudan, also built with the cooperation of the Chinese, and the Malaysians. The new revenues will make up 23% of the national budget this year, and will be allocated for investments in key sectors of the economy: irrigation for agriculture, which is the leading sector; education; basic health care; energy, communications, and transportation; and social programs, through the High Committee on Poverty Reduction, which has been established.

Agriculture is Sudan's priority sector in the economy, and it accounts for 50% of GDP. The country is self-sufficient in food, although food distribution problems are severe in areas affected by the war. Due to severe droughts in 1974, 1983, and again in 1989-90, agriculture had been hit, and exports had dropped from a high of \$600 million to half that much. Now, they are back up to \$600 million, and are expected to increase, as investments are intensified. Planned investments include allocations for rehabilitation of the Nile, dredging canals of silt, and financing for farmers, to increase the area under irrigation. Furthermore, plans exist to expand the area under cultivation of the vast country. Of the estimated 200 million feddayns (a feddayn is roughly an acre) of arable land, about 35-40 million are cultivated, either in the irrigated fields of the Gezira Scheme, the fertile lands along the Nile, rain-fed areas, or the fully mechanized farms. Sudan also has over 100 million head of livestock, bred and raised in the traditional manner; meat was the country's second most important export last year, after oil.

Oil, whose revenues will finance agricultural expansion, has thus become a strategic asset for Sudan. It is no wonder

that the rebel SPLA has attacked the pipeline, bombing it several times, to sabotage oil exports. At the beginning of the war, Garang's forces killed French Chevron workers, which halted work. Work on the Jonglei Canal, a major water management project in the south, whose completion would vastly increase agricultural productivity, was also halted due to the war, years ago. It is to be assumed that the SPLA would like to target the new refinery as well.

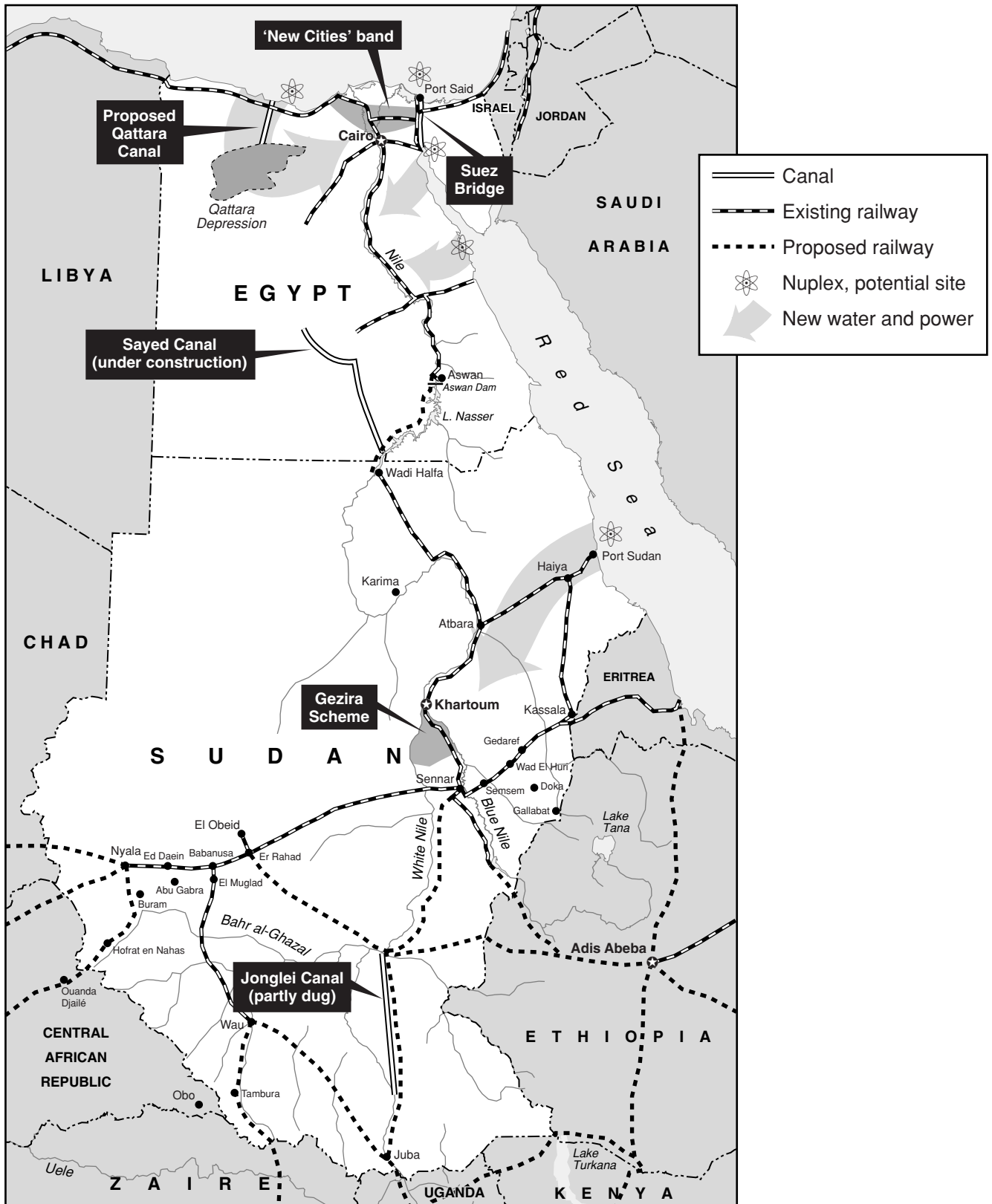
### **Africa and the New Silk Road**

The other sector which is vital to improving the economic picture, is transportation, especially rail. In December 1998, Sudan decided to operate its railroads commercially, through partial privatization. The construction, upgrading, modernization, and development of infrastructure (including permanent routes, stations, signals, and telecommunications) was to remain under government responsibility, while operations, including hiring rail cars and rolling stock, were to be in private hands. An experimental stretch of track between El Obeid and Rahad has been operating on this basis for the last year.

Sudan has one of the few national railway networks in Africa, but there is room for massive expansion inside the country, as well as to neighboring countries (see **Figure 1**). The Sudan Railways Corp. is one of the longest on the continent, operating a 5,898 km single line of 1.067 meter gauge. The main route extends from Port Sudan, via Atbara to Khartoum, flanked by an alternate route from Haiya and Sennar via Kassala. There are branch lines north to Karima and Wadi Halfa. The network has suffered considerably, as a result of

FIGURE 1

**Egypt and Sudan: Selected Infrastructure Projects, Present and Proposed by EIR, 1997**



the U.S. sanctions imposed in 1997, which have blocked urgently needed spare parts. At least \$1 million has already been paid for the spare parts, which are American, but delivery has been politically blocked. Some 90% of Sudan's fleet is American, produced by General Electric, General Motors, and others.

The most recent extensions include new lines built for petroleum transportation, between El Muglad and Abu Gabra (52 km), and between the refinery in Abu Khiraiz and El Obeid station (19 km), completed in 1995 and 1996, respectively.

Now under discussion are plans to extend Sudan's railway westward, into Chad and the Central African Republic, as well as eastward, into Ethiopia. Considering that Central Africa is served by roads only, with no railroad, there are several options for points of connection. Those proposed by the railway authority, are the following: a) from Ed Daein through Buram and Hofrat en Nehas (360 km) to Ouanda Djailé in the Central African Republic (90 km); b) from Wau through Tambura and on the southeast border to Obo in the C.A.R., for a total length of 270 km; c) from Nyala to the adjacent borders between Sudan/Chad and the C.A.R., with a total length of 300 km. This plan also contemplates rehabilitation of existing lines. The total cost of extension a) plus the rehabilitation of Babanusa-Ed Daein, would be \$155 million, and if the line from Babanusa through to Nyala were rehabilitated, it would amount to \$220 million; the cost of b) plus rehabilitation of Babanusa-Wau, would be \$160 million; and the cost for c) plus rehabilitation of Balbanousa-Nyala, would be \$145 million.

In a study of extension into Ethiopia, the Sudan Railways Corp. identified three possible routes: a) El Huri-Semsem-Semsem Center-Ba Sonda-Gallabat; b) Wadi El Huri-Semsem-Doka-Gallabat; and c) Gedaref-Doka-Gallabat, each of which would cost \$30-40 million. Although the cost factor is significant, the investment would rapidly pay for itself, in terms of vastly upgraded productivity of the economy of the entire region.

Finally, there is the possible connection to Egypt, through the construction of a link in Egypt, from Wadi Halfa in Sudan, to Aswan. This connection would be complicated, due to the fact that the two countries have different gauges, but not impossible, as a transitional arrangement.

The extension of Sudan's railways into these areas, would revolutionize economic and trade relations not only for Sudan, but potentially for the entire continent. The Central African Republic and Chad, which are now dependent for transport on Nigeria and Cameroon, would have access to Port Sudan. The lines to Ethiopia, hopefully extended to Adis Abeba, would link Sudan to east Africa. Most important, completing the missing link between Wadi Halfa and Aswan, would make it possible for Sudan, and potentially all of Africa, to be linked to the Eurasian Land-Bridge, or New Silk Road. In Egypt, as *EIR* has reported, intensive study has been

conducted by the Center for Asian Studies of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, of the University of Cairo, on the perspective of extending the Eurasian Land-Bridge into the Persian Gulf region, and into Africa, via Egypt (see "Egypt and the New Silk Road," *EIR*, Aug. 4, 2000; and "Egypt Seminar Takes Up LaRouche, Silk Road," *EIR*, May 26, 2000).

The studies conducted by the Cairo group, were presented in a seminar in Port Said last April, generating considerable interest inside the country and abroad. In early August, the news was released, that the Orient Express, connecting the Arab countries, is being built. A crucial part of it, a bridge over the Suez Canal, has been completed. On Aug. 6, the French-language Egyptian paper, *Progrès Dimanche*, wrote, "The Sinai will be witness, at the beginning of next year, to the running of the first train to cross the Suez Canal by over the Ferdane bridge." This, the "first mobile metallic bridge in the world," is almost ready for inauguration. The train "will connect Africa to Asia, on the one hand, and the Sinai with the rest of the country, on the other."

The paper continues: "This project will confirm Egypt's pioneering role in the return of the 'Orient Express' which is to reconnect the western and eastern wings of the Arab world, and probably, in the future, ensure a link with the rest of the Near East and Europe, if Israel does not persist in rejecting cooperation with the Arabs to find a solution to the Palestinian problem."

In fact, the train should be a function of peace: "It is foreseen that the Orient Express will start in Egypt and go to the Palestinian territories, and later, in the event of peace with Israel, through Israel to Lebanon and Syria. This train should reach, in the future, eastern and western Europe." Egypt has already signed a peace treaty with Israel, and is trying to push through a Palestinian-Israeli agreement.

Transport Minister Dr. Ibrahim El-Domieri stated that the Ferdane bridge and the rail line from Ismailia, toward Rafah (on the border with Palestinian Gaza), "will constitute the core of the return of the Orient Express in the Arab countries." In fact, talks are ongoing with all the Arab countries, to see to what extent each will contribute to the project. In Egypt, engineer Mohamad Maher Mouzstapha, president of the Railway Authority, declared that the construction of the Ismailia-Rafah link (225 km, with 14 stations), is about to start, in the context of a national project for the development of the Sinai peninsula. The Ferdane bridge, over the Suez Canal, is 640 meters long. The new rail line is to greatly enhance Egypt's revenues, through cheaper, faster cargo transport.

Considering recent developments leading to the reestablishment of full diplomatic relations between Egypt and Sudan, and the commitment of the Egyptian government to promote peace, through its joint initiative with Libya, there is good reason to be optimistic, that such infrastructure projects can be realized, and lay the basis for the long-overdue industrialization of the African continent.