



**THE RETURN  
OF THE  
"UGLY AMERICAN"**

**ERIC REEVES  
AND SUDAN**

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**November 2000**

**WORKING FOR PEACE IN SUDAN**

# THE RETURN OF THE ‘UGLY AMERICAN’:

## ERIC REEVES AND SUDAN

The US is committed to overthrowing the government in Khartoum. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States...Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the US government has basically promoted a continuation of the war.

**Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter**<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. is...fully and vigorously committed to the [Sudanese] peace process

**Dr Eric Reeves**<sup>2</sup>

### Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>What is Dr Reeves’ Thesis?</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves’ Credibility as a Commentator</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Sources</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and the Sudan Oil Project</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Claims about Oil Revenues the War</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>The Displacement of Civilians Within the Oil Region</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves Versus the World: A Case of Ugly American Syndrome?</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Dr Reeves and “Genocide”</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Humanitarian Aid</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Selectivity</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Sudan’s “radical Islamic regime”</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Dr Reeves and Government “Slavery” in Sudan</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and Peace in Sudan</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Dr Reeves and Human Rights</b>	<b>13</b>	
<b>Dr Reeves and the SPLA</b>	<b>13</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>	

### Introduction

In the past eighteen months, Dr Eric Reeves, a professor of English at Smith College in Massachusetts, has emerged as a commentator on Sudan. He began his Sudan involvement in the Spring of 1999, and has taken a year’s leave to continue his activities full-time. He has published just under forty op-ed pieces for American and Canadian newspapers, has given several radio interviews and has appeared before the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.<sup>3</sup>

Sudan is the biggest country in Africa. A civil war has raged in Sudan since 1955, a year before that country’s independence. There was a period of peace from 1971 until early 1983, when fighting in southern Sudan recommenced between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) led by Colonel John Garang. The war has essentially been fought about the constitutional status of southern Sudan. It is one of the world’s longest-running conflicts. Dr Reeves speaks of “a radical Islamic regime engaged in a brutally destructive civil war with the people of southern Sudan”.<sup>4</sup> He states that: “The ongoing catastrophe in Sudan stands as the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world today. There are no exceptions. An amplifying paraphrase needn’t be added. Sudan...bears this ghastly distinction with agonizing clarity.”<sup>5</sup> Dr Reeves has focused particularly on the issue of oil and oil revenues within Sudan and what he claims is their direct relationship with the conflict.

### What is Dr Reeves’ Thesis?

<sup>1</sup> ‘Carter, Others Say US Has Faltered in Africa’, **The Boston Globe**, 8 December 1999.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord’, **The National Post**, 29 November 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Pfarrer, ‘Spreading the Word on Sudan’, **Five College News**, 6 October 2000, available at [http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five\\_col/30291.htm](http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five_col/30291.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Are the People of Wisconsin Investing at Sudan’s Expense?’, **The Times Review**, (Wisconsin), 11 May 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Silence on Sudan’, **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

Dr Reeves states that he is opposed to the Sudanese oil project and those foreign oil companies involved within it. The Sudanese oil industry has just begun to export oil from fields in southern Sudan and south-central Sudan. Dr Reeves claims that this “genocidal oil”<sup>6</sup> is generating funds for the Sudanese Government and that as a result the Khartoum authorities are holding up peace talks. Dr Reeves also claims that the Government has displaced all the population around the oil fields, “orchestrating a ferocious scorched-earth policy in the area of the oil fields and pipelines.”<sup>7</sup> He claims to be campaigning to secure international sanctions on Sudan and divestment from the foreign oil companies involved in the Sudan oil project. Reeves ties this all into, amongst other things, his concern about abuses of humanitarian assistance in Sudan<sup>8</sup>, that the Sudanese Government is a “radical Islamic regime” and that “[Khartoum’s leaders] engage in a merciless trade of human slavery”.<sup>9</sup>

### **Dr Reeves’ Credibility as a Commentator**

Much has been made of the fact that Dr Reeves is a professor of English literature. On studying his published material on Sudan, however, rather than the carefully-argued, measured and, more importantly, well-researched work one would have expected from a professor at Smith College, his work has the tone of a shrill student activist - and all the unrealistic and poorly-judged gaucheness of an undergraduate. In fact, had Professor Reeves’ work been marked by any of his political science or international relations colleagues, his various publications would have been graded fail through to “should try much harder”. His work has been arrogant, poor-researched, shallow and maladroit. Dr Reeves’ methodology is particularly weak. Unfortunately his writings are not the predictable certainties of an 18 year-old freshman, but the work of a self-publicist intent on damaging the Sudanese economy seeking to deprive the population of much needed economic development.

It is sadly obvious that Dr Reeves is simply ill-equipped for the task he has set himself. What he has succeeded in is emerging as the latest variant of the “Ugly American” so brilliantly captured by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick in their novel of the same name.<sup>10</sup> Dr Reeves as a professor of literature may well be familiar with this contemporary classic, but appears to have learnt none of the salient lessons embodied within it.

Professor Reeves claims to have approached Sudan “with the eyes of a professional researcher”, claiming “[l]ong hours and days of assiduous reading, archival retrieval, and real-time communications with Sudan experts in and out of government”.<sup>11</sup> At the same time he also admits that he has never been to Sudan.<sup>12</sup> This is somewhat surprising for a “professional researcher”. It has to be said that this is somewhat akin, to use a literary analogy, to someone declaring to be a student of Shakespeare without having actually read Shakespeare in the original and instead basing his work on second-or-third-hand commentaries on Shakespeare. Also surprising is that for all his “long hours and days” of research Dr Reeves appears to have ignored a swathe of material relevant to the issues he pronounces upon but which may have been inconvenient to his arguments. Either that or for all his claims of research expertise he overlooked this information. Given that Dr Reeves states that he has taken a year out, one must therefore assume that he has seen most if not all of the Internet-based material contained in this critique. Dr Reeves jokes that he is “umbilically connected to my computer”.<sup>13</sup> For all the long hours and days he claims to have spent in researching Sudan, however, he appears to be nothing more than one of the instant “experts” that do more damage than good on issues as complicated as Sudan.

Dr Reeves has nowhere acknowledged that the Sudanese civil war, as in most such conflicts, has been caught up in an awesome propaganda war. It is nowhere evident that he attempted to take this into account. In fact it is all too obvious that he has consciously or unconsciously absorbed much of what can only be described as questionable propaganda into his writing and campaigning on Sudan.

### **Dr Reeves and Sources**

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Genocidal Oil’, **The Globe and Mail**, Toronto, 4 May 1999.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan’, **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan’, **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan’, **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Published in 1958, and written by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, **The Ugly American** exposed in considerable detail why American diplomacy was failing in South-East Asia in the 1950s. The “Ugly American” of the title is Louis Sears, the American ambassador to the fictitious country of Sarkhan, an under-developed Third World country. Sears is caricatured as a braying mule in the Sarkhanese media. The “Ugly American” is a crude bumbler. Lederer and Burdick exposed the ineptitude of those who devise foreign policy with all the implications for American influence in the world.

<sup>11</sup> Statement by Dr Eric Reeves before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Washington-DC, 15 February 2000 available at [http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/professor\\_reeves.htm](http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/professor_reeves.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Pfarrer, ‘Spreading the Word on Sudan’, **Five College News**, 6 October 2000, available at [http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five\\_col/30291.htm](http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five_col/30291.htm)

Sources, for both journalist and academic, are everything. One's credibility is either made or broken on sources, their objectivity and their reliability.<sup>14</sup> Dr Reeves admits to several sources. He cites "Sudan experts in and out of government". He should clarify whether the experts "in government" include those party to an almost unbelievably farcical policy towards Sudan, one characterised by demonisation, a systemic policy and intelligence failure and an unjustified cruise missile attack. His "out of government" experts appear not to have included the one American expert out of government with any credibility on Sudan - former President Jimmy Carter. But they do include those affiliated to the United States Committee for Refugees, whose director Roger Winter, far from being objective, actually advocates military aid to the Sudanese rebels.<sup>15</sup> Reeves also states, without qualification, that his sources include the "SPLA/M leadership", one of the main rebel movements in Sudan but not, apparently, the Government of Sudan.<sup>16</sup> One should place on record the SPLA's capacity to deceive. Dr Peter Nyaba, a SPLA national executive council member, has described the SPLA's "sub-culture of lies, misinformation, cheap propaganda and exhibitionism" vividly:

Much of what filtered out of the SPLM/A propaganda machinery...was about 90% disinformation or things concerned with the military combat, mainly news about the fighting which were always efficaciously exaggerated.<sup>17</sup>

Dr Reeves has on several occasions also cited South African Derek Hammond as one of his sources on events in Sudan.<sup>18</sup> Hammond heads the South African-based 'Faith-in-Action' organisation, and can only but be described as a Christian fundamentalist Islamophobe. His website overtly champions the "Christian" fight against "the evil of Islam". He refers to the "anti-Christian religion of Islam."<sup>19</sup> Hammond's exaggerations are obvious: he also claims that "Christians make up...over 80% of Southern Sudan." (This figure should be compared with the figures of 10-15 percent carried in official American government studies, Economist Intelligence Unit briefings or Human Rights Watch material). Dr Reeves' questionable choice of sources is nowhere more evident than in his seeming acceptance of the outlandish story that China was about to move 700,000 soldiers to Sudan to protect Chinese interests in the Sudanese oil project. This article had appeared in **The Sunday Telegraph** of London.<sup>20</sup> Even the Clinton Administration, as hostile as it is to the Sudanese authorities, had to dismiss the claims, stating that even "the figure of tens of thousands of troops is just not credible based on information available to us".<sup>21</sup> Reeves on the other hand terms it an "explosive report" and states that "The Telegraph is no fly-by-night journalistic operation...It is highly doubtful that the report comes from thin air, or that important sources are not behind it."<sup>22</sup> For Dr Reeves to afford even the faintest credibility to claims that 700,000 Chinese soldiers were about to deploy in southern Sudan is astonishingly naïve of him. Dr Reeves would also appear to be blissfully unaware of the fact that newspapers are often used as propaganda adjuncts for disseminating questionable material. It should be pointed out that two months have passed since Dr Reeves' "explosive report", and there has been no sign of the massive, unprecedented air or sea-bridge carrying 700,000 Chinese soldiers to Sudan.

Let us examine the claims made by Dr Reeves.

### **Dr Reeves and the Sudan Oil Project**

As the oil issue is so central to Dr Reeves claims about Sudan, this is clearly the point at which to start. Oil has been discovered in two major areas within the Muglad Rift Basin Complex in south-central Sudan. The biggest discovery is in south Kordofan (within what administratively constitutes northern Sudan) and includes the Heglig and Unity oil fields. The other area is to be found just across the 1956 border in southern Sudan. The first area is operated by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC), a consortium of four companies including the China National Petroleum Company, the Malaysian state oil corporation Petronas, a Canadian company Talisman Energy and Sudapet Ltd. In August 1999 an oil pipeline linking south-central Sudan to the Red Sea was completed. Sudan is expected to export up to 250,000 barrels a day from these fields in the course of 2000. The Sudanese Government has a five percent stake in the project. For a country as desperately poor as Sudan, this technological achievement has been hailed as the answer to economic development for the country. Reeves prefers to speak of "Sudan's genocidally destructive oil project".<sup>23</sup> He claims that local populations in the oil fields and adjacent regions have been displaced by

<sup>14</sup> For further details see, for example, David Hoile, **Farce Majeure: The Clinton Administration's Sudan Policy 1993-2000**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Statement by Roger Winter before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 15 February 2000 available at [http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/mr\\_winter.htm](http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/mr_winter.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Analysis of the Military Situation in Sudan: Khartoum Struggles to Find a Strategy (July 22-29)', 26 July 2000 in News Briefs, Freedom Now, web posted 26 July 2000 at 19:37:32 -0700 (PDT).

<sup>17</sup> Peter Nyaba, **The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View**, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Reeves, 'An Up-Dated Report on the Government of Sudan Attack on the Elementary School in Upper Kaoda', 25 February 2000.

<sup>19</sup> 'African Christian Faith in Action', [http://www.liafrica.org/sudan\\_articles/persecuted\\_church\\_of\\_sudan.htm](http://www.liafrica.org/sudan_articles/persecuted_church_of_sudan.htm)

<sup>20</sup> 'China Puts "700,000 Troops" on Sudan Alert', **The Sunday Telegraph**, London, 26 August 2000.

<sup>21</sup> 'U.S.: Reports of China's Role in Sudanese War Are Overstated', News Article by UPI on 29 August 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Reeves, 'China "Flexing Its Muscle" in Sudan: Its time for SEMA!', 30 August 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Talisman Energy Share Price: Where Are We?', 19 May 2000, Web Posted on 20 May 2000 at 07:12:32 - 0700.

the Sudanese Government, stating, for example, in July 1999, that “[h]uge swaths of land around the oil fields and pipelines are presently cleared of all human life and sustenance”.<sup>24</sup>

### **Dr Reeves and Claims about Oil Revenues Fuelling the War**

Dr Reeves has repeatedly claimed that Sudanese oil revenues were fuelling the war and impeding the peace process.

There are two points which should be considered. Firstly, there has been no evidence whatsoever to date to support Dr Reeves’ allegations. The British Government has repeatedly been asked if there is any such evidence. In March 2000, the British Government, in a typical reply to a Parliamentary question about whether Khartoum had used oil revenues to purchase weapons, publicly stated that they did not “have any evidence of such expenditure at present”.<sup>25</sup> The Sudanese Government has publicly stated the formula for the distribution of oil revenues, with the local state and the southern Sudanese authority receiving most of the funds. This formula is entrenched in the Sudanese constitution. The Khartoum authorities have also repeatedly stated that any oil revenues are to be spent on development, financing agricultural, health, education and environmental as well as infrastructure projects, especially in southern Sudan.<sup>26</sup> The British Government has also stated that the Khartoum authorities have promised transparency with regard to how the oil revenues are spent. It might also be noted that given its membership of the European Union, any British reply would have also incorporated information available to other European countries. In any instance, as a country tied to a strict International Monetary Fund regime, the IMF will certainly closely monitor how these funds are dispersed.

Secondly, the fact that there is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate his claims is also borne out by Dr Reeves himself. In his statement before the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom in February 2000, Dr Reeves’ somewhat weakly states “there is no other way to account for Khartoum’s availability to conduct a war that has been repeatedly characterized as costing \$1 million dollars a day” other than for China to have been engaged in “extensive ‘in kind’ trading: Chinese weaponry for anticipated Sudanese oil and oil revenues.”<sup>27</sup> The use of the word “anticipated” is the key one. Conjecture is all Dr Reeves has to offer by way of evidence.

It should also be pointed out that Dr Reeves’ methodology is, in any event, additionally flawed. In declaring that “there is no other way to account for Khartoum’s availability to conduct a war that has been repeatedly characterized as costing \$1 million dollars a day” he seems to forget the somewhat inconvenient fact that the Sudanese civil war has in effect been fought since 1955, and since 1983 in its most recent phase. Dr Reeves in another forum also admits this, declaring that “Sudan’s 16-year war takes us well back into the first term of the Reagan administration. And during that time, with an obscene relentlessness, more than 10,000 Sudanese (on gruesome statistical average) have died every month.”<sup>28</sup> Given the pivotal role Dr Reeves claims for oil revenues in the war, how does Dr Reeves explain the fact that the war has been fought for sixteen years without any such revenues?

### **The Displacement of Civilians Within the Oil Region**

In addition to the alleged use of oil revenues, at the heart of Professor Reeves paradigm are claims about civilian displacement within Sudan’s oil fields and adjacent regions. He speaks of “Sudan’s genocidally destructive policies in the south, and the oil regions in particular”.<sup>29</sup> Reeves refers to the Sudanese Government’s “savagely war on civilians in the oil regions”.<sup>30</sup>

Firstly, it should be noted that Reeves’ second or third-hand “reports” of massive and continuing displacement in oil-producing areas such as Heglig are clearly contradicted by reputable journalists who have visited these areas. Western journalists who visited the Heglig oil field found no such displacement.<sup>31</sup> Claudia Cattaneo, of **The Financial Post**, a Canadian newspaper, reported:

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<sup>24</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Silence on Sudan’, **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

<sup>25</sup> House of Lords **Official Record**, Written Answer, 22 March 2000, column WA28; also see, **Official Record** Written Answers, 11 January 2000, WA97; and 23 March 2000, WA35.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, ‘Dr Al-Jaz Affirms: Oil Revenue for Development’, Press Release by Sudanese Embassy in Canada, 3 May 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony Presented by Eric Reeves Before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, February 15, 2000, offices of the United States Senate, Washington-DC.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘A World of Suffering’, IntellectualCapital.Com, 20 January 2000 available on <http://www.intellectualcapital.com/issues/issue339/item7946.asp>

<sup>29</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘De-Listing of Talisman Energy from the NYSE: Where Things Stand’, 22 February 2000, Web Posted on SUDAN-L@LISTSERV.CC.EMORY.EDU on 25 February 2000 at 20:30: -0800.

<sup>30</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Just How Secure are Talisman’s Greater Nile Contracts in Sudan?’, 20 June 2000, Web Posted by **Freedom Now** on 20 June 2000 at 09:47:28 -0700.

<sup>31</sup> It should be stated that the Canadian media has been forthright in their critical reporting on Canadian involvement within the Sudanese oil project. Reeves, for example, has commented that “[t]he enormity and complexity of human destruction in Sudan becomes more visible in Canadian news reporting” (‘Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord’, **The National Post**, 29 November 1999. **The National Post** is a sister paper of **The Financial Post**).

[A]t Heglig, the site of Talisman's oil major oilfields and processing facilities, there is no evidence of population displacement. Military presence is low key. Children are playing and going to school near the oil wells. Western and Sudanese workers say thousands of nomads are coming here to look for work, for medical assistance...or for education."<sup>32</sup>

It would appear from first-hand, credible reporting that at the very least Eric Reeves' claims are questionable. It would also appear that far from witnessing the systematic displacement of civilians, southern civilians seem to be being drawn towards the Heglig oil concession. Reeves seems to ignore the simple fact that the Heglig and Unity fields are situated in the midst of a vast open plain that is water-logged during the rainy season - as anyone who has actually visited these areas will have seen - making permanent settlement very difficult.

What is clear, however, is that for all his concern about the displacement of civilians within oil regions, and in his distorted picture of events in Sudan, Dr Reeves has studiously ignored irrefutable evidence of the forced displacement of civilians by the SPLA rebel movement.

In February 2000, for example, Reuters correspondent Rosalind Russell was one of a group of journalists who visited SPLA positions within oil-producing areas.<sup>33</sup> She provided reliable, first-hand reporting of activity leading to the displacement of civilians. She personally witnessed:

a pillar of smoke rising from the besieged town of Mayom, subject to daily bombardments by rebels as the try to advance eastwards to the oil development.<sup>34</sup>

It is perhaps worth noting that Dr Reeves speaks highly of Reuters, calling it "the most reliable news agency in Africa"<sup>35</sup> Similar daily bombardments by the SPLA of the southern Sudanese capital Juba in the early 1990s resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. Reeves should be asked whether or not the daily bombardment of Mayom, and other southern Sudanese towns, resulting in the death and injury of civilians, and the exodus of thousands of other civilians from their homes qualifies as displacement. And, given that Reuters also clearly indicates that the SPLA is attempting to "advance eastwards to the oil development", would this not indicate that the SPLA were the aggressors in the particular circumstances described by Reuters? In August 2000, Reuters further reported that:

An influx of displaced people into Bentiu, the capital of Unity state in war-torn southern Sudan, has greatly strained humanitarian and food aid in the town...World Food Programme (WFP) official Makena Walker told Reuters about 20,000 people displaced by recent fighting had reached Bentiu in the last three weeks.

That is to say fleeing into Government-controlled areas. Reuters also stated that Sulaf al-Din Salih, a government humanitarian aid commissioner, had said that displaced people were arriving in Bentiu at a rate of 150 to 200 per day, with the total number now running at 40,000.<sup>36</sup> In yet another example, in July 2000, the Roman Catholic bishop of the southern Sudanese diocese of Rumbek, Caesar Mazzolari, stated that thousands of civilians were fleeing the southern town of Wau. Bishop Mazzolari said that this massive human exodus was triggered by fears of a possible rebel attack.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps Dr Reeves does not consider these clear examples to be displacement or the "oil-driven destruction" he states he is so concerned about.<sup>38</sup>

Dr Reeves' logic is somewhat twisted. He states, for example, that: "Continued operation by Talisman Energy in Sudan insures the continued loss of innocent human life - men, women and children. This is the inescapable conclusion that must be faced by all who are themselves the owners of Talisman Energy through their shareholding in the corporation." On another occasion he speaks of "Talisman's role in the oil-driven devastation concentrated in the south."<sup>39</sup> He is basically blaming the victim. Canadian journalists have reported that despite Dr Reeves' claims there has been no displacement at Heglig, Talisman's main site. Reuters has clearly reported that SPLA rebels are bombarding and displacing their way towards Heglig, using child soldiers on the way. Yet, Dr Reeves finds fit to

<sup>32</sup> 'Analysts Upbeat About Talisman's Sudan Role', **The Financial Post**, 17 November 1999.

<sup>33</sup> 'Rag-tag Rebels Fight for Sudan's Oil Riches', News Article by Reuters on 14 February 2000 at 14:24:21.

<sup>34</sup> 'Rag-tag Rebels Fight for Sudan's Oil Riches', News Article by Reuters on 14 February 2000 at 14:24:21.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Talisman Energy Share Price: What the Analysts are Saying About the Sudan "Overhang". What the Khartoum Regime is Saying to the Oil Analysts!', 16 June 2000.

<sup>36</sup> 'Refugee Flow Strains Relief in Sudan's Unity State', News Article by Reuters on 7 August 2000 at 14:26:20 EST (-5 GMT).

<sup>37</sup> 'Thousands Flee Sudanese Town Fearing Rebel Attack', News Article by Agence France Presse on 7 July 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Open Letter to Ontario Teacher's Pension Federation (OTPF)', 23 May 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Reeves, 'As in South Africa, It's Time to Let Our Wallets Do the Talking. Sudan: Canadian Oil Firm is an Economic Ally of a Brutal Regime. Divest From it', *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 August 1999.

blame Talisman. This is somewhat similar to blaming the United States Navy for the recent attack on its warship, the USS Cole, in Aden rather than the men who actually perpetrated the outrage.

### **Dr Reeves Versus the World: A Case of Ugly American Syndrome?**

In February 2000, Dr Reeves provided a clear example of what might best be described as his naïveté regarding the United States, Canada and Sudan's position within the international community. Citing an article in **Time** magazine he excitedly reported:

[Canadian Foreign Minister] Lloyd Axworthy and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last month reached agreement on a multilateral sanctions plan against Sudan, one that would grow out of Canada's chairing of the UN Security Council in April.<sup>40</sup>

Dr Reeves stated that "the plan has devastating implications for Talisman Energy: UN sanctions would almost certainly apply to the Greater Nile project and its owners."<sup>41</sup>

The reality was once again totally different. Reeves' misreading of the mood of the international community was clear. Despite chairing the United Nations Security Council, Canada was unambiguously made aware of the vigorous international opposition to anything remotely resembling the Albright-Axworthy plan described by Reeves. The Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, Robert Fowler, had to concede that even raising the Sudan issue at the Security Council was unacceptable:

The representations we received suggested that the timing was not right, that there were important peace initiatives under way both from Libya and Egypt. The Arab League and the OAU (Organization of African Unity), as well as the nonaligned movement, suggested to us that council engagement on this issue at this time would not be productive.<sup>42</sup>

It is also clear that IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the seven-nation East African regional body intimately involved with the Sudanese peace process, a body described by Reeves as "[an] irreplaceable, peace forum"<sup>43</sup> also pointedly opposed any United Nations Security Council resolution action on Sudan. The organisation's executive director stated that IGAD "is strongly opposed to raising the problem at the Security Council".<sup>44</sup>

This position did not even take into account the fact that several permanent members of the Security Council would also have refused to tolerate any such American or Canadian moves. What has also become all too clear is that not only was the international mood at the United Nations vehemently opposed to any "multilateral sanctions plan against Sudan", it is evident that there is a concerted move to lift the limited diplomatic sanctions still in place against Sudan imposed in 1996 in the wake of the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak by Egyptian terrorists. Both Egypt and Ethiopia, the countries most concerned, support the lifting of the sanctions in question.<sup>45</sup> The Egyptian government stated that having seen "a number of positive and encouraging indications from the part of the Sudanese government" aimed at improving Sudan's relations with Egypt, it supported the rescinding of the sanctions.<sup>46</sup> The Ethiopian government said that "it is the conviction of the Ethiopian Government that the concerns that gave rise to the sanctions...no longer apply...Ethiopia is, therefore, of the view that it is now time for the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Sudan".<sup>47</sup>

Sudan has had unprecedented support from the international community on this issue. South Africa and Algeria, in the capacities as chairmen of the 114-member Non-Aligned Movement and the 22-member Arab Group of states respectively called on the Security Council to withdraw the 1996 limited sanctions. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), representing 53 countries, as well as the Arab League, have also urged the Security Council to rescind the sanctions in question.<sup>48</sup> In a letter to the President of the Security Council, OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim stated that the lifting of the sanctions was an urgent matter:

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<sup>40</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Talisman Energy, Sudan...and Sanctions or, "The 'S-word' Saga Continues"', posted by SUDAN-L@LISTSERV.CC.EMORY.EDU on 29 February 2000 at 18:49:19 - 0800; **Time** Magazine (Canadian Edition), 28 February 2000, pp. 32-33.

<sup>41</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Talisman Energy, Sudan...and Sanctions or, "The 'S-word' Saga Continues"', posted by SUDAN-L@LISTSERV.CC.EMORY.EDU on 29 February 2000 at 18:49:19 - 0800; **Time** Magazine (Canadian Edition), 28 February 2000, pp. 32-33.

<sup>42</sup> 'Canada Drops Bid to Discuss Sudan in U.N. Council', News Article by Reuters on 5 April 2000 at 00:36:08 EST.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan', **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>44</sup> 'IGAD Against Internationalising Sudan Peace Bid', News Article by Agence France Presse on 25 April 2000 at 08:05:26 EST.

<sup>45</sup> 'Arabs and Non-Aligned Nations Call for End to Sudan Sanctions at UN', News Article at Agence France Presse on 6 June 2000 at 03:31:37-.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs to the President of the United Nations Security Council, 8 June 2000

<sup>47</sup> Letter from the Ethiopian Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs to the President of the United Nations Security Council, 5 June 2000.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, 'Arab League Call for End to UN Sanctions Against Sudan', News Article by Agence France Press on 6 June 2000 at 15:53 EST.

The lifting of sanctions imposed on Sudan is not only urgently called for, but would also positively contribute to efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in the region.<sup>49</sup>

It is not just from within the ranks of the developing world or Non-Aligned Movement that support for Sudan has emerged. The French Ambassador to the United Nations, Jean-David Levitte, President of the United Nations Security Council, also recognised positive developments regarding Sudan: "There are evolutions for the better in Khartoum, and France is not the only member of the Council to consider that these positive evolutions should be registered."<sup>50</sup> These sanctions themselves have in any case never really been very actively enforced. Sudanese ministers, including the foreign minister, had been able to pay official visits to most European Union countries, including Britain, and Canada.<sup>51</sup>

It is clear that there is a consensus that the 1996 sanctions should be lifted. These moves also demonstrated in turn how out of touch anti-Sudanese activists such as Dr Reeves are with opinion on Sudan in much of the world, and particularly within the developing world. Dr Reeves is also perhaps unaware of how the image of a well-fed, white, middle-class academic telling black and brown Africans what it is that is in their best interests, that developing their own natural resources in order to feed their hungry populations is not to be allowed, does not go down terribly well in the developing world. This is particularly the case given the questionable basis and selectivity of so many of Dr Reeves' claims about Sudan. It is not even paternalism - it is simply crass.

The fact is that as far as its policy towards Sudan is concerned, the United States stands alone - except perhaps for Dr Reeves lending support by e-mail from his college in Massachusetts.

### **Dr Reeves and "Genocide"**

Dr Reeves is generous with his use of the term genocide when it come to Sudan. He speaks of "the continuing genocide in southern Sudan".<sup>52</sup> He even writes of a "final solution".<sup>53</sup> All too predictably, he claims that "the war splits along racial and religious lines...the Arab and Islamicized north against the racially African and religiously animist or Christian south."<sup>54</sup> Ironically, even sources hostile to Khartoum - and constantly cited by Dr Reeves - such as the United States Committee for Refugees rubbishes such a view with its director, Roger Winter, stating: "This is not a Christian versus Muslim war, and I think that that is probably very clear".<sup>55</sup> Apparently not to Dr Reeves.

Dr Reeves' genocide claims are further undermined by sheer physical facts. Reeves states that five million Sudanese, the majority of them southern Sudanese, have been displaced as a result of the Sudanese civil war. They have fled fighting between government and rebel forces. Three million of these refugees have deliberately chosen refuge in northern Sudan.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps as many as two million of these southern Sudanese refugees live in and around Khartoum. It is against this background that one should assess Reeves' claim that the Sudanese Government is "conducting [a] genocidal war".<sup>57</sup> If Khartoum, a "ruthless", "cruel and vicious regime" was actually engaged in a "genocidal war" against southerners, as Dr Reeves would have us believe, why would three million southerners voluntarily trek one thousand kilometres to seek safety and refuge in northern Sudan - most of them in Khartoum itself - especially when they could have far more easily slipped across much closer borders into Uganda or Kenya, to be amongst their own ethnic groups?

Dr Reeves' deliberate use of the terms "genocide", "final solution" and "the Holocaust" can only but invoke images of the European Holocaust. Given his use of these terms, one must ask Dr Reeves if European Jews voluntarily chose to head towards Berlin in the late 1930s and early 1940s? Similarly, given Dr Reeves' claim that "[Khartoum's leaders]... engage in a merciless trade of human slavery"<sup>58</sup> why would three million southerners apparently head towards slavery in the north? Black Africans were not flocking towards Richmond or Charleston in the ante-bellum period of United States history. Dr Reeves has also deliberately invoked the imagery of Kosovo.<sup>59</sup> If this really is an appropriate image, can Dr Reeves explain that while Kosovars were fleeing into Albania away from Serbian control,

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<sup>49</sup> 'OAU Urges Security Council to Lift Sudan Sanctions', News Article by Reuters on 20 June 2000.

<sup>50</sup> 'U.S. Delays UN Vote on Sudan Until After November Poll', News Article by Reuters on 28 June 2000.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, 'UK Flouts Deal to Give Sudan Minister a Visa', **The Independent**, 18 July 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Genocidal Oil', **The Globe and Mail**, Toronto, 4 May 1999.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Genocidal Oil', **The Globe and Mail**, Toronto, 4 May 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan', **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Statement by Roger Winter before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 15 February 2000 available at [http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/mr\\_winter.htm](http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/mr_winter.htm)

<sup>56</sup> 'Three Million Refugees Flee War-Torn South', News Article by Agence France Presse on 29 November 1999.

<sup>57</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Are the People of Wisconsin Investing at Sudan's Expense?', **The Times Review**, (Wisconsin), 11 May 2000.

<sup>58</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan', **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Eric Reeves 'Silence on Sudan', **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999; 'Human Agony in Sudan Can't Be Ignored', **The San Francisco Chronicle**, 12 August 1999;



and certainly not towards Belgrade, three million southern Sudanese have voluntarily headed northwards towards Khartoum and the Khartoum authorities. Perhaps Dr Reeves will claim that three million southerners were all suffering from false consciousness?

The fact is that once again Dr Reeves has been irresponsibly sloppy in making what are very serious claims.

### **Dr Reeves and Humanitarian Aid**

Dr Reeves also presents a stark picture of humanitarian food aid within southern Sudan. He claims that “The Khartoum regime...has systematically used humanitarian food aid as a weapon of war”<sup>60</sup> and that “[s]tarvation is Khartoum’s ‘weapon of mass destruction’”.<sup>61</sup> He states “at the height of last summer’s war-driven famine, the UN has estimated that 2.6 million...human beings, mainly children, were at risk of starvation.”<sup>62</sup>

Once again Reeves has made very questionable claims. Despite inferring that the 1998 famine was created by the Government, Reeves does not mention (or perhaps is ignorant of) the SPLA’s pivotal role in the famine. In late January 1998, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, a SPLA commander who had previously supported the Sudanese government’s internal peace process, led a rebel attack on the city of Wau in southern Sudan. This attack, and the fighting that followed it, led to a drastic deterioration in the security and food distribution situation in that region. Rebel responsibility in large part for the famine situation was reported on by CNN in early April 1998 under headlines such as “aid agencies blame Sudanese rebel who switched sides”:

Observers say much of the recent chaos has resulted from the actions of one man, Kerubino Kwanying Bol, a founding member of the rebel movement...He aided rebel forces in sieges of three government-held towns, which sent people fleeing into the countryside.<sup>63</sup>

**Newsweek** magazine of 18 May 1998 also reported that: “Aid workers blame much of the south’s recent anguish on one man: the mercurial Dinka warlord Kerubino Kuanyin Bol”.

Reeves also trots out predictable claims that the Government of Sudan “strategy is evidently to produce a humanitarian crisis so extreme that Western nations and humanitarian organizations will work forcefully to secure the ‘cease-fire’ the GOS so badly needs. If the GOS fails to secure a ‘cease-fire’ the interruption of humanitarian aid still serves their purposes by creating a population unable to sustain itself - or the SPLA. The GOS is, and always has been willing to starve one to weaken the other.”<sup>64</sup>

Reeves neglects to mention some of the more relevant details, facts rather than conjecture. International humanitarian aid in Sudan is provided by the United Nations-managed Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) consortium, run in conjunction with the Government and rebels. OLS was unprecedented in post-war history when it came into being in 1989 in as much as it was the first time that a government had agreed to the delivery of assistance by outside agencies to rebel-controlled parts of its own country. The Sudanese model, developed during the tenure of the present Sudanese government, has subsequently been used in several other areas of civil conflict, including several in Africa. It is also a matter of record that the number of Khartoum-approved Operation Lifeline Sudan feeding sites in southern Sudan has grown from twenty in the early 1990s to well over one hundred by 1998. During the famine in that year, the number increased to more than 180 locations.<sup>65</sup> These were overwhelmingly in rebel-held areas.

As the London **Guardian** newspaper, no friend of the Khartoum government, observed: “Most of the people affected live in areas controlled by anti-government rebels and...they were reached by flights from Kenya. Governments involved in civil wars usually refuse to authorise cross-border feeding.”<sup>66</sup> This jars somewhat with claims by Dr Reeves that the Sudanese government is a “cruel and vicious regime”<sup>67</sup> or that “[t]he ruling regime in Khartoum is cruel and murderous”<sup>68</sup> or that “[m]ost consequential for the civilians of the south is the evident determination of the

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<sup>60</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘As in South Africa, It’s Time to Let Our Wallets Do the Talking. Sudan: Canadian Oil Firm is an Economic Ally of a Brutal Regime. Divest From it’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 August 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘More Harsh Words for Talisman Energy’s Business Partner, The Government of Sudan’, 11 August 2000, in **Freedom Now News Update for August 14, 2000** posted at 06:08:46 -0700 (PDT).

<sup>62</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan’, **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>63</sup> ‘1 million people face famine in Sudan, Ethiopia’, April 10, 1998, Web posted at 6:04 p.m. EDT (22:04 GMT).

<sup>64</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Analysis of the Current Military Situation in Sudan’, Posted on 8 August 2000 at 02:21:32 + 0100.

<sup>65</sup> **The Guardian**, London, 25 April 1998.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Millions Still in Need in Sudan’, **The Guardian**, London, 25 April 1998.

<sup>67</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Silence on Sudan’, **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘The Legacy of the Al Shifa Bombing’, IntellectualCapital.com, 26 August 1999 available on <http://www.intellectualcapital.com/issues/issue284/item6181asp>

Government of Sudan...to bring an end to humanitarian aid to the south”.<sup>69</sup> Far from bringing humanitarian aid in southern Sudan to an end, it is a matter of public record that Khartoum has agreed to an eight-fold increase in feeding centre (almost all of which are in rebel-controlled areas) in the past several years; presumably Khartoum could easily have attempted to keep the number to twenty or less. Dr Reeves’ claims are also somewhat undermined by the fact that unanimous United Nations resolutions have acknowledged “with appreciation the cooperation by the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations, including the agreements and arrangements achieved to facilitate relief operations with a view to improving United Nations assistance to affected areas.”<sup>70</sup>

### **Dr Reeves and Selectivity**

For all his professed concern about humanitarian food aid in southern Sudan, Reeves is deafeningly silent on the very well documented denial of food aid to southern civilians by the rebels he so eulogises. Perhaps Reeves really is unaware the Roman Catholic church in southern Sudan has publicly and unambiguously stated that the SPLA were stealing 65 percent of the food aid going into rebel-held areas of southern Sudan - and this also at the height of the 1998 famine Reeves has highlighted. Agence France Presse also reported that:

Much of the relief food going to more than a million famine victims in rebel-held areas of southern Sudan is ending up in the hands of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), relief workers said.<sup>71</sup>

Additionally, in March 2000, the SPLA rebel movement began to expel international non-governmental organisations which had refused to sign an aid Memorandum drawn up by the SPLA. The SPLA Memorandum made unacceptable demands of aid agencies including SPLA control over the distribution of humanitarian assistance; a requirement to work “in accordance with SPLA objectives” rather than solely humanitarian aims. Eleven international humanitarian aid agencies felt themselves unable to remain active in southern Sudan under the conditions demanded of them by the SPLA. **These NGOs handled 75 percent of the humanitarian aid entering southern Sudan.**<sup>72</sup> **The withdrawal of these NGOs directly affected US\$ 40 million worth of aid programs.**<sup>73</sup> **The expelled aid agencies stated that one million southern Sudanese were at risk as a result of the SPLA’s decision to expel the NGOs.**<sup>74</sup> The United Nations explained that the SPLA’s expulsion of the NGOs:

This has created a void in the OLS consortium’s ability to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to the people of southern Sudan, already made vulnerable by decades of war and deprivation. Emergency response, health, nutrition, household food security, and water and sanitation programmes will be hardest hit.<sup>75</sup>

One can only but imagine Mr Reeves’ delight had the Government of Sudan been found guilty of diverting two-thirds of emergency food aid in southern Sudan or that its political intransigence had caused three-quarters of all humanitarian assistance to be suspended. It would have proved a dozen more impassioned articles. Yet, for all his studied concern about food aid and humanitarian assistance and the people of southern Sudan, Mr Reeves is once again deafeningly and selectively silent.

### **Dr Reeves and Sudan’s “radical Islamic regime”**

Dr Reeves speaks of “a radical Islamic regime” in Sudan.<sup>76</sup> While a convenient propaganda image the claim of a “radical Islamic regime” is questionable.<sup>77</sup> The former speaker of the Sudanese Parliament, Dr Hasan Turabi has been seen as the architect of Sudan’s present Islamic model. Respected Africa analyst and commentator Colin Legum has said of Turabi:

Turabi’s policies are out of step with other Islamic fundamentalist organisations on a number of important issues...One of Turabi’s fundamental breaks with the strict Islamic traditionalists is over the place of women in Muslim societies. As a declared supporter of women’s liberation, he insists on their right of equality...<sup>78</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Analysis of the Current Military Situation in Sudan’, Posted on 8 August 2000 at 02:21:32 + 0100.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Emergency Assistance to the Sudan’, UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/1 J-O, 11 January 1999.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Aid for Sudan Ending Up With SPLA: Relief Workers’, News Article by Agence France Presse on July 21, 1998 at 08:23:48.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Rights Group Urges More Talks on Sudan Relief’, News Article by Associated Press on 8 March, 2000 at 05:30:49 EST.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Seven Aid Agencies Urge Renewed Negotiations for Relief to Southern Sudan’, Associated Press, 1 March, 2000.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Expelled Aid Agencies Say Million at Risk in Sudan’, Reuters, 1 March, 2000.

<sup>75</sup> ‘OLS Evacuates NGO Staff from Southern Sudan’, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva, 1 March, 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Are the People of Wisconsin Investing at Sudan’s Expense?’, **The Times Review**, (Wisconsin), 11 May 2000.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, **Religion in Sudan**, Religion File Number 3, The Sudan Foundation, London, 1998. This is available at <http://www.sufo.demon.co.uk/rel003.htm>

<sup>78</sup> Colin Legum, ‘Struggle Over Sharia’, **New African**, March 1992, p.33.

Legum also commented on the particular difficulties faced by Islamic leaders in the Sudan in trying to “reconcile the demands for an Islamic state with the interests of the sizeable minority of non-Muslim Southerners”. Legum states that: “The solution proposed is that non-Muslims should have the right to live according to their own traditions and desires just as Muslims have the right to live in a system governed by sharia laws within a democratic society.”

A significant example of Khartoum’s effort to accommodate the interests of Sudan’s non-Muslim southerners was the 1991 exemption of the largely non-Muslim southern Sudan from *sharia* law. Even the Clinton Administration has had to admit that *sharia* law is not applied in the south.<sup>79</sup> It was the present Sudanese government that exempted southern Sudan from the Islamic *sharia* law introduced by Washington’s ally General Nimeiri in late 1983.

The Sudanese model of Islam has also been remarked upon by respected commentators such as the veteran American journalist Milton Viorst and author of **Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World**. He has compared the Sudanese model to others in the region:

By the standards of other Arab societies, Turabi’s concept of Islam is open-minded and tolerant... The signs are plentiful, in a visit to Sudan, that the Islam practiced there is less strict than that of Egypt, to say nothing of Saudi Arabia. One scarcely sees the hijab, the head-covering that makes many women in Egypt appear so forbidding, much less the Saudi veil. Most Sudanese reflected Turabi’s preference for a genial, non-rigorous Islam, more in keeping with Sudan’s special experience within the flow of Islamic history.<sup>80</sup>

Professor Tim Niblock is one of the foremost British authorities on Islam and Sudan. He has pointed out two areas in which Sudan’s model differs from mainstream Islamist thought. One is the Sudanese Islamists’ “explicit acceptance of liberal democracy as the appropriate form of political organisation for Sudan. The advocacy of liberal democracy by the N.I.F. went well beyond the stress which Islamist movements customarily place on the need for shura (consultation).” Secondly, the Sudanese model with regard to women is “qualitatively different from that proposed in most Islamist programmes. The emphasis is on women ‘escaping from social oppression’ and ‘playing a full part in building the new society’, rather than on their primary duty lying within the family”.<sup>81</sup> Even **The New York Times**, a source not noted for its affinity to Islamic models of government, said of Turabi in 1996: “He voices a tolerant version of political Islam - far less conservative than Saudi Arabia’s, far less militant than Iran’s”.<sup>82</sup> Dr Reeves would appear to have missed these references in the course of his research.

### **Dr Reeves and Government “Slavery” in Sudan**

It is also clear that Reeves could not resist jumping upon a further anti-Sudanese bandwagon with his claims that “[Khartoum’s leaders]...engage in a merciless trade of human slavery”.<sup>83</sup>

Such allegations have been clearly questioned by professional human rights groups such as Anti-Slavery International and African Rights. The internationally-respected human rights activist Alex de Waal, an acknowledged expert on Sudan and a former director of African Rights, stated with reference to identical claims made by Christian Solidarity International that despite the fact that there are no “slave markets in the 19th century image”:

Nonetheless, overeager or misinformed human rights advocates in Europe and the US have played upon lazy assumptions to raise public outrage. Christian Solidarity International, for instance, claims that “Government troops and Government-backed Arab militias regularly raid black African communities for slaves and other forms of booty.”...This despite the fact that there is no evidence for centrally organized, government-directed slave raiding or slave trade.<sup>84</sup>

A 1997 Anti-Slavery International report on allegations of Sudanese slavery, also contradicts Reeves’ claims of government involvement in slavery: “the charge that government troops engage in raids for the purpose of seizing slaves is not backed by the evidence.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> **Sudan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1995**, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, Washington-DC, February 1996.

<sup>80</sup> Milton Viorst, ‘Sudan’s Islamic Experiment: Fundamentalism in Power’, **Foreign Affairs**, 1995, Volume 74, Number 3, pp. 46-47.

<sup>81</sup> Professor Tim Niblock, ‘Islamist Movements and Sudan’s Political Coherence’, in Herve Bleuchot, Christian Delmet and Derek Hopwood, (Editors), **Sudan: History, Identity, Ideologies**, Ithaca Press, Reading, 1991, p.265.

<sup>82</sup> **New York Times** Service, republished in **International Herald Tribune**, 26 December 1996.

<sup>83</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan’, **The Catholic New Times**, Toronto, 31 October 1999.

<sup>84</sup> Alex de Waal, ‘Sudan: Social Engineering, Slavery and War’, **Covert Action Quarterly**, Spring 1997.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Verney, **Slavery in Sudan**, Anti-Slavery International and Sudan Update, London, May 1997, p.20.

The following comments made by Anti-Slavery International in a formal submission to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights' Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery have a direct bearing on the sort of claim made by Reeves. In its submission, the Anti-Slavery International representative stated:

There is a danger that wrangling over slavery can distract us from abuses which are actually part of government policy - which we do not believe slavery to be. Unless accurately reported, the issue can become a tool for indiscriminate and wholly undeserved prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. I am worried that some media reports of "slave markets", stocked by Arab slave traders - which I consider distort reality - fuel such prejudice."

Dr Reeves is sadly yet another in a long line of "overeager or misinformed" commentators on Sudan. Additionally, his discredited allegations about Arab "slave" traders in Sudan may serve only to further fuel anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice. His claims about slavery are serious allegations about which there are self-evidently serious question-marks. Mr Reeves has not done his homework - he certainly has not reflected the level of doubt that exists about such claims. Discretion should have been put before cheap propaganda.

### Dr Reeves and Peace in Sudan

Dr Reeves frequently refers to the civil war in Sudan. "Sudan's horrifically destructive civil war"; "the most destructive civil conflict in half a century"<sup>86</sup> "brutally destructive civil war"<sup>87</sup>; a "genocidally destructive civil conflict"<sup>88</sup> He has stated "No place offers a suffering more massive, more reflective of immense human destruction...than Sudan"<sup>89</sup> and that the war has shown "a truly terrifying inhumanity".<sup>90</sup> In one of his more pertinent questions, Dr Reeves asks: "What sustains such destruction and suffering?"<sup>91</sup>

Predictably, Reeves places the absence of peace in Sudan full-square on the Sudanese Government. He has claimed, for example, that the Sudanese government "refuse to enter into good faith peace negotiations under the auspices of IGAD"<sup>92</sup> and that the Sudanese government had "spurned the only effective peace process".<sup>93</sup> He also refers to "the obstacles to peace presented by the ruthless National Islamic Front...regime of Omar Beshir." Dr Reeves has also claimed that "Khartoum has proved intractable in peace negotiations...chiefly because of on-line revenues from the...oil project"<sup>94</sup> - an observation immediately undermined by his own admission that the war has raged for sixteen, oil revenue-less, years.

What then would be the basis for peace in Sudan? Associated Press states the common perception that the SPLA "rebels have been fighting for autonomy for southern Sudan from the Muslim-dominated government in the north since 1983".<sup>95</sup> This was placed on the negotiating table quite some time ago. It is hard to believe that Dr Reeves is unaware that the Sudanese government has since 1997 offered an internationally-supervised referendum whereby southern Sudanese can decide their own future. This offer was incorporated into Sudan's new 1998 constitution and has been repeated on several occasions.<sup>96</sup> It is an offer that has also been acknowledged by the SPLA. The SPLA's seriousness about a referendum can be judged by the fact that while it acknowledged the offer of a referendum, it then said that such a referendum must include parts of Sudan not within the previously accepted borders of southern Sudan - some of which were not even geographically adjacent to southern Sudan. Such deliberate spoiling tactics mean that the war continues, with the SPLA being actively encouraged by the Clinton Administration to continue fighting what is so clearly a no-win war despite the offer of what must be their "holy grail", an internationally-supervised referendum on unity or separation.

<sup>86</sup> Eric Reeves, 'In Sudan, No News is Not Good', **The Montreal Gazette**, 8 August 2000.

<sup>87</sup> Eric Reeves, 'As in South Africa, It's Time to Let Our Wallets Do the Talking. Sudan: Canadian Oil Firm is an Economic Ally of a Brutal Regime. Divest From it', *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 August 1999.

<sup>88</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Analysis of the Military Situation in Sudan: Khartoum Struggles to Find a Strategy (July 22-29)', 26 July 2000 in News Briefs, Freedom Now, web posted 26 July 2000 at 19:37:32 -0700 (PDT).

<sup>89</sup> Eric Reeves, 'A World of Suffering', IntellectualCapital.Com, 20 January 2000 available on <http://www.intellectualcapital.com/issues/issue339/item7946.asp>

<sup>90</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Are the People of Wisconsin Investing at Sudan's Expense?', **The Times Review** (Wisconsin), 11 May 2000.

<sup>91</sup> Statement by Dr Eric Reeves before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Washington-DC, 15 February 2000 available at [http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/professor\\_reeves.htm](http://www.uscirf.gov/hearings/15feb00/professor_reeves.htm)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Eric Reeves, 'A World of Suffering', IntellectualCapital.Com, 20 January 2000 available on <http://www.intellectualcapital.com/issues/issue339/item7946.asp>

<sup>94</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Talisman Energy Share Price: What the Analysts are Saying About the Sudan "Overhang"; What the Khartoum Regime is Saying to the Oil Analysts!', 16 June, 2000.

<sup>95</sup> 'Sudanese Rebels Plan to Intensify War Around Oil Fields', News Article by Associated Press on 6 June 2000.

<sup>96</sup> See, 'Sudan offers South secession', News Article by BBC, 22 February 1999 at 00:16:14 GMT; 'Southern secession better than more war: Sudan's president', News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 February 1999, at 10:04:31; 'Referendum agreed at Sudan peace talks', News Article by BBC World, 7 May 1998, at 11:06 GMT; 'Sudan Says Happy for South to secede', News Article by Reuters, 7 May 1998.

Dr Reeves appears to have missed major developments regarding peace in Sudan. As Dr Reeves has mentioned political and armed opposition to the Sudanese government has been vested in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a grouping which includes the SPLA. On 26 September 2000, however, as part of ongoing peace talks, the Sudanese President met face to face with the NDA leadership in Asmara, Eritrea.<sup>97</sup> Not only has Khartoum engaged in peace talks with the NDA, but the biggest Sudanese opposition party within it, the Umma party, led by former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, has now left the NDA. Sadiq al-Mahdi, whose democratically-elected government was overthrown in 1989, and who remains a pivotal rebel leader, has declared that:

There are now circumstances and developments which could favour an agreement on a comprehensive political solution.<sup>98</sup>

Once again, these developments have been widely covered by the international news media, in articles such as 'Opposition Leader Predicts Solution to Sudan's Conflict', 'Sudanese Rebel Group to Enter Khartoum Politics', and 'Mahdi's Withdrawal Dents Opposition Alliance'.<sup>99</sup> These also appear to have escaped the selectively attentive Dr Reeves. Sudan's government has also announced the holding of internationally-monitored, multi-party elections in December this year.<sup>100</sup>

Dr Reeves views on the obstruction of the Sudanese peace process, and who is to blame - that is to say the Sudanese government - are starkly at variance with less prejudiced and somewhat better-informed observers. Former President Jimmy Carter, for example, has been very candid about who he perceives as being to blame for the continuation of the Sudanese conflict:

The people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict. The biggest obstacle is US government policy. The US is committed to overthrowing the government in Khartoum. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States...Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the US government has basically promoted a continuation of the war.<sup>101</sup>

As even Dr Reeves may admit, this is not the Sudanese government speaking. He presumably accepts that Jimmy Carter is a man respected the world over for his work towards peace in various conflicts. Former President Carter is also a man who knows Sudan, and the Sudanese situation well, having followed the issue for two decades or more. Carter has further stated:

If the United States would be reasonably objective in Sudan, I think that we at the Carter Center and the Africans who live in the area could bring peace to Sudan. But the United States government has a policy of trying to overthrow the government in Sudan. So whenever there's a peace initiative, unfortunately our government puts up whatever obstruction it can.<sup>102</sup>

As unwilling as one might be to interpret former President Carter's views, he does not seem to think that the Sudanese Government or oil revenues are necessarily holding back the peace process. The United States has waged a seven-year campaign aimed at the diplomatic, economic and military destabilisation of Sudan culminating in a cruise missile attack on Khartoum which even Dr Reeves concedes was "extraordinarily ill conceived...an attack justified by not a shred of credible and sustainable evidence."<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, Dr Reeves amazingly states that the Clinton Administration has shown "indifference" towards Sudan.<sup>104</sup> He has further stated that: "The U.S. is...fully and vigorously committed to the [Sudanese] peace process".<sup>105</sup>

Carter actually touches on the Clinton Administration's militarily destabilisation of Sudan, bluntly stating that he believed that Washington's position of discouraging peace talks and encouraging a military solution, at least in part aided by military assistance to Sudan's neighbours, had a negative effect on the SPLA's interest in negotiating a political settlement:

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<sup>97</sup> See 'Sudan President Meets Opposition', News Article by BBC on 27 September 2000 at 01:07:11 EST (-5 GMT).

<sup>98</sup> 'Developments in Sudan Favour National Reconciliation: Mahdi', News Article by Agence France Presse on 25 December 1999 at 12:38:20.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, 'Opposition Leader Predicts Solution to Sudan's Conflict', News Article by PANA on 27 March 2000; 'Sudanese Rebel Group to Enter Khartoum Politics', News Article by Agence France Presse on 20 March 2000 at 15:03:57 EST; and 'Mahdi's Withdrawal Dents Opposition Alliance', News Article by PANA on 25 March, 2000 at 00:40:27 EST.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, 'Sudanese Elections Set for December', News Article by Agence France Press on 28 September 2000 at 02:39:32 EST (-5 GMT) and 'Sudan Sets December Date for Elections', News Article by Reuters on 27 September, 2000 at 08:24:55 EST.

<sup>101</sup> 'Carter, Others Say US Has Faltered in Africa', **The Boston Globe**, 8 December 1999.

<sup>102</sup> 'CARE Seeks Political Fix in Sudan', **Atlanta Journal-Constitution**, 7 October 1999.

<sup>103</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Silence on Sudan', **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

<sup>104</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Silence on Sudan', **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

<sup>105</sup> 'Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord', **The National Post**, 29 November 1999.

I think Garang now feels he doesn't need to negotiate because he anticipates a victory brought about by increasing support from his immediate neighbors, and also from the United States and indirectly from other countries.<sup>106</sup>

Given former President Carter's somewhat firm and unambiguous comments, which range from 1997 through to late 1999, perhaps Dr Reeves can put together a more intellectually challenging answer to his question "What sustains such destruction and suffering?" than his stock reply of Khartoum and oil revenues. Reeves' ignorance of former President Carter's perspective on why the peace process is stalling is once again surprising given that Reeves has gone out of his way to state that:

It is...imperative that news reporting and the ensuing commentary be guided as fully as possible by ascertainable facts. And nowhere is this imperative more critical than in discussions of the peace process that all agree is the only hope for this torn African nations - a just peace that respects the legitimate interests of all parties in Sudan's conflict."<sup>107</sup>

Dr Reeves is self-evidently a stranger to many ascertainable facts about Sudan - particularly those which would contradict his jaundiced, questionable paradigm about Sudan and the Sudanese situation. Perhaps Mr Reeves, a *parvenu* on the Sudan situation, albeit one armed with a computer, mouse and modem and "real-time" communications, genuinely thinks that he knows more about Sudan and the Sudan peace process than former president Carter. Reeves states that his sources on Sudan include in and out of the American government but not apparently Jimmy Carter.

Dr Reeves' dogged ignorance of the real dynamics of the Sudanese peace process, that is to say that the policy of the Clinton Administration to continue to militarily and politically destabilise Sudan - and that Washington has discouraged the SPLA from meaningful engagement in peace talks - must please his mentors inside and outside of the Administration. Reeves, for example, criticises the Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy's comment that: "It is important to do what we can to promote the peace process, which is not within the U.S. approach", labelling them as "Mr Axworthy's inaccurate statements about U.S. policy".<sup>108</sup> It is for readers to judge the credibility of Dr Reeves' criticisms of Mr Axworthy.

It is evident that Dr Reeves' professed concern about peace does not extend to the Egyptian peace initiative which has unfolded over the last year or so, and which seeks to bring the Sudanese Government and the NDA to the peace table, and which seeks to augment the IGAD initiative which only involves Khartoum and the SPLA. In claiming that "[o]nly the success of IGAD will provide a means of political reconciliation or accommodation"<sup>109</sup> he follows a clear State Department line meant to once again discourage any new attempts to bring peace to Sudan.

### **Dr Reeves and Human Rights**

Dr Reeves has professed deep concern about human rights violations in Sudan. This concern appears to be selective to say the very least. For example, he has eulogised SPLA commander Peter Gadet: stating that this man "has proved himself an exceptional leader of a very strong fighting force".<sup>110</sup>

Yet this is the very SPLA commander who has bombarded towns and civilians and whose forces contain significant numbers of child soldiers. Reuters has independently reported that the ranks of the Gadet's rebel forces had been "swollen by shy boy soldiers".<sup>111</sup> Reuters also took photographs of these child soldiers. One photograph appeared with the following caption: "Sudanese Child Soldiers Guard Rebel Military Headquarters". The report and the photograph were distributed around the world by the Reuters news agency. It is inconceivable that Professor Reeves, given his "long hours and days" of scouring the Internet could have missed this report - given the report's direct bearing on his chosen theme. If he did miss it then that is a reflection on his "professional" research skills. **The National Post**, the Canadian national daily, also reported the presence of SPLA child soldiers. Reporting from Tabanga in southern Sudan, **National Post** journalist Charlie Gillis unambiguously stated that most of the SPLA "soldiers" in one location he visited were: "adolescent boys, carrying...machine guns too big for their hands."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>106</sup> 'Ex-President Opposes Policy of Aiding Khartoum's Foes', **The Washington Times**, 25 September 1997.

<sup>107</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord', **The National Post**, 29 November 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord', **The National Post**, 29 November 1999.

<sup>109</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Sudan Crisis Calls for U.S.-Canada Accord', **The National Post**, 29 November 1999.

<sup>110</sup> Eric Reeves, 'Analysis of the Current Military Situation in Sudan', Posted on 8 August 2000 at 02:21:32 + 0100.

<sup>111</sup> 'Rag-tag Rebels Fight for Sudan's Oil Riches', News Article by Reuters on 14 February 2000 at 14:24:21.

<sup>112</sup> 'Meeting the Victims of Sudan's Oil Boom', **The National Post**, Canada, 27 November 1999.

How Dr Reeves can praise Gadet, ignoring the credibly reported presence of child soldiers amongst forces “attacking” oil-producing areas is amazing given the statutory war crimes Gadet is so clearly party to. The Statute of the International Criminal Court makes it clear that the use of child soldiers is a war crime.<sup>113</sup>

Given that at the heart of Dr Reeves’ stated concerns are allegations that the Khartoum authorities are waging war on and bombarding civilians, why does he unashamedly laud someone actively engaged in waging war on civilians and bombarding towns in southern Sudan? If Reeves concern is about human rights violations does Gadet’s use of child soldiers within oil-producing areas not deserve to be considered as “human rights violations committed in the name of oil”? Why turn a blind eye to independently documented accounts of child soldiers as reported by Reuters while choosing to accept unverified “reports” by rebels with a vested interest in presenting negative images? This selectivity undermines the credibility of anything Dr Reeves claims to stand for.

### **Dr Reeves and the SPLA**

What then is the nature of the SPLA rebels Mr Reeves seemingly wishes to see triumph in Sudan? Eight US-based humanitarian organisations working in Sudan, including CARE, World Vision, Church World Service, Save the Children and the American Refugee Committee, no friends of the Sudanese government, have publicly stated that the SPLA has: “engaged for years in the most serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, beatings, arbitrary detention, slavery, etc.”<sup>114</sup>

**The Economist** has summed up the general image of the SPLA when it stated that:

[The SPLA] has...been little more than an armed gang of Dinkas...killing, looting and raping. Its indifference, almost animosity, towards the people it was supposed to be “liberating” was all too clear.<sup>115</sup>

**The New York Times**, a vigorous critic of the Sudanese government, states that the SPLA: “have behaved like an occupying army, killing, raping and pillaging.”<sup>116</sup> It is not just Dr Reeves’ “exceptional leader” Peter Gadet who is a statutory war criminal. **The New York Times** has also described the SPLA commander-in-chief John Garang as one of Sudan’s “pre-eminent war criminals”.<sup>117</sup>

To take but one example of SPLA behaviour, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Sudan documented an incident in which SPLA forces attacked two villages in Ganyiel region in southern Sudan. SPLA personnel killed 210 villagers, of whom 30 were men, 53 were women and 127 were children. The Special Rapporteur stated that:

Eyewitnesses reported that some of the victims, mostly women, children and the elderly, were caught while trying to escape and killed with spears and pangas. M.N., a member of the World Food Programme relief committee at Panyajor, lost four of her five children (aged 8-15 years). The youngest child was thrown into the fire after being shot. D.K. witnessed three women with their babies being caught. Two of the women were shot and one was killed with a panga. Their babies were all killed with pangas. A total of 1, 987 households were reported destroyed and looted and 3, 500 cattle were taken.<sup>118</sup>

This is the organisation whose military victory Dr Reeves apparently wishes to see. Reeves pronounces upon genocide but is silent about the genocidal tendencies of the very organisation he supports. In the above example, the SPLA burnt, shot and hacked 127 children to death because they were from a different southern ethnic group. Reeves speaks of a war on civilians but this was only one of many similar instances of gross human rights abuses involving civilians. Amnesty International, African Rights, and Human Rights Watch have all documented example after example of SPLA attacks on villages and villagers - a self-evident war on civilians very often with ethnic, “genocidal” by Mr Reeves’ definitions, overtones. That this continues to this day is evident. The BBC reported on “[g]rowing friction in rebel-held southern Sudan”, stating that non-Dinka ethnic groups “have accused the SPLA or becoming an army of occupation”.<sup>119</sup> These and numerous other independent reports of SPLA ethnic cleansing of non-Dinka southern

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<sup>113</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court states that “Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities” is a war crime, (available at <http://untreaty.un.org/English/notpubl/rome-en.htm>)

<sup>114</sup> ‘Humanitarian Organizations Oppose Plan Providing Food to Sudanese Rebels’, Press Release by InterAction, the American Council for Voluntary International Action, Washington-DC, 30 November, 1999.

<sup>115</sup> **The Economist**, March 1998.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Misguided Relief to Sudan’, Editorial, **New York Times**, 6 December, 1999.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> **Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan**, UN Special Rapporteur Gaspar Biro, E/CN.4/1996/62, 20 February 1996.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Growing Friction in Rebel-Held Southern Sudan’, News Article by BBC Online on 9 June, 1999 at 16:36 GMT.

tribes provide a clear picture of an SPLA-controlled Sudan. Dr Reeves invokes Rwandan imagery while supporting similar genocidal forces in Sudan.

## Conclusion

From the safety of his office in Smith College, Dr Reeves has emerged as quite an armchair strategist with regard to the Sudanese civil war. For someone who was an opponent of the Vietnam War, having applied for and obtained “conscientious-objector status on moral grounds”<sup>120</sup>, Dr Reeves is remarkably gung-ho with other people’s blood. He appears to be content to fight to the last drop of southern Sudanese blood to satisfy his all too questionable and ill-informed prejudices regarding Sudan.

Dr Reeves concedes that the Sudanese situation is a complex one and yet he reduces the situation to one of questionable crudity. This review has only briefly touched on the many inconsistencies and double-standards contained within Dr Reeves’ “work” on Sudan. It has been sufficient to realise that Dr Reeves has been ill-equipped to come to terms with the reality of events in Sudan. This inability has not been assisted by a shameless selectivity in what he has chosen to highlight and what he has clearly ignored or simply been unaware of.

Amazingly, Reeves has the audacity to rail against those who “have failed to do the necessary homework on what’s really happening in Sudan.”<sup>121</sup> What is crystal clear is that he has failed to do anything approaching the necessary homework on Sudan. He has instead relied on hearsay, second and third-hand claims, sources that are self-evidently all too questionable - including out and out Islamophobes, as well as unadulterated propaganda spoon-fed to him by a discredited American Administration.

Dr Reeves states he is concerned about peace in Sudan. Former President Carter has clearly pointed out that it is Dr Reeves’ own government that is the biggest obstacle to a negotiated settlement and peace in Sudan. Perhaps Dr Reeves should focus on railing against Washington. Similarly, Reeves makes much of human rights abuses within Sudan. It is a simple sad fact that the vast majority of human rights abuses in Sudan are a direct consequence of the civil war in that country. As former President Carter has stated, the Clinton Administration is artificially sustaining the Sudanese civil war, and is thereby at least partly responsible for any human rights abuses that take place. Once again, perhaps Dr Reeves should focus closer to home. Rather than campaigning against the oil companies involved in the Sudan oil project for their alleged role in exacerbating and fuelling the civil war, Reeves should focus on the **real** culprit involved in the continuation of the conflict - the Clinton administration and its various agencies.

The “Ugly American” appears to have resurfaced during the Clinton Administration. Even **Time** magazine dedicated a cover page and story in 1997 to the question “Power Trip. Even its Best Friends are Asking: Is America in Danger of Becoming a Global Bully?”.<sup>122</sup> The **Economist** has also stated: “The United States is unpredictable; unreliable; too easily excited; too easily distracted; too fond of throwing its weight around.”<sup>123</sup> In microcosm, Professor Reeves has been also been unreliable, too easily excited, too easily distracted and too fond of throwing his weight around. His reputation can only but suffer, but unfortunately so does the reputation of Americans internationally. Dr Reeves would have us believe that he knows better than the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of African Unity, the Arab League, IGAD and the European Union. A clearer picture of arrogant, white middle-class patronising “Ugly Americanism” is hard to find.

Dr Reeves pronounces on Sudan that: “This is as morally unambiguous an issue as can be.”<sup>124</sup> The fact is that his stance and selectivity is anything but morally unambiguous. Reeves states that he is concerned about “genocide”, forced displacement, slavery, abuses of humanitarian food aid and the absence of peace in Sudan. He declares that “American silence in all this is unconscionable.”<sup>125</sup> Yet he stands silent as the rebels he eulogises engage in a war on civilians including murder, rape, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing and slavery-like practices - including the use of child soldiers. His own silence on these issues is unconscionable. **Dr Reeves is not a promoter of peace. He is a partisan of one side, a brutal, murderous rebel movement, in a tragic civil war**

Either Dr Reeves is ignoring that which is inconvenient to his case - in which case he is a poor academic - or he is simply not researching the issue thoroughly enough - in which case he is a poor academic. What Mr Reeves has to

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<sup>120</sup> Steve Pfarrer, ‘Spreading the Word on Sudan’, **Five College News**, 6 October 2000, available at [http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five\\_col/30291.htm](http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five_col/30291.htm)

<sup>121</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Just How Secure are Talisman’s Greater Nile Contracts in Sudan?’, 20 June 2000, Web Posted by Freedom Now on 20 June 2000 at 09:47:28 -0700 (PDT).

<sup>122</sup> **Time** magazine (Canadian Edition), August 4, 1997.

<sup>123</sup> **The Economist**, 21 September 1996.

<sup>124</sup> Steve Pfarrer, ‘Spreading the Word on Sudan’, **Five College News**, 6 October 2000, available at [http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five\\_col/30291.htm](http://www.gazettenet.com/10062000/five_col/30291.htm)

<sup>125</sup> Eric Reeves, ‘Silence on Sudan’, **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.



realise is that it is one thing to spend his time at Smith College dissecting literature written some centuries ago, and to vigorously debate or publish conjectural theories with fellow ivory-tower academics on what Shakespeare or Milton may or may not have meant in a particular play or poem. Nothing except academic pride gets bruised. Dr Reeves' academically unsound, flawed readings of events in Sudan have implications on a live situation with live people. At no point does Reeves even concede that he might be wrong on his all-too-questionable claims about Sudan. If he is even remotely in error the implications for all Sudanese, north and south, brown and black, are bad. Naivety is to be expected in ivory towerism; it is often an endearing feature of literary professors. Where it is less welcome is when it blunders so malignantly into the real world. Rather than a literary dissection, Dr Reeves is engaging in a vivisection of a people for which he is patently ill-equipped.

While Dr Reeves, given his choice of sources, may have missed them, it is undeniable that there have been significant changes within Sudan, and with regard to Sudan's regional and international standing. These changes have included a Constitution safeguarding civil liberties and human rights, legislation entrenching multi-party politics - and the return to Sudan of major political opposition parties because of these changes - constructive developments in the Sudanese peace process, and the freeing of all political prisoners. And Khartoum has also announced the holding of democratic multi-party parliamentary and presidential elections in Sudan in December 2000. Ongoing economic reforms and progress have also been enough for the International Monetary Fund to restore Sudan's IMF voting rights. A particular feature of the past two years have been improved relations with neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as the international community.

The gap between Dr Reeves' selective projection of Sudan and the reality of events in that country is self-evident.