EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

By ROBERT COLLINS and RICHARD HERZOG

During the first decade of the Anglo–Egyptian occupation of the Sudan, the newly formed Condominium Government had slowly established its rule in the Southern Sudan. A way to the south was first cleared through the sudd-choked channels of the Bahr al-Jabal and the Bahr al-Ghazāl Rivers, and administrators and troops soon followed to secure the control of the Upper Nile Valley for Britain and Egypt against the pretensions of other European powers. In 1898 Britain successfully rejected the claims of France to the Upper Nile, but it was not until 1906 that the British Government was able to eliminate the third competitor for control of the Southern Sudan—the Congo Free State. From 1902 to 1906 desultory negotiations were carried on between the British Foreign Office and the representatives of Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Congo Free State, enlivened only by provocative incidents precipitated by Leopold’s agents in the Southern Sudan. Both parties had valid legal and moral claims to the Upper Nile which were supported by the arms of the Force Publique on the one hand and Egyptian and Sudanese troops on the other. Finally in 1906 the dispute was amicably settled. By the Anglo–Congolese Agreement of that year, Leopold gave up his claims to the Southern Sudan in return for certain commercial concessions, guaranteed interest on a railway loan, and the retention of the Lado Enclave for the duration of his reign.1 On 17 December 1909, Leopold II died. Within a month the Belgian Minister in London informed the British authorities that the Belgian Government was prepared to consummate the Anglo–Congolese Agreement of 1906. A joint commission was duly appointed to effect the transfer and on 16 June 1910, the Lado Enclave was officially handed over to the Sudan Government authorities. The Southern Sudan, territorially speaking, was at last completely within the jurisdiction of the Sudan Government and the task of consolidating the administration of the south could now begin.

During the twelve years between Kitchener’s victory on the plains of Karari in 1898 and the taking over of the Lado Enclave in 1910, the Sudan Government had devoted its energies in the south to frustrating French and Congolese ambitions on the Upper Nile. But this preoccupation with French and, particularly, Congolese pretensions did not preclude the extension of Anglo–Egyptian administration to the inhabitants of the

Southern Sudan. Indeed it was during these years that the British administrators sought to control the multitude of diverse, warlike tribes who, proud of their independence, were reluctant to give up their anarchical freedom in return for good government. In bringing order to the Southern Sudan the British administrator faced a host of complex problems which defied solution and taxed the common sense and patience of even the most optimistic and enthusiastic of the government officials. The territory over which the Sudan Government exercised legal jurisdiction was in fact far from being under any kind of control. It was a wild and turbulent land where warfare and violence, springing from the way of life of the tribal peoples, were deep-rooted and traditional.

The principal causes of warfare and violence within and among the tribes of the Southern Sudan were cattle, women, and the unrestrained power of the individual tribal chiefs. Among many of the tribes of the Southern Sudan, and in particular the Nilotes, the basis of all legal, social, and economic transactions was cattle. The desire for and concern with cattle transcends any mere material interest, and the Nilote ‘is never so happy as when watching, tending, and talking cattle’. But cattle, unlike a currency (even of spearheads), are difficult to guard, and that such a commodity was the most important asset in the land made stealing frequent and the attendant violence inevitable. Moreover, in a land of swamp and forest, grazing land was in short supply particularly during the rainy season. This shortage naturally heightened the tension among the tribes. Often sickness or exhausted soil would necessitate movement to new land. And conflict often resulted.

Next to cattle, women were the principal cause of violence. All chiefs and many of their more prosperous tribesmen kept a number of wives. Violations of harems occurred frequently within tribes, and intertribal raids usually involved the stealing of women as well as cattle. The women themselves often contributed to the difficulties by running away from their proper spouse to some other for, as one British officer put it, a ‘change of air’. For all involved, ghastly punishments, reprisals, and even open warfare were time and again the ultimate results of such episodes.

Still another aspect of chaos arose from the power that individual chiefs could acquire under the tribal system. In many tribes the powers of the chief were definitely restricted and restrained, but in others an able and unscrupulous individual could grasp undivided power subject to no system of compulsory consultation. Strengthened by the use of ritual functions and supernatural sanctions, a leader could inspire blind devotion and undeviating loyalty among the superstitious and sorcery-minded peoples of the Southern Sudan. Thus the peace of a whole district often depended

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3 Sudan Intelligence Report (hereafter abbreviated as SIR), no. 166, Appendix G, 'Report on Quarrel between the Rizaigat Arabs and the Lolle River Dinkas'.
4 SIR, 178, App. A, 'Extracts from Meridi Intelligence Report'.
5 SIR, 165, App. E, 'Meridi Intelligence Report'. 
upon the vagaries of a single, primitive personality. In 1910 a British officer wrote:

The most important achievement of the patrol has been the capture of Sheikh Ashwol, whose influence over his large following and consistent hostility to the Government have been a constant menace to the peace of the district. Ashwol was the paramount chief of the Loitch, Akot, Kwek, and Galek sections of the Atwot Dinkas, and his ability to defeat any efforts on the part of the Government troops was implicitly believed in.6

Furthermore, the tribesmen possessed long memories. Feuds and tribal and intertribal disputes went on for years, and many cases brought to the District Commissioner to settle involved the ancestors of the people presently concerned. Such practices contributed to a pattern of intertribal warfare which invariably began as a minor incident and snowballed to wide-scale violence involving thousands of tribesmen. A typical example was a series of violent incidents which took place in Mongalla and Upper Nile Provinces. A great Nuer chief, Diu, invaded the country around Luang Deng to avenge the murder of his mother by a Dinka. During the march he cut through the Dinka tribes, drove them off, and occupied their country. The Ol and the Angai Dinkas, who had taken refuge in the Twi Dinka country to the south, were determined to recapture the large numbers of cattle taken from them by the Nuers. But the Dinkas, ‘beaten in open fight, did their best to recover the cattle by stealth’ and not by outright warfare. For several years the Dinkas tried by guile and deception to recover their cattle, but it was not until the death of Chief Diu that they grew bolder and openly attacked the Nuer. The Dinka leader, Machar Deng, was so skilful at such activities that Diu’s son and successor, Machar Diu, ‘stung to madness by his continual losses’, retaliated in October 1906 with a fierce raid which drove the Dinkas out of their northernmost point, Faijing, and forced them south to Kongor. From that time open hostilities became practically continuous. Machar Deng, the Dinka chief, never relaxed his ‘energetic cattle lifting’, and Machar Diu, the Nuer leader, replied with violent forays and full-scale attacks. During all this time the Nuers were complaining to the Mongalla authorities of ‘unprovoked raids’, while the Dinkas countered with similar grievances. Both Nuer and Dinka saw themselves in the right: ‘Machar Deng was recovering Dinka property seized by Diu, Machar Diu was defending cattle seized by his father in fair fight and therefore, in his opinion, lawful property’. The key to the British settlement, which took place in April 1909, was the removal of such rationales. All cases between Nuers and Dinkas prior to 1908 were cancelled. ‘On all present we impressed the necessity of forgetting old feuds, which would not be considered any more by the Government.’7 Thus was the

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6 SIR, 180.
anarchic spiral of violence brought to a halt, temporarily at least, in the lands east of the Bahr al-Jabal.

With so many original causes of violence and with the tendency for violence, once begun, to become self-sustaining, it was little wonder that fighting with lethal weapons became the tribal pastime of the Southern Sudanese. That the violence at times occurred wholly for its own sake, not even in the interest of tribal politics, was demonstrated by Chief Alikori of the Beris in September 1906. Chief Alikori lived east of Mongalla Post and sent his respects to the government. He announced that he would be pleased to receive a visit from the government in the dry weather but advised the officials at Mongalla that ‘whoever visited him should have sufficient escort, as otherwise he might have some difficulty in restraining his young bloods’.

In addition to the recurring and ingrained violence throughout the Southern Sudan, the British had to deal with a problem quite typical of a new administration—the delineation of borders and the location of the border area peoples. The principal difficulty centred in Zandeland, along the Congo–Nile watershed which formed the frontier between the Belgian Congo and the Sudan. Not only did the British administrators doubt the accuracy of the Belgian delineation of the watershed, but frequently the Zande chiefs straddling the boundary skilfully played one government off against the other. For instance Hokwa, a Zande chief living in Sudan territory, complained that Babwandara, a Zande chief residing in the Congo Free State, and his men were raiding some of his villages. In fact some of Hokwa’s people were living in Babwandara’s territory in the Congo Free State. Although warned to do so, Hokwa refused to move his people north of the watershed, and it was not until July 1908 that a meeting was called of all the chiefs concerned in order to settle this matter.

Their respective frontiers were explained to them. They were ordered to warn their respective people that if at the end of a fortnight’s time they were not in their proper district, they would pass to the sheikh of the district in which they elected to remain. No native was to be forced to move against his will, and no objections were to be raised as to their taking property and belongings with them on moving.

The settlement appears to have worked well, for in December 1908 it was reported that there were no longer any complaints about Babwandara and his people.

The success of such border settlements rested principally on the relations between the respective Belgian and British officers on either side of the frontier. Fortunately for the success of administration in both the Congo and the Southern Sudan, but frequently in contradistinction to official

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8 SIR, 146.
10 SIR, 170, App. B.
11 SIR, 173.
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positions, the relations between British and Belgian administrators were, on the whole, cordial. In May 1906 it was reported that 'whenever Belgian and British officers meet in the disputed territory, the greatest courtesy and friendliness is displayed'. The following year, the officer at Maridi Post reported: 'I am personally on the best of terms with all the Belgian officers.' Elsewhere relations, both official as well as private, were equally amicable and this co-operation was strengthened by such incidents as a British officer performing an urgent operation on a Belgian soldier. The main contact between British and Belgian officers came as a result of local violations of the frontier. In October 1910 the authorities on each side of the watershed took appropriate steps to prevent Chief M'Vuto, son of N'Doruma, from attempting to exercise his authority over former tribesmen living in what had become Belgian territory. A more common type of frontier violation was caused by the individual who, after committing some offence, crossed the border to avoid punishment. Commanding officers on both sides would promptly arrange for the return of such fugitives. In August 1909, the Central Government of the Congo at Boma had ordered chefs de poste to refuse to return runaways from countries with whom treaties of extradition did not exist and instead to refer the incident to the Central Government. In practice, however, the decree had little effect and did not disturb a custom born of necessity and mutual dependence. As one British officer laconically remarked: 'The decree would not interfere with any existing private arrangements between the officials of the two governments.'

Naturally enough in a country that managed to resist order in such manifold ways, the British administrators met a wide range of attitudes towards government in general and their administration in particular. Many of the tribes had a wholly unreasoning fear of government and its white representatives. Thus, a patrol sent through the Mandari country between Tombe and the Tapari River reported that

The inhabitants of these villages are a very wild lot and know nothing of government as yet. Whenever one came to a village, unless I had been able to send on ahead and let them know my mission was a peaceful one, all the inhabitants took to the bush, and it was then most difficult to get them to return.

In most cases the attitude of the tribes towards the government depended on the personal relationship between the District Commissioner and the tribesmen. To the peoples of the Southern Sudan the local administrative official was the government. Certainly the success or failure of the administration rested on the need for personal affirmations of rule and friendship on the part of the government officers. The need and desire of the tribesmen for personal rule by the local government representative can

12 SIR, 140.
13 'Meridi Intelligence Report, March—Feb., 1907', Intelligence I/5/52.
14 Ibid.
15 SIR, 195.
16 SIR, 188.
17 SIR, 186.
18 SIR, 153.
19 SIR, 177.
be cited in countless incidents. One such case was that of Chief M'Vuto, who wrote to a government official in December 1907 to ask 'if the Government were displeased with him, as no inspector had been sent to see him lately'. Chief Bagataka also inquired for the same reason, and the list of such examples could be extended indefinitely. Clearly the recurring problem of unvisited tribes was an unfortunate and inimical result to an expanding administration with limited resources of men and money.

Frequently the Anglo-Egyptian administration in the Southern Sudan was regarded with hostility when by chance or ignorance it was associated with the more oppressive régimes which had ruled the south during the latter half of the nineteenth century. A typical instance occurred on a march from Rikita to Maridi near the Ibba River. Chief Binza, a Zande sultan, sent a message to the government patrol telling it not to proceed to his village. The head of the patrol, Bimbāshi Ensor, a British medical officer, ignored the warning and subsequently arrived at the village. The chief stoutly denied having sent the message, to which Ensor commented:

A sheikh like Binza is of course very ignorant of the intentions of the present government, and the proceedings of the old 'Turkish' Government were not such as to make the Zande in love with any strangers from the north, and in these unexplored districts the people only very dimly, if at all, recognize the difference between the methods of the two Governments.

Certainly it was an ambiguous understanding of the 'difference in methods' which caused, in May 1905, a chief to come into Wau and ask the government for twelve sacks of dura. The request was refused as 'it was only made in order to endeavour to impress the Government that he was not worth plundering. The Dinkas find it very difficult to believe that this is not our ultimate object in staying here.' Many tribes while not actually hostile to the government were reluctant to co-operate because they were not convinced of its permanence. Labour difficulties in Mongalla Province early in 1904, for example, were attributed to the fact that during the previous twelve months, six different officers had appeared, each as would-be governors. A willingness to work and an adequate labour supply would be forthcoming 'when the Baris and others realize that a British officer will stay with them'. Similar difficulties were encountered in the southern Bahr el-Ghazāl where the rotation of troops would be interpreted by the people as a government withdrawal. When the Congolese forces were withdrawn from the Southern Sudan it was noted that the

Belgian evacuation has already produced a marked effect for the better in the general attitude and bearing of many of the sheikhs and inhabitants in the

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20 SIR, 163, App. B, 'Bahr el-Ghazal Province Monthly Diary'.
21 SIR, 163, App. C, 'Report on a March from Rikita Post to Meridi'.
23 Matthews to Wingate, 12 Apr. 1904, Int., VIII/2/12; SIR, 163, App. D, 'Notes on Dinkas in Eastern Bahr el-Ghazal'.

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district. The natives now fully realize how they stand, which it was quite im-
possible for them to do so long as the Belgian posts were occupied.24

Many tribes, of course, were friendly to the government, but their motives 
were by no means uniform. The slave tribes of the southern Bahr al-Ghazāl, 
grateful for their liberation from the Zande sultan Yambio, settled in the 
vicinity of the Maridi Post and became ‘intelligent, hard-working and loyal 
servants to the Government’.25 Similar unsubtle purposes convinced the 
Jurs of the eastern district of the Bahr al-Ghazāl, who were pressed between 
the powerful Dinka to the north and east and the war-like Zande to the 
south and west, to be attentive and amenable to the demands of the 
administration.26 This desire for protection was undoubtedly the most 
important single factor in the ready acceptance of government by the 
tribes. In February 1908 a situation, unusual by western standards, arose 
when five Nuer chiefs requested that the District Commissioner of the 
Zaraf Valley should tax them that year.

The reason is that the Dinkas twit the Nuers with not being under Government 
protection, and point to their immunity for taxation as a proof; the Dinkas say 
that our quasi-friendly patrols are only undertaken with a view to locating the 
wealth of the Nuer cattle, when an organized Government raid will follow. 
Whatever the Nuers may believe, they would undoubtedly feel more secure if 
put on an equal footing with the other tribes. . . .27

Such strange occurrences were not really unusual in the Southern Sudan. 
Here British civil servants and military men sought to administer order 
through a strange amalgam of power, understanding, common sense, 
humanitarianism, and a knowledge of the strange and diverse peoples which 
they governed. In the midst of maddening inconsistency, where gifts 
would be welcomed by one tribe as a sign of friendship and scorned by 
another as a sign of fear, certain techniques of administration seem to have 
been repeatedly employed in dealing with the people.

The government officials before extending their administration to a tribe 
would first attempt to gain as much information as possible about the 
people before making the initial government visit. To this end they sought 
out escaped prisoners of the tribe or members of a near-by tribe friendly to 
the government. Invariably it was found that military strength was a 
necessary condition for negotiation, and frequently when an official found 
himself practically without escort, it was simply better to withdraw until 
he could return with negotiable strength. As there was in fact a continuous 
shortage of troops, a considerable amount of deception became necessary. 
When arguing against certain measures proposed to deal with a rumoured 
attack on a government post in the southern Bahr al-Ghazāl, a British 
officer wrote:

26 SIR, 163.
As our occupation of these posts at considerable distances apart, with comparatively so few troops, is in great measure a game of bluff, and any action on our part which would be attributed to fear by the natives is to be avoided, although of course no precautionary measures should be neglected.28

Such bluff could be enhanced by a certain stance and style of action. As usual, the British officials kept a certain distance between themselves and the indigenous people, and this aloofness undoubtedly contributed to the respect shown towards the Sudan Government administrators. The bad manners and lack of deference which the Belgians allowed from the natives drew British comment, and on one occasion it was noted with incredulity that 'the sultans actually dine with them (the Belgians) at table'.29

In addition to detachment the British officials were not loath to employ a tough line of approach. When Borton Bey first wanted to visit Anok, 'King of the Aliab Dinka', he was told of a route through the swamp which would provide a way to the heretofore inaccessible chief. The officer sent for Chief Akaja

and told him he was to take me by this route to Anok. He strongly denied that there was any such route. On my saying that if there was not, he and his people would start next day to cut one under my supervision, he suddenly remembered it.30

A similar tone was used to achieve the proper effect in the interests of a dura-growing scheme in Mongalla Province. According to arrangements, dura had been issued to selected chiefs on the following conditions: after the harvest each man was to repay twice the amount received, if the year was favourable, and was to sell any over his own requirements to the government official at a fair price. When first agreed, the arrangement had been very popular, but four months later when the time came to do the extra work of preparing more ground, most of the chiefs were 'grumbling at it saying that birds eat dura while growing'. The British officer concerned was able to convince the people to clear the extra ground and plant the seed by pointing out 'to these malcontents that I am well aware that birds eat dura, but that I have also known of Governments eating cattle and sheep when dura is not forthcoming'.31

When such techniques did not get the desired results, other more involved means of manipulation were available. The British attempted at times to 'educate' indigenous rulers to a desired point of view. For example, Chief Musa Hamid of the Western District of the Bahr al-Ghazāl had been arrested for inciting his men to murder an African soldier. 'It was decided that he would be reinstated but he was to be detained at Khartoum for at

30 'Mongalla Intelligence Report, May, 1904', Int., VIII/2/12.
31 'Mongalla Intelligence Report, March, 1904', Int., VIII/2/12.
least six months to see more civilized methods of administration,'32 More often an erring chief was simply deposed and another ruler appointed in his place.33 This technique, however, was to prove inimical to the general framework of British policy which was ‘to support the sultans and sheikhs in their dealings with their own subjects—allowing them to administer according to their tribal customs as far as possible but under certain reservations’.34 The deposition and replacement of the tribal leaders seriously undermined the authority of the chiefs on which the whole basis of British policy rested. It was a contradiction almost implicit in Indirect Rule and one which the British administration in the Southern Sudan never succeeded in overcoming.

Although the administration did not in general interfere with tribal customs, certain practices simply could not remain under British rule. Among these was slavery, which in the Southern Sudan centred in the northern and western parts of the Bahr al-Ghazāl. Daym az-Zubayr, for example, ‘had been drawn upon for slaves during so many years by so many people, that the country round had practically run dry of anybody worth stealing’.5 Throughout all of the western Bahr al-Ghazāl there were Arabs whose principal livelihood was slaves. Such a situation was perhaps inevitable when custom saw nothing wrong in the practice, and when slavery was clearly ‘the only trade which has any money in it in these parts, except perhaps ivory’.36

The policy of the government towards slavery attempted to ensure that the elimination of slaves would not disrupt the whole fabric of society, even if a gradual reduction meant that many would still live out their lives as slaves. The policy of the Sudan Government asserted that:

all slavery in the Sudan should in due course come to a natural end. Its aim therefore has been to do nothing that will delay the natural ending of slavery, but it was not desirable and would not have been fair to other classes of the people of the Sudan to take active steps to produce that result in too short a time. This natural end will be brought about by the decision of the government that no person born after the reoccupation of the country in 1898 is otherwise than free and by the recognition of the principle that no master has the right to retain Sudanese servants against their will.37

Steps were soon taken after the reconquest to ensure the end of the traffic in slaves. In 1899 both the importing and the exporting of slaves was made illegal, and anti-slavery posts were established in the Blue Nile Province although for financial reasons none were erected in the western Bahr al-Ghazāl for some years.38 On the western border of the Sudan both

32 SIR, 161.
35 SIR, 161, App. F, ‘Notes on the Advisability of Starting a Slavery Department Post in the North West Bahr el-Ghazal’.
36 Ibid.
38 SIR, 162.
the French and the British administrations began issuing passports in 1910 with the object in view to end the slave caravans which plied between the two territories. Yet inexplicably the Slavery Repression Department, which was in charge of slavery and the slave trade, was hindered by an absurdly inadequate legal position. If a caravan was stopped by members of the Department but found to possess no slaves, the Department members involved were personally liable for illegal detention. The nature of the job required far broader powers for the inspectors to meet with any kind of success. As one Department member noted:

Spending a few days in towns like Ragaa, Kossinga, or Kafia Kingi, it is impossible to tell if there are many slaves there, as all the grass tukls have walls made of grass and wood around them, and nobody knows what is inside. The only way to really find out would be in case of a fire.

Certain indigenous practices were, of course, to be stamped out immediately. Mutilation as a form of punishment was in this category, as was the famous bengye. As practised by the non-Zande tribes, bengye meant that a suspect would drink the ground-up seeds of the toppa tree. If innocent, he supposedly vomited with no ill-effects. If guilty, he died. Accused persons were often anxious to drink the mixture as a means of proving their innocence, frequently with unfortunate results. The Sudan Government and its officials were unyielding and unambiguous in the prohibition of the use of bengye.

There are several men in Meridi prison now undergoing long sentences for being present when this toppa was given and death ensued: I found it convenient to try them for 'abetting suicide', which is what it really amounted to, as the people who drank it and died had themselves prepared the concoction, and drank it of their own free will.

In a very real sense, this policy of prohibiting certain tribal practices tended to upset the order which the administration was trying to bring to the Southern Sudan. Specifically, the presence of government with its inevitable restrictions undermined in many ways the authority of the tribal chiefs, yet these chiefs were an integral and vital part of the government's system of administration. In June 1908, for example, it was noted that the great Zande sultan, Mangi, did not seem to exert any longer an effective authority over his people. This decline was due in large part 'to the fact that he cannot put people ruthlessly to death as he did formerly'. Not only were the humanitarian requirements inhibiting to the powers of a chief, but so was the attainment of the government's basic goal—the
cessation of intertribal warfare. By 1908 it had become clear in some areas that 'in consequence of continued peace there is a tendency for tribes to split, as the necessity of one strong leader is no longer apparent to the people'.

Furthermore the government's practice of making and breaking chiefs abetted this decline in the power of the tribal chief. Chiefs were often appointed whose power was really artificial, as with the Zande Chief Oku who, when appointed, had 'openly stated that his following was so small that he could not maintain his position if the troops were withdrawn'. Within a few months poor Oku was 'continually running away and leaving his people in the lurch'—clearly not helping the cause of administration by native authorities. Indeed the very idea of an appointed chief placed the individual involved in an uncomfortable, even ambiguous, dual role. Often such a ruler had difficulty in realizing that 'however much the government must insist on obedience, he is regarded as and expected to show himself, a big man amongst his own people'. For a variety of reasons, therefore, the attempts of the government to rule through friendly chiefs developed in practice serious inconsistencies which formed a recurring subject for administrative concern.

Beside the elimination of certain inhuman practices, little was really expected from the Southern Sudanese. Taxes were, of course, levied, but the assessments were light and payment could be in kind. Certain chiefs were responsible for keeping roads and rest houses within their territory in usable condition. In exchange for these nominal obligations the government would, among other things, hear judicial cases. This in itself was a major task for the administration, for the Southern Sudanese were a litigious people whose two principal preoccupations, cattle and women, ultimately led to an unbelievable number of cases involving one or the other or both. Even where a case was first heard by a chief, the right of appeal to the District Commissioner was always open. On frequent occasions the chiefs themselves sent the more important and invariably more complex cases to the government officials. On every visit to the tribes large numbers of cases were always on the docket awaiting consideration.

The really primary goal, necessary to all other forms of administration, was the achievement of peace among the tribes. At times precautionary advice on self-defence was all the government could provide, and this was seldom heeded. In other instances, tribes were relocated in areas where they could be easily protected by some government post, or a new post was formed in a hitherto unprotected area. The punitive patrol was, of course, frequently employed, yet this device often failed to bring about the desired

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46 SIR, 192.
47 Two bullocks for every 100 head of cattle, SIR, 175.
48 'Mongalla Intelligence Report, Jan., 1904', Int., VIII.2.12.
results. For instance, in June 1908 a strong patrol was sent against the Beir tribe who lived east of Bor near the River Veveno. Although the patrol failed to capture the Beir Chief, Lom, over 1000 cattle were taken and the Beir villages burned to the ground.\textsuperscript{50} The British had believed that an effective blow against Lom would result in the desired tractability. Either the attack or the reasoning was inadequate, however, for the Beir raids continued. In the sixteen months between December 1909 and April 1910, the Beirs killed 101 Dinkas, wounded sixty, and captured large numbers of cattle. In November 1910 British officials were again foreseeing that ‘it will be necessary sooner or later to take some steps to prevent these depredations on tribes who look to the Sudan Government for protection and who pay taxes’; and it was not until a strong punitive expedition was sent against the Beirs in the winter of 1911–12 that their raiding ceased.\textsuperscript{51}

The Rizayqāt Arab–Dinka feud provided another instance of intertribal warfare unmitigated by the advent of administration. The raids and counter-raids between the Rizayqāt and the Dinka dated from an old tribute which the Dinkas paid the Arabs when in the neighbourhood of the Bahr al-ʿArab during the dry season.\textsuperscript{52} Although refusal to pay was probably the original cause, violence was constantly re-kindled by some new factor. In June 1908, for example, fighting commenced when the Rizayqāt attempted to cheat the Dinkas regarding a hunting agreement which they had made and refused to deliver ivory to the Dinkas which was due to them under the agreement.\textsuperscript{53} The government for its part was slow in gaining control over the Dinkas on the Lol River, and it was only after May 1908, ‘owing to a tour made by Bimbāshi Greenwood when he stopped some fighting and settled an old quarrel, that the mamur of Chak Chak has been able to get in touch with their Sheikhs’.\textsuperscript{54} Action against the Rizayqāt Arabs was similarly slow, as the government feared that intervention would precipitate their shaykh, Mūsā Madibbū, closing the trade route from Nahūd to Shakkā and Raga.\textsuperscript{55} Mūsā Madibbū himself was willing to settle matters and wrote to the government repeatedly requesting a meeting for that purpose.\textsuperscript{56} By 1909, however, his control over his people had been weakened by his flight before the forces of ‘Ali Dinār, Sultan of Dār Fūr, and the fighting between the Rizayqāt and the Dinkas continued. In spite of efforts by the government hostility between the Arabs and the Dinkas on the Bahr al-ʿArab continued for many years—a microcosm of the general feelings of enmity between the Northern and Southern Sudan.

Progress in intertribal peace was in the Southern Sudan slow in becoming a reality. The government, operating with limited resources in a vast land, simply could not cope with the innumerable incidents of

\textsuperscript{50} SIR, 167; SIR, 169, App. C, ‘Instructions to the Officer Commanding Beir Patrol’.
\textsuperscript{51} SIR, 196.
\textsuperscript{52} SIR, 200.
\textsuperscript{53} SIR, 167.
\textsuperscript{55} SIR, 170.
\textsuperscript{56} SIR, 175; SIR, 176.
intertribal friction. Many times a native chief, true to his promises to keep the peace, would not immediately retaliate for a raid made upon his village, but too frequently government inaction would soon force the chief to defend himself according to the old ways of tribal relations.\(^57\) In spite of the limitation imposed on the administration by insufficient funds and lack of personnel, the inability of the Sudan Government to bring intertribal peace to the Southern Sudan must be counted as a major failure of its administration and one which prevented for too long the development of other aspects of the land and its people.

In spite of the obstacles placed in the way of economic and social development by the continual chaos and violence in the Southern Sudan, there were efforts by these early administrators to develop the productive capacities of the south. Various officers started small experiments with such crops as cotton and maize, and the Department of Woods and Forests occasionally attempted salutary reforms such as the orders against burning grass in the forests issued in October 1903.\(^58\) Yet the various agricultural activities undertaken from 1900 till 1910 were essentially independent projects started by individual administrators and appear to have had virtually no impact on the Southern Sudan as a whole.

Trade was carried on more extensively but in an equally haphazard manner as agriculture. The government itself engaged in barter with the people, although British trade goods were not of a particularly good quality, and they refused, unlike the Belgians, to trade guns and powder.\(^59\) Consistent attempts were made to introduce currency into general use, and in Mongalla the wood-cutters for the Nile steamers were induced to accept money payments. They began gradually to purchase government goods, and it was 'hoped they will have a civilizing effect as well as acquainting them with the currency'.\(^60\) In the White Nile Province, the people had been urged to collect and sell their extensive gum crops in order to pay their taxes in money rather than in kind.\(^61\) To the south, a similar development took place among the Baris of Mongalla Province. Borton Bey had introduced bananas from Gondokoro, and the Baris discovered that the fruit flourished on their islands in the Nile. By October 1908, the tribesmen were bringing in large bunches for sale and paying their tax in currency.\(^62\) But these were isolated examples at best and in general the government did nothing to further economic development. In December 1907 a British officer observed that 'no great advance can be made in the colony without more private enterprise and capital—that of which appear to be forthcoming'.\(^63\) He spoke at a time when, 'apart from roads and railways, very little money has been spent by the Government'.\(^64\) Unable to provide the needed investment itself from the limited revenue,
the Sudan Government appeared, with a certain justification, reluctant to allow private capital to enter, and consequently no private concessions were granted until 1911.65

The most important single factor in the administration and development of the Southern Sudan was the construction of transport facilities. Although river transport was cheap and provided a main artery to the north, it could only serve the riverine areas, and even so the Nile and its tributaries had to be continually cleared of the sudd. In 1907, in accordance with the Anglo-Congolese Agreement of 1906, a Nile–Congo Railway survey was conducted from Mahagi to Rajjāf. Unfortunately the estimates showed that the route would be expensive to construct and derive only limited profits.66 Upon the death of Leopold II in 1909 the scheme was quietly dropped.

Progress in motor transport was similarly uncertain. The Belgians had built a motor road between Rajjāf and Aba on the Congo–Nile Divide, but the service was unpredictable and the road expensive to maintain. In the Bahr al-Ghazāl motor lorries were tried but without great success, and in spite of the broadly favourable outlook, motor transport in the Bahr al-Ghazāl was slow to develop. In February 1910 a motor lorry was at work between Gadain (south of Mashra' ar-Riqq) and Wau, but carts had to be employed during the rainy season when the road was not sufficiently dry for use by motor vehicles, and traffic and game, particularly elephants and hippopotami, churned the road surface into an impassable quagmire.67 The most concerted and extensive non-military efforts of the government in the Southern Sudan were against the sleeping sickness. By December 1907 it was known that the tsetse fly (Glossina palpalis) was not only the carrier of the disease but that it was potent only for a few hours after sucking the blood of an infected person.68 The fly was found only in deep shade near water, appearing most active in the early and late parts of the day. Its range from such a site was variously estimated at from twenty to 300 yards. The government immediately took measures to combat the fly. Grass and scrub were cleared for a distance of thirty yards from all water sites used for drinking and washing; orders were issued that water could only be drawn between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and that river banks were not to be frequented except during these hours: all chiefs were warned to advise their people of the danger of remaining in shady places along the banks of rivers and pools; and troops and carriers were on no account to be halted for a rest within 200 yards of any stream or pool.69 The best deterrent to the disease, of course, was to prevent people already sick from coming into a healthy area since only infected blood could make the fly a carrier. Accordingly, many schemes were employed not only to eliminate
the fly, but to restrict the unnecessary movements of the tribesmen from one region to another. The Belgians, once the Congo Free State had become a colony, attempted to prevent diseased persons from entering the Lado Enclave from other parts of the Congo. An examining station was set up at Ibamba in October 1909 and others were planned at Loka and at Yakoma on the Ubangi.\(^70\) The safety of the land north of the Enclave would indeed be dependent upon the efficacy of such stations, for fly was found by December 1907 to be present in about eleven places on the Congo–Sudan frontier between Maridi and Yambio.\(^71\) It was several years, however, before the administration actually began policing the border in an attempt to prevent infected persons from entering the Sudan.

Although effective administration proceeded slowly in the southern Bahr al-Ghazāl, in the western district of the province the government erected examining posts and quarantine camps for sleeping sickness on the three main roads from the French Congo to the Sudan. Many of the water-courses were cleared of brush and the chiefs were warned not to harbour refugees who had entered the country by devious routes to by-pass the examining stations. The chiefs were frightened enough of the disease to be co-operative, and one of the two cases discovered in 1910 among Africans recently arrived from the French Congo had been sent in by a local chief to a government examining station.\(^72\) Such co-operation was typical when regarding sleeping sickness prevention in particular and health matters in general, and there is no doubt that in such matters the government consistently received better co-operation and more appreciation than in any other activity.\(^73\) As with all things in the early days of British administration in the Sudan, strange twists occurred in the struggle against the sleeping sickness. Thus in 1907 Captain Ensor, investigating for the Sudan Sleeping Sickness Commission, examined as many persons as possible, including those he would meet on the roads. Such examinations included checking glands of the neck, as their swelling was a symptom of the disease. Ensor reported that the people did not appear to object in the least to such an examination and

look upon it merely as a foolish whim on my part or perhaps they consider it to be a ‘Turkish’ form of salutation, as on one occasion a native after being thus examined by me wished to return the compliment by passing his hand down my own cervical regions.\(^74\)

Yet except for the border regions in the southern Bahr al-Ghazāl the efforts of the few British, Egyptian, and Syrian medical officers in

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\(^70\) SIR, 183, App. II, ‘Distribution of Tsetse Fly and Sleeping Sickness in the Lado Enclave and the System of Surveillance Adopted by the Belgian Authorities in the Lado and Congo’.

\(^71\) SIR, 159.


\(^73\) SIR, 163, App. B, Ensor to Hill, 17 Dec., 1907.

co-operation with the administration and the tribes managed to keep the sleeping sickness under control in the Southern Sudan at exactly the time it was sweeping in epidemic form through the adjacent territories of the Congo and French Equatorial Africa.

Such success, however, was not a frequent occurrence in the Southern Sudan, which in the main had changed little during the first decade of Anglo-Egyptian administration. To be sure intertribal warfare had been reduced but it had not been eliminated. Little if any economic development had taken place and even the improvement of the transport facilities was not impressive. Crippled by lack of funds and personnel, and primarily concerned with removing the Congolese, the Sudan Government itself appeared content to ignore the Southern Sudanese and to allow its representatives in the south to govern them with little direction or encouragement from Khartoum. What overall policy the administration had devised was at best vague, ill-defined, and self-contradictory on the one hand and simply not conducive to the multi-sided development of the area on the other. Such criticisms, however, should not detract from the unflagging efforts of the individual British administrators in the Southern Sudan who with loyalty and devotion to the people they ruled tried, in these early days, to introduce government to a wild and belligerent people. Many were struck down by disease; others were sent home exhausted in mind and body; and several were murdered by hostile tribesmen and killed by wild beasts. To the work of these men the Republic of the Sudan today owes an imperishable debt of gratitude for laying the first foundations of civilization in its southern provinces.