

much seems to be explained as "merely an inter-tribal problem", but displacement has gone on, and is still going on, and in Ruweng County, it is hard to deny that displacement is now, and has been for some time, because of oil. This is a commodity which is seen increasingly as, and may well be, the enemy of a people with nowhere to go where they can enjoy human security.

4 Oil and Conflict Examined

Talisman Energy Inc. is the largest independent oil and gas company in Canada, and perhaps the third or fourth largest in the world but the distinction of being the first foreign oil company to seek to capture oil in the Muglug Basin of southern Sudan goes to Chevron, which was granted a concession in 1975 and started drilling in 1977. In 1979 it made its first discovery. In 1980, it made a significant discovery in the Unity/Talih area north of Bentiu in Western Upper Nile, & by May, 1982, it had discovered substantial reserves of oil in Heglig, just inside South Kordofan.

The Canadian company, Arakis, entered the scene after Chevron withdrew following armed attacks against its facilities. First Chevron halted its work in February, 1984, after three workers were killed at Rubkona (now planned to be the operational base of IPC), decided in 1988 to resume, and then withdrew in 1990 and relinquished its concessions: enter Arakis.

Peter Verney, editor of Sudan Update, claims that when Chevron resumed operations in the late 1980's, it tried to support a militia from the Baggara, who are Arab cattle herders with a long history of conflict with Nuer and Dinka over water and grazing rights.

There can be no understanding of the oil conflict in Western Upper Nile without keeping in mind the interplay of Baggara, Nuer, and Dinka. But to see conflict as being nothing more than some kind of traditional interplay between armed cattle-herders is too limited.

Arakis was able to pick up the Chevron holdings for a small stake. But development required a much bigger stake, one which was revealed as being too big for Arakis: enter Talisman. On October 8, 1998, it completed the acquisition of Arakis Energy Corporation, thereby acquiring a 25% interest in the oil exploration and development project in Sudan being operated by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC).

Leonardo Franco gave attention to claims that "long-term efforts by the various governments of the Sudan to protect oil production have included a policy of forcible population displacement in order to clear oil-producing areas and transportation routes of southern civilians, who were suspected of supporting sabotage actions by the SPLA."

He claims that the economic, political and strategic implications of the oil issue have exacerbated the conflict and led to a deterioration of the overall situation of human rights and the respect for humanitarian law, and diminished the slim chances for peace. On Thursday, December 2, 1999, the Reuters correspondent in Khartoum reported that sixteen militia commanders once aligned