

*Sadly, Professor Collins died shortly after submitting this article. His friend and colleague, Tom Ofcansky, a regular contributor to ARD, has provided this tribute.*

## ROBERT OAKLEY COLLINS (1933- 2008)

On 11 April 2008, Bob Collins—who was the leading historian of Sudan—died from cancer at the age of 75 in Santa Barbara, California.

Collins' academic accomplishments included a B.A. from Dartmouth (1956); a B.A. and M.A. degrees from Balliol College (1956 and 1960); and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University (1958 and 1959). His early academic posts included Williams College, Massachusetts; and Columbia University. In 1965, he joined the History Department at the University of California-Santa Barbara. During his long career, Collins supervised thirteen Ph.D. candidates from the US and Sudan. He urged all of them to gain a sound knowledge of the country's geography in order to understand the nature of Sudan's politics and wars.

In 1994, he retired but became Professor Emeritus and continued to lecture and advise students about Sudan's history and future prospects. Additionally, he regularly lectured at academic conferences and frequently advised several governments about political developments in Sudan.

During his long career, he published scores of books and hundreds of journal articles. In 1984, Collins received the John Ben Snow Foundation Prize for his *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in Southern Sudan, 1918-1956*. He also received the Order of Sciences from the Democratic Republic of the Sudan (1980). Additionally, Collins served on the editorial board of *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* and the *Journal of African Studies*.

In late years, he collaborated with J. Millard Burr, a former relief coordinator for Operation Lifeline Sudan, US Agency for International Development. They produced several volumes including *Africa's Thirty Years' War: Chad, Libya, and the Sudan, 1963-1993*; *Requiem for the Sudan: War, Drought and Disaster Relief on the Nile*; *Darfur: The Long Road to Disaster*; *Alms for the Jihad*; and *Revolutionary Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi and the Islamist State, 1989-2000*. These volumes will remain classics for years to come.

Collins also had amassed a considerable library. In the early 1990s, he donated his collection to Durham University and to the University of Bergen as both institutions had strong commitments to Sudanese studies.

Apart from his academic pursuits, Collins was an accomplished traveller. He spent much time travelling throughout Sudan, especially in the southern region, learning the country's geography and its people. Collins also traversed most of the Nile River.

He never tired of sharing his reminiscences with colleagues and friends. A favorite episode of mine concerned one of his trips to southern Sudan. Collins inadvertently left a typewriter on a railway platform. Some weeks later, Collins returned to the station and found the undisturbed typewriter just where he left it. He always ended the story by saying how much Sudan had changed since then.

Collins led a full life. In my last conversation with him he said his career was over. Perhaps, but his many books and articles will continue to educate students and scholars for sometime to come.

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