

THESE PEOPLE, WHERE ARE THEY?

Ryszard Kapuściński

They are supposed to be here – but where are they? Rain is falling and it is cold. The clouds hang low – thick, dark, motionless. As far as the eye can see: swamps, bogs, floodwaters. The single road leading here is also flooded. Our cars, although they are powerful all-terrain vehicles, have become stuck in the mud, buried in the black, viscous goo, and are now standing tilted at the most extraordinary angles, in ruts, puddles, narrow crevices. We have had to climb down and continue on foot, getting drenched in heavy downpours. We pass a high escarpment, from whose summit a flock of peacocks surveys us carefully and anxiously. I notice a man in the grass by the roadside. He is curled up, shriveled, shivering

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	Natural increase			Net migration			Total increase		
	1980	1999	2000	1980	1999	2000	1980	1999	2000
Netherlands	4.7	3.8	4.1	3.6	2.8	3.3	8.3	6.6	7.5
Austria	-0.2	0.0	0.2	1.2	2.4	2.1	1.0	2.4	2.3
Portugal	6.5	0.8	1.4	4.3	1.0	1.1	10.8	1.8	2.5
Finland	3.9	1.6	1.4	-0.5	0.7	0.5	3.4	2.3	1.9
Sweden	0.6	-0.7	-0.3	1.2	1.5	2.7	1.8	0.8	2.4
UK	1.6	1.1	1.2	-0.6	2.8	2.3	1.0	3.9	3.5

Source: Eurostat (2001). *Statistics in focus* (3-15/2001), Brussels.

with malaria; he does not extend his hand, does not beg, looks at us with eyes that ask for nothing, that are devoid even of curiosity. In the distance, far away, we spot several ruined barracks. Other than that, it is desolate. And wet, for this is the rainy season.

This place is called Itang. It is located in western Ethiopia, close to the border with Sudan. For several years now a camp has stood here housing 150 000 Nuer – refugees from the Sudanese war. There were still here just a few days ago. But today the place is deserted. Where did they go? What happened to them? The only thing that disturbs the stillness of these swamps, the only thing you hear, is the croaking of the frogs, a frenzied, toadlike uproar, loud, relentless, deafening.

In the summer of 1991 the United Nations high commissioner for refugee affairs, Sadako Ogata, was going to Ethiopia to visit the camp in Itang, and I had been invited to join her. I dropped everything and went. It was a rare opportunity: camps like these are located in remote places, difficult to reach; and, more frequently than not, there is no admittance. Life in them is sheer misery, a sad vegetative existence, perpetually on the brink of death. Yet other than a group of doctors and the employees of various charitable organizations, few people know much about these camps; the world scrupulously isolates such places of collective suffering, preferring not to know.

I always thought that it would be impossible to see Itang. First, you have to get to Addis Ababa. There, you must charter (but from whom?) and pay for (but with what?) an airplane to take you five hundred kilometers to Gambela, the only town near Itang with an airport. Since the town borders Sudan, securing permission to land would be indescribably difficult. But let us assume that you have a plane, and even permission. You arrive in Gambela. What now? Whom should you go see in this poor little town, where a number of Ethiopians stand motionless, barefoot in torrential rain in the empty marketplace? What are they thinking about? What are they waiting for? And where in the world are you

Migration

Stocks

Stocks are the total number of immigrants – the result of years of migrant flows.

Data on stocks usually come from population registers but also from censuses and other sources. European countries tend to keep more data on foreign citizens, while the traditional countries of settlement are more concerned with counting the foreign born.

Europe, foreign citizens, workers, and foreign born

	Foreign citizens as % of population		Foreign workers as % of workforce		Foreign born as a % of population	
	1990	1999	1990	1999	Year	%
Austria	5.9	9.2	7.4	9.5	..	..
Belgium	9.1	8.8	7.1	8.7	..	..

going to find a car in Gambela, or a driver, people to help you pull the car out of the mud, ropes, and shovels? And what about provisions? But let us assume you have all these. How long would it take you to reach your destination? Would one day be enough? How many sentries at roadblocks along the way would you have to chat up, placate, bribe, to be allowed to continue? All this only to arrive at the gates, and have the guard order you to turn back – because an epidemic of cholera or dysentery has just broken out in the camp, or the commander who must give his consent is not present, or there is no one to interpret for you with the Nuer. Or, as is now happening to us, you see no one on the other side of the gate, not a single living soul.

Sudan was the first country in Africa to gain independence after World War II. Prior to that it was a British colony, distinct entities artificially, bureaucratically glued together: the Arab-Muslim North and the black-Christian (and animistic) South. A long-standing antagonism and hatred existed between these two populations, because the northern Arabs for years had invaded the South, captured its inhabitants, and sold them into slavery.

How could these two hostile worlds coexist in one independent nation? They could not – and that is exactly what the British wanted. In those years, the European powers were convinced that they could formally give up their colonies, while continuing de facto to govern them – being needed in Sudan, for example, for continual reconciliation between the Muslims of the North and the Christians and animists of the South. Before long, however, these imperial delusions lay in tatters. As early as 1962, the first North-South civil war erupted in Sudan (already preceded by earlier revolts and insurrections in the South). When I was traveling to the South for the first time in 1960, I needed in addition to a Sudanese visa another special visa, on a separate piece of paper. In Juba, the largest town in the South, a border patrol officer took it from me. 'How can you do that?!' I snorted angrily 'I need it to reach the border with the Congo, which is still two hundred kilometers from here!' The officer pointed at himself and said,

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	Foreign citizens as % of population		Foreign workers as % of workforce		Foreign born as a % of population	
	1990	1999	1990	1999	Year	%
Denmark	3.1	4.9	2.4	2.5	1999	6.3
Finland	0.5	1.7	..	1.2	2000	2.5
France	6.3	5.6	6.2	6.1	1990	11
Germany	8.4	8.9	7.1	8.7	..	..
Ireland	2.3	3.1	2.6	3.4	2000	6.8
Italy	1.4	2.2	1.3	3.6	..	..
Luxembourg	29.4	36	45.2	57.3	1991	30.2
Netherlands	4.6	4.1	3.1	3.4	2000	9.8
Norway	3.4	4	2.3	2.9	1999	6.5
Portugal	1.1	1.9	1	1.8	1991	4.6

not without a measure of pride: 'I am the border!' Indeed, beyond the town's tollgates unfolded an expanse over which the government in Khartoum exercised no significant control. It remains thus to this day: Juba is protected by an Arab garrison from Khartoum, and the province itself is in the hands of the guerrillas.

The first Sudanese war lasted ten years, until 1972. During the next ten years, a fragile, impermanent peace prevailed, but in 1983, following an attempt by the Muslim government in Khartoum to impose Islamic law, or sharia, on the entire country, a ghastly new chapter of the war began, and continues to the present day. It is the longest and largest war in the history of Africa, and probably the largest in the world right now, but because it is being waged in the most remote backwaters of our planet, and does not directly threaten anyone in, say, Europe or America, it does not arouse much interest. Moreover, the theaters of this war, its vast and tragic killing fields, are for all intents and purposes – both because of the region's inherent impediments to communication and Khartoum's draconian restrictions – inaccessible to the media. The majority of people in the world have not the slightest idea that a great war is being fought in Sudan.

It is being fought on many fronts, and also on many levels, and today the conflict between the North and the South is not even paramount. In fact, that old divide can confuse and distort the true picture. Let us begin in the north of this immense country of 2.5 million square kilometers. The North consists in large measure of the Sahara and the Sahel, which we associate with a boundlessness of sand and weathered rocky rubble. Northern Sudan is sand and rocks, but it is not only that. As one flies over this part of Africa from Addis Ababa to Europe, an extraordinary view presents itself below: passing through the golden-yellow surface of the Sahara, which stretches as far as the eye can see, is a great, shockingly green band of fields and plantations – the shores of the Nile, which flows here in wide, gentle semicircles. The border between the deep ocher of the Sahara and the emerald of these fields is as sharp as if it had been carved with a knife: there are no intermediate shades here, no gradations. Immediately

Migration

	Foreign citizens as % of population		Foreign workers as % of workforce		Foreign born as a % of population	
	1990	1999	1990	1999	Year	%
Spain	0.7	2	0.6	1	1991	2.2
Sweden	5.6	5.5	5.4	4.1	2000	11.1
Switzerland	16.3	19.2	18.9	18.1	1990	21.3
UK	3.2	3.8	3.3	3.9	1999	7.5

Source: Stalker, P. (2002). *Migration Trends and Migration Policy in Europe*, Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen.

beyond the last little shoots of a plantation begin the first small clods of the desert.

Once upon a time, these riverine fields supported millions of Arab fellaheen, as well as nomadic peoples who now and then stopped here. With time, however, and especially since the middle of the twentieth century and independence, the fellaheen started to be ousted by their wealthy kinsmen from Khartoum, who, together with the generals, and with the help of the army and the police, gained possession of these fertile lands along the Nile, creating on them gigantic plantations of export crops – cotton, rubber, sesame. Thus came into being a powerful class of Arab landowners, which in alliance with the generals and the bureaucratic elite seized power in 1956 and holds it to this day, waging a war against the 'Negro' South, which it treats like a colony and simultaneously oppressing its fellow ethnic countrymen, the Arabs from the North.

Dispossessed, dislodged, deprived of land and cattle, the Sudanese Arabs must find someplace to go, something to do, a means of livelihood. The Khartoum oligarchy folds some of them into its ever larger army, others into the ranks of its vast police and bureaucracy. But the rest? That multitude of the landless and uprooted? These the regime will try to direct toward the South.

The inhabitants of the North number around twenty million, those of the South around six. The latter are composed of dozens of tribes, speaking a host of languages, adhering to various religions and cults. In this multitribal ocean of the South, two groups nevertheless stand out; together they make up half the population of this part of the country. They are related (although sometimes also mutually embattled) peoples: the Dinka and the Nuer. You can mistake each for the other at a distance: they are both tall, (around the two-meter mark), slender, with very dark skin. A beautiful, well-built, dignified, and even somewhat haughty race. Anthropologists have long wondered how they came to be so tall and thin. They subsist almost exclusively on milk, sometimes supplemented by the blood of their cows, which they raise, worship, and love. Killing cattle is for-

Migration

Countries of settlement, foreign born as a % of total population

	1990/91	1996	1999
Australia	22.8	23.3	23.6
Canada	16.1	17.4	..
United States	7.9	9.3	10.3

Source: SOPEMI (2001). *Trends in International Migration*, Paris, OECD

The money that migrants send home is very important not only to their families but also to their country's balance of payments.

For many countries remittances represent a significant proportion of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as of foreign exchange earnings. The following table is derived from IMF statistics.

bidden, and women cannot touch them. The Dinka and the Nuer have subordinated their lives to the needs and requirements of their animals. They spend the dry season with them near the rivers – most importantly, the Nile, the Ghazal, and the Sobat – and in the rainy season, when grass turns the distant plateau green, they leave the rivers and head upcountry with their cattle. The lives of the Dinka and the Nuer pass in this immemorial rhythm, this pendulum-like, almost ritualistic wandering between the riverbanks and the pastures on the plateau of the Upper Nile. To exist, they must have space, land without boundaries, a wide, open horizon. Hemmed in, they sicken, turn into skeletons, wane, die.

I do not know how exactly the war began, it was so long ago. Did soldiers from the government forces steal a cow from the Dinka? Did the Dinka set out to retrieve it? Did shooting break out? Were there casualties? It must have happened something like that. Of course, the cow was just a pretext. The Arab lords in Khartoum could not tolerate the shepherds from the South having the same rights as they did. The people from the South could not accept as their rulers, in an independent Sudan, the sons of slave traders. The South demanded secession, their own state. The North decided to destroy the rebels. Massacres began. The war is said to have claimed a million lives by now. For the first ten years, a spontaneous, poorly organized guerrilla movement, Anya-Nya, operated in the South. Later, in 1983, a Dinka career colonel, John Garang, organized the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which now controls most of the region.

The war flares up, dies down, then explodes again. Although it has gone on so many years, I have heard of no one trying to write its history. In Europe, there are shelves of books dedicated to every war, archives full of documents, special rooms in museums. Nothing of the kind exists in Africa. Here, even the longest and greatest war is quickly forgotten, falls into oblivion. Its traces vanish by the day after: the dead must be buried immediately, new huts erected on the site of burned ones.

Documents? There never were any. There are no written orders, no ord-

Migration

Top 20 developing country receivers of remittances, 1999

Rank	Country	\$ millions	% of GDP
1	India	11,097	2.6 t
2	Philippines	7,016	8.9
3	Mexico	6,649	1.7
4	Turkey	4,529	2.3
5	Egypt	3,196	4.0
6	Morocco	1,918	5.5
7	Bangladesh	1,803	4.1
8	Pakistan	1,707	2.7
9	Dominican Rep	1,613	11
10	Thailand	1,460	1.1

Rank	Country	\$ millions	% of GDP
11	Jordan	1,460	21.2
12	El Salvador	1,379	12.3
13	Nigeria	1,292	3.5
14	Yemen	1,202	24.5
15	Brazil	1,192	0.2
16	Indonesia	1,109	0.8
17	Ecuador	1,084	5.8
18	Sri Lanka	1,056	6.9
19	Tunisia	761	4.0
20	Peru	712	1.2

Source: IMF *Balance of Payments Statistics* (2001) and World Bank *World Development Report* (2000).

nance maps, cryptographs, leaflets, proclamations, newspapers, letters. The custom of writing memoirs and diaries does not exist (most frequently, there is simply no paper). There is no tradition of writing histories. Most important – who would do this? There are no collectors of memorabilia, curators, archivists, historians, archaeologists. It is actually just as well there are no such people nosing about the battlefields. They would be quickly spotted by the police, imprisoned, and, suspected of spying, shot. History in these parts appears suddenly, descends like a *deus ex machina*, reaps its bloody harvest, seizes its prey, and disappears. What exactly is it? Why has it chosen us to cast its evil eye upon? It is better not to think about it. Better not to pry.

Getting back to the Sudan. The war, which began with lofty-sounding slogans, the drama of a young state (the North: we must maintain the country's unity; the South: we are fighting for independence), with time degenerates into a war waged by various military castes against their own nation, a war of the armed against the defenseless. For all this is occurring in a poor country, a country of hungry people, where someone reaching for a weapon, for a machete or a machine gun, is doing so first and foremost in order to grab some food, to get something to eat. It is a war over a handful of corn, a bowl of rice. All thefts are easier here, in this country of enormous distances and roadless expanses, of poor communication and transportation, of a small and scattered population – conditions under which robbery, pillage, and banditry go unpunished, if only for lack of any sort of control or supervision.

There are three types of armed forces conducting this war. There is the government army – an instrument of the Khartoum elite – commanded by the president, General Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Cooperating with the army are numerous official and secret police units, Muslim brotherhoods, the private regiments of large landowners.

Opposed to this ruling force are the guerrillas of John Garang's SPLA, as well as various units in the South that have broken away from the SPLA. ┘

□ *Annual Book Title Production*

YEARS	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Argentina	4.915	6.092	7.365	10.452	12.140	9.511	9.913	11.919	13.156	13.149	.
Australia ^o	6.676	7.991	9.742	8.831	13.741	.	6.841	.	6.935	.	.
Austria*	10.378	10.405	3.628	4.527	6.681	7.153	4.574	7.291	7.487	6.487	.
Belgium	8.420	9.319	9.654	9.994	9.751	9.835	.	.	.	9.816***	.
Brazil	13.684	13.893	28.450	33.508	38.253	40.503	41.455	51.460	49.746	43.697	45.111
Bulgaria	.	.	.	.	5.925	5.400	4.440	4.790	4.950	.	.
Canada	14.231	14.749	14.787	16.475	.	.	18.573	.	.	.	.
Chile	2.843	2.656	.	.	4.971	1.906	4.975	2.093	.	.	.
Colombia	.	2.139	2.420	5.812	6.940	4.686	4.514	6.447	6.351	.	.
Czech Rep.	.	.	.	.	.	8.994	10.244	11.519	11.738	.	11.965
Denmark	11.082	11.744	11.761	11.492	11.973	12.478	14.184	13.450	13.175	14.455	.
Ecuador	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.001	.	.	1.026	.
Egypt	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	18.000
Estonia	.	.	.	.	2.291	2.635	.	3.317	.	.	.
Finland	5.647	5.669	5.265	5.058	5.712	6.344	6.690	6.652	6.826	7.000	.
France	38.414	39.492	38.616	40.916	41.560	42.997	46.306	47.214	50.937	49.808	.

The third and final category of armed combatants are the countless so-called militias: paramilitary groups of young people (often children) of tribal origins, commanded by various local or clan chieftains, who, depending on the situation and the benefit therein, will cooperate with either the army or the SPLA (African militias are a product of recent years, an anarchistic, aggressive, and expanding force, which destabilizes states, armies, organized guerrilla groups, and political movements).

Who are all these armies, divisions, legions, posses, and corps – so numerous and so long embattled – arrayed against? Sometimes, it is each other. But most frequently it is their own nation they are fighting, in other words, the defenseless – which means, in particular, women and children. But why are they against women and children? Could it be that these armed men are governed by some kind of a biological antifeminism? Of course not. They attack and rob groups of women and children because women and children are the targets of international aid: it is they for whom the sacks of flour and rice are intended, the boxes of biscuits and powdered milk, things of no consequence in Europe, but here, between the sixth and twelfth degrees of latitude, priceless. One doesn't always actually have to dispossess the women of these treasures. It suffices simply to surround the delivery plane as it lands, confiscate the sacks and boxes, and carry or drive them over to one's regiment.

For years now the regime in Khartoum has availed itself of the weapon of hunger to defeat the South's inhabitants. It is doing today with the Dinka and the Nuer what Stalin did with the Ukrainians in 1932: it is starving them to death.

People are not hungry because there is no food in the world. There is plenty of it; there is a surplus, in fact. But between those who want to eat and the bursting warehouses stands a tall obstacle indeed: politics. Khartoum restricts the number of flights bringing supplies for the hungry. Many of the planes that reach their destination are robbed by the local chieftains. Whoever has weapons, has food. Whoever has food, has power. We are here among peo-

Annual Book Title Production

YEARS	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Germany	61.015	67.890	67.277	67.206	70.643	74.174	71.515	77.889	78.042	80.779	.
Greece	2.870	3.400	.	.	4.500	.	.	5.364	5.914	.	.
Hungary	7.464	7.210	7.629	8.458	9.383	8.749	8.835	8.941	10.626	9.731	8.986
Iceland	.	.	1.670	1.328	1.513	.	1.692	1.695	.	.	.
India	55.000	53.394	52.508	55.562	58.342	54.251	55.426	57.386	.	.	.
Indonesia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5.000	.	.	.
Ireland	.	.	.	.	6.540	.	.	7.375	.	.	8.325
Israel	.	.	.	2.725	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Italy	37.780	40.142	42.007	43.757	46.676	49.080	51.134	45.844	.	52.262	.
Japan°	40.576	42.345	45.595	48.053	53.890	52.528	63.054	65.438	65.513	.	.
Kenya	.	.	.	.	.	.	120	.	.	.	.
Korea S°	21.000	22.769	24.783	26.304	29.564	27.407	26.664	27.313	.	36.425	.
Latvia	1.564	1.387	1.509	1.614	1.677	1.968	1.965	2.320	2.596	2.652	.
Lithuania	2.499	2.482	2.361	2.224	2.885	3.164	3.642	3.827	.	.	.
Luxembourg	372	334	417	420	400	218	.	.	.	878	.
Macedonia	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.000	.	.	.	.

ple who do not contemplate transcendence and the existence of the soul, the meaning of life and the nature of being. We are in a world in which man, crawling on the earth, tries to dig a few grains of wheat out of the mud, just to survive another day.

Itang:

We walked over to where some barracks stood. This must have been the hospital, now ravaged, ruined. But by whom? The beds are turned over, the tables broken, the cabinets thrown open. The new X-ray machine smashed with rocks, twisted, its levers torn off, its control panel, with its dials and clocks, crushed. It must have been the only X-ray machine within a five-hundred-kilometer radius. Now someone has turned it into useless scrap metal. But who? And why? Next to it lies an electrical generator, also battered, broken. The only technological objects (besides, of course, weapons) for endless miles in every direction, now rendered useless, turned into junk.

We walked from there along a causeway to the only dry area. Stagnant water on both sides, the smell of rot, raging mosquitoes. Marshes and more marshes, and among them a few shanties, most of them empty, but some with people sitting or lying in them. In the water, then? Yes, in the water – I saw it with my own eyes. In the end, a hundred, two hundred people were assembled for us. Someone ordered them to stand in a half circle. They did so silently, motionless. Where have the others gone, those one hundred fifty thousand? Where did they all set off to one night? Into Sudan. Why? The leaders ordered it. The residents of the camp are people who have been hungry for years, no longer able to comprehend, disoriented, without will. It is good that someone still orders them to do something, that he realizes that they exist, wants something from them. Why did they not leave with the others? It is impossible to ascertain. Do they want something? No, nothing. As long as they continue to receive aid, they will live. If aid does not come, they will die. Yesterday they received aid. And the day before yesterday. So it really isn't so bad; there is nothing to ask for. ┘

Annual Book Title Production

YEARS	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Malaysia	.	.	3.320	1.186	3.960	4.455	3.770	.	5.816	.	.
Mexico	.	.	.	16.055	12.469	11.917	11.570	15.505	.	.	.
Morocco	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.859	.	.
Netherlands	13.691	12.509	15.997	16.610	18.001	18.123	17.544	17.235	.	17.235	.
New Zealand	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5.036	.	4.800	.
Norway	4.376	4.526	4.711	4.864	5.157	5.219	4.781	5.022	5.032	6.991	.
Peru	.	.	.	.	.	2.646	2.056	3.478	.	.	.
Philippines	.	.	3.320	1.186	3.960	4.455	3.770	5.093	.	.	.
Poland	.	10.991	11.064	10.071	11.194	.	14.234	15.996	16.462	.	.
Portugal	6.150	6.430	6.462	6.341	6.523	6.933	.	8.331	9.196	.	.
Russia	.	.	28.716	29.017	29.017	33.623	36.237	45.026	46.156	.	.
Singapore	.	.	.	.	.	3.000	.	.	.	.	.
Slovenia	.	.	.	.	.	.	3.441	3.647	3.722	.	.
South Africa	7.300	7.200	7.800	7.900	7.800	9.000	.	5.592	.	.	.
Spain	42.207	43.896	50.644	49.328	51.048	51.934	50.159	54.943	60.426	.	.
Sweden	12.034	11.866	12.937	11.191	12.114	12.700	13.496	13.210	12.547	3.683**	.

An older man gives them the signal to disperse. I ask if I might be allowed to take a photograph. Of course I am allowed. Here, everything is allowed. □

Ryszard Kapuściński is a Polish author, and has written books such as the *Shah of Shahs* and *The Emperor*. Kapuściński studied Polish history at Warsaw University, and subsequently was employed as a domestic reporter and a foreign correspondent for the Polish Press Agency. While working for the Polish Press Agency, he gained critical and popular praise for his coverage of civil wars, revolutions and social conditions in the Third World. This text is a chapter from his book *The Shadow of the Sun: My African Life*, published in 2001 by Alan Lane The Penguin Press. Translated from the Polish by Klara Glowczewska.

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Annual Book Title Production

YEARS	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Switzerland	9.781	10.438	10.274	10.602	10.495	10.790	10.896	12.435	9.924	13.694	.
Thailand	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8.000	12.000	.	.
U.K.	63.756	67.704	77.726	82.322	89.738	95.064	102.102	100.029	102.925	110.155	.
Uruguay	2.026	1.607	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
U.S.A.	46.743	48.146	49.276	42.217	51.863	62.039	58.465	64.711	.	.	.
Venezuela	.	.	.	.	.	2.504	.	.	.	.	.
Yugoslavia	9.797	5.485	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Zimbabwe	.	.	158	123	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

* Austria: after 1992 academic duplicates not included

** Number of new/new editions only

*** Dutch language books

° Australia, Japan, Korea and Turkey: new titles only