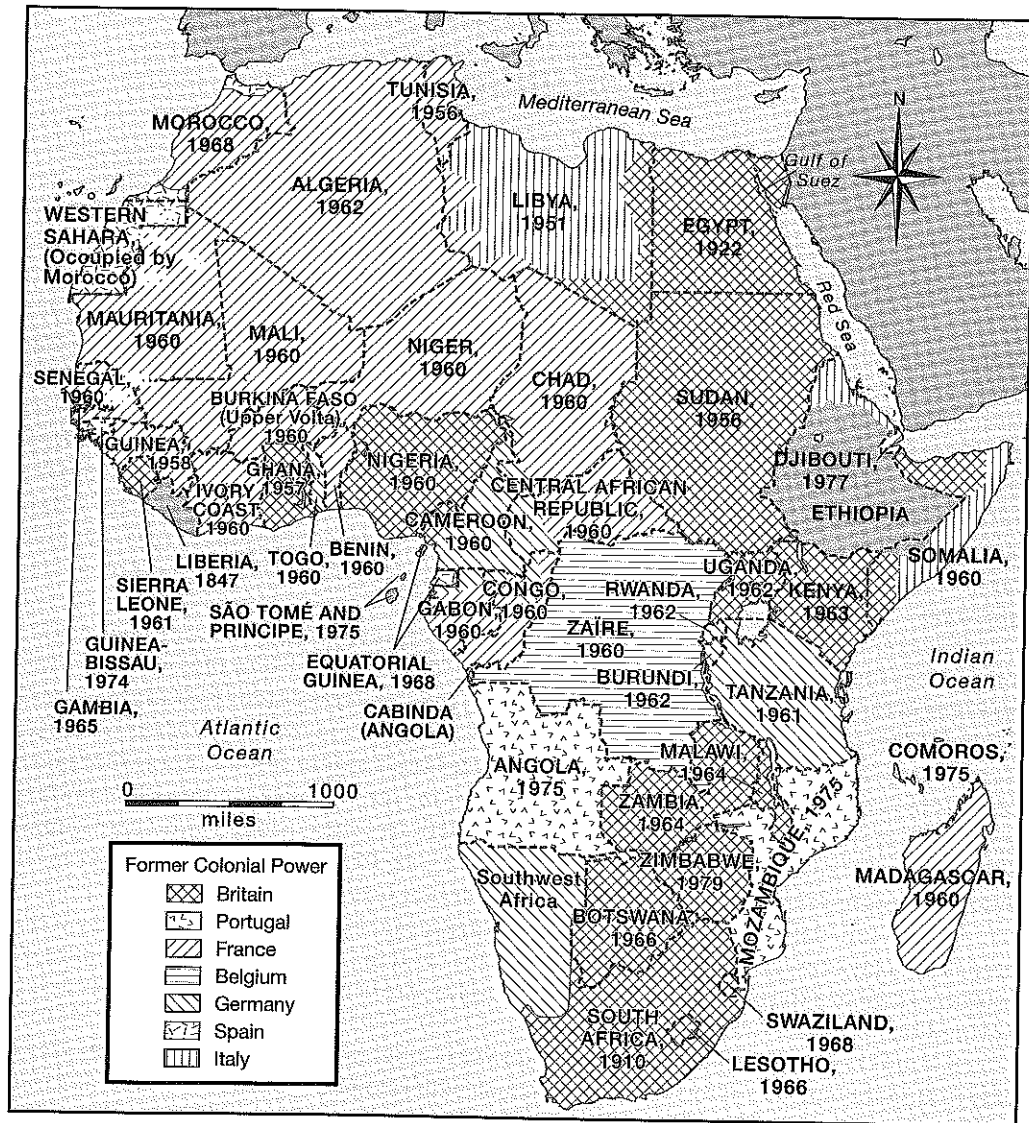


Rwanda—The Genocide

Mark Huband,

Cairo Correspondent for the Financial Times (London)



The term genocide is used widely and sometimes loosely, but what took place in Rwanda in April and May of 1994 was the third unquestionable

genocide of the twentieth century. As defined by the 1948 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it consists of

certain acts "committed with an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such." In Rwanda, somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus, who fit the convention's definition of a national group, were murdered.

The planning of this *genocide*, which was important legally because it established the clear intent of its architects to commit the crime, had become known to the United Nations well before it took place. The Rwandan government's effort in 1993 to carry out a census in which all Rwandans had to state their tribe had been followed by a slaughter of Tutsis in the northern part of the country. This would prove to be a macabre dress rehearsal for the genocide of 1994.

In the interim, the Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana, signed a peace accord in Arusha, Tanzania, with the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that was intended to end the country's four-year civil war. Whether President Habyarimana sincerely intended peace, or more likely, viewed it as a pause in which to finalize plans to exterminate the Tutsis, will probably never be answered conclusively. What is clear is that he was restructuring the Hutu-dominated national administration to put extremists in positions of authority—extremists whose main goal was to conspire to launch a final, genocidal strike against the hated Tutsi minority.

On April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana flew back from Tanzania after a meeting on the peace process. As Habyarimana's plane attempted to land in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, it was shot down by extremist members of the president's own party. They were, in any case, quite ready to sacrifice him since they believed he had conceded too much to the RPF in the peace agreement, even if only temporarily.

Habyarimana's death served as the pretext to launch the genocide. Rwanda's national radio as well as a number of private stations relayed instructions to the death squads, the so-called Interahamwe (the name, in Kinyarwanda, means "those who fight together"), and ceaselessly urged

the killers to step up their slaughter. The Rwandan armed forces backed up the Interahamwe in those areas where the killers encountered resistance from Tutsi civilians. Prepositioned transport and fuel permitted the death squads to reach even the most isolated Tutsi communities.

Other genocides—the Turkish slaughter of the Armenians, the Nazi extermination of Europe's Jews and Gypsies—took place largely in secret. Rwanda was different. There was a United Nations peacekeeping force on the ground in Rwanda. Its members stood by and watched as the killings took place. The rest of the world watched on television as Rwanda exploded.

I recall a young woman pleading silently through the terror in her eyes as she was led to her death past French UN troops. The French were guarding foreign evacuees fleeing the Rwandan capital in an open truck, and a government militia had ordered the convoy to halt on a muddy road near the city's airport. The UN troops waited obediently, saying it was "not our mandate" to intervene. Beside them in a compound, two men were kneeling in silence as the militiamen crushed their heads with clubs, then cut their throats. The woman knelt beside them. Within less than a minute her head was all but severed. Then the convoy was allowed to move on.

The world's governments not only knew what was occurring but were complicit. Article 1 of the Genocide Convention binds its signatories to act to prevent as well as to punish genocide. The fact that the UN knew the genocide was being planned and, presumably, communicated this knowledge to member-States, and the fact that once the genocide began nothing was done, makes what took place in Rwanda in 1994 more than a crime. It was an event that shamed humanity.

It is clear by now that far from having been caught unawares, the great powers were intent on obscuring the reality of what was taking place in Rwanda. When the Security Council met, it was decided that the representative of Rwanda—of the government that was

committing the genocide—would be allowed to make a statement. For all practical purposes, the council's main concern appears to have been to debate for as long as possible the question of whether a genocide was taking place.

There were thousands of examples of the State's role. At the Nyarubuye Catholic Mission in eastern Rwanda, I happened upon Leoncia Mukandayambaje, a survivor, sitting outside her hut among the trees. She had fled there when the local mayor, Sylvestre Gacumbitsi, had given the local Tutsi population special passes to allow them to reach the large brick complex. After grouping them there, he arranged for two truckloads of murderers to be sent.

In school rooms, in cloisters, in corridors, and in doorways, the 2,620 victims covered the floor in a carpet of rotting death. Leoncia was saved by her baby daughter, whom she held close to her while the murderers hacked both with machetes. Her daughter's blood covered her. The murderers assumed both mother and child were dead.

By the time the UN Security Council had finally concluded what was plain from the start—that a genocide had indeed been taking place—it was too late to do anything for the people of Rwanda. To have admitted otherwise would have bound the parties to the Genocide Convention, among whom were all the permanent members of the Security Council, to intervene and bring the mass murder to a halt. The council, on May 26, did eventually find that a genocide was taking place. By that time, half a million had died. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's acknowledgement was too little, too late.

He was still ahead of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. From the beginning of the slaughter, the U.S. government had prohibited its officials from using the term genocide. Finally, on June 10, Christopher relented, reluctantly and with bad grace. "If there is any particular magic in calling it genocide," he conceded, "I have no hesitancy in saying that."

There was magic, all right, in the sense that using the term would have bound the United States and other governments to act. By the time Christopher made his grudging concession to reality, it was too late, which may have been the idea all along.

The complicity of the so-called world community in the Rwandan genocide should not, of course, obscure the fact that the principal responsibility for the crime lies with its Rwandan architects. Apologists for the Rwandan authorities insisted at the time that the killings were unfortunate by-products of a renewal of the civil war. Later, Hutu extremists justified the killings as acts of self-defense against Tutsi aggression. Such arguments stood reality on its head. Almost all the victims in the spring of 1994 were killed as part of a government-inspired campaign of extermination, not as casualties of the subsequent fighting between the Rwandan Army and the RPF.

According to the provisions of the Genocide Convention, the government was guilty on all counts of the Convention's Article 3: genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public *incitement* to commit genocide, and complicity in genocide. Members of the government had used its administration to organize the slaughter and, equally grave, incited the Hutu civilian population to kill their Tutsi neighbors and even, for intermarriage was common in Rwanda, to kill Tutsi spouses and relatives.

After the slaughter was over, an international tribunal was established to bring the guilty to book, to try them under international humanitarian law and under the provisions of the Genocide Convention. Doubtless, such trials are better than nothing. At least, in the Rwandan case, there will not be total impunity. But trials are a poor substitute for prevention, and the one thing that is clear is that the Rwandan genocide could have been prevented had the outside world had the will to do so. The facts were plain. The legal basis for intervention was there. It was courage that was lacking.

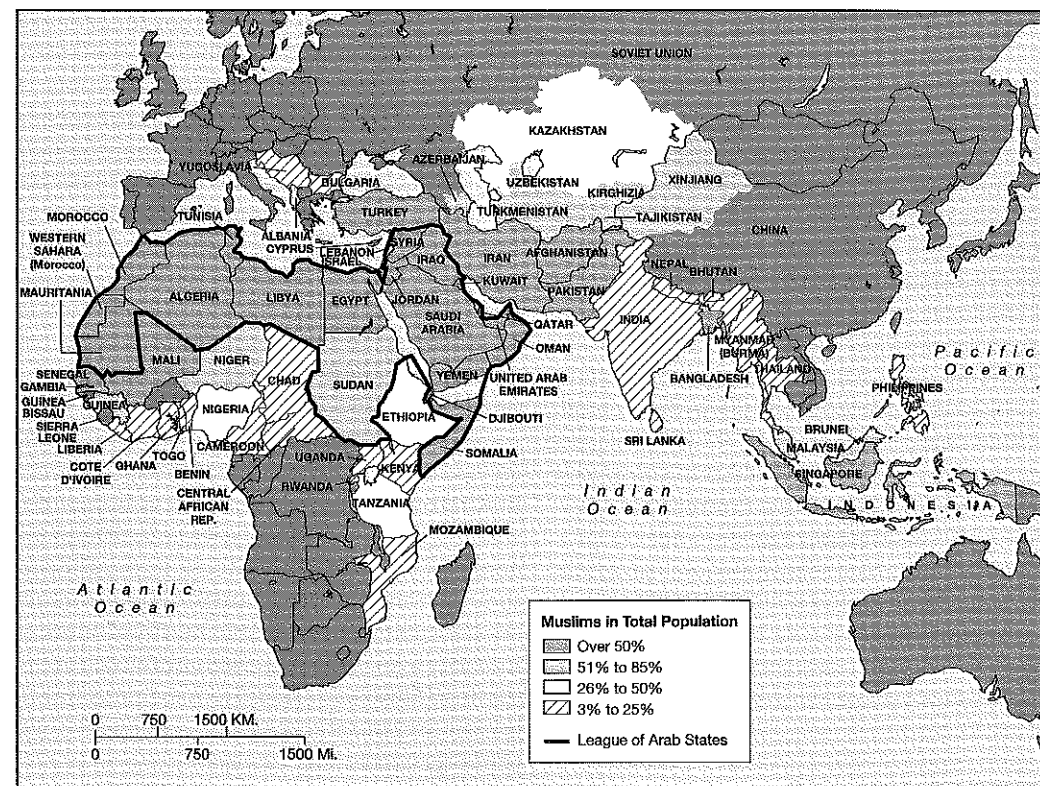
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was the pretext for launching the Rwandan genocide?
2. In what significant way was the Rwandan genocide different from the Armenian and Nazi atrocities?
3. Explain the irony of the world's governments obscuring the genocide.
4. Describe U.S. response to the genocide.

Sudan—Civil War and Genocide

Francis M. Deng

Senior Fellow: Brookings Institution



The great challenge for Christianity in the Sudan, especially in the southern part of the country, is closely linked to the civil war between Sudan's North and South. This war has raged intermittently since 1955, making it possibly the longest civil conflict in the world.

"Sudan—Civil War and Genocide," by Francis M. Deng from *Middle East Quarterly* Winter 2001, 8(1): 13–21. Reprinted by permission.

It continues unabated, mostly outside the focus of diplomacy or the attention of international media, taking a huge and terrible human toll. Over two million people have died as a result of the war and related causes, such as war-induced famine. About five million people have been displaced, while half a million more have fled across an international border. Tens of thousands of women and children have been abducted and subjected to slavery. By all accounts, it appears to be the worst humanitarian disaster in the world today.

Religion is the pivotal factor in the conflict. The North, with roughly two-thirds of Sudan's land and population, is Muslim and Arabic-speaking; the northern identity is an inseparable amalgamation of Islam and the Arabic language. The South is more indigenously African in race, culture, and religion; its identity is indigenously African, with Christian influences and a Western orientation.

Although Christianity predated Islam in northern Sudan, it was effectively eradicated and replaced by Islam by the early sixteenth century. It was then introduced to the southern part of the country through missionary work that was associated with British colonialism. Since independence, the South has been threatened by the policies of Arabization and Islamization. Paradoxically, the religious persecution of non-Muslims has the effect of promoting Christianity; Southerners now see Christianity as the most effective means of countering the imposition of Islam, especially as traditional religions cannot withstand the forces of spiritual and religious globalization.

BACKGROUND: THE NORTH

The civil war culminates a long history in which the North has tried to spread its religion and language to the South, which has resisted these efforts.

The North's identification with the Middle East is an ancient one, going back several thousand years, to the time when Egyptians

and Arabians expanded southward in the search for slaves, gold, ivory, and taxation revenue. Christianity entered the scene in the sixth century AD and became the religion of three kingdoms (Nubia, Magarra, and Alwa) that survived for a thousand years. The introduction of Islam a century later, primarily by traders, then led to descent groups in Sudan tracing their genealogy back to Arabia; in the case of politically or religiously prominent families, they claim to have roots going back to the Prophet Muhammad himself. Islamization set in motion a process of gradual decline for Christianity in northern Sudan, culminating in the overthrow of the Christian kingdoms in 1504 by an alliance of Arabs and the Muslim kingdom of Funj. In due course, Islam and Arabic gained hold in the North and overshadowed the indigenous and Christian cultures. Islam in northern Sudan was later reinforced by every successive regime, from the Ottoman-Egyptian administration that invaded the country in 1821 to the Mahdist Islamic revolution that overthrew it in 1885, and even to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium that ruled the country from 1898 until Sudanese independence in 1956.

In the nineteenth century, the Turkish rulers of Egypt and the Mahdist government in Khartoum invaded the South in hopes of extending their own boundaries, as well as to gain access to more slaves. Indeed, to Southerners their actions were indistinguishable from one another; they were all slave hunters. Southern memory associates them with nothing less than the total destruction of their society. Oral history in Sudan refers to this period as the time when the world was spoiled.

While Arabs could invade the South to capture slaves, they never penetrated deeply and did not settle. Swamps, flies, mosquitoes, tropical humidity, and the fierce resistance of the people kept contact to a minimum, even as it was devastatingly violent. Arabs were interested in the material value of blacks as slaves and so had no wish to integrate with them (in contrast to their pattern

of settling down with Northerners); had the southern Sudanese converted to Islam, it bears noting, Arabs could no longer have engaged in legal slave raids against them (given that Islam prohibits the enslavement of fellow Muslims).

BACKGROUND: THE SOUTH

In sharp contrast, the identity of southern Sudan has been shaped primarily by the prolonged resistance to the imposition of Arab and Islamic culture from the North. This has had the effect of unifying the Southerners as black Africans and has geared them toward Christianity and the English language as means of combating Islam and Arabism.

In contrast to the Arabs, the British were associated with the redemption of the South from the Arab slave raids. The British sought first to suppress the trade in slaves through their influence on the Turko-Egyptian administration, then, after the re-conquest of the Sudan in 1898, to abolish it; also, British occupation meant that the North's efforts to spread Islam southwards were confined to urban centers and in the end were significantly frustrated. In sharp contrast to the Muslims, Christian missionaries came to southern Sudan peacefully. They arrived with the British conquest of Sudan, encouraged by London to spread the Christian gospel through pacific means, largely by providing education, health services, and other social services. To avoid sectarian competition, the British administration allotted each sect spheres of influence for its missionaries. Over the next century, Christian missionary activity came to be associated with personal well-being and socio-economic development, positive incentives which won over many new converts.

This official favoritism toward Christian missions in the South, notwithstanding, the British authorities in Sudan sought to keep religion and state apart. Thus, the Reverend Wilson Cash, secretary of the Church Missionary Society, observed in 1930:

The government is scrupulously fair to Muslims and pagans, and in religious matters adopts a strictly neutral attitude. The task of evangelization is no part of the government's work and it falls to the mission alone to decide whether these southern pagan tribes shall be left to be captured for Islam or whether they shall be won for Jesus Christ.

Some missionaries worried that this neutrality would in the long term benefit Islam, for the latter in many ways better accommodated the African way of life and was therefore more likely to appeal to the pagans. For example, whereas the Christian proselytizer is interested in intensive religious instruction as a prerequisite to baptism, the Islamizer is more interested in the recital by the convert of the words, "There is no divinity but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet." As Charles D'Oliver Farran observed, "No other test is necessary, and it would not matter if he had never heard of Mecca or even the Koran." Among other factors which, according to northern Sudanese scholar Mahgoub Ahmed Kurdi, appear to favor Islam are the Arabic language, the equal status practiced among Muslims, the ease with which the Islamic creed was understood, the comprehensive determination by Islam of all the aspects of personal, social, and religious life, the similarities between Islam and African traditional religions, and Islam's orientation of its converts towards Islamization in southern Sudan.

In the Sudanese context, the Arabic language had special importance, for it gave the Southerners the ability to communicate with all the inhabitants of the Sudan, especially the Northerners and the government whose daily language was Arabic. Having no common language of their own, the members of various tribes took recourse to Arabic as lingua franca to understand one another. Those who mastered the language immediately found themselves in an advantaged position over those who did not. Commonly the Arabic language therefore served the religious as well as the mundane purposes.

Despite this, southern Sudanese tended to receive Christianity favorably, for they associated it with peaceful preaching and the

benefits of modern education and medical services. Christianity also benefited from the sense that Europeans had come to rescue the Southerners from enslavement by Arabs. This understanding was, of course, a bit innocent, for some nineteenth-century Europeans were in fact engaged in the slave trade, but their involvement was hidden by their reliance on Egyptian or northern Sudanese middlemen whom southern Sudanese saw as the sole culprits.

CIVIL WAR SINCE INDEPENDENCE

With independence in 1956, the northern-dominated government in Khartoum sought to Arabize and Islamize the South. It had two motives: a belief that homogenizing the country would ensure national unity and a desire to spread what they considered to be a superior civilization. Some Southerners did convert, whether out of conviction or for other reasons, but most resisted.

A civil war between North and South had already begun a year before independence, in 1955, continuing until the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972 granted regional autonomy to the South. Although the issue of a constitution in conformity with Islam had been debated since independence, President Ja'far Muhammad Numeiri's presidential decree of September 1983, imposing Shari'a (the sacred law of Islam) on the country placed the issue squarely on the public agenda, leading to increased tensions and eventual conflict between the government and rebels in the South. The conflict resumed in 1983 when the Khartoum government unilaterally abrogated the Addis Ababa agreement, divided the South into three regions, reduced the powers of the regional governments, and imposed Shari'a on the whole country, including the non-Muslim South.

The South fought under the leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its military wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA). The rebellion was triggered when the government attempted to

transfer southern battalions to the North, thereby removing their capacity to resist. The rebels fled to Ethiopia, where they received strong support which helped them organize themselves and equipped them militarily, turning them into a strong force against the government. Although the SPLM/SPLA is composed largely of Southerners under Christian leadership, it was later joined by non-Arab ethnic groups from the North and liberal-minded Northerners who share with the movement a vision of a secular, democratic Sudan.

Then, after Numeiri's ouster in 1985, the Muslim Brethren, an elite Islamist group, metamorphosed into a broader-based political party, the National Islamic Front (NIF). The NIF shot to prominence in the parliamentary elections of 1986, winning the third largest number of seats. The group's Islamic agenda was endorsed and reinforced by General 'Umar Hasan al-Bashir, who seized power on June 30, 1989, in the name of the "Revolution for National Salvation." Initially, Bashir projected himself as independent from the NIF, although he shared its Islamist agenda. In due course, however, it became clear that the *coup d'état* was in fact engineered by the NIF and that Hasan at-Turabi, the NIF's leader, wielded the real power with Bashir not much more than the executor of his will. Recently, however, a conflict over power has ensued between Bashir, supported by young hawks from Turabi's camp, and Turabi, joined by some loyal NIF members and new supporters. While the struggle continues, Bashir appears to have the upper hand while Turabi is significantly marginalized within the system. Their conflict has limited importance for the South, being internal to the Islamist agenda; both parties still agree that the South will only receive limited accommodation within an Islamic state.

Since the resumption of hostilities in 1983, the relationship between religion and the state, in particular the role of Shari'a, has emerged as the central factor in the conflict. Religion defines identity in both the Sudan's North and the South. For Northerners, Islam

is not only a faith and a way of life, it is also culture and ethnic identity associated with Arabism. For Southerners, Islam is not just a religion, but also Arabism as a racial, ethnic, and cultural phenomenon that excludes them as black Africans and adherents of Christianity and indigenous religions. Race in the Sudan is not so much a function of color or features, but a state of mind, a case of self-perception; the North identifies as Arab, no matter how dark its people's skin color.

The southern backlash to Islamization and Arabization boosted its Christian identity. Southerners now combine indigenous culture, Christianity, and general elements of Western culture to combat Islam and the associated imposition of Arab identity. A northern Islamic scholar, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Affendi, articulated the religious dilemmas for the country when he wrote:

The close association between Islam and northern Sudanese nationalism would certainly rob Islam of an advantage [in the South] ... [as] it remains beset by problems similar to those that limited the appeal of the SPLA's Africanism [in the North].

He elaborates:

Northern Sudanese, who identify strongly with their Arab heritage, are in no danger of being seduced by Africanism. ... But equally, Islamic ideology is by definition, unacceptable to non-Muslims. Its association with Arab northern self-assertion makes it even more unpalatable to Southerners.

The clash of these two antagonistic cultural outlooks has implications that go beyond the borders of Sudan, for the two identity groups have affinities within and beyond Africa along both religious and racial lines that could potentially widen the circles of conflict. The Arab-Islamic world sees in northern Sudan an identity that must be, and has been, supported. For it, the South serves as a dangerous rallying point for Christendom, the West, and

even Zionism to combat Islam. While this is largely an exaggerated conspiratorial construct, it provides a strong basis for Arab-Islamic solidarity with the North. On the other hand, black Africa sees in the plight of the South a humiliating racist oppression that must be resisted. While the commitment to African unity without racial or cultural distinctions inhibits overt support for the South, they have discreetly and clandestinely supported the SPLM/SPLA. The potential for an Arab-African clash over the Sudan remains real. There is no doubt that Sudan is as much a link as it is potentially a point of confrontation among converging diverse identities.

NORTHERN EFFORTS

From the North's perspective, the South is a legitimate domain for Arab-Islamic influence which the Christian missionaries, in alliance with British colonial rulers, wrongly usurped. Northerners believe that the roots of Christian and Western influence in the South are shallow and can easily be replaced by Islam and Arabic culture. Interestingly, just one year after independence, the government nationalized all Christian missionary schools in the South, causing them to lose their Christian character while allowing missionary schools in the North to continue to provide education to mostly Muslim students, albeit without proselytizing Christianity.

The council of ministers decided in February 1960 to change the official day of rest in the South from Sunday to Friday. When southern schools went on strike in protest against that decision, the government retaliated by prosecuting the alleged ring leaders and imposing severe prison sentences on them. A native priest, Poulino Dogali, was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment for having printed and distributed a leaflet critical of the government's decision. Two secondary-school students received ten years each for having