

## HISTORICAL BASIS OF SOUTHERN SUDAN'S DEMAND FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Kenneth Okeny

The August 1991 split within the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) has highlighted the depth of division within the movement regarding its stated goal of maintaining a united Sudan. The three rebel commanders—Riak Machar, Lam Akol and Gordon Kong—who precipitated this development have apparently come to the conclusion that the goal of a "united secular Sudan" is simply unattainable in the foreseeable future. Consequently, they have openly advocated a separate Southern Sudan. Since August 1991 the separation of the Southern Sudan from the rest of the country has become the single most important issue within the SPLA and among Southern Sudanese in general.

The immediate cause of this development is the determination of the Muslim fundamentalist regime of General Umar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir and its National Islamic Front (NIF) supporters to impose the *Sharia* Law upon the whole country in blatant disregard of Southern feelings about the issue. Although this is not the first time that an Arab-dominated government in Khartoum has tried to use state power and institutions to Islamize the South, yet the efforts and arrogance of the government of al-Bashir have convinced most Southerners that there can be no compromise on this issue since the implementation of such a policy would in effect reduce them and the non-Muslim population of the country into second class citizens.

Collateral with the Islamizing zeal displayed by the present government is the ambivalent attitude of the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA), of which the SPLA is a member, towards the sensitive question of the role of religion in politics. Since its formation in September 1989 the NDA has consistently avoided tackling the problem, thus dampening hope among Southerners who had hoped to maintain a united Sudan that the traditional parties, the Umma and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), would abandon the idea of an Islamic state for a secular constitution if the Bashir government were overthrown. This belief was further strengthened by the NDA's apparent, if not tacit, support for the recent government offensive against the SPLA, which resulted in the dramatic shift of military balance in the nine-year conflict.

Historically, however, Southern claim for separate statehood lies upon the lack of any feeling of commonality of interests between peoples of the two regions, the policies of the Condominium government towards the South as well as the failure of all successive

Arab-dominated Sudanese governments since independence in 1956 to recognize and address legitimate Southern demands.

### Legacy of the Slave Trade

Although both Northerners and Southerners share common experience of domination by the British and Egyptian colonial powers, the Southern Sudanese have not forgotten the role which the ancestors of the Northern Sudanese played in the "Nilotic slave trade" during the nineteenth century. The scars from that dark period of the country's history are embedded in their minds in the form of deep-seated psychological resentment, suspicion and fear of domination by the North. Hence the felt-need for "protection and self-preservation".<sup>1</sup> An important legacy of the trade also was that it gave rise to an elaborate racially pejorative vocabulary and to assumptions of superiority over the Southerner, who began to be looked down upon as *abid* (slaves).<sup>2</sup> Together with the policies of the Turco-Egyptian regime and the destruction caused during the Mahdiyya, they had the effect of reinforcing the racial and cultural division between the North and the South as well as sowing the seeds of hatred and mutual suspicion between them.

### British Policy Towards the South

The Anglo-Egyptian regime that came to power after the overthrow of the Mahdist state at the turn of the century in a sense recognized these differences and pursued policies which reinforced them. As early as 1902 the British authorities had begun to treat both the North and the South as separate administrative units at different stages of development and progress.<sup>3</sup> In 1910, apprehensive of neo-Mahdist uprisings in the North, Governor-General Wingate ordered the creation of the Equatorial corps as a bulwark against the expansion of Islam and Muslims to the Southern Sudan and the British territories in East Africa.<sup>4</sup> It was to be staffed by Southerners and officered by British personnel. Its language of command was to be English and religious observance Christian. In 1918 Sunday was substituted for Friday, which had been introduced in some parts of the South by Northern Muslims, as the weekly day of rest. By that time, Northern Sudanese officers and soldiers had been progressively eliminated from the South.

The policy of shielding off the South from Northern cultural and religious influences was further reinforced by the division of the region

into rival spheres of influence among Christian missionary societies. The missionaries gave the Southerners a Christian-culture education, while the North continued to remain under Islamic influence.<sup>5</sup>

In 1922 these measures were given a boost by the promulgation of the Passports and Permits Ordinance, which effectively shut off the South from the outside world by declaring it a "closed district". Among other things, the ordinance prohibited the free movement of peoples between the South and the North, except by permit of the governor-general, and the teaching and speaking of Arabic in the South. Seven years later, in 1929, the policy was solidified still further by the adoption of English as the official language of government and instruction in the schools of the South.

In 1930 all these administrative practices were legalized by the announcement of "Southern Policy," which in effect recognized and strengthened the differences between the North and the South. The effect of this policy was to give credibility to the false impression that the British intended to separate the South from the rest of the country despite the fact that such a policy was never contemplated in London.<sup>6</sup> The driving force behind the introduction of "Southern Policy" was, rather, MacMichael's desire to construct an administration based upon the principle of indirect rule.<sup>7</sup> It was designed first and foremost to streamline and regulate administration in the South.

But there was an economic aspect of "Southern Policy" as well—the realization by some British officials that the economic development of the South could never be achieved as long as the South remained as a part of the Sudan and so long as it continued to be starved of funds in order to satisfy the financial needs of the North. In 1923, a report by C.H. Stigand had candidly addressed the issue:

An administrative change which is sorely needed, and which must take place before any great advance can be made, is the complete separation of the Negro provinces of the Sudan from the Arab provinces . . . little can be done for the Negro provinces whilst they are starved so as to turn over all available funds to the Arab provinces and whilst they are subject to laws and regulations made for the benefit of the latter . . . if one has a country which is supposed to be progressive and another which is backward bracketed together, all energy and regulations will be made for the benefit of the former, with the result that the latter goes to the wall.

The report added:

Having separated the administration of the Negro provinces from the Arab, the wage rate of the former must be kept as low as possible. For this purpose, labor and employees such as artisans, police, etc, should be trained and employed locally, and highly paid imported laborers, artisans, etc, should be excluded. . . . The introduction of troops, police and servants from the North tends to raise local prices. . . . If . . . wages are to be kept down, it is essential that all armed forces, regulars and police . . . should be put on a separate establishment with local rates of pay and the Northern troops should be eliminated.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, throughout most of the Co-domini period the Southerners were paid lower wages than the Northerners until May 1948 when a uniform salary structure was implemented. Thus the question of excluding Northerners from the South was both a political and a religious question as well as an economic necessity. Similarly, the keeping of Arabic accounts by the Southern administration was deemed to be expensive and redundant as it entailed the retention of Northern personnel. To simplify things and reduce costs, government business could be conducted only in English.<sup>9</sup>

In practice, however, the exclusion of Northerners was not always successful for it was never found possible to remove all of them. As late as 1937 certain government departments in the South still had more Muslim staff than non-Muslims. In Upper Nile province, for instance, the government technical staff consisted of 61 Muslims as opposed to 33 Southerners; the province police had 3 Northern officers; the district engineer in Malakal had 35 Muslim employees and 3 non-Muslims; and the Egyptian Irrigation Department at Malakal employed 267 Muslims and 3 Southerners.<sup>10</sup> The reason for this was that the educational aspect of the "Policy" was not implemented, with the result that no sufficient number of Southerners was trained to assume such posts. The failure to expand education, in turn, was the result of a conscious policy of fostering tribalism and propping up traditional rulers rather than the troublesome educated "new men." After the revolt of 1924 the government was determined that the incident not be repeated elsewhere in the country. Hence the shift in policy away from educational expansion to cooperation with notables, shayks or tribal rulers.

The failure to expand education in the South obviously meant that its economic development was doomed. Without trained personnel and finance, the vast potential of the region could never be realized. The British authorities in the center had been, moreover, reluctant to

encourage the economic development of the South. From 1934 to 1944, when Francis Rugman was Financial Secretary, they rejected practically every proposal put forward for developing the region, while huge sums of money was being spent every year on the Gezira scheme, more than the government was getting from it in revenues.

Thus by 1946, when the prospect of Sudanese independence was advancing rapidly, the reality of economic disparity between the North and the South was already in place. The basis for the structural imbalance in the sharing of power and national resources, and in the shaping of national policy, which has characterized North-South relations since independence, had thus been laid. Together with the question of the Sharia, they constitute the most divisive factors that cleavage the South from the North. When in December 1946 the British decided to reverse "Southern Policy" and integrate the South to the North, Southern reaction to the new policy was dictated by this glaring inequality in the social and economic development of the two regions.

#### Contemporary Southern Views about Amalgamation

Then, as now, the Southerners were divided about the question of amalgamation. Although the civil secretary did not initially consult Southern opinion about the change of policy, he was now forced to do so in an attempt to forestal opposition from British Southern administrators, who felt that the South was getting a raw deal, and the British public represented by the Fabian Society, which was urging a postponement on a decision regarding the future of the Southern Sudan until the Southerners were sufficiently enlightened to do it by themselves. Hence the decision to convene the 1947 Juba Conference, which in reality was intended to rubber-stamp and legitimize the new policy of integrating the South to the North.

In the intervening period between Robertson's dramatic reversal of "Southern Policy" and the convening of the Juba Conference, however, the British authorities in the South sought to glean Southern opinion about the question of amalgamation. From their written responses, the Southerners were clearly divided about the issue. One group seemed to favor the idea of a separate Southern Sudan, while the other called for conditional unity with the North.

The latter, or "unionist" group for lack of a better term, included people such as chiefs, clerks, and station officers, who were in one way or another closely related to the Administration. It was from among members of this group that the Southern representatives to the conference would later be selected by the British authorities. Due to their proximity to the administration, however, they were easily susceptible to influence by the authorities. Indeed, before the

conference met, some of the British officials in the districts held meetings with prospective Southern members ostensibly to explain its aims to them. In reality, however, such meetings were invariably used to influence support for the government's new policy of amalgamating North and South, and to prepare Southern opinion to accept and struggle for what appeared to be the only remaining option for them—constitutional safeguards for the south in a Sudan which was progressing rapidly towards self-government.

On 1 June 1947, for instance, the Jur River District Commissioner, J. H. T. Wilson, called a meeting of the Gogrial council in which he told the members that the South should "meet the North half way in their demands".<sup>11</sup> In effect, he was urging the Southerners to support the integration of the South to the North. By the end of the meeting, Wilson's efforts had paid off. The council members concluded that "no one [in the Gogrial council] wants the South to split from the North."<sup>12</sup> However, they also qualified this statement by saying that unity between the two regions should await further progress in the South, and that even when that time came there would have to be constitutional safeguards for the South rather than symbolic representation in a legislative assembly in Khartoum. Accordingly, they recommended the formation of a consultative body for channelling Southern opinion to a national legislature. In the meantime, great efforts were to be exerted to speed up development in the South so that it could fend for itself and stand up as the equal partner of the North.

With such official influence, it came as no surprise that an increasing number of the Southern intelligentsia began to support the idea of unity in the hope that constitutional measures would be provided to safeguard the South's special interests. Among the "unionists" were people such as Benedetto Madut Akol and Siricio Iro. Akol was a clerk from Wau, but his nomination by the Deputy Governor of Bahr al-Ghazal Area, T. R. H. Owen, to attend the conference was turned down by Governor B. V. Marwood of Equatoria.

Siricio was one of the few educated Southerners who took part in the meeting. When he was nominated to attend the conference, he was then serving as station officer in Torit district.<sup>13</sup> Seven years later, on 21 April 1954, the National Unionist Party (NUP)-dominated parliament nominated him to the governor-general council to replace Ibrahim Ahmed, the Umma member of the council who was removed in a vindictive move by the NUP to punish the Umma Party for its role in instigating the violent demonstration that took place in Khartoum on 1 March 1954 during General Najib's visit to attend the inauguration of the first Sudanese parliament.<sup>14</sup>

Like others who advocated unity, Siricio was steadfast in his opposition to the notion of a separate Southern Sudan or attachment

southwards: "I disagree that South should become a separate country nor be joined on to Uganda".<sup>15</sup> He also felt that it would be inappropriate to establish a parliament in the South at that early date, although he would welcome such a move once the Southerners had learned the art of self-government.

Similarly, Akol was initially opposed to the idea of setting up a parliament in the South for the Southerners on the ground that it would lead to isolation and backwardness as long as the closed districts ordinance was still in force and free intercourse between the South and the outside world continued to be restricted. But once the ordinance were lifted, he would be prepared to see Southern affairs run by an assembly in the South.

Not all those whose views were solicited, or those who merely volunteered their opinions, supported the idea of unity with the North. A number of people from the police, clerical and teaching professions opposed such view. Generally, they advocated the separation of the South from the North. Employing the slogan "the North for the Northerners and the South for the Southerners," Corporal Patricio Lojok of Juba Police Department thus argued that the division between the two regions in terms of culture, religion, and socio-economic and political development was so deeply-rooted that they could not simply stick together.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the attitude of ethnocentricism and racial superiority, which accompanied the nineteenth century slave trade, was still prevalent among the Northerners and thus serving as a constant reminder of the lack of commonality of interests between the Northerners and the Southerners.<sup>17</sup>

Another police corporal from Juba police force, Philiberto Uchini Vanvongo, also argued in a paper titled "Southern Sudan Nation Expected," which he submitted to Governor Marwood, that the Southerners did not want the South to be amalgamated to the North nor to Uganda or any other country.<sup>18</sup> Instead they expressed the desire to remain under British trusteeship until they were capable of ruling themselves after which they would then decide whether to dispense with British rule or not. He also wondered why the South was not being allowed to exercise the right to become a separate and sovereign nation since small countries like the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Liberia enjoyed the same right. Like most Southerners, Corporal Vanvongo was suspicious of the motive behind the Northern demand for amalgamation. Accordingly, he felt that rather than unite with the South, the Northerners should instead seek integration with the Egyptians since there was racial, linguistic and religious affinity between them.

A memorandum by Tonj Government School teachers to the Deputy Governor Bahr al-Ghazal Area sums up the intensity of feelings among this group against integration:

If we are true patriots of the Southern Sudan, why should we leave our mother country in the hands of the Northern Sudanese to govern? . . . Why should we make our mother country to be an office which is handed over? The Southerners have got the scars of the Dervishes i.e-slavery. When the scar is touched again by a hard object, won't it become septic wound? What would happen if we unite with Arabs, and later they ill-treat us, would not the scar burst into a septic wound?<sup>19</sup>

Like the other Southerners who were opposed to unification, the Tonj teachers accused those who were advocating merger with the North of betraying the South for the sake of money.

But the basic reason for opposition to unity was the existing economic disparity and social inequality between the North and the South. Southern staff in Aweil made this clear to Owen in a memorandum dated 20 April 1947 in which they argued:

It is too early now for Southerners to join with Northerners in any form of community or parliament. The reason is because some Northerners seem to have advanced in education (i.e. they have D.C.'s, A.D.C.'s, Mamurs, Doctors, Engineers, Postmasters, etc.). And it would appear as if when we join with them in talks their voice would more be heard. As none in this part of the Sudan is in such scales, they would merely be ruling the country instead of sharing the government. Therefore, we do not agree with them at present until we have reached the same scales or conditions.<sup>20</sup>

The overwhelming sentiment among Southerners was thus against amalgamation. Yet Governor Marwood selected mostly chiefs and a few educated people like Siricio, whose views on the issue were identical with that of the government, to represent the South in the conference. The other shade of opinion was thus excluded from the conference. The result was a foregone conclusion. The Civil Secretary's plans for a merger of the North and the South was endorsed, thanks to the efforts of Judge Muhammad Salih al-Shingiti, Dr. Habib Abdalla and Hassan Ahmed Uthman, who lobbied the Southern members, "using all possible means and arguments-bribery not excluded," to support unity.<sup>21</sup>

### Progress Towards Self-Government

In the aftermath of the Juba conference, the pace for constitutional development quickened. In June 1948 an ordinance creating a legislative assembly and an executive council for the whole country was promulgated. On 15 December 1948 the assembly was formally opened by the governor-general. The South was represented by thirteen members selected through hastily organized province councils or through nomination by the governor-general.

Once in the assembly, however, the Southerners belatedly came to realize the awkward position into which the South and its future was thrown. To extricate it from this situation, they were henceforth resolved to fight their way out of the "union" by constitutional means. Thus when the Umma Party tabled a draft resolution on 13 December 1950 calling for self-government, the Southern members opposed it. They demanded that the South be developed to the same level as the North before any progress towards independence. Buth Diu, the member from Upper Nile, went further and stated that if the Northerners persisted with their demand for self-government, the South would only be connected to the North through a federal arrangement.<sup>22</sup> This was the first time that they spelt out the nature of the constitutional relationship which they desired with the North.

The concerns of the Southern members were addressed by the thirteen-man Constitutional Amendment Commission (CAC), which Governor-General Robert G. Howe appointed on 26 March 1951 to amend the 1948 Legislative Ordinance and to recommend constitutional advance towards self-government. The commission recommended the appointment of a minister for Southern affairs supported by an advisory board. But when these proposals came up for debate in the assembly in April 1953, the Northern representatives rejected them despite pleas by their Southern compatriots that they reflected feelings at the grass-roots level. The finely worded safeguards were thus deleted from the draft constitution. In its place a counter-motion was tabled which proposed that instead of a minister for Southern affairs, it should be simply provided that at least one of the ministers should be from the South.

The defeat of the original motion calling for the creation of a ministry for Southern affairs came on the heels of another disappointment for the Southerners—their exclusion from the constitutional talks held in Cairo between the Northern political parties and the Egyptian government in October 1952 and between the Condomini powers from November 1952 to February 1953. These discussions led eventually to the signing on 12 February 1953 of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement concerning self-government and self-determination for the Sudan. The agreement defined both the modalities

for the transfer of power from the Co-domini powers to the Sudanese as well as a constitutional framework within which such power would be exercised during the three-year interim period for self-government.

During the discussions that preceded the agreement, the only safeguard for the South then still remaining in the draft self-government statute, the governor-general's special veto powers over legislation affecting the special interests of the South, was removed at the insistence of the Northern Sudanese political parties and the Egyptian government. It was substituted with another provision, which granted the governor-general "special responsibility to ensure fair and equitable treatment to all the inhabitants of the various provinces of the Sudan."<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, while in 1947 the Northern Sudanese were eager to consult the opinion of Southerners, now they justified the exclusion of the Southerners from these talks on the ground that they had no organized political parties- even though an organization called the "Southern Political Committee" was already in existence in Juba by December 1952.

These disappointments were not the last that the Southerners were forced to swallow. The self-government statute had provided that all government posts which might affect the freedom of the Sudanese at the time of self-determination were to be Sudanized by a Sudanization committee. When the committee was appointed on 20 February 1954 the majority of its members were Sudanese, but none from the South. In all, the committee reviewed 1222 posts, of which 1069 were held by Britons and 153 by Egyptians.

By August 1954 when the results of Sudanization became known in the South, it was clear that seniority, experience and qualifications had been taken into consideration. Consequently, the Southerners received only four posts of assistant district commissioners and two mamurs. It was a shattering contrast to the recent (1953) election promises made by the NUP and Major Salah Salim, the Egyptian Minister for Sudanese Affairs in General Najib's government. The NUP had pledged:

The Southerners have more education than many of the Northerners and they will be able to occupy all the high post in government that were occupied by the British in the South, and that they will be district commissioners, governors, deputy governors and in general they will have a quarter of the jobs in the Sudan. . . . Our approach to the question of Sudanization shall always be just and democratic. Not only shall PRIORITY BE ALWAYS GIVEN TO SOUTHERNERS IN THE SOUTH but also shall the employment of Southerners be greatly fostered in the North especially in the higher ranks of the central

government service. Not only government jobs, but also membership of the different local government institutions, development committees etc. shall be as far as possible in the hands of competent Southerners in the Southern provinces.<sup>24</sup>

Major Salim had also made similar extravagant promises to the effect that when the British left, "the forty jobs of governors, district commissioners, assistant district commissioners [and other technical jobs] will be given to the Southerners."<sup>25</sup>

The results of Sudanization were thus another source of frustration and bitterness among the Southerners, who were now rallied around the Liberal Party's call for federation. Southern members of the cabinet openly spoke of the loss of confidence in a united Sudan "as an integral whole," while other Southern leaders urged Southerners living in the North to return to the South without delay.<sup>26</sup> As tension rose in the South, the political situation deteriorated steadily until 18 August 1955, when a company of the Equatorial corps stationed in Torit revolted. From Torit the revolt soon spread to other parts of the South.

The uprising came as a shock to most Northern Sudanese. Practically all Northern political parties condemned it, claiming that it was "a time bomb laid by British imperialism to explode at a fixed time in order to undermine the constitutional development in the country."<sup>27</sup> The Liberal Party, some of whose members were apparently implicated, refused to condemn it.

Meanwhile in the aftermath of the revolt, a motion for the declaration of immediate independence was tabled in parliament on 19 December 1955. The Southern members refused to endorse it unless their demand for a federal system of government was agreed to in advance. Faced with the prospect of delayed independence, the Northern representatives caved in and the provision for federation was inserted in the motion:

The claims of Southern members of parliament for a federal government for the three Southern provinces be given full consideration by the Constituent Assembly.<sup>28</sup>

The motion was carried by a unanimous vote in both houses of parliament. The Southern members innocently believed that they had secured federation for the South, but their Northern colleagues thought otherwise. To them, the "federal pledge" was merely intended to make the Southerners happy so that they could support the independence motion.

### The Rejection of Federalism and Emergence of the National Liberation Movement in the South.

Indeed, events of the post-independence period were later to prove the Northern interpretation of the "pledge" correct. No longer under any pressure, the Northern members in the draft constitution committee, which had been appointed in September 1956 to consider the federal proposal, and those in the Constituent Assembly had by 1958 rejected the demand for federation as an expensive facade. Instead, they drafted a constitution which recommended that the Sudan should become an Arab Islamic state.

The two sides were thus deadlocked, and a Southern spokesman in parliament stated that the alternative to federation was for the South to seek independence by asking the popular will of the Southerners under the principle of self-determination.<sup>29</sup> On 17 November 1958, however, the army intervened and overthrew the bickering government of Abdalla Bey Khalil and assumed the reigns of power. Soon afterwards, Southern members of parliament were rounded up and packed onto a South-bound steamer, where they were put under surveillance by the security forces.<sup>30</sup> Calls for a federal system of government were also outlawed.

This sudden turn of events convinced the Southerners that the Northerners were determined to push through their unitary Islamic constitution by means of "military dictatorship." And with the ruthless assimilation campaign that the regime unleashed and the lack of any available democratic means to redress the situation and to continue the constitutional struggle, they resorted to armed struggle in the early 1960s. There was now a gradual shift from federalism to separatism as the goal of the national liberation movement.

Throughout this decade, the movement underwent different phases of development. From 1962 until March 1965 it was dominated by the Sudan African National Union (SANU), led by Joseph Oduho. During this period, SANU established relative unity in the region. In January 1965, however, it split into two factions when William Deng, Secretary for External Affairs, wrote Prime Minister Sirr al-Khatim al-Khalifa that he was willing to return to the Sudan and that he was prepared to consider federation as a basis for negotiation.<sup>31</sup> On 27 February 1965, following his dismissal from SANU, Deng did indeed return to the Sudan.

For a time the two factions functioned as SANU (Outside) and SANU (Inside). In June 1965 a group of politicians, led by Oduho, broke away from SANU (Outside) and formed a new organization called Azania Liberation Front (ALF). Meanwhile, those who remained within SANU (Outside) organized themselves into the Sudan African

Liberation Front (SALF), under the leadership of Aggrey Jaden, while others formed the short-lived Sudan African Freedom Fighters Union of Conservatives (SAFFUC). In December 1965 the Southern leaders in exile made attempts to rebuild unity as a result of which SALF was absorbed into ALF. By March 1966, however, Jaden, the former SALF leader, had been dismissed for allegedly meeting William Deng in Nairobi and discussing the Southern problem with him without official authorization. This phase of the liberation struggle was thus characterized by division among the Southern leadership.

But in August 1967 a serious attempt was made to bring about unity once more when a number of Southern political exiles met at a convention in Angudri in Eastern Equatoria. At the end of the meeting it was agreed to dissolve all political organizations in the South and to replace them with a provisional government called the Southern Sudan Provisional Government (SSPG) to be headed by Jaden.

The SSPG played an important role in maintaining unity in the South during this period of the liberation movement until March 1969, when internal division resurfaced once again and which culminated in the flight of Jaden to Nairobi in early 1969. On 19 March 1969 yet another convention was held, this time at Balgo-Bindi in Yei district, at which Southern Sudan was renamed the "Nile Republic" and the SSPG replaced by the Nile Provisional Government (NPG) headed by Gordon Muortat Mayen.<sup>32</sup>

Despite this attempt at forging unity, the NPG was itself ridden with internal division. On 16 July 1969 supporters of the former SSPG leader broke away and formed the Anyidi Revolutionary Government (ARG) under the leadership of General Tafeng, while other factions organized themselves under the Sue River Revolutionary Government (SRRG) and the Sudan Azania Government (SAG).

This spate of fragmentation in the movement was ended by July 1970, when the various governments dissolved themselves and their leaders pledged support for Colonel Joseph Lagu of the Anya-Nya Organization. By January 1971 Lagu's leadership of the movement was almost unchallenged and he proceeded to form the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), which negotiated the Addis Ababa Agreement of March 1972 with the government of Jaafar Muhammad Nimeiry.

The internal divisions within the liberation movement during its various phases of development were due mainly to ethnic rivalries, personal ambitions, personality clashes and differences between politicians and Anya-Nya leaders rather than to matters of substance. The division within the NPG, for instance, reflected differences of opinion between politicians mainly from Equatoria and those from the other Southern provinces.

The Southern nationalist movement was inspired by the struggle of the African peoples for freedom from external domination. However, its ultimate goal tended to vary from time to time and between the different factions during the same time. SANU at first advocated self-determination, but later tilted towards complete independence. The ALF, SALF, SSPG and NPG all espoused this goal. The ALF called for an independent "Azania" state, while the NPG sought to create the "Nile Republic." The SSLM, on the other hand, advocated self-determination, a position which enabled it in 1972 to settle for the less attractive solution of regional autonomy.

Justifications for the call for separation or self determination were based upon the long list of grievances against the North, which included the rejection of federalism; the exclusion of the South from the benefits of Sudanization and also from the constitutional talks in Cairo that formulated the self-government statute of 1953; the rejection of safeguards for the South by the Northern members of the legislative assembly in April 1952; and the economic disparity as well as the inequitable distribution of resources and power between the North and the South. In addition since 1955 the Southerners were subjected not only to physical violence, but also to forced Islamization and Arabization by the Arabs of Northern Sudan. This was a clear violation of their right to self-determination, their desire to remain African and non-Muslim.

The Southerners also felt that there was no shared interests between them and the Northerners. On the contrary the South had an historical record of separate identity and resistance to foreign encroachments, including the Arabs. Moreover, they were not consulted about the fate of the Southern Sudan in the same way that the Northerners were given the opportunity to choose between independence or union with Egypt.

#### The Present Situation and Prospects for the Future

The last point above is especially important because of the divergent nature of Sudanese nationalism, which tends to pull both parts of the country in different directions, towards Arabism and Africanism respectively. The issues in the present conflict are not different from those of the 1960s. But what is new is the ideological division among the Southerners themselves. Whereas the movement of the 1960s had independence or self-determination as its main goals, the professed aim of the SPLA is the creation of a "united secular Sudan." The leadership of the movement has identified the root cause of the problem in the Sudan as being the exploitative relationship between the center and the underprivileged areas of the country, including the South. This being

the case, they argue, the problem cannot be resolved to the benefit of all through secession, for were the South to secede, then the other areas would follow suit. The result would be the emergence of a number of small weak states with unviable economies. Hence, the commitment to the idea of a united Sudan free of any discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender or any form of sectarianism.

However, since the split of 28 August 1991, "unity in diversity" has become more or less a dead issue. The main reason is the question of the *Sharia*, which has become the most critical stumbling block in every attempt at negotiation since the Koka Dam meeting of March 1986, and including the DUP-SPLA/SPLM peace initiative of November 1988, the mediation efforts by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, and the Nigerian President, General Ibrahim Babangida.

The *Sharia* was also one of several factors that contributed to the gradual erosion of mutual trust between the North and the South and the eventual outbreak of hostility on 16 May 1983—the others being the heavy-handed manner by which the central government, through the Sudanese Socialist Union or the President, intervened in the selection process of the chief executive of the Southern Region; the construction of the Jonglei Canal and especially the alleged plan to resettle 2 million Egyptian peasants along the canal; the integration of the Sudan to Egypt and the conclusion of a joint defence pact between the two countries; the various attempts by the central government to deprive the South of the economic benefits expected from the rich Bentiu oil-fields (for example, by redrawing the border between the North and the South in such a way as to include the oil areas, the rich agricultural lands of Renk and the nickel and uranium discoveries in the South as part of the North); the decision to site the refinery for Bentiu oil at Kosti; and the transfer to the North of members of the absorbed Anya-Nya forces.<sup>33</sup>

On the question of the *Sharia*, the Northern position is for the eventual establishment of an Islamic state in the Sudan. The Muslim fundamentalist regime of al-Bashir in particular, has insistently avowed that the Islamic nature of the state as represented in the *Sharia* legal system, the present system of quasi-regionalism which is masked as federalism, and the one-party political system it has imposed upon the country are non-negotiable.

With such a rigid stance, the SPLA's call for a secular constitution seems rather like asking a Muslim to accept the separation of mosque from state. It is a position that Muslim fundamentalists find distasteful, to say the least. As the charter of the NIF indicates

The Muslims are unitarian in their religious approach to life. As a matter of faith, they do not espouse secularism. Neither do they accept it politically. They see it as a doctrine that is neither neutral nor fair, being prejudicial to them in particular; it deprives them of the full expression of their legal rights and other values in the area of public life, without such detriment to those non-Muslim believers whose need is exclusively relevant to private and moral life.<sup>34</sup>

Since the "moderate" position of the mainstream SPLA is ideologically unacceptable to both the separatists in the South and the Islamists in the North, there seems no other option left now but partition. The Sudanese seem at last to have arrived at the moment of truth when they must make a final decision on the question of the country's identity and the role of religion in politics. The Southerners have been urging such a decision since independence. A prominent Northern Sudanese leader and Minister of Local Government in the DUP-Umma (Imam al-Hadi's wing) coalition government of Muhammad Ahmed Mahjoub, Hassan al-Mahjoub, added his voice to this call in January 1968 when he told the constituent assembly that the South should be allowed to secede from the North:

I believe that the Southern Sudan should be separated from the North now. If we do not accept the separation of North and South today, the Southerners will separate from us one day, in ten or in thirty years perhaps. All that I know of the South leads me to believe that those fighting for separation are not prepared to renounce their aim.<sup>35</sup>

Then and now, however, such views were anathema to the Northern elite who, infused with a sense of a new national pride resulting from the triumph of independence from colonialism, saw the Arabization and Islamization of the South as the only way to integrate it to the North. Thus, in order not to incur the wrath of the government and his party, Mahjoub was quick to add:

In Speaking in this way, I am expressing a personal viewpoint and not that of the government, but I hope that my declaration will be noted for history.<sup>36</sup>

Yet the inherently irreconcilable ideological positions of both sides in the conflict suggest the option for separation which, if "rationally considered, positively postulated, and constructively designed," could "foster a new basis for coexistence and cooperation"

between the North and the South.<sup>37</sup> The first step towards a solution, though, must start with the rebuilding of unity among the Southerners themselves.

---

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>D.M. Wai, "Sources of Communal Conflicts and Secessionist Politics in Africa," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.1, No.3 (July 1978), pp. 292-293.

<sup>2</sup>This attitude still persists among the Northern Sudanese: see F. Rehfisch, "A Study of Some Southern Migrants in Omdurman", *Sudan Notes and Records*, vol.43 (1962), pp. 50-104; and T. Woldemikael, "Southern Migrants in a Northern Sudanese City", *Horn of Africa*, vol.8, no.1 (1985), pp. 26-31.

<sup>3</sup>J.S.R. Duncan, *The Sudan's Path to Independence* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and sons, 1957), p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>O. Albino, *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 20; R.O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 172-176.

<sup>5</sup>It should, however, be remembered that Cromer's principal motive for allowing Christian missionaries to go to the South was not to christianize the Africans there, he could not have cared less, but to get them out of Khartoum and Omdurman, where they were viewed as a menace for law and order in their efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity. The societies were too powerful for Governor-General Wingate to control effectively, so they were sent out of sight into the "Bog."

<sup>6</sup>Some members of the political service such as Martin Parr did, however, think of separating the South from the North; but that was all there was to it. Separation never became official policy of the Sudan government: see D.J. Sconyers, "British Policy and Mission Education in the Southern Sudan 1928-1945," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1978, pp. 240-251.

<sup>7</sup>Collins, *Shadows*, pp. 172-176.

<sup>8</sup>C.H. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), pp. 201-202.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 202; M.W. Daly, "Economic Development in Southern Sudan 1899-1940", University of Juba, *The Role of Southern Sudanese People in the Building of Modern Sudan* (Khartoum: Arrow Commercial Printing Press, 1986), p. 81.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup>J.H.T. Wilson, District Commissioner Jur River District to Deputy Governor Bahr al-Ghazal Area, 1 June 1947, SCR/1.B., *NRO*.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>"Station Officer" was a lower rank administrative position, below sub-mamur, created by the British authorities in the South to accommodate the few educated Southerners in the administration.

- <sup>14</sup>M. Khalid, *The Government They Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990), pp. 122-123.
- <sup>15</sup>Siricio Iro Wanison to Governor Equatoria Province, 6 June
- <sup>16</sup>Corporal Patricio Lojok to Governor Equatoria Province, 9 June 1947, EP/SCR/1.A.5/1., *NRO*.
- <sup>17</sup>See footnote 2 above.
- <sup>18</sup>Corporal Philiberto Uchini Vanvongo to Governor Equatoria Province, 6 June 1947, EP/SCR/1.A.5/1., *NRO*.
- <sup>19</sup>Tonj Government School Teachers to Deputy Governor Bahr al-Ghazal Area, 24 May 1947, EP/SCR/1.A.5/1., *NRO*.
- <sup>20</sup>Southern staff Aweil (Fortunato Gessi, Victor Dimo, Alfonse, and Kallisto) to Deputy Governor Bahr al-Ghazal Area, 20 April 1947, EP/SCR/1.A.5/1., *NRO*.
- <sup>21</sup>J. Oduho and W. Deng, *The Problem of the Southern Sudan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 16.
- <sup>22</sup>See footnote 72 in Khalid, *The Government They Deserve*, p. 115; A.L.L. Loiria, "Political Awakening in Southern Sudan 1946-1955: Decolonization and the Problem of National Integration," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969, p. 232.
- <sup>23</sup>Loiria, *Political Awakening*, p. 260.
- <sup>24</sup>Sudan Government, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry, Southern Disturbances, August 1955* (Khartoum: McCorquodale Company [Sudan], Ltd., 1956), pp. 112-113.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.
- <sup>26</sup>P. Woodward, *Condominium and Sudanese Nationalism* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1979), p. 152.
- <sup>27</sup>"Sudan Political Intelligence Summary", No.3, September 1955, UNP 1/20/167, *NRO*.
- <sup>28</sup>*Weekly Digest of Proceedings of the Senate*, The First Parliament of the Sudan, Sitting No.36, Thursday, 22 December 1955, p. 304.
- <sup>29</sup>Oduho and Deng, *The Problem of the Southern Sudan*, p. 36.
- <sup>30</sup>"Petition to the United Nations by Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (SACDNU)", South 1/13/125, *NRO*.
- <sup>31</sup>E. O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan 1955-1972* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 70; B. Malwal, *People and Power in Sudan: The Struggle for National Stability* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), p. 100.
- <sup>32</sup>"It is now the Nile Republic", *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 15 May 1969, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>33</sup>Sudan People's Liberation Movement, "Stated Position of the Rebels", *Horn of Africa*, vol.8, No.1 (1985), pp. 39-46.
- <sup>34</sup>National Islamic Front, "Sudan Charter", F.M. Deng and P. Gifford (eds.), *The Search for Peace and Unity in the Sudan* (Washington, D.C.: The Wilson Center Press, 1987), p. 79.

---

35"Minister Mahgoub in Favour of Separation", in *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 15 April 1969, p.4.

36*Ibid.*, p. 4.

37G. Muortat Mayen, et al., "The Adare Declaration on the Future of the Sudan", Unpublished document, The Adare Manor, Limerick, The Republic of Ireland, 8 September 1991, p. 3.