

African unity's hardest test

The Arab-African clash in the Sudan

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IN THE SUDAN two widely differing African cultures — the Arab and the African — share the country (the latter in Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal Provinces). If harmony could be established in these conditions it could be truly said that Pan-Africanism had validity and substance, that African unity had passed its hardest test. Elsewhere in Africa the vast tracts of the Sahara Desert prevent anything more effective than the telegraph being used as a form of communication between Arab and African.

But, as the recent series of reports in London's Daily Mail show, armed anarchy exists in the area. This is the most polite expression that can be used for a situation where armed garrisons are the only form of administration, where no organised agriculture exists, where no outsiders can enter, from which 100,000 refugees have fled and which, the Daily Mail has estimated, may have cost as many as one million lives.

To make any sense of the fighting, it is necessary to study the detailed cases of the Sudanese government and the Southerners as presented in *Fourteen documents on the Problem of the Southern Sudan*, compiled by the government in late 1965, and *The Problem of the Southern Sudan, a Memorandum submitted by the Sudan African Liberation Front to the 3rd Summit Conference of the OAU at Ghana, 21st October 1965*, drawn up by SALF.

GOVERNMENT CASE

THE GOVERNMENT CASE IS THAT the problem is an inheritance from the British colonial government. From 1899 until 1947, it is claimed, the British government deliberately tried to remove Arab influence from the South. This even went so far as to forbid the use of Arab names and an effort to exclude Arab traders. Then, in 1947, this policy was reversed, so that when the Sudan became independent in 1956, the work of national reconstruction was only partially done. The Sudanese Prime Minister gave his verdict on the success of this policy at the Khartoum Round Table Conference in March 1965: "But the efforts which the Imperialists had made during half a century for the total destruc-

tion of all human, economic and political links between the North and the South had in the meantime poisoned the minds of many and left deep and unhealthy impressions which are still with us today and which will no doubt take many years to get rid of." Now the Sudanese government claims that it is carrying out a large programme of "Southernisation" (which would seem to be perpetuating their interpretation of the British policy) and it is hoped that past excesses of bad feeling between the North and the South will end.

WAR OF GENOCIDE

THIS SEEMS ADMIRABLE ENOUGH, but the dissident Southerners, represented by the Azania Liberation Front say that the implementation of the policy has been twisted into a war of genocide. The Southerners give a catalogue of alleged atrocities starting from 1955 and ending with the Juba and Wau massacres of July last year. The hapless British also catch it from this direction: "It is quite evident that the so-called unity between the Southern and Northern Sudan is nothing more than a reflection of ill-will of the British in sacrificing the four million Southerners for their interests in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. And the conclusion of the exiles is that the Sudan must be split, and the two halves must then try and start afresh as separate states within the spirit of co-operation of the OAU.

Certainly both antagonists agree that there is a Southern problem, and equally there are the usual three observations that an outsider can make of the difficulties in finding a solution. The first observation — that it is very difficult geographically to create a unified state in the Sudan — should not deter the more dedicated unionists, but when this is combined with the racial problem and the religious one, then it becomes more clear that the Sudan has a rough ride ahead of it.

The religious complication is that the Sudan is a Moslem country and a member of the Arab League. This would not be insuperable if it were not that the active work of missionaries in the South has produced many Southern Christians. South-

erners point to the expulsion of the missionaries from the South and say that this is proof that the government intends to impose an alien religion upon them, while the government alleges that the missionaries were interfering with the country's internal affairs. But certainly it is difficult to see tribes like the Dinka as an integral part of the Arab League.

SUPPORT FOR KHARTOUM

What are other countries doing to help solve the problem, particularly those in Africa? The answer is that they are giving their full support to the Khartoum government. The support is given in a series of agreements that the Sudanese government has concluded with its neighbours not to interfere in each others' internal affairs. This approach has been successful as oppositions to the governments of Chad, Ethiopia, and the Congo have used the Sudan as a base for their training operations. Now the Sudanese government has stopped all such activity in return for non-interference in its solution of the Southern problem.

It has been more difficult in this respect to swing the Ugandan government to the side of Khartoum, as so many of the refugees are in Uganda, some of them being in official United Nations camps. Also tribes such as the Lituka span the Uganda/Sudan border. But only last month, Uganda's Minister of Defence, Mr. Felix Onama (who comes from the Sudan border), made a statement in Khartoum that he was calling on all leading and educated Southern Sudanese to return to the country to reach a final settlement of their problem with the present government. He added that the Security Committee of East Africa had agreed not to allow Southern leaders to carry out any hostile act against their country from its members' territory.

The diplomatic offensive has been accompanied by a determination by Khartoum to have elections in the South. These are scheduled for April, by which time many of the schools should have re-opened. Perhaps by then enough rifles will also have been put away to satisfy Southerners that it is time to try again.