
IV. London's Sudan Policy

Britain's 1930s apartheid policy in southern Sudan

by Linda de Hoyos

In 1930, the British administrators redefined their southern policy of separating the north from the south. It had in fact begun in 1902, and had been furthered in 1922, because they feared that the newly emerging anti-British sentiments in the north, encouraged by Egyptian factions, might spread into the south, and from there into British East Africa territory. On the 25th of January it was decreed that the object was "to build up a series of self-contained racial and tribal units with structure and organization based, to whatever extent the requirement of equity and good government permit, upon indigenous customs, traditions, usages, and beliefs."

From *The Secret War in the Sudan: 1955-72*, by Edgar O'Ballance

Led by Baroness Caroline Cox, the British press has long had a field day excoriating the government in Khartoum for the civil war in the country that erupted in 1955, even before independence, extending to 1972, and then erupted again in 1983. Human rights violations on the part of Khartoum, religious oppression, economic abuse, and educational segregation are among the charges leveled at the Sudan government for the problems in southern Sudan. Even a brief perusal of British policy over Sudan demonstrates, however, that it is the British colonials, whose policies persist in the British Ministry of Overseas Development of Baroness Lynda Chalker, who created a completely artificial divide in Sudan, between north and south, imposing the harshest form of apartheid on the southern population which denied the southern citizenry access to education and economic development. Further, to accomplish this aim, with the help of anthropologists such as E. Evans-Pritchard (see article p. 49), the British colonial masters manufactured out of whole cloth a southern Sudanese tribal "identity"—distinct from the Arabized north—to induce the southern, besieged population into the hoax. *This is the origin*—along with logistics and arms amply supplied by British puppets in the region—of the civil wars in Sudan.

The policy was enunciated in a 1930 memo, by Angus

Gillan, governor of Kordofan from 1928 to 1932, who stated categorically that the aim of the apartheid policy between north and south Sudan was "to preserve authentic Nuba civilization and culture as against a bastard type of 'Arabization.'" The areas to be segregated were the three southern provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria.

As reported in a July 1990 article in *African Affairs*, journal of the British Royal Africa Society, by Kamal Osman Salih, the segregation measure was in part prompted by the advent of the cotton industry to the region, which revolutionized local economic conditions. From the 1920s onward, the ethno-cultural map of the Nuba Mountains had been reshaped owing to the spreading influence of Arabization. Cotton and the money from it tempted the Nuba to leave their mountain homes and come down to foothills, where they were in closer contact with Sudanese Muslims, or what the British designated as "Arabs." Cotton also brought new roads, which increased the contact. Every year, more Nuba males were leaving their hills to work in the northern towns. More had also applied to enlist in the different army units, either inside or outside the region.

The governor of the Nuba Mountains wrote: "Once the pagan Nuba starts mixing with the Arabs and the world outside his own community, as he is now beginning to do, this change will be rapid. With present conditions, therefore, and with the fact that immediately he leaves his hill, the pagan steps into a Mohammedan atmosphere, it will not be very long before he assumes Arab characteristics, i.e., dresses and talks Arabic."

A panicked southern district commissioner wrote in 1930: "All I can point out is, as far as this district is concerned, little has been done to prevent Islamization. . . . The urgency of the matter lies in the economic progress of the Arab; the contacts are bound to increase; for economic reasons the races must mix, and if a policy for Nuba is to be stated, it must be formulated now."

Thereupon the British decided to institute both a policy of physical apartheid of the southern Nubians from the so-called Arabs (i.e., Muslims), and also to forge a "Nubian" identity. Gillan admitted that the idea was to build a cultural bloc against the northern Muslims: The aim was "to preserve

or evolve an authentic Nuba civilization and culture, as against a bastard type of Arabization, or at least to support this evolution up to a point *where the people themselves will be fit to choose*, with their eyes open, the type of culture which most appeals to them" (emphasis added).

Extolling the apartheid policy, Douglas Newbold, who later succeeded Gillan as governor of Kordofan, 1932-38, wrote: "The Nuba policy as set forth in Mr. Gillan's printed memorandum and approved by the central government is a positive civilizing policy, based on what is best in local tradition and culture. It does not aim at keeping the Nuba in a glass cage, nor in making the Nuba Mountains into a human game reserve, but envisages the evolution of Nuba civilization through Nuba leaders and Nuba communalities."

The policy certainly worked. As southern anti-Khartoum activist Alexis Mbali Yangu wrote in his book *The Nile Is Red* in 1966: "The policy of assimilation through the Islamic religion and Arabic language is unequivocally opposed by Africans because this is calculated to destroy their African identity and national dignity."

Physical segregation

Two problems quickly arose in the policy's implementation: the heterogeneity of the Nuba tribes and their contiguity with northern Muslims. The Nubians consisted of dozens of tribes "of entirely different stocks, of different cultures, religions, and stages of civilization, speaking as many as ten entirely different languages and some 50 dialects, more or less mutually unintelligible," as an article in Britain's *African Affairs* noted.

Gillan hoped to overcome this problem with federation: "I am satisfied that the solution of the problem is summed up in one word: federation. . . . The best hope of attaining this and evolving an authentic Nuba civilization and culture is by creation of federations strong enough to stand on their own feet, and significantly imbued with Nuba tradition to present a firm barrier to Arabization."

The formation of these federations would be effected through the policy of "indirect rule"—so-called "native administration."

Secondly, the British had to deal with the Muslim overlordship of some Nuba communities. One faction of colonialists argued in favor of the elimination of Arab domination at once, and at any cost. The other spoke in favor of continuity of Arab suzerainty, because it believed that the Arab overlords could administer those communities better than anyone else. In some cases, the communities involved were so isolated that Arab suzerainty was left intact, or remained with restrictions.

British policy supported "villagization," and discouraged urbanization. The idea was to "institute a Nuba village, or series of villages, within easy distance of the town, whereby Nuba, whether permanently or temporarily, can live as far as possible under tribal conditions."

All those Nuba males who worked as daily wage laborers in urban centers such as Kadugli and Dilling were settled in the surrounding villages. No Nubians were permitted to live in the towns for fear they would become detribalized. A large number of Nuba reported to be in northern cities such as Khartoum and Medani were summarily rounded up and sent home. "By blocking their geographical mobility, the administration had undoubtedly undermined Nuba economic interests, and thereby increased their economic deprivation," reports Osman Salih. Various tribes were relocated in the border area, to create a buffer zone to the north. Tribe members were forbidden to live anywhere outside their tribal zone.

It was also feared that Nuba enlistment in army units stationed inside Kordofan would abet their Arabization. As a result, it was decided to stop all military recruitment of the Nuba outside the province. According to a British ordinance of May 15, 1930, "Nuba, domiciled in the Nuba Mountains, who present themselves at army units outside the province, will not be enlisted." Furthermore, any Nubian operating outside of the district was discharged—thus reversing the policy of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium since 1903 which had sought to bring the Nubians into the army.

The Closed District Order of 1930 was then used to bar Muslim traders from the south: Almost 75% of the cotton lands were reserved to the Nuba, leaving only one-quarter to the non-Nuba residents in the region.

Deculturation

Muslim-dominated areas in Nuba were treated as northern and they were provided with elementary schools of northern type. Nuba pagans were not permitted to attend them. In his Nov. 26, 1930 Memorandum on Education Policy in the Nuba area, British Secretary of Education and Health J.G. Matthew stated: "The wish of the government is that the Nuba should develop on their own lines and be assisted to build up self-contained racial or tribal units, but at the same time it is recognized that for their material advancement there must be easy communication between them and their neighbors and also the various groups of Nuba themselves who speak different dialects. It is considered that Arabic is the only possible language for inter-communication and it is recommended that for this purpose Arabic in roman script should be taught as a subject in the elementary schools."

"The use of Arabic script was thought undesirable because it would enable pupils to read Arabic literature of all kinds, thereby introducing influences tending toward the disintegration of their tribal life."

To further raise the cultural wall, Muslims in the south were prevented from practicing their beliefs; Arabic dress was forbidden, as were Arabic names, and intermarriage between northerners and southerners was banned.

Then began a policy of Christianization, or as Gillan stated, "through the help of the missions, to begin the battle against the introduction of Mohammedanism among the pa-

gans in the province before it is too late.”

The net result of these policies was that Nubia became an economically deprived region, and completely undereducated, while the army of Sudan came to be placed almost entirely in the hands of the northerners.

Colonial whiplash

Then, in 1946, when there was open talk of the British leaving Sudan, the Colonial Office suddenly reversed gears and placed the administration of the whole country in the hands of the northern Muslims. “Native rule” was abrogated in the south and handed over to Muslims from the north—after the British had so assiduously cultivated a “Nubian identity”! On April 23, 1946, the Colonial Office issued its reversal, stating that it was acting “upon the facts that the peoples of the southern Sudan are distinctively African and Negroid, but that geography and economics combine (so far as can be foreseen at the present time) to render them inextricably mixed to the middle Eastern and Arabised northern Sudan.”

Lord Winterton, arguing in the House of Lords against the reversal of apartheid, noted that “the southern Sudanese strongly objected, so far as they were able vocally, most of them of course being illiterate, to the removal of our power to protect them, and the dreadful events which have resulted [the 1955 civil war] show that their fears were justified.”

As the British pondered the civil war in the south, the debate in the House of Lords during the mid-1950s presaged precisely Baroness Cox’s demands today for a separate zone to be carved out of the south and overseen by international agencies. As the Marquis of Reading stated in debates in 1955: “It has been proposed that an international commission should be sent to the south, possibly under the auspices of the U.N., to see that the southerners get fair treatment. Other suggestions have been made that the International Red Cross or the World Health Organization should send a mission to the South. Either of these measures could be taken only with the agreement of the Sudan government, who would probably regard such proposals as a sign of lack of confidence and therefore be calculated to weaken its positions.

“The dispatch of the U.N. observers would almost certainly revive and strengthen the movement for some sort of self-rule in the South, thus widening the gap between North and South. . . . The present difficulties in Sudan can be solved only if the Sudanese government itself seeks a solution by consultations with all parties.”

The British colonial policy—first apartheid against the southerners and then placing them under northern administration—created the preconditions for the outbreak of civil war in 1955, which did not end until 1972. By the time the British had left Sudan, the identity exhibited by the southerners at this time was not only Nubian, it was pro-British! As Mbali Yangu admits: “British departure from the Sudan was thought of in the South with great anxiety.”

British family helps ignite two continents

by Scott Thompson

The Evans-Pritchard family, father and son, have been involved, respectively, in laying the basis for the operations of John Garang’s Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) insurrection in southern Sudan, and in the bloody Thirty Years’ War-style insurgencies in Central America. Whereas the father, structural anthropologist Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, fostered the myth of the “Nilotic tribes” from which Garang today recruits for his war against Khartoum, his son Ambrose Evans-Pritchard worked with British intelligence on all sides of the war in Central America.

And today, as Washington Bureau Chief of the London *Sunday Telegraph*, which is owned by a multibillion-dollar British intelligence firm, the Hollinger Corp., Ambrose Evans-Pritchard is seeking to stir up every possible scandal he can against President Bill Clinton, who has broken the “Anglo-American special relationship.”

The myth of the ‘Nilotic tribes’

Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard was instrumental in creating the myth of the “Nilotic tribes.” He was born on Sept. 21, 1902, the son of Rev. John Evans-Pritchard, a vicar of the Church of England. During 1916-24, he was educated at Winchester College and at Exeter College, Oxford, where he studied under A.R. Radcliffe Brown, with whom he would later introduce structural anthropology to Britain. During 1923-27, he did his Ph.D. studies at the London School of Economics, in part under C.G. Seligman, who was among the first Englishmen to study the “Nilotic tribesmen,” especially the Dinka tribe of which Garang is a member, and the Shilluk of southern Sudan.

E.E. Evans-Pritchard started his field work with the Azande tribe, doing a study of their beliefs in oracle and magic. In 1930, he began his research on the Nuer tribe and their relationship with the Dinka. As E.E. Evans-Pritchard admitted in his anthropological “classic,” *The Nuer: A Description of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, first published in 1940: “My study of the Nuer was undertaken at the request of, and was mainly financed by, the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which also contributed generously toward the publication of its results.”

In short, E.E. Evans-Pritchard’s studies of the “Nilotic tribes” were financed and broadcast by the Colonial Office of His Britannic Majesty’s government.

Among E.E. Evans-Pritchard’s tasks was to complete a