

people from other countries. They do not start by meeting people from other countries except insofar as people from other countries can help them to start a national association, and not only national, but even local, in various parts of this country, because the country is very big.

EIR: What role do you think economic development has in this dialogue?

Arinze: I am not an economist. But speaking from the point of view of religion, I have this to say: Religion must motivate people to promote the good of their country. Therefore working together to promote the good of their country is part of the inter-religious dialogue, of course.

Documentation

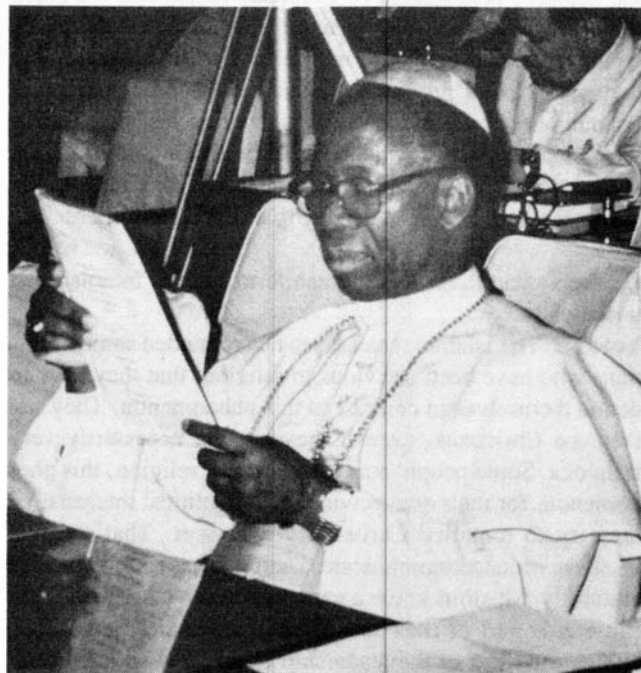
Sudanese leaders deal with the issues

In the context of the Inter-Religious Dialogue conference held in Khartoum Oct. 8-10, members of the Sudanese leadership opened up to the press on a wide variety of issues. *EIR* participated with questions at meetings with Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi, the chairman of the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference, and with Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin Al-Atabani, state minister for political affairs. Both leaders, one spiritual and the other political, stressed that for meaningful dialogue to unfold, there is a need for leading figures in the West to learn about Sudan, and about Islam, directly. It is in the interest of providing such leaders—among them the newly elected members of the U.S. Congress and Senate—with a picture of Sudan as the Sudanese present it, that we include lengthy extracts from these discussions, which occurred in Khartoum on Oct. 11, 1994.

Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi

Q: You proposed during the conference the establishment of a “worldwide religious order.” Can you say more about how you see this evolving?

Turabi: There was probably too much focus on the domestic affairs of Christian-Islamic dialogue, but I am interested in the international human context, a dialogue initially, later on it would become cooperation. The concern about Christian-Islamic relations in Sudan is a reflection of international concern about the so-called Islamic society or Islamic renaissance, or whatever they call it, or “fundamentalism” in the Sudan. Whether it’s human rights or underdevelopment or regional problems here, it is always interpreted in terms of



Cardinal Arinze: Dialogue must first have roots in Sudan.

that Christian-Islamic relationship. That’s why I try to focus on the international human dialogue of religions generally, not only a dialogue, but further on, perhaps, an institution or machinery for cooperation as well.

Q: In the New World Order, what kind of dialogue are you looking for?

Turabi: Inter-government relations are now dominated by the so-called New World Order. It’s only a transitional world order, I think. The bi-polar world order, which was not only bi-polar in the sense of confrontation, was for the Third World countries of the southern hemisphere a structure of justice and balance. Each pole would take care not to provoke the other, there was much more fairness in that bi-polar order. But we can find in both “poles” people who are interested in dealing with other human beings as equals, understanding each other, and cooperating. The New World Order is not very orderly at all, it’s only a transition. After the collapse of the bi-polar order, people are looking for a new order, so to speak.

Q: Do you think the Islamic revival will change the world order?

Turabi: Within Islamic history, renaissances are cyclical. In old times, it might be local. In this country, for example, there was a revolution against the European invasion. But now, any revival in one country immediately affects other countries. For example, the Islamic renaissance in the Sudan, with its political, economic, and social dimension, has a worldwide influence, as an example. Sometimes we ride over

the negative propaganda of European media and we reach Muslims and non-Muslims across the world. I have very little doubt that this revival will not be only spiritual, not only a revival of social programs, but it will be a resurgence of Islamic energy worldwide. I'm not saying that it would be the new pole, against which another pole would like to point its guns after the Soviet Union collapsed, another bi-polar order, but that we can contribute to a new world order.

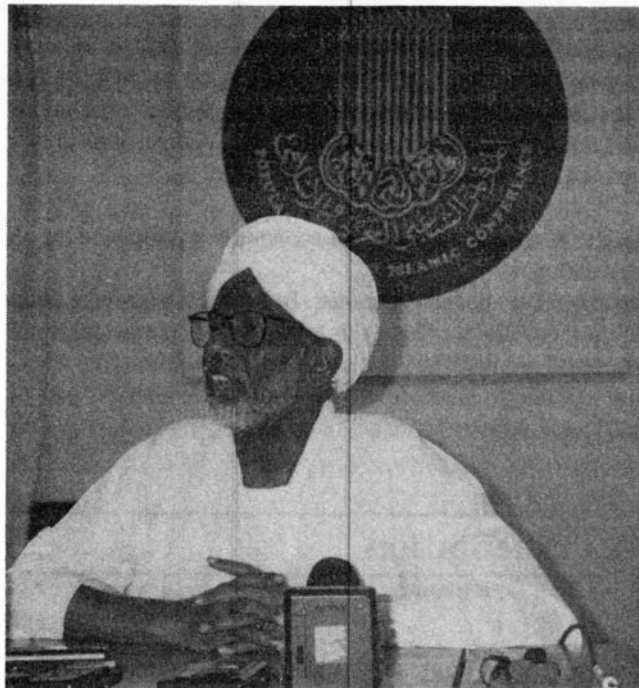
Q: Don't you think it is premature to start an international initiative?

Turabi: The Islamic renaissance has reminded some Christians who have been oblivious to religion, that they have to define themselves in contrast to this phenomenon. They say they are Christians, even if they are not necessarily very religious. Some people may try to exploit religion, this phenomenon, for their own economic and political interests, so they try to mobilize Christianity against it. That's why I think we need to communicate. Dialogue has to be two ways culturally: Muslims know a great deal about Christianity because it is part of their historical heritage and tradition of Islam, and most of the leadership of this revival have been educated in the west, they know so much about the language, the categories of thought. The West knows so little about Islam, generally. Christians know so little about Islam, and this "post-Christian West" actually knows so little about the South, where Islam lies. That's why we have to know about each other.

Q: There have been accusations of religious discrimination in the Sudan. What is your response?

Turabi: There is no consciousness of religious identity in any social association in this country. Color, or ethnic or religious identity, is not a factor of consciousness, let alone discrimination. At the legal level (I'm a lawyer myself), I challenge any lawyer in the world to tell me that there is legal discrimination in this country. I can't have a Friday off in any European country; I can't have my private contract with my family, I'm married to a lady and have children, and the affairs of the family association, inheritance, arbitration, are completely our own. You can have this in business in the West, but you can't have it in marriage in the West; but you have it in this country, definitely better than in any other country in the world.

I would like to know in what other country minorities, like the Christians in the country, who are only 5%, can reach up to the vice presidency, to speakers, to the house of parliament, ministers all over the country. In America, for example, if you are Catholic, it's very difficult for you to become President, and if you do, look at what happened to Kennedy. Let alone England, where the law says you can't be head of state unless you are an Anglican, not a Christian, but *Anglican*. And if you abuse religion, the Anglican Church, you can be taken to court, but whatever you say about Islam, even if you insult Islamic sacred ideas, as Sal-



Religious leader Hassan al-Turabi responds to questions from reporters on Oct. 11. His advice to western leaders: "Get to know Sudan better."

man Rushdie did, you are free. Look at our criminal law and compare it to any other law in the world.

Q: How are Christians treated equally within Sharia [Islamic law]?

Turabi: Private law is their own. Any court will adjudicate any case regarding family law according to their law. With respect to criminal law, there are four provisions in the criminal law court which are derived specifically from Islamic law, and those provisions are not applicable in the south, not because it is predominantly Christian, but because it is predominantly non-Muslim. There are as many Muslims as Christians there. These Islamic provisions are not applicable there, there are alternative provisions; for instance, instead of flogging, you receive a prison term. Instead of prohibition—which we thought was not necessarily an Islamic or Quranic provision, in America it was the Christian spirit actually which called for prohibition, and it was written into the Constitution and America failed to do it. But nevertheless, because some Christians say, "Oh no, it is a religious right" [to consume alcohol]; all right, in the south, there is no prohibition. We are regionalizing these criminal law provisions because we don't want to personalize it. We don't want the police, if they suspect someone of any crime, talking about his religion, and to claim that he is one religion or the other. Criminal law cannot be under personal investigation, but personal law can be. There is no bar based on religious identity in public office in the Sudan.

I have not heard of any case of discrimination here. There

are stories about it, the farther away from Sudan you are, the more stories you hear. But if you come very close, you hear few stories, if you come to the reality itself, I have not heard of a case of discrimination.

Q: If the situation in Sudan is so good, why is Sudan so isolated? Why doesn't it have followers in other countries?

Turabi: I'm not saying that the situation here is perfect, but I think every country should develop its values. On isolation, if you mean the governments, yes, there are governments which are very jealous of Sudan because it is Islamic; they claim to have gone Islamic themselves, but Sudan shows another model of government, which is not dictatorship and not a hereditary monarchy, and they become very jealous. Sudan Islamized the banking system, and they are very jealous because this exposed them, actually; other rich countries should have Islamized before Sudan, which is a poor country. Islamization of the banking system means that there is no interest, all transactions are profit- and loss-sharing transactions. This means the banks should be popular, should be democratized, and even the poor, who have no estate to mortgage and no one to guarantee them, should be given some advantages by the banks. Not just the rich. Among the Arab states there are some which are close to Sudan, Yemen, Qatar, Syria, Iraq, Iran—although Iran and Iraq are opposed to each other, both of them are good friends of the Sudan, and even North Africa, Libya, Morocco, we have no problems. It's those countries which have domestic problems, where Islam is rising against the government regimes, they say Sudan is responsible for giving an example. With the people we have no problems; people from Indonesia, Russia, even America, everywhere, Muslim people are very sympathetic to Sudan. It is the first time, actually, that Sudan has had this popularity worldwide. Previously, people did not hear of Sudan, but now Sudan is very popular; in Saudi Arabia, in Asia, in Africa, in Nigeria, in Senegal, in Morocco, in Algeria itself, or in Egypt, Sudan is very popular, it is not isolated. At the government level, I would not say that Sudan is "isolated." European countries, like Italy, are very close, [or] France; we have good relations with the Netherlands, with Finland, and the like.

Q: But international institutions have withheld credits from Sudan, isolating it financially.

Turabi: Previously, we were dependent; we used to draw some hundred million dollars, up to a billion, as aid from the U.S., the U.N. organizations, Europe, Arab governments, at the government level. Now this has been interrupted, because most of them are anti-Islamic. But it was actually very good, we responded by mobilizing our own resources. This is a very rich country, you know. In agriculture we are not hungry, we are exporting cereals, vegetables, fruits, meat, sugar, and we are building our country, alone. Roads are being built across this very big country, from west to north to south to east. Our higher education: There are ten times more people going to

university than five years ago. We are doing this on our own resources. We are getting credit, commercial credit, from all over the world actually, and it is better than being dependent. If you wait for the NGOs to come and inject our bodies against diseases—that was an unfortunate state of relations in the world.

Q: What are your current relations with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund?

Turabi: It was only one country which sought to throw us out of that institution—America—and it was outvoted.

Q: Would you accept a relation with them?

Turabi: Yes, but not on the basis of dependence on the outside, because if I am dependent, I'll just relax and become dormant, and wait for food to come from outside. In all history, countries develop if they have to respond to challenges. If there is no challenge, you just fall asleep.

Q: Sudan has faced many such challenges, from foreign occupation to drought to threats from American imperialism.

Turabi: The drought was very good because it compelled us to raise our dams, to broaden our irrigated area, and to go to those areas that are still under rainfed farming, develop them for agriculture. The American challenge was also very good, because it turned us from a dependent country into an independent country now; and in history it's always like that: Challenges—if you respond, of course—are good for your development. If you don't respond to the challenge, you collapse. But we are not collapsing.

Q: What would your message be to President Clinton?

Turabi: Please get to know the Sudan better. Fortunately, I have known the previous Presidents, all of them, personally. They knew very little about the Sudan. Before dealing with the Sudan, get to know the Sudan first, because you make yourself a laughingstock if you call the Sudan "terrorist." Even the Europeans, I speak to the Europeans, and I tell them, know the Sudan first. Sudan is not hungry, it is not terrorist; it is developing. It's an Islamic country. The Americans, I know they are not anti-Islamic; even if there is a prejudice against Islam in Europe, it's much less in America. So if you want to be representative of American society, don't sound anti-Islamic.

Q: What is it that conjures up such fears in the United States?

Turabi: It's the lobbies. Foreign policy in the U.S. is not an electoral mandate, I know that. Presidents in America are not elected on a foreign policy mandate. Americans, when they vote, know little about foreign policy, they are interested in their domestic, economic policy. There are lobbies which focus on Sudan being an Islamic country, and that's not representative of American society. It's not democratic, and it's based on ignorance about the Sudan. Even if you want to accuse Sudan of terrorism, all Europeans—I don't want to



Jute harvesting in Sudan. "Sudan has less than 30 million, it can easily hold 300 million" people.

say diplomats here, because it's embarrassing to them—but I've seen it at that level and higher, all over Europe. Not a single European has said that there is any terrorism in the Sudan. The Europeans know Sudan much better, of course, than America, unfortunately. The Americans confuse the Sudan and Iran, although in Iran they have their own problems. They were very close to the Shah, the government, and the revolution was anti-American simply because "the friends of my enemy are my enemy."

Q: Why do you call your association the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference?

Turabi: The event that was behind the constitution of that conference was the Gulf war. Because many Arabs yesterday were Arab nationalists, we wanted actually to give all of them, and behind them, all of the Islamic fronts, a forum together, so we used the word Arab. In this country, there is no Arab nationalism; in this country, the word Arab only means language. It is derived from Arab culture, the Arabic language; the Quran is in Arabic. When the PAIC develops, it may very well drop the word altogether.

Q: What has the PAIC achieved?

Turabi: It has assembled Muslims from all over the world, America and Canada and the Caribbean, white and black, Japanese and Europeans, of European stock and European nationalities, Asians, Africans and the Middle East—Arabs mostly. For the first time, from all over the world, we assembled one meeting after the other. We have overcome the internal divisions, Shia, Sunna, differences in jurisprudence or spiritual orders, they now speak together; the dialogue

between Christianity and Islam, we were behind it, and trying to develop a dialogue between governments in Muslim countries and societies, whether in Algeria or other countries. And differences between two Muslim countries, Iran and Iraq, what were formerly Southern and Northern Yemen, and the settlement of problems in Afghanistan, some African countries, Muslim minorities all over the world, and dealing with Christian minorities also. This is the first time in world history that Muslim societies have met, not at the diplomatic level, because the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) is not representative of the people and is not active.

Q: One reason why the West is suspicious is that Muslims use the term "jihad," holy war.

Turabi: Jihad does not mean "holy war." The word "holy" does not appear in the word, nor does "war." Jihad means literally "effort for effort." If the other commits an effort against you, you have to respond with an effort. It means also dialogue, by the way. If the effort is an argument, respond by another argument. If it is by aggression or force, respond; don't turn the other cheek. Of course, you can turn the other cheek if it is only personal, you can forgive. But if it is an effort to destroy Islam altogether, to undermine it, respond by force. Literally, it means this. It's comprehensive; it doesn't mean fighting only. But now the word is popular, it has been spread in the West in Arabic letters, it's a "foreign" word, they write it big, J-I-H-A-D, instead of translating it. And it means now the new revival from below, from society, sometimes it turns against the use of force by government. Some governments are not democratic, they won't allow freedom of expression, freedom of organization, representa-

tion of the popular social will. I don't think the word jihad would have become so popular otherwise. Sometimes western countries, they want to keep this government or that government in power, supplying them with money, in alliance with them. They are frightened of the prospect of Islam becoming a power, a government, and want to keep it down. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims are in jail all over the world, not only Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, but elsewhere, yet nobody seems to care. That's why many Muslim movements think that if there is an external force applied against you, apply force against them.

In the West, if the rising force is popular with them, they give it beautiful names; in France, against the Vichy government, which was supported by the Nazis, they called it "la Résistance." A very honorable thing, we talk of "la Résistance." If you actually overturn it, it's called the "revolution." In America, in England, in France, in Russia, it's a very popular word. But if it happens in a Muslim country, they call it a "coup," "terrorist," give it another name. These words are used non-scientifically. I don't mind using an objective term that's neither sympathetic nor antipathetic.

You can't stop history. If you try, it will load up and load up and then explode. And explosion is such a waste of human energy in those countries. I am worried about this. Such a waste of energy, in Syria, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia. It's a waste of human energy. I don't want human energy to be wasted, destroyed in that destructive revolutionary process. I would prefer an evolution. Definitely. But if there is no other course, it will be an explosion. And it will not be local. Explosions tend to destroy not only one house, but the neighbor's house as well. If anything happens in North Africa, Mediterranean countries will be affected, and even north of the Mediterranean.

Q: Do you find higher values to guide society only in religion, or do you find them also in secular trends, like humanism?

Turabi: If you think that the human being is a God, the ultimate, there are others who think that there is another Being called God. The first are humanists, but all right, derive values from that. I want to have a dialogue with you. We may have common values, derived from humanism, or whatever you call it, or natural law, or from God. And according to any denomination because actually, we consider Christianity another denomination of Islam, not because it is an inferior thing, but because Islam is not a word of Mohammed, it's the word of Abraham. In the Quran we call Moses a "Muslim" which literally means, "submitting to God," and Jesus Christ another "Muslim," and Mohammed another "Muslim." Whatever they called themselves, they are different denominations of the same traditions, whether it derives from that tradition or from those who worship the human being himself. I don't mean a *particular* human being, not in a *particular* community. In that view, he, the particular human being, wants to monopolize all power, like a God, he

doesn't want technology to be spread worldwide, he doesn't want power to be spread worldwide, in the United Nations, he holds it. He doesn't want money to be wasted (he doesn't mind spending for his cats or dogs, but not for those Africans down there). But anyway, I will have a dialogue with him.

Q: Can you name this particular person you're talking about?

Turabi: I don't have to name him. It's like God, I don't have to name him.

Q: You seem optimistic. Look at Bosnia. How do you think Muslims and Christians and Jews can be brought to live harmoniously in Europe?

Turabi: My values dictate that I have a dialogue even with someone who is hostile to me, who is aggressive. I have to talk to him. The Quran tells me, "talk to him." My religious model is the Prophet, who started a dialogue and established his first state in a written constitution (we have the document), a state established between Muslims and Jews. And he convened a constituent assembly and they wrote down the constitution with a federated association of three Jewish tribes and other Muslim communities. And he invited the Christians and allowed them to pray inside his mosque. So my model, which I call perfect, is such that, I'll do my best to talk to him. If you don't want to talk to me, you will never speak Arabic, so I will learn English, and learn French, and some German perhaps, and some Italian. He doesn't want to talk to a black man, but I'll talk to him. He doesn't want to share wealth evenly between North and South in the international economic dialogue, but I'll try to share human wealth with him, or freedom and so on. But, of course, if he commits aggression against me, I'll use force. I'm told by the Quran to respond exactly, in a controlled, disciplined manner. The Quran tells me, don't behave the way armies behave, whether in Somalia or Vietnam or the Gulf war or even western Europe. I remember the wars there.

Sometimes they go beyond the limits. They don't weigh power against power, to balance it. They use their force abusively. I know what is happening in Sarajevo, and people are closing their eyes. They don't care about hundreds of thousands women being raped and killed, children, hundreds of thousands being killed. See, if one incident happened in Sudan, there would be a United Nations resolution condemning Sudan for the suspicion of one incident. But people sometimes are not fair. So we have to talk to each other to persuade them to be fair and not to use double standards, but one standard for all people.

Q: How do you view the situation in Iraq?

Turabi: We said, before the Gulf war was on, that the so-called international intervention was not about Kuwait. They were not interested only in liberating Kuwait. I knew that Iraq was going beyond the red line as far as advanced technology, including in the military industry, was concerned. The U.N.

determined that Iraq would never develop beyond a certain limit.

Q: In Algeria, do you consider the GIA (Islamic Armed Group) terrorist or revolutionary? What is your role in mediating between the French and Algerians? Do you propose a Sudanese solution for Algeria, i.e., a military government backed by Islam?

Turabi: Perhaps the GIA was a revolutionary movement but it broke away from the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front], and they thought that Europe was providing the military government, which is using force against Algerians, billions of dollars. (The European Community has been providing lots of funds, in fact.) They thought that the European military presence there, in particular the French one, in support of the government and the security as well, so they thought they should fight not only the immediate enemy but the allies of their enemy and they went beyond the limit in attacking ordinary tourists, ordinary people, who are not even politically associated with the Algerians. Revolutions normally go beyond the limit.

The Sudanese model is not a military government supported by an Islamic movement. That's a transition. We have always had military people, after every failure, corruption, inefficiency, formal family government which are called democratic, etc. The government is proceeding towards privatization of the economy, decentralization of government, by federation, and substantial democratization of government, elections for local government were over a year ago, elections for state government are going on now until next March, and then elections for the presidency and parliament. The Islamic model of government is based on, I might call it democracy minus the financial or the monetary factor. When we allow people to elect their leaders, we don't allow a candidate who is rich to beat another simply because he mobilizes more money. There is complete equality, exposing all candidates to the electorate, whether he's Perot or Clinton or Bush, we don't want money to interfere. That is the model. How far it takes ideally to make the transition, that's a matter for them to organize on their own.

Q: At the Cairo conference, the Vatican and Islam mobilized against what the pope has called the "structures of sin." How do you see the implications of this?

Turabi: You probably know, Muslims are allowed to control birth, plan families, there is no problem about that. It's only after a certain age that abortion is not allowed. Very early it is allowed for health reasons. Unfortunately, that conference was held in an atmosphere where many Africans were a little suspicious about the real motives behind the conference. Many Europeans, believe me, have told me that AIDS was introduced into Africa as a means of population control. Africa is not overpopulated: It's underpopulated actually. Africa could hold ten times the population of today,

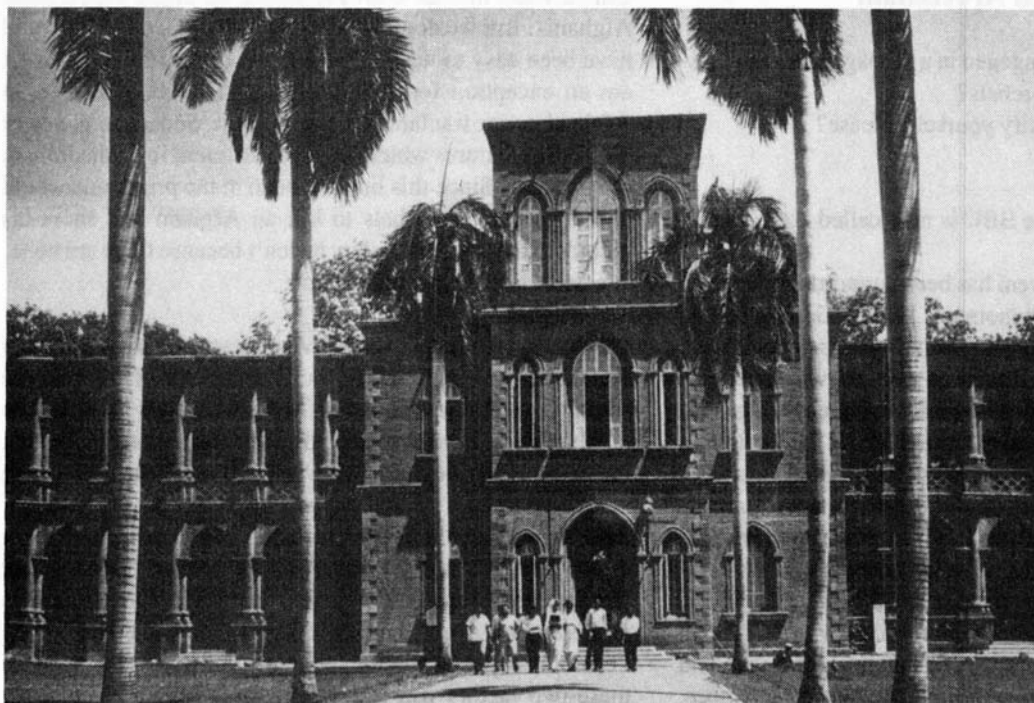
even if it's not developed to the extreme. And so they think AIDS was introduced. It's a plague now, destroying many countries, deliberately introduced to check them, because if Africa overloads with people, it will overflow elsewhere and nobody wants that to happen. And also, many people think that many countries over there in the West, if population is compared to the area and the natural potential, food particularly, there's no comparison. For example, Sudan has less than 30 million, it can easily hold 300 million, if not 1 billion people, because—what's in Europe? If someone comes here and tells me, "Oh, we're concerned about the population developing, and we have to check that." If you are so concerned about humanity, why don't you extend some of your aid and technology to allow countries like this to develop their agriculture? The world can develop more food. So there was a lot of suspicion, and because it was extreme: The homosexuals and the lesbians wanted to say their word, some people thought you should delay marriage until 35 and allow sexual energy to be diverted elsewhere, homosexually or otherwise. Some of these were a bit provocative to the religious spirit, among the Catholics, in particular, and among the Muslims. That's why there was almost an alliance between them. The government of Sudan boycotted the conference but not the Sudan generally. Tens of Sudanese went there representing the organizations. The government officially said no, mainly for these considerations, partly for other considerations, the place of the conference.

Some of the security memos in America were reviewed, memos written by Henry Kissinger and others, which approached these problems in political terms of security. They did not approach them in sociological terms of human population growth and therefore of the need to develop their economy and food production as fast as the population develops and if it develops that far, to try to balance the two. If it had been a reasonable approach, I'm sure the Muslims would not have protested that much. But those documents showed that there are other ulterior motives to depopulate this world, especially perhaps the Muslim world itself. "If all these Muslims multiply with all this fundamentalism, and 'terrorism,' then we might as well reduce their numbers," was the idea.

But there are certain developments you can't stop, for example, Islamic consciousness. What are they going to do, drop the atomic bomb? I believe God would not allow human beings to do that. If it happened, it would mean, the hereafter is over now, it would be the last day of humanity.

Q: The West tries to impose policies in the name of human rights. Are there differences in the Islamic and western view?

Turabi: Human rights, to enjoy sex with the same sex, or with the other? Yes, there are differences. Even in the West, I think there are limits. If there were complete license, there would be no law in any country. Absolute "freedom" would mean no legal system, no police force. They in the West have



Khartoum University in Sudan. "We have to remove the barricades and allow a peaceful exchange between Arab culture and African culture."

their own view of human rights and balance with protection, but I as a Muslim cannot enjoy my rights in the West, I have lived there many years. I don't believe the West believes in *absolute* human rights, that would mean a criminal is entitled to act freely. There are criteria for human rights everywhere, though there are different philosophies and different cultures. If you say the West respects human rights absolutely, that would mean no law. What about criminals? What about drugs? Is that a human right? America tried to prohibit alcohol, but it failed. Tomorrow perhaps, if there is a failure of law, gradually, light drugs might be legalized.

Q: Is the West, the U.N., trying to impose its view of human rights, and withhold credits?

Turabi: There is an imperial tradition in the West, a colonial experience, deriving from Rome, of trying to impose one's culture. They think that there is one model of democracy. But it is not an absolute value, because if the Muslims were to become a majority, then suddenly there's no democracy. But they have certain models which they think should apply everywhere and all human beings should have these models only, but I don't think they can do it. It's only transitional. The West cannot govern the world. There is not a God called "the West." Even within the West itself, political parties are collapsing; they mean very little in America. In England, between Labour and Conservative, it means less than it used to. In Italy, yesterday's Communist Party, its Christian Democratic party, are gone; it's now north and south, regional problems. Even the form of democracy in the West is changing, it's no longer democracy of parties. Even the economic weight of Europe

will not remain the only power in the world, tomorrow it will change. China is rising with its 1 billion population, the whole of Asia is growing, the world will find a different balance tomorrow. The best thing is free dialogue. Humanity is very close, means of communication are great, we should encourage the world to allow freedom worldwide. Of dialogue, let's talk to each other. One or two languages can serve for that communication, and let everyone contribute his own share, his own culture, to the common stock of human culture. We have to provide, to allow for diversity and freedom, therefore; otherwise, God would not have created so many people, He would have created only one man, or would have remained alone. I'm optimistic, perhaps, that humanity will realize that it's better to allow the South, the North, the blacks, the white, the yellow, the poor, the rich, the able, the disabled, to talk to each other and to communicate and to share power, to share ideas, to share knowledge, wealth, with each other, fairly, with a lot of freedom. I don't mean mathematical equality, but reasonable human equality will probably ultimately prevail. We are a small country, a poor country, vast only in area. Illiteracy and disease are high, the country is still developed just a bit above zero. It's developing, but there is one message: We want to talk to other people, we want to talk to them in their language, we invite them to come here. They are always welcome here. This country is always open to receive anybody, and there is no harm or risk for anyone of whatever nationality. Aid—I'm not interested in aid, whether voluntary or monetary or otherwise. But exchange I would welcome. I'm not asking anyone to help me live and be healthy, but bilaterally, exchange, yes.

Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin Al-Atabani

Q: Why has Sudan been engaged in a propaganda war accusing Uganda of helping the rebels?

Atabani: Could you identify yourself, please?

Q: I'm from the BBC.

Atabani: Is it true that the BBC is now called "bed, breakfast, and cornflakes"?

The truth is that Museveni has been supporting the rebels all along, up to the present moment. He and Garang belong to the same school of African revolutionaries, which were groomed in Dar-es-Salaam by certain well-known African intellectuals. Garang enjoys head-of-state treatment in Uganda, he has a ranch, and the security around him is similar to that around Museveni himself. It is known that Uganda provides at least political and diplomatic protection for John Garang, because he can move in and out at will. But we have proof of more. I personally flew to Museveni and showed him videotapes of ammunition depots captured by the Sudanese army. It was tell-tale evidence: ammunition boxes with "Ugandan army" stamped on it, full stop. I showed it to Museveni and he denied it; he attributed it to Idi Amin. If you remember, some years back in the United States in Orlando, Florida, there was ammunition seized, headed for Uganda, and this year, there was in Lanarka, the case of shipments of arms to Uganda, which were intended for the rebels; so this body of evidence contradicts the claims of Museveni.

We tried to straighten out this problem without a lot of publicity, but Museveni didn't agree, because he has problems with his northern tribes, the Ashobis. His strategy was to have the Dinkas stay there in northern Uganda as a buffer zone between Sudan and the Ashobis. Now that the Sudanese army has recaptured most of the territory belonging to the Sudan and has pushed the rebels to a very narrow strip along the border, Museveni started crying wolf. We have not engaged in propaganda recently against Museveni, only we came out openly and stated that he was helping the rebels and that was prompted by the demand that was being raised in the U.N. Security Council that Sudan should be punished by sanctions.

Q: There are reports that there are Afghans in the Sudanese army. Are they correct?

Atabani: I tell you frankly, there are none of them. The type of war that we have to fight against the rebels is very different from the war that the Afghans had to fight against Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Some of the media said that Sudan was enlisting the help of Iranian revolutionaries, but we don't need to learn anything from the Iranians about war in southern Sudan, a war that has been going on for 40 years. We know a lot more about the terrain, the tactics, and the use of weaponry. We don't need satellite pictures, either, as was rumored was part of the deal with France for the delivery of [the terrorist] Carlos. So we don't need Afghans. Maybe, if the

United States intends to invade Sudan, we might import some Afghans. But we don't need them now. Of course, it would have been easy to detect them, the way they look. Maybe I am an exception for a Sudanese, and might look like an Afghani or an Iranian, but the average Sudanese has very distinctive features which are quite different from the Iranian or Afghans. Since this line has been in the press, one would have expected the rebels to kill an Afghani and show his picture to the world, but they haven't because there are none. We don't need them, believe me.

Q: The British have been active in destabilization efforts in Sudan, in the campaign on human rights violations in the south, through the archbishop of Canterbury's visit, and so on. It's also known the British exert influence in Uganda, including in the situation in Rwanda. What is the British role here?

Atabani: The role of the British is confined to back-door diplomacy. It's not as explicit as the role of the U.S. But Britain, being our ex-colonizer, the advice of Britain has considerable weight in the European Union and with the U.S. I can only say they are not very friendly to us. So if you take these two factors you can deduce what they are deploying with regard to Sudan. The negative approach became evident in the case of the visit of Archbishop Carey. Generally, their role is one of advice to the European Union and to the United States, and I wouldn't say that their advice is very constructive. It is clear that the United States has taken over the role formerly occupied by Britain, in Africa generally, in Anglophone Africa.

Q: Do you think that with the military successes of the Sudanese army in the south, you have solved the problem?

Atabani: Such a problem has been with us for 40 years, and draws upon a long history of colonial policy aimed at creating a separate culture in southern Sudan, a culture of hatred and animosity against northern Sudan. This is not a problem that can be solved militarily. We are convinced that the solution to this problem must be a long-term one, must be expressed in the policies of the government, economic, political, and cultural policies.

The military measures which we have to take time and again are aimed at securing towns and routes. In 1992 the rebels besieged Juba, and hundreds of people were killed, but the international community did not say a word. But as soon as we started pushing the rebels back and securing positions around Juba, 100 or 200 kilometers around Juba, the so-called international community started raising its angry voice. But we had to do it, because otherwise Juba would have been cut off from the rest of the world, its people would have perished because of lack of supplies and food. So once we have secured a town and routes, the next step is to consolidate it.

You know we have introduced a federal system. The idea of federalism came from southern Sudan. But northern politi-

cians had always been suspicious of federalism. I remember a demonstration in the streets of Khartoum shouting “federation is separation.” They thought of federalism as separation. This is the first government to offer federalism to the whole of Sudan, because Sudan is so vast and diverse, language-wise and so forth. Now we have federalism, and in the south this includes economic development and cultural activities whose aim is to raze to the ground the psychological barriers that the colonialists established by their 1928 ordinance which cut off the south from the north completely, which was intended to create a separate culture, a culture of hatred against the north. This is something that was initiated at the turn of the century, and then became an official policy by the 1920s. Southerners were prevented from moving north, and northerners were prevented from moving south; southerners were prevented from taking Arab names, and they were even prevented from wearing their native dress. This was an intentional policy against Arab culture. We have to remove those barriers, and to allow back the peaceful exchange between Arab culture and African culture, which interacted over hundreds of years. It was not the Arabs encroaching on African culture, it was a two-way process. The Arabs were Africanized and the Africans were Arabized; they took the Arabic language, but the peoples mingled, you can see it in the faces of the people around you. It is the same which happened in eastern Africa, in Mombasa, in Dar-es-Salaam, etc. But the colonialists wanted the southerners to believe that all that comes from the north is bad, even the names and the language. In order to change that, I hope you agree, you cannot reverse that militarily: You have to reverse that process peacefully over a long period of time, in order to remove the hatred and hostility and preconceptions about the north.

Q: Sudan made the headlines with the release of Carlos. Instead of being given credit for this, you were accused of harboring terrorists. Why did you take the risk and what was the gain from it?

Atabani: I tend to differ. I don’t think that the whole outcome, that all the coverage from Europe was negative. Maybe after the initial surprise and acclamation, which was in the press, suspicions arose, people started to speculate because in the thinking of many people nothing arises from nothing. But then that “risk” as you call it, was forced upon us in the first place because we didn’t know that Carlos was in the country initially and I don’t think it would be difficult for someone to understand why Sudan should not be happy to have Carlos. We don’t have anything to share with him. Maybe an Afghani has something to share, because he’s a Muslim fighting against the Soviet Union, but with Carlos we are not ideologically or historically linked to him.

He was part of a plot by a so-called friendly Arab nation, which I will decline to name, even though it has become well known. He was sneaked into the country, and when we caught him four months later—and maybe I am saying this for the first time—we gave him every chance to leave the

country, because to us he was not condemned. We are very cautious not to follow western media, so someone who has been tried by the media is not necessarily condemned in our eyes. So we identified him, we gave him every chance to leave the country, and kept hammering away that he should leave, for six months. And he refused to leave. Then French intelligence came with information, showing us that it was Carlos. That eliminated our doubts. We were 90% sure that it was Carlos, but only when the French came with their pictures—and not satellite pictures but the pictures of Carlos—were we sure.

First the issue raised moral difficulties for us. Even though we had nothing to share with Carlos in terms of ideology and his past, this country has a long tradition of giving asylum to political refugees and being host to more than a million refugees, including some very well-known ones like Haile Selasse in the 1940s. This was the question which made it difficult for us at the beginning, to take a decision. But then there was the fact that he entered the country without our permission, and never identified himself to us and never asked for asylum. On the contrary, he was always denying initially that he was Carlos. When the French brought their indictment and showed it to us, we were convinced that we were not dealing with a revolutionary but perhaps a criminal. There was very strong evidence suggesting that he was a criminal. So it became obvious to us that we should hand him over to the French. But then, we put it as a condition that he would get a fair trial, and it was agreed.

Q: What lies behind American motivation for its anti-Sudanese stance? Obviously America is fearing something. What’s the motivation?

Atabani: It’s two things. The Americans always say that we harbor terrorists, etc., but they never showed any evidence. But it’s essentially because America is now the sole superpower, and when you’re a superpower you don’t entertain the idea that someone raises his voice to object to your policies. Sudan has adopted a policy of independence. Not necessarily anti-United States. On the contrary, we offered the United States cooperation in many fields, for instance, Somalia, before the American invasion of Somalia. I myself talked to one of their senior diplomats, and said: Look, I know there are rumors about our role in Somalia, but we need to cooperate in Somalia, because our intention is in achieving peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. But they declined it, and a few months later they invaded Somalia, and we know how the operation ended. So it’s not an established policy on our part and a final one not to cooperate with the United States; it’s the United States which is not cooperating with us. The United States sees in our statements, in our policies a sort of challenge to them, that’s how they perceive it. When the Gulf war broke out, this could only substantiate their concerns and doubts about the Sudan. In the Gulf crisis, we did not endorse Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, but our position was perceived to be primarily anti-United States.