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Fostering future

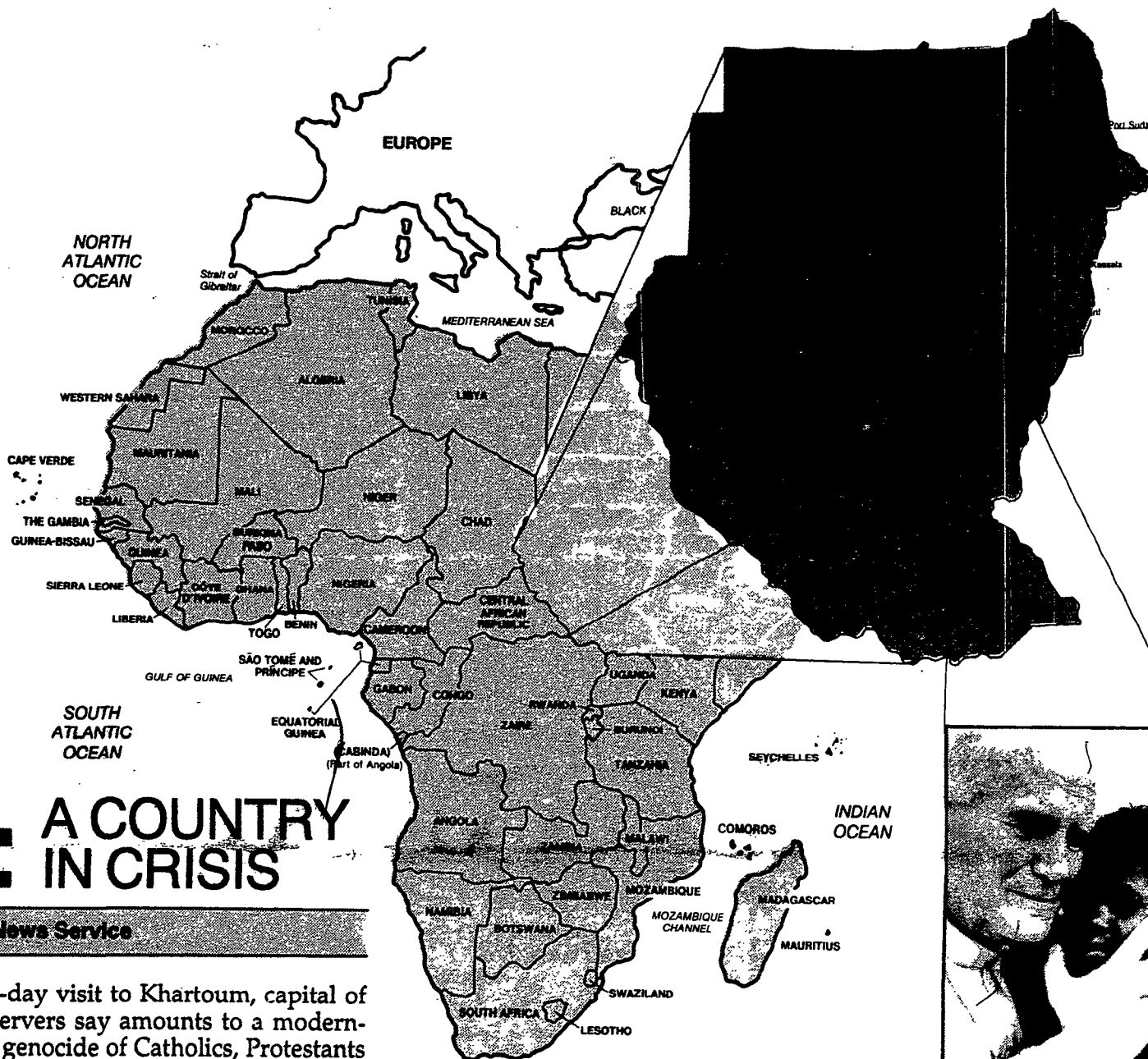
The Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of Mercy and Nazareth College are collaborating to provide education for Tanzania's women. Page 7.

NORTHERN

Pop. 55 percent Arab, substantial minority non-Arab Muslim. North about 75 percent Muslim. Rest of pop. mostly adheres to native religions. Primary language: Arabic, but others exist.

SOUTHERN

Pop. is primarily black, 40 percent Dinka who comprise 10 percent of Sudan's pop. Most adhere to native religions. Four to 10 percent Christian. English spoken, along with native tongues.



SUDAN: A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

By Catholic News Service

Pope John Paul II's recent one-day visit to Khartoum, capital of Sudan, highlighted what observers say amounts to a modern-day persecution and possible genocide of Catholics, Protestants and non-Muslims.

In a Feb. 10 address to Sudan's president, General Omar Al Bashir, the pope likened the current civil strife in Sudan to the murderous warfare in the Balkans, Cambodia and Liberia.

"Freedom of conscience and freedom to seek the truth and to act according to one's personal beliefs are so fundamentally human that any effort to restrict them almost inevitably leads to bitter conflict," the pontiff asserted.

Bitter conflict has racked Sudan since the early 1980s. A civil war pits the Arab-Muslim population of the North against southerners who are primarily Christians and followers of traditional African religions.

About 55 percent of Sudan's population of more than 25 million is Muslim. The rest adhere to traditional religions, and among that group, between four and 10 percent are Christians, with probably a quarter-million Catholic.

Sudan's government has its power base among northern Arab Muslims, and critics say the government is attempting to impose Islamic law and the Arabic language on non-Muslims.

The government's critics include the human rights organization Amnesty International, which claims that the government declared a *jihad*, or holy war, last year against the Sudan People's Liberation Army made up of three divided groups united only in their opposition to the government.

The casualties of that holy war allegedly include hundreds of non-Muslim civilians who once lived in the Nuba mountains of southeastern Sudan. Hundreds have been killed, while thousands have been displaced by the war.

"Since 1987, the SPLA has actively recruited among the Nuba, who regard themselves as an African people

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Religious, ethnic strife rooted in past

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

"The efforts made and money spent for the (Islamicisation) of the South is perhaps the most preoccupying concern of Sudanese Arabs both as a Government and as individuals... Christianity, the only rival to Islam recognized by the Northern Sudanese, is not left undisturbed."

A recent report from Khartoum on the government's policy toward Christians? Actually, the preceding passage was written in the 1963 booklet, *The Problem of Southern Sudan*, published by the London-based Institute of Race Relations.

As that passage indicates, tensions between Muslims and Christians are nothing new to Sudan. According to several historical sources, the nation has a long his-

Periods of peace alternate with war

tory of Muslim-Christian interaction — some of which has been violent, and some of which was peaceful.

Christianity first came to Nubian kingdoms, situated in what is today southern Egypt and modern-day Sudan, in the sixth century. Muslim invasions in the seventh century failed to subjugate the Nubians, and the Christian Nubian kingdoms prospered financially and held their sway militarily well through the ninth and 10th centuries.

The Nubians and the Arab Muslims who ruled Egypt eventually settled into a peaceful trading pattern of such items as slaves and

grain that benefited both civilizations. Trade and intermarriage between Muslims and Christians along with a policy in Muslim-ruled areas of tax exemption for Muslims contributed to steady erosion of Christianity in the region.

In 1315, a Muslim prince of Nubian royal blood became king of Dunqulah, a Nubian Christian realm. His ascension to the throne highlighted Islam's expansion and the Christian Church's decline in the region. Nonetheless, Muslims did not constitute a majority in the old Nubian areas until the 15th or 16th century, but once they became entrenched, Christianity disappeared from the region.

The coming of Islam eventually changed the nature of Sudanese society and facilitated the division of the country into north and

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