

Appendix 57:

Editorial

Please Save Nigeria

This Week

6 April, 1987

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The way into the future, if we truly mean for any meaningful future, is unambiguous: Nigerian current rulership must crush the challenge of religious fanaticism.

Here is our schema: President Babangida's government, acting with dispatch and a sense of mission, must distinguish between the Nigeria it met and the Nigeria it wishes to leave behind. We believe that the federal structure it would be leaving behind would be held together by some key pillars; one of them, secularity. The state, consistent about what constitutes a threat to this heritage must distinguish between religion and fanaticism. Where government is uncertain, it should ask. It should stamp the scourge from the face of our beloved country.

First, we suggest that the ban on open-air preaching as well as on radio and television be made law. The one on religious groups in higher institutions should be extended to all institutions from secondary on.

Second, government, we consider, should avoid involvement, no matter how tempting, in any religious affairs. It can be seen by taking its hand off pilgrimages, Christian or Moslem.

Third, it is important, since all this is being considered because of the sensitive nature of the subject, for government to be very careful about the detail of each step it takes. In Kaduna State, for example, one of the officials serving on the H.N. Donli Committee probing the recent disturbances was deeply involved in the 1977 conflict at the Bayero University, Kano. A second example is a fanatic detained by the Muhammadu Buhari administration for subversive activities. This former student of Ahmadu Bello University (he was expelled), subsequently received training in propaganda and agitation in Iran. He was released along with other detainees by a simple-minded Babangida administration, driven by an indiscriminating "human rights" policy.

Fourth, government must probe and plug the curious relationship between the security agencies and the police which have made it impossible for imminent crises to be aborted. \

Fifth, government must take another look at inter-ethnic relationships in the country. The teaching of the nation's major languages in schools should be explored and the status of citizens living in states other than their original must be courageously defined to encourage total integration. Nigerians should be able to claim citizenship right of state based on birth or domicile.

Sixth, government must answer "no" to the question: "Is it desirable that religious material be allowed into the country so indiscriminately – from such countries as Iran, South Africa and Israel?"

Seventh, and subject to "SECOND" (above), religious leaders at various levels should be given a code of conduct regarding political statements and commentary on other religions.

Eighth, religious leaders should be encouraged, at various levels, to interact freely.

Ninth, the media should be encouraged to hold seminars and workshops on the question of religion and coverage of religious matters.