

32. Africa After WWI

Even previous to World War I, European nations were making inroads in North Africa. In 1885, Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Seyyid Abullah proclaimed himself Mahdi, an Islamic spiritual leader thought to be the leader of the last millennium in human history. He captured Khartoum and killed General Gordon. In 1899, however, the British turned the tables and finally defeated Mahdism.

Previous to and during World War I, Christian leaders had felt that the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire would bring greater opportunity for Christian witness in Muslim countries. This did not prove true. The so-called “Christian” nations often signed treaties which hindered missionary work. Later the anti-colonialists and nationalists restored Islamic control.

After World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, European political control over North Africa spread, but “in order to insure the economic exploitation of their new charges, treaties were often drafted prohibiting the spread of the Gospel so as not to annoy the natives.”ⁱ

Libya had been controlled by Italy since 1911, but became independent when Italy lost in World War I.

In 1963 RVOG (Radio Voice of the Gospel) was founded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the Lutheran World Federation. In 1977 it was seized by the new Marxist regime.

In 1966 Bible correspondence courses were mushrooming worldwide, especially in closed countries like Morocco, which enrolled 110,000 seekers.

ⁱ Not in Vain, p. 159.