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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER AZHARI ADVOCATES SUDANESE REPUBLIC LINKED TO EGYPT
1954-12-31- Azhari, Egp Egypt, Plean

Prime Minister Azhari created a political stir by personally advocating that the Sudan become a republic linked to Egypt only by joint meetings of the two Cabinets to discuss defense, foreign policy and Nile Waters. Hitherto Azhari has been very careful in public not to advocate any particular course personally. He has insisted that the NUP must decide on the form of unity with Egypt. On the evening of December 25th the Prime Minister summoned Mohammed Beshir Said, editor of the pro-Independence Al Ayam and gave him his personal views on what the future of the Sudan should be. Al Ayam's editor considered this statement so important that he issued a special edition on December 26th with the Prime Minister's views presented in the form of a question and answer interview.

The first question Al Ayam's editor asked was, "Do you think that the misunderstanding in the Cabinet which led to the dismissal of the three Ministers was about the future of the Sudan, that is, were they asking for the independence of the Sudan while you were working for unity with Egypt?" To this the Prime Minister answered: "NO, I am sure it was not that. The differences that resulted in the removal of the three Ministers were not over principles, but were personal and mainly on points of procedure in the Council of Ministers. It could not be said that the differences in the Council of Ministers were over political principles since the Council of Ministers does not discuss such matters; the question of the future of the Sudan is the business of the NUP, not the Government." Azhari then denied that any Minister had ever submitted to him any suggestion that the Council of Ministers define its political views. He added, in a sentence that he has used many times, "Generally speaking, the NUP aims at unity with Egypt although the members of the Party hold different views on the sort of union they support. Some aim at a strong type of unity and others want a weak type of link with Egypt."

Al Ayam's editor then asked what the personal views of the Prime Minister were, and for the first time in public he gave them:

"I believe in the following, and I shall set these views before the NUP Executive for discussion along with other suggestions which they may accept, amend, or dismiss:

JSweeney:am
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By Joseph Sweeney NARA Date 3/2/78

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From

1. That the Sudan shall be a republic with its own President, Council of Ministers and Parliament as in Egypt.
2. The union or tie that links the two countries shall be a High Council composed of the Sudanese and Egyptian cabinets. This Council is to meet once or many times a year for the discussion of joint affairs such as defense, foreign policy and the Nile Waters.
3. The decisions of the High Council are to be submitted to the Sudanese and Egyptian Parliaments for approval.

This interview was a very effective political act. The initial reaction of the majority of Sudanese in the Three Towns was that Azhari had courageously gone to the paper that is most hostile to Egypt and had said, ask me what you want to know and I will tell you. The local rumor is that Mahia El Fadli gave Mohammed Beshir Said LE 15,000 to run this interview and special edition, which the Editor naturally denies. At a time when Mirghani Hamza was attacking the Prime Minister for being the tool of Egypt, the Prime Minister came out and deprecated the attack of the three dismissed Ministers by saying they were concerned only with personal reasons and that anyone who wanted to know what he Azhari thought could hear it. He then went on to release what at first glance to many people seemed like an espousal of Sudanese independence, although on careful reading, as the intellectuals subsequently discovered, it was really a clever way of tying the Sudan with Egypt, or rather in the hands of a Sudanese Government that wanted a close link with Egypt this formula could be utilized for Egyptian domination of the Sudan. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister has gained significantly from the release of this interview. It has made him appear a man of reason and has made Mirghani Hamza appear a "sore-head" who is mad because he was not allowed to act as Prime Minister during Azhari's temporary absence.

Two of the Ministers who were in on the planning of this interview said that Azhari "had been forced" to make this statement by Mirghani Hamza's attacks. They both said the interview had been drawn up and formulated without reference to Egypt and both said, "We hope Salah (Major Salah Salem) approves it!"

Despite the cleverness of the Prime Minister's statement, it commits him to very little. He has agreed only to submit this plan to the NUP and has indicated that he will abide by whatever the NUP decides. In the present quarrel between the Prime Minister and Mirghani Hamza, the Prime Minister has just won another round.

Joseph Sweeney

Joseph Sweeney
United States Liaison Officer

cc: London, Cairo

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