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SUBJECT: An Independent Elected Leader of the Opposition

Mohammed Ahmed MAHGOUN, the most prominent advocate in the Sudan, was elected Leader of the Opposition in the Sudan's House of Representatives. This selection is an odd one in that Mahgoub is not a member of the Umma Party. If the Umma Party had a majority in the House of Representatives Mahgoub would not have been nominated for the post of Prime Minister. His selection is a confession of leadership bankruptcy on the part of the parliamentary Umma Party. The fact that Umma members did not believe Sayed SADDIK, the president of the Umma Party, should lead them in parliament was an admission that they recognize his limitations. Mahgoub was chosen because he is one of, if not the, ablest debator in the House.

Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub is a strange, unhappy and unpredictable sort of man. He stood for the Graduates' Constituency as an independent. He is as close to a genuine independent as there is in Sudanese politics because he is paradoxically capable of agreeing with everyone and disagreeing with everyone. A tall brooding man, he will on one occasion be quite charming and talkative and on another occasion he will hardly notice the person with whom he has previously been so friendly. A part of his sensitiveness is believed to be due to the fact that his mother was a slave. His family has produced some of the most distinguished Sudanese -- his brother Ahmed Youssif HASHIM is a leader in Sudanese journalism, his brother Abdel Cadir YOUSSEIF is to be the new Commissioner of Labor, another brother, Dr. Abdel Halim Mohammed is now in charge of the Khartoum Hospital.

As the most prominent advocate in the Sudan, Mahgoub excels in criminal cases or litigation involving considerable sums of money. Impressive in court, he is an unusually forceful speaker. Although he is well known throughout the Sudan, few people trust him because he is so unpredictable. Umma leaders have said, "We can use Mahgoub because of his debating ability." NUP leaders say, "We are not worried about Mahgoub, we will just flatter him and he will do what we want." Exactly what Mahgoub will do is anyone's guess. He is delighted with his position as Leader of the Opposition. The limelight is very appealing to him and the vagaries of Sudanese politics have now given him an important role.

cc: London, Cairo

JSweeney:md

REPORTER

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Joseph Sweeney,
United States Liaison Officer.

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