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SUBJECT: Sudan Roundup December 1953

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NND 822900 9-9-86 I. GENERAL

By *WH*, NARA, Date *9-9-86*

December witnessed the completion of the last stages of the Sudan's first parliamentary election. The Electoral Commission submitted its report on these elections to the co-dominant and thus ended an important, arduous and somewhat thankless task. The American member of this Commission exerted a particularly important influence and contributed a full measure of moderation and sanity. With the ending of the elections the maneuvering within the parties and between the forthcoming government and the British administration produced a series of hectic minor crises. The outlook for the establishment of parliament is good, but the outlook for full cooperation between the forthcoming NUP Government and the British administration is fraught with tension and animosity. Political activity dominated the month. On the economic front the outlook is promising as a result of optimistic crop forecasts. The Assistant Liaison Officer visited the Northern Province and added to our knowledge of this important area of the country which is the center of the railway administration and the most important labor concentration.

II. POLITICAL

A. The Elections: an NUP Victory

The National Unionist Party won the Sudan elections because it worked harder than any other party, had adequate financial backing, and its leaders displayed political astuteness. Although in the main the vote was primarily sectarian, indicating the superior strength of the pro-NUP Khartoum over the pro-Umma Ansar. The NUP capitalized on anti-British and anti-Mahdist sympathies. For a preliminary analysis of this election see Khartoum 113, December 3, 1953. The introduction of self-government as a prelude to self-determination for a country as backward as the Sudan is at best an experiment. A key factor in whether this experiment will work out in the most effective way will be the ability and willingness of the British administration to work with the NUP. The British administrators do not like the NUP—they look upon them as town politicians and rabble-rousers. The NUP in turn have little use for the British administrators and are convinced that these civil servants will attempt to sabotage the NUP Government. This conflict will lead the NUP to do its best to speed up Sudanization, in order to get rid of these British civil servants. The future so far as NUP-British administration relations are concerned is not promising.

J. Sweeney,ief
REPORTER~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

15 JAN 1954

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USLO has submitted lists with the political affiliation of the individuals showing the: (a) Members of the House of Representatives, Territorial Constituencies, Khartoum 131, December 19; (b) Elected Members of the Sudan Senate, Khartoum 132, December 19; (c) Members of the House of Representatives, Graduates Constituency, Khartoum 133, December 19, and ; (d) Appointed Members of the Sudan Senate, Khartoum 140, December 30. Parliament is officially scheduled to open on January 1, 1954. In the interval between the finish of the elections and the opening of parliament the most important political developments were the submission of the Electoral Commission's report, the inept reaction of the defeated Umma Party, and a dispute over the selection of the appointed Senators.

B. The Electoral Commission Finishes Its Task

The supervision of the Sudan's first elections was an important, arduous, and somewhat thankless task. Striving to conduct the elections fairly, and I believe succeeding in this objective, the Electoral Commission successfully withstood criticism that the Co-domini were interfering with the elections. Out of the welter of unfounded rumors, sticking courageously to its job as laid down in the various statutes and agreements, the Electoral Commission managed to give to the Sudan elections that were accepted by all. The final Sudanese reaction to the work of the Electoral Commission is definitely favorable. On December 14 the Electoral Commission signed its report and requested the Governor General to forward it to the Co-domini. Khalafalla KHALID, the NUP member of the EC, refused to sign the final report because the Electoral Commission was unwilling to attach his note of dissent on the grounds that it was irrelevant. (See USLO telegram 36, December 14 from Warwick PERKINS.) After signing its final report the Electoral Commission dissolved. It is appropriate at this point to point out what a fine job the American member of the Commission did. Time and again he was the moderating influence that helped the Commission over rough spots. This kind of moderation is seldom recognized publicly, but those who know the inside workings of the Electoral Commission fully recognize Warwick Perkins's important contribution.

C. Umma Party's Inept Rejection of the Elections and Subsequent Confused Acceptance

Stunned by the overwhelming nature of the NUP victory, the initial reaction of the Umma leaders was one of pique. Sayed SADDIK, the Umma President, in the heat of the first news of the defeat issued an inept statement that the Umma could not accept the results of the elections, although just before the elections he had stated publicly that the Umma would accept the results whatever they happened to be. British administrators and Umma advisors worked on Sayed Abdul Rahman EL MAHDI and his son, Saddik, and the upshot was that Saddik issued a subsequent statement confusedly indicating that while the results were unfair the Umma would not boycott the new parliament. This Umma reaction should not be taken too seriously. Umma leaders were terribly disappointed, Saddik is an inept political leader, and the Umma could hardly have stayed out of parliament without provoking a civil war. The Umma are now determined to organize an effective opposition and to contest the next elections with a better organized political machine. (For the details of this episode see Khartoum 121, December 8.)

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By S NARA Date 3/2/78D. Dispute Over the Appointed Senators

An involved dispute occurred over the Governor General's appointment of the 20 appointed Senators which has left political bitterness. With its strong victory the NUP felt that it should be given a majority of the 20 Senators to be appointed by the Governor General and confirmed by his commission. The Governor General did not see it this way and claimed he should appoint the best men for the job and not upset the party balance in parliament. Unfortunately the Governor General thought the best men were Umma and he submitted only 9 NUP candidates. A dispute took place in the Governor General's Commission and a compromise resulted which gave the NUP 10 of the 20 Senators. NUP leaders looked on this as the first test of the British administration's willingness to cooperate with them and they believe the results prove the British administrators will not cooperate. For the details of this episode see Khartoum 139, December 30. This incident emphasizes the importance of the role of the Pakistani Chairman, Mian Ziaud DIN, who, as the Commission is now constituted, has the deciding vote with the Egyptian and NUP members normally on one side and the British and Umma members normally on the other. If the pro-NUP parliament does not confirm the Umma member and elects an NUP member to take his place the balance of the Commission will be upset; see Khartoum 143, December 31.

E. The Sudan and the Outside World

Sudanese leaders, particularly the NUP, are fully aware that the Sudan cannot live in isolation. For possible cooperation, or more, between the Sudan and Uganda see Khartoum 114, December 3. Sirdar PANNIKAR, the Indian Ambassador to Egypt visited the Sudan early in the month and conducted discussions with Sudanese political leaders; see Khartoum 124, December 11. NUP leaders wanted to invite Arab leaders to the ceremonial opening of parliament; see Khartoum 130, December 17. This would have caused embarrassment to the British administration, which under the Governor General is still responsible for external affairs. The NUP leaders subsequently decided to invite the Arab and possibly leaders of surrounding countries to a later session of parliament.

F. New Liberal Party

A group of Southerners in Parliament founded this month a new Liberal Party to represent the South's desire for an independent Sudan in which the rights of the South would be fully respected; see Khartoum 144, December 31.

G. Assistant Liaison Officer Visits Northern Province

The Assistant Liaison Officer spent a week in the Northern Province and found that in this Khatmia stronghold the NUP victory there was generally expected. Northern Province officials are strongly opposed to the proposed High Dam at Aswan because they fear Egyptian control of the Nile waters. Atbara, the headquarters of the railway administration and a labor center, was one of the most important cities visited and here it was found that although Communism remains potentially strong it has lost some influence among railway workers, particularly in the recent railway union elections, although unfortunately there is little in the way of effective non-Communist labor leadership. The Sudan railways have impressive plans on paper for badly needed expansion.

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III. ECONOMIC

A. Optimistic Crop Outlook

A review of crop conditions prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture giving data as of November 25, 1953 indicated that the cotton crop is likely to exceed last year, dura will provide an outstanding crop with the likelihood of an excess for export, sesame production will be about the same as last year, and groundnuts (peanuts) are expected to be twice last year's crop; see Khartoum 118, December 7 and Khartoum 137, December 24.

B. Sudan Government's Trade Policy with Israel

A newspaper story led the Sudan Government to explain its trade policy with Israel which is unrestricted except in the instances of war contraband and the re-exportation of certain goods imported from Egypt; see Khartoum 117, December 7.

C. Communist Activity Among Gezira Cultivators

Communist activity markedly increased during December among the cultivators of the Gezira cotton scheme, as well as in the Nuba Mountains area; see Khartoum 116, December 5.

D. Transmittal of Government Reports

During December the Liaison Office transmitted the Sudan Government's Labor Branch report for the period from July 1, 1952 - June 30, 1953; Khartoum 112, December 2; the Sudan Railways Report for the period from January 1, 1952 - June 30, 1953, Khartoum 135, December 23; and a Trade and Commercial Survey published as a supplement to the Sudan Star, Khartoum 136, December 24.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Governor General Attempts to Boost Morale of British in Sudan Civil Service

Sir Rober HOWE, the Governor General, took the opportunity of the recent Caledonian dinner to make a speech calculated to boost the sagging morale of the British in the Sudan Civil Service. He urged them to do a good job in this final period and sought to reassure them on their pension rights; see Khartoum 122, December 8.

B. Northern Boundary of the Sudan

During his recent visit to Aswan Dam and the Northern border of the Sudan General NEGUIB reportedly said that the Northern boundary of the Sudan should be rectified to give Egypt a strip that had been denied because of an error in marking the boundary. The Sudan Government retaliated with a publicity release on the Northern boundary of the Sudan; see Khartoum 119, December 7.

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