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SUBJECT: Umma Leaders Discuss the Future of the Party

Ever since the Umma defeat in the recent parliamentary elections there has been a debate going on inside the Umma Party as to what should be done to attempt to regain political strength. It is felt by a large number of leaders that the Mahdi family is a political liability to the Umma Party at the present time. By this they mean that the Umma Party should not be so closely identified with the Mahdi family and that Sayed SIDDIK, the son of Sayed Abdel Rahman El MAHDI should resign his position as President of the Umma Party. Sayed Siddik has not proved himself an effective political leader. He is expected eventually to succeed his father as the leader of the Ansar Sect, and many of his supporters believe he should be above politics.

Against this background there was considerable interest in what the General Assembly of the Umma Party would do when it held a meeting in Khartoum during the past week. Sayed Siddik addressed the members and gave a review of the present political situation in the Sudan. He appealed to all of the members to work together in order to achieve full independence for the Sudan. Siddik explained that his party intended to form a new parliamentary group composed of all those who favored independence for the Sudan and that this new group would draw up a policy which it would strive to achieve in parliament. Other Umma leaders gave speeches along similar lines. A discordant note was sounded by Abdulahi El FADIL (eldest son of the eldest son of the Mahdi who was defeated in the recent parliamentary elections) who proposed the election of new party officers. His proposal was defeated and in the press publicity given to the meeting his suggestion was not discussed but it was reported factually that the President and the Secretary of the Umma Party (Abdallah Bey KHALIL) hold their offices for life.

Thus far, the Umma Party has done very little in the way of reorganization. Discussions have been held between the Umma leaders and members of the newly-formed Liberal Party made up of Southerners who are members of parliament.

The British administration here hopes that the Umma Party can form the central core of a strong opposition which can eventually bring about independence for the Sudan.

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J.Sweeney:md  
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Until the Umma Party faces squarely its need for effective political leadership, does something to lessen the allegation that it is pro-British, and branches out in its appeal so as to attract more people who are not members of the Ansar Sect, there now appears little likelihood of its improving its present political position.

*Joseph Sweeney*

Joseph Sweeney,  
United States Liaison Officer.

cc: London  
Cairo

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