

CLASSIFICATION BY NARA Date 3/20/84

745 W. 00 / 9-1854

FROM : USLO, Khartoum

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF :

September 18, 1954
 DATE
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SUBJECT: Juba Conference of Southern Leaders

1954-9-18, Azhari, South, Conference

A group of leading Southern political leaders primarily from the pro-independence group have organized a political conference of Southern Sudanese to be held in Juba, the capital of Equatoria Province (the southern-most province in the Sudan). This conference will meet the first week in October. The prime mover in this conference is Buth Diu, Secretary General of the Southern Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition Arrangements have now been completed for 600 Southerners to meet. This significant number will be made up of all Southern members of the Parliament regardless of party and a majority of chiefs, sub-chiefs and sultans. The Government, which has taken no official notice of this conference but which has given plenty of indication that it is concerned about it, will be unofficially represented by the three Southern members of the Cabinet. In addition, at least three members of the NUP Executive will attend as observers or at any rate will be present in Juba when the conference is going on. The three decided on at present are Prime Minister Ismail El Azhari, Ali Abdel Rahman, Minister of Justice who served as a Kadi throughout the South and has the most influence in the South of any member of the NUP, and Khalafalla Khalid, Minister of Defense.

As announced by the organizing group the Juba conference will discuss (1) the present government and its relationship to the Southern Sudan, (2) the possibility of a united Southern bloc in Parliament and (3) whether the Sudan should be independent or united with Egypt. Southern leaders advocating independence are overly enthusiastic about this conference and insist that they will emerge with the support of all but two or three Southern members of Parliament. In the Government's first move to influence Southern opinion at this conference the Prime Minister released to the press on September 13 "Extracts from a Letter Addressed by the Prime Minister to Chiefs and Sultans of the Southern Provinces". This release is attached as Enclosure No. 1 (Unclassified) and seeks to convince the Southerners that the NUP Government has their welfare in mind as well as making the sly point that it is seeking to reduce their taxes. The reporting officer also understands that a series of promotions of Southern civil servants will be announced just before the Juba conference. The NUP Government would like nothing better than to turn the tables on the pro-Umma Southerners who have organized this conference and

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J Sweeney/ht

REPORTER

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