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I. SUMMARY

By NA, NARA, Date 9-9-80

An unexpected personal dispute between Mirghani Hamza, the political leader of the Khatmia and Ismail El Azhari, the Prime Minister, developed into a cabinet split which has thrown the Sudanese political scene into unresolved confusion. With the advice of the Egyptian Government and the support of the remaining members of his Cabinet, the Prime Minister has dismissed Mirghani Hamza, Minister of Education, Agriculture and Irrigation, Khalafalla Khalid, Minister of Defense and Ahmed Gelli, Minister without Portfolio. These three men were the leading Khatmia in the Cabinet. A great deal now depends on what action Sayed Eli El Mirghani (SAM), religious head of the Khatmia, takes. Both sides expect his backing. Parliament will not reconvene until February 14 and little in the way of resolution can be expected before that time. When Parliament does meet Mirghani Hamza will try to form a Khatmia Government; he can only do so in the first instance with the approval of SAM and in the second instance even with this approval he will probably need Umma support. This Umma support will be forthcoming if he agrees to lower the British and Egyptian flags everywhere in the Sudan except over the Governor General's Palace (to increase a sense of Sudanese nationalism) and to introduce Sudanese currency in place of Egyptian (to stop or at least make more difficult Egyptian subsidization.) If, however, as now seems likely SAM does not take sides but in fact allows Azhari to continue, the NUP will be badly split and it will be clear that its main support is Egyptian money and planning. Mirghani Hamza, in this case, will attack SAM. The Umma do not want to form a Government at this time. There is some evidence to suggest that Azhari and his followers would not be too disappointed if they were in the Opposition against an Umma Government as they believe such an Umma Government would be weak and they could strengthen the idea of unity with Egypt more effectively in opposition. This Cabinet crisis is the most important as well as the most confusing development in Sudanese politics since the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in the Sudan in February 1954.

J.Sweeney:am
REPORTER

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II. DETAILS

The following detailed account of what has happened contains all of the known important facts and speculations and underlines what a highly complicated political squabble is going on.

1. Neither the Prime Minister nor Mirghani Hamza wanted or expected the break to come at this time. The reporting officer had lengthy discussions with both the Prime Minister and Mirghani Hamza just before the Prime Minister left for a trip to Darfur on December 12 (see Khartoum despatches 100 and 104). From these talks it seemed clear to me that there was a difference, perhaps a fundamental one, between these two men with the Prime Minister clinging to the idea of some form of unity with Egypt and Mirghani Hamza holding out an independent Sudan. However, each thought he could bring the other around to his way of thinking and the last thing that either one of them wanted at this time was a split in the NUP high command.

2. How the Break Started. At midnight December 12, after the Prime Minister's lengthy talk with me, he received unexpectedly a note from Mirghani Hamza in which the Khatmia leader wrote, "My doubts have become clear that things in the Council of Ministers will not be all right during your absence, and that it will put me in a position that contradicts with my dignity. Therefore be advised that I will not attend the sittings of the Council of Ministers under its present position." This was apparently Mirghani Hamza's way of telling the Prime Minister: (1) that the PM should be careful of his tactics in working through an inner Cabinet in his pro-Egyptian campaign; and (2) that the PM should delegate authority to Mirghani Hamza while away on his trip to Darfur. The Prime Minister did not answer this note. He did not delay his trip and reportedly thought the Council of Ministers could proceed without Mirghani Hamza until he returned from his trip and straightened the matter out.

The next day a Cabinet meeting was scheduled to pass some matters concerning Sudanization. Mirghani Hamza appeared to find Mubarrak Zarroug, Minister of Communications who acted for the Prime Minister on his European trip, presiding. Mirghani Hamza put his hand on Mubarrak's shoulder and said, "I am going to say something, but I want to assure you all it is not personal against Mubarrak, we are old friends and I have nothing against him. (Mubarrak Zarroug, though able, is quite young and was still a child when Mirghani Hamza was the highest Sudanese official in the Civil Service) I feel that the dignity of the position that I occupy because of my age, experience and political leader of the Khatmia is being affronted by delegating this responsibility to a young and junior Minister, and I will not participate in the Cabinet meetings until the Prime Minister returns." He then walked out of the Cabinet meetings. Khalafalla Khalid followed him and this, plus the fact that some Ministers were in Egypt and some with the PM on his trip, meant that the Cabinet did not have a quorum and could not get on with the very important work of approving the recommendations of the Sudanization Commission (this approval's importance is seen from the fact that the first step that must be completed before the transitional period can be brought to an end and the request for self-determination be made is Sudanization). Mubarrak Zarroug communicated this information to

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