

THE RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SUDAN:

1936 - 1946

ALEXANDER SOLON CUDSI

A Thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

School of Oriental & African Studies

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

ProQuest Number: 10672766

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10672766

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

A B S T R A C T

A number of factors contributed to the rise of political parties in the Sudan. Firstly, there was the discord in nationalist circles concerning the means most suitable for the quickest realization of the Sudan's independence. Some nationalists advocated a militant approach, even overt opposition to the Condominium Administration if need be; others sought to achieve the desired objective through co-operation with the Government. In due course, the militants gained the upper hand, a conflict with the Government developed and they turned to Egypt for support. The accompanying disagreement on the Sudan's political relation to Egypt exacerbated further the divisions in the nationalist movement.

Secondly, the economic hardships prevalent in the Sudan during the war had generated considerable discontent among various sections of the population. The militants exploited the situation to mobilize political support for their demand for an immediate and effective participation by Sudanese in the government of their country.

Thirdly, the rivalry between the two major religious orders served as another channel through which the

nationalist struggle spread to the population in the countryside. Unlike the head of the Khatmiyya sect, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi cherished definite political ambitions. In the light of the growing debate on the Sudan's relation to Egypt, the political issues inevitably became intertwined with sectarian interests.

Fourthly, British and Egyptian attitudes to the political future of the Sudan influenced nationalist commitments. British attitudes conveyed the impression that they were not intending to grant independence to the Sudan but rather prolong the lifetime of the Condominium. The Egyptians, on the other hand, spoke of a free and united Nile Valley, with the Sudan having its own internal administration. Sudanese nationalists were accordingly divided on whether or not union with Egypt was the shortest path to independence. Political parties thus emerged as organizations primarily dedicated to the realization of independence through the one or the other means.

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION	i
ABBREVIATIONS	ii
CHAPTER ONE	THE HERITAGE OF SUDANESE NATIONALISM
	The Condominium Administration in the Sudan. 1
	The Sudanese Awakening. 3
	The Politics of British Reaction. 12
	The Rehabilitation of Nationalism. 16
CHAPTER TWO	THE GENESIS OF THE GRADUATES' GENERAL CONGRESS
	Reactions to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. 28
	The Need for a Nationalist Organization. 39
	The Graduates' General Conference. 53
CHAPTER THREE	THE GROWING CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND THE GOVERNMENT
	The Politics of British Tolerance. 80
	The Tug of War Between Moderates and Militants. 94
	The Deterioration of Relations with the Government. 118
	The Mahdist Ascendancy in the Congress. 144
	The Congress Memorandum of 1942. 154
CHAPTER FOUR	THE GROWTH OF FACTIONS WITHIN THE CONGRESS
	The Triumph of the Militants. 193
	The Beginnings of Flirtation with Egypt. 207
	The Advisory Council and Nationalist Reaction. 219
	The Split Between Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and Azhari. 238
	The Sudan Question and the Polari- zation of Nationalist Sentiment. 249

CHAPTER FIVE	THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES	
	The Sectarian Involvement in Nationalist Politics.	270
	The Formation of the Umma Party.	286
	The Formation of Other Political Parties and the Eclipse of the Graduates' Congress.	296
CHAPTER SIX	THE BETRAYAL OF INDEPENDENCE AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS.	
	The Mission of the Sudan Delegation to Cairo.	335
	The Effect of the Sidqi-Bevin Protocol.	347
	Political Repercussions.	354
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY		359

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In the transliteration of the Arabic characters, I have in general followed the system adopted by the Editors of Sudan Notes and Records. This system has not, however, been applied to geographical names, for which the conventional spelling used by the Sudan Government Survey Department has been adopted. In the pronunciation of personal and party names, I have followed the Sudanese practice rather than the classical forms of literary Arabic.

ABBREVIATIONS

CIVSEC	Civil Secretary's Office Files.
CRO	Central Records Office, Khartoum.
DAKHLIA	Ministry of Interior (Khartoum) Files.
DARFUR	Darfur Province Files.
DURHAM	School of Oriental Studies Library, University of Durham.
FO	Foreign Office (London) Files.
HALFA	Halfa Province Files.
KASSALA	Kassala Province Files.
KHARTOUM	Khartoum Province Files.
NORTHERN	Northern Province Files.
PORT SUDAN	Port Sudan District Files.
PRO	Public Records Office, London.
SMIS	Sudan Monthly Intelligence Summary.
SPIS	Sudan Political Intelligence Summary.

C H A P T E R O N E

THE HERITAGE OF SUDANESE NATIONALISM

The Condominium Administration in the Sudan.

The reconquest of the Sudan in 1899 created a number of legal and diplomatic problems for the British Government. Although the regained territories were for all technical purposes former possessions of the khedive, the simple restoration of Egyptian rule over the Sudan was rejected by the British out of hand. So was also the extension of the privileged status which Europeans had acquired in Egypt. At the same time, however, the apparent alternative of creating an undisguised British colonial administration was not feasible, for Egypt's historical claims had in fact been used as a convenient pretext by the British to justify, to rival European powers, the extension of their domination over the country.¹

The result of all these considerations, embodied in the Anglo-Egyptian Conventions of 1899 (usually known as

1. For a fuller account, cf. Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan, Clarendon Press (Oxford 1969), ch. I; also, P.M. Holt, A Modern History of the Sudan, Weidenfeld and Nicolson (London 1967), ch. VIII.

the Condominium Agreement), was to confer on the Sudan a separate political status from that of Egypt. The link between the two countries was however formally preserved by associating the Egyptian with the British government in a joint sovereignty over the Sudan. The khedivial claims were further recognized by the provisions that both the Egyptian and British flags should fly together in the country; that the appointment and removal of the governor-general should be by khedivial decree (but only on the recommendations of the British government); and that the proclamations of the governor-general, having the force of law, should be notified to the president of the Egyptian council of ministers, as well as to the British agent in Cairo.¹

These stipulations apart, the Agreement deliberately excluded Egyptian authority from the Sudan. All supreme military and civil command was vested in the governor-general who, as a nominee of the British government, invariably turned out to be a British national. In addition to full executive powers, the governor-general was also given complete authority to legislate by proclamation, and Egyptian legislation was not to apply to the Sudan unless specifically proclaimed by him. British officials occupied all the senior posts in

1. P.M. Holt, op. cit., p. 133 ff.

in the administrative machinery while Egyptians were given subordinate ranks. Thus, by reserving almost complete autonomy to an official nominated by the British government, the Agreement did not create a true condominium but merely gave a nominal recognition to the historical claims of the khedive.

The Egyptians were never satisfied with the terms of the Agreement and they felt, with a sullen resentment, that they had been jockeyed out of their rights. Once Egypt had passed from under British control, the artificiality of the Condominium could no longer be concealed and, from the end of the First World War onwards, it became increasingly an embarrassment both to successive British cabinets and to the British administration in the Sudan.

The Sudanese Awakening.

The cradle of Sudanese nationalism lay in Khartoum and Omdurman, and it was the result of the politicization of Sudanese who had been educated at Gordon Memorial College for service in the administration of the country. Before 1915, these "graduates" were mostly interested in the Islamic literary heritage, and their activities were confined to organising literary festivals and to eulogising

the Muslim past.¹

The aftermath of the war, however, witnessed a profound re-orientation in Sudanese political interest. As in other Muslim countries, the revolt against the Ottoman caliphate created an ideological crisis for the sophisticated Sudanese, and the question of legitimising political authority began to pre-occupy their thinking more intensely. Partly out of interest and partly by force of circumstances, their attention was drawn to the study of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which were then being widely discussed in the Egyptian newspapers and which were very freely commented upon by the Egyptian community in Khartoum and Omdurman. The widely-drawn conclusion in these circles was that the British would evacuate Egypt completely after the war. The general effect of all this on the Sudanese was to make them realise that a British withdrawal from Egypt inevitably implied a withdrawal from the Sudan as well. With recollections of an independent pre-condominium state still lingering in their mind, Sudanese graduates began to feel pleasantly restless at this renewed prospect of independence. Their conception of a modern Sudanese

1. G.M.A. Bakheit, British Administration and Sudanese Nationalism, 1919-1939, Ph.D. Thesis (Cambridge University, 1965), p. 67.

nation-state was not at that stage fully developed, and in their efforts to define it more clearly they were to be inevitably influenced, whether in a positive or negative respect, by the turbulence of Egyptian nationalism.

At the time the intelligentsia were stirring, the country's religious leadership was proceeding along parallel, though not coincidental, lines of thought. Before the outbreak of the war, Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani¹ had stood alone as the only religious leader in whom the British placed confidence, whereas Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi² and Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi³ were ever kept under the eye of suspicion. The war with the Turks, however, dictated a modification in the government's policy toward the latter leaders, especially Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. The main factor that occasioned these

-
1. Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani: head of a sufi sect in the Sudan, known as the Khatmiyya; grew up in exile in Egypt during the Mahdiyya rule in the Sudan and returned after the reconquest of the country in 1899; solid supporter of the British administration until the late 1930's and strong opponent of Mahdist influence and ascendancy.
 2. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi: posthumous son of the Mahdi, and recognized leader of the Anṣār sect.
 3. Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi: head of a third, and smaller, religious order (the Hindiyya).

modifications was Wingate's¹ intense anxiety to counteract the Pan-Islamic propaganda of the Central powers. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was thus allowed, for the first time, to visit and live on Aba island, from where his father's revolt had started and which was generally considered to be the cradle of Mahdism. The tight restrictions which had hitherto been ruthlessly imposed on the Anṣār were gradually relaxed.

Following this somewhat official recognition of their influence and position, both Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi set about to consolidate their new standing in the country. They courted Sayyid 'Ali and explored with him the possibility of promoting a policy by which all the religious orders would have one acknowledged head, who would correspond to the Shaykh Mashaykh al-Turuq in Egypt.² Though a formal agreement on these lines did not eventually materialize, the regular contacts accompanying these discussions had the effect of bringing these dignitaries closer together and thereby establishing an informal triumvirate of political leadership. Like their other compatriots, these sectarian leaders as well

1. Sir Reginald Wingate: Governor-General of the Sudan 1899-1916; British High Commissioner in Egypt 1916-1919.

2. Stack to Symes, 11.9.1917, PRO, FO.141/479 (file 2217).

detected in Wilson's Fourteen Points the promise of independent statehood for the Sudan and they groomed themselves to assume the positions of political power in the country.

Egyptian nationalist agitation, however, scandalized Sudanese nationalism and confused the British reaction to it. Egyptian speculation about the outcome of the Peace Conference at Versailles reached the Sudanese in a more garbled form, involving the substitution of Turkish officials in the higher positions to take the place of British officials; retaliation on pro-British notables for expressing loyal sentiments; and a general calling to account of those who had displeased the Egyptians in any way.¹ In the light of such disturbing rumours, the sectarian triumvirate urged Stack² to take a stronger line than was then being taken "to emphasize the fact that the Sudan is under the British Empire and that its future

1. Stack to Wingate, 22.12.1918, DURHAM, Wingate Papers, Box 204/1; also, PRO, FO.371/3711.

2. Sir Lee Stack: Joined Sudan Government 1904; Private Secretary to Wingate (Governor-General) 1904-7; Sudan Agent in Cairo 1908-14; Civil Secretary 1914; Governor-General and Sirdar 1919-1924; assassinated in Cairo 1924.

is identified with British control".¹ Sayyid 'Ali in particular spoke of his ambition to see the Sudanese become, under the guidance of Britain, "a united people with their own laws, customs and administration, capable of both governing and fighting for themselves". The three leaders admitted that the bulk of the people were not yet conscious of any national ambition of this kind, but they were definitely convinced that the idea was latent and that it only required education to bring it out. For this purpose they asked "to be allowed to institute among their followers a kind of propaganda which will endeavour to foster loyalty and co-operation with the British Imperial idea, with the ultimate object of cultivating a spirit of national unity among the Sudanese."²

Although the suggestion was then rejected by Stack, the sectarian leaders continued to be deeply concerned about the future of the Sudan. In March 1919, Zaghlūl Pasha demanded the termination of British occupation not only in Egypt but also in the Sudan, and he re-asserted Egypt's historic claim to possession of the country. Believing that Zaghlūl would take the Egyptian case to the Peace Conference, principal Sudanese notables became

1. Stack, "Note on the Growth of National Aspirations in the Sudan", 23.2.1919, DURHAM, Wingate Papers, Box 204/1.

2. Ibid.

more determined to have their own say in the matter and they despatched two letters to Stack, in which they disassociated themselves entirely from the Egyptian nationalists and rejected any Egyptian claims to speak for the Sudanese. Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi was the more explicit. The Sudan, he declared, had been finally separated from Egypt since the reconquest and had become capable of "bearing its own expenses and of carrying out its own independence under the protection of Great Britain."¹

Whatever might have been the expectations of Sudanese nationalists, the Peace Conference at Versailles did not even discuss, let alone decide, the political future of the Sudan. Instead, the Sudan question was to become the subject of protracted negotiations between Egypt and Britain. The intense propaganda, both British and Egyptian, that inevitably accompanied such negotiations had the overall effect of retarding, if not actually deforming, the growth of Sudanese nationalism. The political status of the Sudan was not finally settled until 1953. But, in 1919, this fact could not be foreseen by any of the participants, especially the Sudanese. Under the impact of Egyptian propaganda, they had formed the erroneous impression that

1. Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi to Lee Stack, 21.4.1919, and Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani (et als) to Lee Stack, 23.4.1919, DURHAM, Wingate Papers, Box 204/1.

the then on-going Anglo-Egyptian negotiations would actually result in the withdrawal of the British from both Egypt and the Sudan. In the light of this impending independence, budding Sudanese nationalists found themselves confronted with serious, and in some respects disturbing, problems of nationhood: There was not that widespread sense of national consciousness which was necessary for the maintenance of unity and stable government in the country; and, at the same time, there were hardly any qualified Sudanese who could be called upon to replace British and Egyptian officials in running the country's administration effectively. Some Sudanese graduates, particularly the muwalladdīn¹, were highly influenced by their close connection with Egyptian culture and they tended to visualize the Sudan as an administrative part of Egypt. Others, including the influential religious leaders, were uneasy at the prospect of a repetition of Egyptian maladministration, as in the previous century, and they tended to adopt the view that the Sudan would be better off if it developed along its own separate lines under the trusteeship of Britain.

Between 1919 and 1924, these two nationalist outlooks became increasingly polarized. The events and debates

1. The term muwalladdīn referred to those born of mixed Egyptian and Sudanese parentage.

of this period may be summarized briefly. In 1919, Egyptian nationalist propaganda sought to impress the then visiting Milner Mission that the Sudan's future lay in unity with Egypt. In response, Ḥusayn Sharīf¹ (editor of al-Ḥadāra and mouthpiece of the anti-unity school of thought) publicly challenged the logic of Egyptian claims and propagated instead the alternative policy of preserving "the Sudan for the Sudanese". He called for an end to the condominium with Egypt over the Sudan, and the continuation in its place of sole British trusteeship until the country was ready to stand on its own feet as an independent state.² The pro-unity advocates, in their turn, became understandably disturbed. They saw in these articles the hand of British conspiracy designed to rob the Sudan of its immediate independence, and they

-
1. Son of Khalīfa Sharīf (cousin of the Mahdi); educated at Gordon College, worked for a time as a teacher and then edited the literary magazine al-Rāid in 1917; in 1919, he edited al-Ḥadāra as a literary paper, and he continued in his post when it was bought over by the three Sayyids in June 1920. He was highly respected among the graduates, even by his political opponents. Died in 1928.
 2. These views were expressed in a series of four articles published in al-Ḥadāra on 7, 14, 21, and 28 August 1920. For a more elaborate summary, cf. Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, op. cit., p. 101. Muddathir mistakenly identifies the author of these articles as having been Sayyid Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf (a nephew of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman).

responded by organizing the distribution of political leaflets, in which they attacked vehemently both the British administration and its anti-unity collaborators. In February 1922, despairing of reaching any agreement with the Egyptians, the British Government unilaterally terminated their protectorate over Egypt and reserved the Sudan question for future settlement. In the Sudan itself, this declaration drove the pro-unity group into adopting more militant forms of political action. The White Flag League was formed and political activity henceforth spread from the distribution of anti-British leaflets to the organization of public demonstrations in support of the ideal of a united Nile Valley, free from the British and under the Egyptian crown. The League received more or less covert support from Egyptian political circles, both within and outside the Sudan; and this factor, together with its slogan of unity, led the British authorities to look upon it as a mere agency of Egyptian agitators.¹ As the disaffection spread to Sudanese military units, and when the British ordered the evacuation of Egyptian army units from the Sudan following the assassination of Stack, these units mutinied. The

1. P.M. Holt, op. cit., p. 130.

disturbance was suppressed and the Egyptian share in the Condominium administration was effectively, though temporarily, abolished.¹

The Politics of British Reaction.

As a result of the 1924 disturbances, British administrative policy in the Sudan developed along different lines than those actively pursued in the post-war years. During that period, British policy directly or indirectly aimed at de-Egyptianizing the government by associating the Sudanese more closely with the administration of the country. They sought to realize this objective by conferring minor executive powers on tribal shaykhs and notables, and also by widening the opportunities for western-educated Sudanese to be employed in government service. In this respect, special courses were introduced in 1919 to train Sudanese for the post of māmūr and sub-māmūr, and within five years there were 102 of them as against 35 Egyptians. Sudanese were also trained in greater numbers as medical assistants, engineers, agriculturalists and telegraphists. In the three capital towns, a consultative municipal council was constituted in 1921 with a number of

1. For a more detailed study of this period, cf. G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., Part II, Chapter III.

Sudanese as nominated members; and, in a similar municipal council constituted at Port Sudan, one third of the members were Sudanese.¹

This limited experiment in "Sudanisation", however, suffered a severe setback after 1924. The events of that year produced a crisis of confidence between the British administration and the Sudanese intelligentsia. While the government had rightly perceived that active opposition had been confined to a small minority, it nevertheless reacted as if the intelligentsia as a whole was "its inveterate enemy, to be checked and circumscribed in the interest of political stability."² British policy was henceforth directed at reducing the power and need of Sudanese junior officials in central government service. Entrance to government posts was made more difficult by the imposition of harder examinations. The powers of Sudanese māmūrs and sub-māmūrs were greatly reduced and their recruitment ceased altogether by 1927.³

While the role of educated Sudanese in the country's administration was being progressively reduced, that of tribal authorities was correspondingly increased. Since

1. Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, op. cit., p. 64.

2. P.M. Holt, op. cit., p. 133.

3. G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., pp. 134-5.

1917, Stack had gradually drawn traditional tribal authorities into local administration and he regarded this policy of "Native Administration" as complementary to that of training educated Sudanese for service in the hierarchy of the central government. The paramount consideration in both cases was to replace Egyptian officials by Sudanese. After 1924, however, and under the influence of Maffey¹, Native Administration came to be looked upon as an alternative to the employment of educated Sudanese in the civil service, and ordinances were accordingly enacted which considerably enhanced the status and power of tribal authorities. This policy of one-sided administrative development continued until 1934 when it was reviewed by Maffey's more liberal successor, Sir Stewart Symes.² But by then, the psychological damage had already been done. The crisis of confidence between the intelligentsia and the British gradually engulfed the tribal authorities as well and turned the nationalist sons against their political

-
1. Sir John Maffey: Chief Commissioner N.W. Frontier Province of India to 1926; Governor-General of Sudan 1926-34; later Permanent Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office and H.M. Ambassador to Ireland.
 2. Sir Stewart Symes: Served in the Egyptian Army and was seconded to the Sudan in 1906-1916; served with Wingate in Cairo 1917-1920; Palestine 1920-8; Aden 1928-30; Governor Tanganyika 1931-4; Governor-General of Sudan 1934-40.

fathers. The demand for "Sudanisation" in the 1930's and 1940's thus came to mean not only the replacement of British by Sudanese officials, but also the total subordination (if not abolition) of "native administration" to the primacy of the nationalist intelligentsia.

The Rehabilitation of Nationalism.

In the aftermath of the 1924 disturbances, the Sudanese intelligentsia underwent a crucial phase of soul-searching and readjustment. They were sternly shaken by the drastic actions of the British administration, and they bitterly regretted the departure of the Egyptians, whom they had come to regard as sympathetic allies. They were furthermore distressed at the confirmation of their earlier suspicions that, without an Egyptian counter-presence, the British would be completely free to enforce any policy they desired in the Sudan.¹

As the more militant proponents of "a united Nile Valley" subsided into political inactivity and despair, not to re-emerge until the mid-1940's, the bulk of the intelligentsia continued to explore privately ways and means by which they could drag the Sudan along the path to

1. "Political History of the Sudan: 1924-1931", CRO, SECURITY 7/1/1.

independence. Their motto was "the Sudan for the Sudanese", and they had discerned in the British acceptance of it not only an implied denial of Egyptian claims, but also a tacit theoretical admission to the Sudan's ultimate independence. They accepted the temporary need for Britain's guardianship while the Sudanese qualified to "become a self-governing nation".¹ But, at the same time, they saw in this guardianship a risk of the Sudan drifting into a status of a British colony, and they had consequently wanted to obtain a British commitment to a fixed time limit for the achievement of Sudanese independence. The assassination of Stack, however, robbed them of the opportunity: The consequent expulsion of the Egyptians inevitably relieved the pressure on the British of making such a commitment.

The subsequent turn of events in Egypt dismayed the Sudanese intelligentsia even more. They had hoped that the Egyptian nationalists would quickly resume their share in the Sudan administration and thus re-apply a brake on British imperialist designs. Instead, they were increasingly frustrated to observe that the Wafd was unable

1. Petition by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi and others to the Governor-General, 10 June 1924, quoted in G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., p. 80 ff.

to keep itself in power, or to even demolish the "dictatorial" government of Muḥammad Maḥmūd Pasha. Rightly or wrongly, they looked upon the latter as an instrument of British imperialism, or at least as a friend of England who was prepared to give her what she wanted and play her game in combating the Wafd in return for being kept in power. In this respect, the Maḥmūd regime and its alliance with Lord Lloyd (High Commissioner in Cairo) were seen as a severe blow to nationalist aspirations both in Egypt and the Sudan. When Anglo-Egyptian negotiations were started again in 1929, the Sudanese intelligentsia silently wished for a return of the Egyptians and they were somewhat disappointed when these negotiations finally ended in failure. The dismissal of Naḥḥās Pasha, and his replacement by Ṣidqi Pasha as Prime Minister, created a widespread impression that the British Government, annoyed with the Wafd for not having accepted the treaty terms on the Sudan, had let Naḥḥās down by advising King Fuʿād to accept his resignation and to institute another "dictatorial" regime. The Wafd's failure to bring down Ṣidqi disappointed again the Sudanese intelligentsia who, as a result, became henceforth increasingly disenchanted with Naḥḥās's verbal heroics. By 1931, therefore, the Sudanese nationalists had come to believe that Egypt would never be given her old status in the Sudan, and they decided instead to take

their destiny into their own hands.

The timing was coincidentally most propitious. For some time past, the intelligentsia had come to believe that the failure of 1924 was primarily due to lack of knowledge and general political maturity on the part both of its leaders and rank and file. In order to educate the masses and groom the leaders for proper execution of their duties, they had deemed it necessary to direct all efforts to extensive learning and serious thinking. This type of education, however, was not formally available in the Sudan at that time, and the intelligentsia had sought to attain cultural maturity by resorting to the usual means of personal enlightenment. Small study circles emerged as a result in which graduates drawn from similar professional or residential background debated the subject matter of imported newspapers and literary works. At first, they were attracted by anything and everything, but in due course they became more selective and narrowed down their pre-occupation to the study of international politics and the history of other nationalist movements.¹ Meeting in private houses to avoid the eyes and ears of government spies, these groups had evolved their individual authoritative leaders and had cultivated strong bonds of

1. Ahmad Khayr, Kifāh Jīl, (Cairo 1948), f. 58 ff.

loyalty between them and the other members. The majority of these literary societies did not survive, but those that did produced in due course recognizable types of political and social attitudes which characterized some of the political parties that were to emerge in later years.¹

In the early 1930's, however, these literary groups served as scaffolding for the rehabilitation of the nationalist movement. An apparently minor yet significant incident in 1931 marked a turning point along this process. In response to the effects of the world economic depression, the British administration had adopted stringent economic measures, one of which involved the reduction of the number and starting salaries of Sudanese employees in the civil service. This decision became the subject of stormy discussions in the Graduates' Club at Omdurman² and eventually ten members were elected with a mandate to petition the Government in the interests of the graduate class. In their petition, the Committee of Ten suggested that instead of retrenchment the British Government and financing institutions in London should be pressed to suspend their demands for re-payment of loans advanced for the Gezira scheme in the Sudan. They also urged that

1. Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, op. cit., p. 112.

2. Established in 1918 as a centre of graduate activities in the capital.

no Sudanese should be discharged from service and that the starting salary of Gordon College graduates should not be reduced, as was proposed, but kept in its original level. Unwilling to recognize that the Committee had any right of representation in the matter, Maffey talked to some of its members individually and agreed to readjust slightly the reduced rates of pay, on the condition that the Committee refrained from further collective action.¹

The outcome and nature of these individual consultations generated a conflict within the graduate class. The government measures of retrenchment had united the intelligentsia in condemning the financial regime which led to this debacle. The trouble, in their view, started with Schuster² who had increased the cadre of British officials, giving them at the same time other improved allowances at Sudanese expense.³ If any reduction in number or salaries was to be applied this was expected to cover the foreign staff and not the Sudanese officials.

-
1. For a detailed account, cf. CRO, CIVSEC 1/58/165 and SECURITY 12/2/10.
 2. G. Schuster: Financial Secretary in the Sudan in the 1920's.
 3. "Note by Controller, Public Security Intelligence, and Intelligence Officer on Conversations with Native Officers and Officials regarding Economic Proposals", 5.1.1931, CRO, CIVSEC 20/28/138.

Within such a perspective, therefore, the acquiescence of the interviewed Committee members to a partial reduction in the starting salaries for Sudanese solicited strong criticism in nationalist circles. The younger members of the intelligentsia, who were of course the ones most directly affected by these measures, felt particularly resentful. They had placed all their hopes in the Committee of Ten and they felt betrayed by the individual acquiescence of some of its members. The fact that all of those interviewed by Maffey were Khatmiyya adherents eventually added a sectarian colour to the overall resentment. As a result, the graduates in the club divided into "Filist" and "Shawqist" factions, which soon forgot the original issue in the heat of their personal feud.¹

In the years that followed, the Filist-Shawqist feud dominated intelligentsia politics and signalled the growing infiltration of sectarianism into graduate activities. Since 1926, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi had sought to gain recognition as a national leader from the graduate class in general, or at least from its non-Khatmiyya members who composed the greater part of it. Accordingly, he had never failed to associate himself at

1. The factions were so called after the names of their respective leaders, Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fil and Muhammad 'Ali Shawqi.

an early stage with every movement, political or commercial, of the urban intelligentsia, which seemed to him to have a "national" aspect or to foreshadow a demand for a "national" figure-head.¹ He shared their opposition to the policy of Native Administration and the resulting increase in the authority of local tribal chiefs, both of which he regarded as a threat to his own position and to that of his khulafā' in the provinces. He further consolidated his position by making donations to charity funds, patronising schools and adopting orphanages organized or founded by members of the graduate class. His first real opportunity, however, presented itself in November 1931. When Gordon College students, despairing of any effective action by the Committee of Ten, went on strike in protest against the retrenchment measures, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān lost no time in profiting by the circumstances to assume a leading role. Instigated probably by influential graduates who feared that Maffey might close down the College altogether, he volunteered to speak to the students and the Government agreed. He headed a deputation of parents in an attempt to induce the students to return to their classes but failed to do so. He later

1. General Note on Mahdism and on Sayed Sir Abd El Rahman El Mahdi, 1926 to 1932, CRO, CIVSEC (I) 56/2/19.

held a succession of meetings in his Omdurman house at which, though expressing great sympathy with the students' grievances, he consistently advocated the unconditional ending of the student strike on the assurance that no reprisals would be taken against them. In taking the line he did, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was definitely opposing the opinions held by the majority of the graduate class, and in this respect he ran some risk of prejudicing his ambitions to "lead" the intelligentsia. But he realized that the strike must eventually fail and he calculated that he would be amply rewarded for any temporary inconvenience of unpopularity he might have had to suffer. In due course, he succeeded in persuading the students to return to school and thus gained considerable prominence for the mediating role he had played. In particular, he won the support and allegiance of two influential Sudanese officials in the Legal Department, Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqī¹ and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭī², who were to stimulate

-
1. Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqī: Engineer, appointed to Legal Department in 1914; was active in Graduates' Club and later in the Graduates' Congress; nominated to Advisory Council in 1944-7; member of the Administrative Conference in 1946.
 2. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭī: Born 1896; he graduated from Gordon College and joined the Legal Department in 1918; became sub-mamur in 1920; district judge in Omdurman, 1922; eventually became Province judge; member of the Administrative Conference 1946; Speaker of Legislative Assembly 1948-53.

considerably his increasing involvement in the nationalist movement.

At the time of the students' strike, Sayyid 'Ali was on leave in Egypt. On his return, he was greatly dismayed to find that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, whom he regarded as a rival since their relationship broke up in 1930, had stolen a march on him and occupied a position which definitely relegated him to second place in the regard of the intelligentsia. The Filist-Shawqist feud provided him with an opportunity to strike back. Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi had been, since 1928, repeatedly elected as Vice-President of the Graduates' Club, and his faction's ascendancy on its Committee had already begun to cause some irritation among his rivals. The club was then emerging as a focus of enlightened public opinion vis-a-vis the government and the election of the Committee of Ten had greatly enhanced its importance and role. Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fīl¹ had been elected President of this Committee and, when it was dissolved, he and his friends feared that Shawqi, as Vice-President of the club, might be looked upon instead as leader of organized graduate opinion. The

1. Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fīl: Graduated 1906; appointed to Legal Department; became Inspector of Shari'a courts, and later Mufti. He was an influential liaison between the British and Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani.

Filists henceforth repeatedly tried to wrest the Vice-Presidency from Shawqi but failed.¹ With Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān supporting the Shawqists, Sayyid 'Ali threw his weight behind the Filists, and intelligentsia politics began to be increasingly interwoven with sectarian rivalry.

The intensification of this rivalry coincided with the beginning of a resurgence of nationalist consciousness. Maffey had gone and Symes had succeeded him as Governor-General of the Sudan. In the aftermath of the world economic depression, Symes had come to regard economic growth and social education as the first tasks of colonial administration, and in this connection he had little use for a system of indirect rule. His main aim was to give the Sudanese intelligentsia an effective share in the administration of their country and, to qualify them for this role, he decided to intensify European education, particularly at post-secondary level. He lifted the censorship on the press, and he allowed Sudanese editors to publish whatever they wished on their own responsibility.² In the new circumstances, the intelligentsia crept out of their political bunkers into a more overt and positive

1. J.C. Penney, "Note on the Elections of the Graduates' Club Omdurman", 9.3.1933, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/12/79.

2. For a fuller account of conditions in the Sudan under Symes, cf. G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., Part III.

involvement in national affairs. The timing was indeed critical. For, a year later, with the balance of power in north-east Africa changing as a result of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 ended the virtual exclusion of the Egyptians from the Sudan.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GENESIS OF THE GRADUATES' GENERAL CONGRESS

Reactions to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936.

The prospect of deciding the future political status of the Sudan in bilateral negotiations between Britain and Egypt alarmed the intelligentsia, particularly those committed to a policy of an independent "Sudan for the Sudanese". One such leading group consisted of persons closely associated with Al-Fajr magazine, a group of young intellectuals who had established themselves as the nucleus of a modernist, cultural and secular movement.¹ Sensing the opportunity to influence the outcome of the negotiations, Al-Fajr launched a campaign to induce the

-
1. The Fajr group was first organized about May 1934. Their primary objective was "to promote a movement of intellectual advancement and social reform, and to create on this basis an enlightened national consciousness transcending tribes, parties and personal motives". By 1935, the Fajr group developed an acute political consciousness, and they agitated "to see the young enlightened generation taking an active part in the affairs of this country, certainly not in the notorious, facile, negative and irresponsible way, but in a truly civil temper and with real responsibility." Prominent among the members were 'Arafāt Muhammad 'Abdallah, Muhammad Ahmad Maḥjūb, Muhammad 'Ashri 'al-Siddīq, Yūsif al-Tinay, and Mu'awiya Muhammad Nūr. Cf. PSI Monthly Letter, May 1934, para 31c, CRO, NORTHERN 1/20/188; and PSI Monthly Letter, April 1935, para 252, CRO, NORTHERN 1/17/110.

contracting powers to allow the Sudanese voice to be heard in the forthcoming negotiations.

The Egyptian response to this appeal, however, was ironically evasive. Egypt, it was argued, heartily agreed that the Sudanese voice should be heard on the question of the Sudan's fate in the negotiations. But by what means could Sudanese public opinion be made known? Through general elections in Sudan? Or through the formation of a Chamber of Deputies to whom questions could be submitted? Or could it be made known by means of a plebiscite? If so, who would supervise such a plebiscite, the British Government, a Sudanese body, an Anglo-Egyptian body or the League of Nations? Finally, what precisely was the plebiscite to be taken on, the Condominium Agreement of 1899, the status-quo-ante 1924, the existing fait accompli, or on new proposals?¹ The Egyptians had suspected that the appeal for consultation of the Sudanese was basically a plot of the Sudan Government, designed to gain for it a say in the negotiations. The questions they raised were thus designed to debar the Sudan Government from any claims to represent, or speak on behalf of, the Sudanese.

These questions, however, invoked deep concern among the Sudanese intelligentsia. They were upset that the

1. SMIS, No. 27, March 1936, para 629, PRO, FO.141/598 (file 181).

level of the country's constitutional development did not enable them to express their opinions effectively on the determination of their own political future, but they were also not prepared to lose the opportunity of improving their political condition. In the absence of a National Advisory Council, they used the local vernacular press to express their views on the treaty negotiations, and they appealed to the contracting powers to regard these expressions as representative of public opinion in the Sudan.

The reaction of the Sudanese in general to the prospect of an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, however, was by no means unanimous, and it was in many respects dictated by individual and personal pre-occupations.¹ On the one side, there were the government officials and commercial employees. Believing that the standard of the education they had acquired in the Sudan schools was not of a sufficiently high quality, they opposed the possible return of Egyptian officials, for fear of being competitively ousted from their posts. On the other side, there were the students and unemployed ex-students who assumed that the re-association of Egypt with the government of the Sudan

1. J.C. Penney, "Feeling in the Sudan Regarding the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty", 27.7.1936, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/28/176; also, NORTHERN 1/17/108.

would lead to an era of political and economic advancement for all.

The bulk of intelligentsia opinion, however, was basically nationalistic. Suspicious of the objectives of the Southern Policy, they wanted the unity of the Sudan preserved and argued against any partition of the country.¹ They thought of themselves first as Sudanese, with an independent political future somewhere ahead of them, a future which they did not want to see prejudiced by any two-party agreement in which they had no voice. Of their ultimate objective they had no doubt, and they were then only concerned with the question of the right approach to its attainment. They denounced firmly the old Wafdist theories of annexation to Egypt. They were quite prepared for a treaty, but they were suspicious of attempts at a "final" solution which someday they might have to challenge. They discussed possible alternatives, such as a League of Nations mandate or a Dominion status, but even here they regarded these as temporary administrative expedients.

1. On the subject of the Southern Policy, cf. G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., Ch. VI; Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, The Development of British Policy in the Southern Sudan, 1899-1947, School of Extra-Mural Studies (Khartoum 1968); and Mohamed Omer Beshir, The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict, Hurst, (London 1968).

The merchant class held a more pragmatic view. They were on the whole in favour of a ¹⁹⁴⁷ treaty, particularly those who had Cairo connections. They believed that the stabilisation of the political relations between the Sudan and Egypt must encourage greater mutual economic prosperity, and might even lead to the investment of Egyptian capital in the country. An association with Egypt "might also strengthen their hand in approaching the Sudan Government over the various alleged grievances which from time to time agitated the Sudan Chamber of Commerce."¹

The attitude of the two main sectarian leaders was essentially identical, though for quite different motives. Both opposed the restoration of any effective Egyptian influence in the administration of the Sudan: Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi, because of his hereditary opposition to Egyptian rule and his current support of the status quo; Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, because of his fear that the return of Egyptian influence would drive the intelligentsia into the Mahdist camp, and thereby strengthen the political leadership of his more modern and realistic rival, whom he considered better equipped "to extract personal advantage from Egyptian intervention in Sudan affairs."² Sayyid 'Ali

1. J.C. Penney, "Feeling in the Sudan Regarding the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty", 27.7.1936, loc. cit.

2. Ibid.

believed that the Sudan itself could derive no possible advantage, economic or otherwise, from a closer association with Egypt, and that very few merchants would actually benefit from any improved economic relations.

Provincial tribal opinion, in so far as it existed at all, favoured the status quo. Traditionally conservative, its horizon was completely limited by local interests. It viewed the Sudan Government as a British Government and the theory of Egyptian partnership as a more or less meaningless political fiction. It would not be disturbed by the actual conclusion of a treaty, provided the existing effective system of administration remained unchanged. In the Northern Province, due to their contact with Egypt, the sedentary agricultural and commercial population astride the railway and the river had developed a feeling not antipathetic to Egyptian partnership, provided that it did not involve partition or prejudice their own material interests.

In general terms, therefore, there were apparently two camps. In the one camp, there were those who favoured some closer association with Egypt -- the merchants and some of the younger intelligentsia. In the other camp, there were those who opposed such an association -- the two Sayyids, the bulk of the intelligentsia and tribal authorities.

After more than four months of protracted negotiations,

the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was finally signed in London on 28 August 1936.¹ The main terms of the Treaty concerning the Sudan were in Article 11. The question of sovereignty over the Sudan was shelved, and the Condominium Administration was to continue, with the governor-general exercising power on behalf of the two countries. It was vaguely provided that the primary aim of the administration "must be the welfare of the Sudanese."² In addition to Sudanese and British troops, Egyptian troops were now placed at the disposal of the governor-general "for the defence of the Sudan." Egyptian immigration into the country was to be unrestricted, "except for reasons of public order or health." There was to be no discrimination in the Sudan between British and Egyptians in matters of commerce, immigration or the possession of property. Finally, it was agreed that British and Egyptian officials would only be selected for appointment to posts for which qualified Sudanese were not available.

The conclusion of the Treaty met with a varied response in the Sudan. Provincial opinion, particularly in the western and central Sudan, was initially nervous about the

1. For a detailed account of the negotiations, cf. Hasan Ahmed Ibrahim, The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, Ph.D. Thesis (University of London, 1970).

2. P.M. Holt, op. cit., p. 139.

possibility of the return of Egyptian officials, a feeling that subsequently subsided after assurances to the contrary were provided by the British authorities.¹ The commercial classes were generally pleased at the restored association with Egypt, and so were also some of the younger elements of the intelligentsia.

On the whole, however, the majority of Sudanese nationalists were undoubtedly disappointed with the new Egyptian attitude towards the Sudan as revealed in the Treaty. From demanding independence for the whole Nile Valley, "one and indivisible", the Egyptian patriots had changed into willing partners with the British, demanding the perpetuation of Condominium rule and obtaining, in theory at least, an equal share in the rights of sovereignty over the Sudan. The Egyptian "brother" and fellow-nationalist had thus become a ruler, and many of the educated Sudanese looked with disfavour on his re-appearance in this guise. The return of the Egyptian troops, "a second army of occupation" as many of them called them, evoked little enthusiasm among them.² In the strict

-
1. "Opening Meeting held at the Palace on Sunday 29th November 1936", Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), CRO, NORTHERN 1/16/100; also, DARFUR 1/13/72.
 2. SMIS, No. 64, June 1939, para 1302, PRO, FO.407/224 (No. 4); also, Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub, Democracy on Trial (London 1974), p. 39.

political sense, the Egyptian was to the Sudanese as much a foreigner as the British.¹ As a sleeping partner in a condominium, the Egyptian was one thing; as an "active" principal, he was quite another. This possibility of Egyptian penetration prejudicing the Sudanese claim to eventual political independence created in the minds of the intelligentsia a very definite uneasiness.² They had regarded the Condominium Agreement as obsolete,

"drawn up by a British conservative at a time when the policy of colonisation ignored the interests of the native; and was accepted and signed by the other party. The Condominium did not provide for the third party, the people of the country, and even it did not specify the development of the country. A Treaty which was concluded in 1899 and under those very unfavourable circumstances should not be reinforced and applied in the year 1936. The country has changed, the people have made their way through the roads of education and have founded their political ideals towards which they are aspiring, and the world around them is ever changing. The policy of colonisation has taken a different

-
1. A distinction must here be made on the status of the Egyptian in the Sudan. Before 1922, Egypt herself was under British rule, so that in Sudanese eyes the Egyptian "partners" were rather fellow-subjects with the Sudanese than co-rulers with the British. In 1936, however, the Egyptians, independent and allies of the British on a footing of equality, appear to the Sudanese in quite a different light.
 2. "Note on Intelligentsia Treaty Reactions in the Sudan, September 1936", SMIS, No. 33, September 1936, Appendix I, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/28/176; also, PRO, FO.407/219 (No. 157).

aspect, and may well tend towards friendship and co-operation, because world affairs necessitate such a policy."¹

In the light of such beliefs, the intelligentsia naturally resented the manner in which their fate had been decided without any reference to their views. They had no alternative but to grant negative approval to the Condominium regime as confirmed by the Treaty, "at least for the present and until the resources of the country and the status of its people would warrant the institution of a constitutional indigenous Government."²

All was not lost, however. The nationalists derived some consolation from the fact that the question of sovereignty over the Sudan had not been "finally" settled by any agreement arrived at between the two negotiating parties. That question would remain in abeyance for future settlement, and any immediate changes affected by the Treaty would be merely superficial and not substantial. "Until the time comes when our words are listened to and consideration is given to our opinions on the affairs of our own country, let us be logical and be neither

1. "Translation of an article on the Treaty and Education which appeared recently in 'El Nil'", SMIS, Nos. 31 & 32, July-August 1936, Appendix III, PRO, FO.141/598 (file 181)

2. Ibid.

unnecessarily hopeful nor pessimistic about the results of the present negotiations."¹ In the meantime, the intelligentsia would have to develop and declare, within the framework of the Condominium administration, an autonomous Sudanese identity, capable of formulating and expressing a collective point of view which the Condominium partners would have to take into account.

There was still another cause for consolation. The Treaty "safe-guarding" clauses had asserted that the educated Sudanese would have prior claim to government appointments and that the primary aim of the administration would be the welfare of the Sudanese. These clauses were received with equanimity by the majority of the intelligentsia, the general feeling being that, if the pledges contained in these clauses were honoured, the Sudan would have come off reasonably well.

There was some apprehension, however, in regard to the clause dealing with the priority of Sudanese claim to government posts. This clause was vague in two vital respects. Firstly, it did not specify criteria whereby the "qualification" of educated Sudanese candidates could be measured; secondly, it did not specify clearly which

1. "Appreciation of Local Reactions to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty", SMIS, Nos. 31 & 32, July-August 1936, Appendix II, PRO, FO.141/598 (file 181).

posts would be open to "qualified" Sudanese. It was the belief of the intelligentsia that these vital points should have been clearly defined in the text of the Treaty and not left to the sole discretion of the Sudan Government.¹

The Need for a Nationalist Organisation.

By the beginning of October 1936, the initial fears of an invasion by Egyptian officials had been laid to rest, and the intelligentsia were becoming more intensely pre-occupied with the whole question of the future of the Sudanese official. They began to formulate their own ideas as to what line the implementation of the treaty provisions should take. They believed that two specifically co-related policies would have to be adopted. Firstly, higher education would have to be introduced at its full force, and a wider base of secondary, intermediate and elementary education would have to be provided. Secondly, government posts of District Commissioners and upwards would have to be open to qualified Sudanese. In this connection, they felt that it would also be necessary to cancel all Sudan Government regulations dealing with

1. "Translation of an article on the Treaty and Education which appeared recently in 'El Nil'", loc. cit.,

careers and cadres, which were inconsistent with the undertaking embodied in the agreed minute accompanying the Treaty, that "the promotion and advancement of members of the Sudan service shall be, irrespective of nationality, up to any rank by selection in accordance with individual merits." To the intelligentsia this undertaking meant the recasting of the report of the 1934 Establishment Committee; the framing of a single cadre for all Sudan Government officials, whether indigenous or foreign; and the disappearance of a number of irritating career anomalies which operated unfavourably against the Sudanese.¹

A need naturally grew for the formation of an association which would promote the interests of the graduates along the lines indicated. As early as August 1936, before the terms of the Treaty were published, a number of senior officials held a meeting in Omdurman, under the presidency of Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fil (the mufti), and discussed the formation of an Advisory Council, on the lines of the 1931 "Committee of Ten", whose duty it would have been to interpret

1. "Note on Intelligentsia Treaty Reactions in the Sudan, September 1936", loc. cit.

Sudanese feeling on the treaty clauses to the Government.¹

The authorities indirectly tried to discourage such a movement, but the demand for a voice in the settlement of Sudan affairs gained momentum, more so as a result of the Treaty provisions.

-
1. "Appreciation of Local Reactions to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty", loc. cit. The idea of advisory councils had a historical background. From 1826 onwards, governors-general of the Sudan appear to have convened from time to time assemblies composed of representatives of public opinion to advise on matters of public policy, taxation and so forth. In the period immediately preceding the Mahdiyya, two such bodies were established: One, a permanent council of eight (of whom some were senior government officials and some leading notables and merchants), sitting in Khartoum with general advisory and quasi-legal functions; the other an annual assembly of tribal leaders summoned to Khartoum to be consulted on administrative matters concerning their tribes. The practice then fell into disuse until August 1924, when a meeting of senior graduates and merchants held in Sayyid Isma'īl al-Azhari's house in Omdurman advocated the appointment of indigenous members to the Governor-General's Council. A few weeks later, a similar meeting, led by Husayn Sharīf, considered the appointment of Native Advisory Council desirable. This desire was communicated to the Government by influential notables, who presented it as one of the surest means of counteracting the cause of the then existing agitation against the government. There are no details on record as to the projected composition or scope of such a council, but apparently the Government took no measures to establish one. From then onwards, the subject had been always present in the minds of the intelligentsia leaders, albeit in a passive sense. The financial crisis of 1931 was the occasion for a grand demonstration of the graduates' desire to have their interests adequately represented to the Government. The Committee of Ten was avowedly a temporary body entrusted with a specific mission, but several of its members (as well as outsiders) raised at the time the question of permanent or periodic representation. Cf. "Note on Advisory Councils", 25.11.1936, Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), CRO, DARFUR 1/13/72.

This demand was given a more concrete expression in a scheme informally proposed by Shaykh Ahmad^Uthmān al-Qādi¹ to the British authorities. Briefly, this scheme contemplated the election, by the intelligentsia only, of some representative Sudanese body, composed of distinguished notables and leaders of public opinion, whose functions would be to advise the government on matters of general welfare. This body should come into existence modestly as a Committee, elected by the graduates, to administer a fund to be raised for educating Sudanese boys at foreign university. Having been elected as such, it should then receive some sort of government recognition and should be invited in due course to express opinions on an extended range of subjects. This representative body would also be primarily concerned with the task of organising a "Sudanese front", independent of local sectarian leadership, to protect the country against Egyptian political penetration, and to promote instead the policy of the "Sudan for the Sudanese".²

-
1. Shaykh Ahmad^Uthmān al-Qādi: Graduated 1909 from Gordon College and joined the Education Department as a teacher; became editor of al-Hadāra 1931-8; Sudanese Relations Officer in the Civil Secretariat 1942; member of the Advisory Council 1944-47.
 2. "Note on Intelligentsia Treaty Reactions in the Sudan, September 1936", loc. cit.; also, "Addendum to Note on Advisory Councils", Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), loc. cit.

The agitation for some form of Sudanese representation in government confronted Gillan¹ with vital questions of policy. Should the Government make some gesture of appeasement, and if so in what manner? Or should it ignore the agitation altogether? Gillan's position was a difficult one. In either case, the agitation would undoubtedly grow in dimensions sooner or later. In that eventuality, and if a policy of appeasement was adopted, would the Government be prepared to grant the growing demands of the movement? If, on the other hand, the Government decided to ignore this agitation, would it be prepared later to suppress it forcibly if it grew to threatening dimensions?

Gillan was generally in favour of some gesture of appeasement, not so much aimed at establishing a national Advisory Council, but rather aimed at defusing the agitation itself by channelling it into a different course. He was clearly opposed to any form of a "one class" council arrogating to itself advisory functions in matters of general policy affecting the country as a whole. "This unfortunately is, in essentials, just what the most vocal section of the 'progressive' party want. They might

1. Sir John Angus Gillan: District service 1906-21; Deputy Acting Governor Nuba Mountains 1921-28; Governor Kordofan 1928-32; Assistant Civil Secretary 1932-34; Civil Secretary 1934-39; left the Sudan in 1939.

admit the inclusion of a few elderly figureheads of the old school, but their whole thesis is that the voice to be heard in the direction of affairs is that of younger educated Sudanese, who in the present conditions of the country are 90% Government officials."¹

At the same time, the establishment of a truly national Advisory Council was considered to be an impractical proposition. In view of the "backwardness" of the southern Sudan population, such a Council would necessarily have to be limited to the northern part of the country, and it would have to include a fair proportion of tribal leaders, who represented the greater majority of the taxpayers. In Gillan's view, however, there was no desire among the tribal leaders for such a Council. They would have much preferred to discuss their own problems with their Governors and District Commissioners, with an occasional informal talk with the Governor-General. The same, it was believed, largely applied to most of the urban notables.

In the circumstances, Gillan felt that the obviously appropriate policy to follow at the time was to provide training in local government -- municipal and rural.

1. J.A. Gillan, "Preliminary Note on Native Representation", Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), loc. cit.

In the provinces, there was no immediate problem. Local councils, advisory or executive, formal or informal, existed all over the country. They were believed to be doing useful work and were slowly arousing the interest and securing the co-operation of the more educated local people. Could the same process of training be applied to the Khartoum intelligentsia, to enable them to let off steam, arouse their interest and provide them with experience in public service?

While still retaining his resolute opposition to any form of quasi-national representation by one small class, Gillan nonetheless thought that the Government could still benefit from the "institution of some form of organisation to advise on, and in some cases direct, welfare work, charity organisation, non-government education (perhaps government education in an advisory capacity) and such like services."¹ In this regard, he felt that the scheme proposed by Shaykh Ahmad^Uthmān al-Qādi contained some commendable aspects, in spite of the difficulty in the faction-ridden Sudanese community of getting the best people for the right places. But then, assuming that such an organisation was established, how would its

1. J.A. Gillan, "Preliminary Note on Native Representation", Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), op. cit.

activities be related with those of the municipal council? Could it function as an unofficial body without overlapping or interfering with the council? Or could it function under the council on sub-committee lines? The latter was constitutionally preferable to Gillan, but it would have understandably failed to meet the aspirations of those concerned, to whom municipal administration held little appeal. A study of the question had to be made first before any appropriate government policy could be formulated.¹ But in the meantime, one thing was certain: The movement for the establishment of an Advisory Council, on the lines proposed by the intelligentsia, had to be definitely discouraged.

It was against this background that the movement to form a nationalist organisation was to unfold. The obstacles were considerable. The intelligentsia were beset by divisions in political temperament and sectarian loyalties, and a compromise capable of uniting every faction under one umbrella had still to be hammered out.

1. At the request of Gillan, the Governor of Khartoum Province, Mr. C. L. Armstrong, submitted some proposals for associating the intelligentsia with municipality affairs in the capital. These proposals envisaged for the intelligentsia a role more in line with that of unofficial "technical" advisors to sub-committees dealing with specialised matters. In any event, no action was apparently taken on those proposals at the time. For a precis of the proposals, cf. Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1936), loc. cit.

Shaykh Ahmad ʿUthmān al-Qādi's scheme envisaged an organisation free from sectarian influences, and this objective was generally shared by the younger members of the intelligentsia who were getting tired, and even ashamed, of what they referred to as "faki partisanship". The same objective was also shared by Mirghanist elements, albeit for different reasons and in a negative sense. They thought that an organisation, so instituted, would not easily fall under the control of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān and would also limit his political influence and leadership which, at that time, was quite high and rising. The Mahdist elements were equally interested in the institution of such a nationalist organisation, cherishing the thought of bringing it, sooner or later, under their control. While still desirous that this nationalist organisation should be free of sectarian partisanship, the intelligentsia had nevertheless become convinced that the passive support of both the Mahdist and Mirghanist elements was indispensable for the success of the movement. Otherwise, it would be split into two factions, neither of which could claim with any justification to speak in the name of the Sudan.

The nationalists were, therefore, confronted with major political and organisational problems. How was the institution of this organisation to be initiated without

causing a backlash from any side? Members of the Graduates' Club in Omdurman hesitated to take the initiative, fearful that such a move might provoke government opposition, as it did in September 1936.¹ Besides, an attempt to set up a Graduates' Representative Committee, similar to the 1931 "Committee of Ten", would probably have met with strong opposition from the Mirghanist camp. Shawqist (and thereby Mahdist) influence was still dominating the club, despite the fact that some neutral elements formed part of its Committee.² Similarly, an initiative on the part of Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fil or Shaykh Ahmad Uthmān al-Qādi to set up such a Representative Committee outside the Omdurman Club would have also met with equal opposition from the Shawqist-Mahdist camp. As a result of this absence of a truly neutral political leadership able to command the support of the majority of the intelligentsia, the early endeavours to initiate the institution of a nationalist

-
1. At that time, a group from the younger elements of the intelligentsia were planning to organise at the Omdurman Club a meeting, open to the public, to discuss the Treaty clauses relating to the Sudan, and to formulate certain demands of their own for presentation to the Government. The authorities, however, were not prepared to allow the use of the club for a political meeting open to all the Omdurman "riff-raff", and a firm disapproval was accordingly conveyed to the club's Vice-President. cf. SMIS, No. 33, September 1936, para 810, loc. cit.
 2. SMIS, No. 27, March 1936, para 621, PRO, FO.141/598 (file 181).

organisation were locked in a stalemate.

The situation, however, began to take a different turn with the publication in Al-Fajr, in May 1937, of a lecture delivered by Ahmad Muhammad Khayr¹ at the Graduates' Club in Wad Medani.² The lecture was essentially an appeal for the re-orientation and re-organisation of the graduate class which, in his view, had become a mere "association without existence", beset by "diverse opinions and antagonistic tastes". He attributed the main cause for this deplorable state to the absence of a "vanguard leadership" among the intelligentsia. He believed that political conditions in the Sudan, after the Treaty, had placed the burden of the political struggle squarely on the graduate class. He disagreed with the view that all sectors of the community were equally qualified for the struggle, and he argued instead that a distinction had to be made on the basis of intelligence and ability. In his view, there were two types of nationalists: The first type, exercising physical ability, was more suitable

-
1. Ahmad Muhammad Khayr: Born 1905; after graduation from Gordon College he joined the Irrigation Department in Wad Medani as a translator; influential member of Wad Medani Literary Society; joined Gordon College again as a law student in 1940; a founder and leader of the Graduates' Congress. Subsequently became a lawyer.
 2. "Our Political Duty - The Graduates' Congress", Al-Fajr, Vol. III, No. 6, 16 May 1937, pp. 181-184.

to lead the struggle on the forefront of the battle lines; the second type, exercising intellectual ability, was more suitable for a role in central leadership and the execution of policies. Ahmad Khayr identified the graduate class, which he also labelled "the enlightened class", with the latter type, and he maintained that, in this initial stage of its life, Sudanese nationalism basically required the organisation of, and proper planning by, this "enlightened class" for the fulfilment of national objectives. He called on the graduate class, therefore, to liberate themselves from divisive influences and to form "an association or a congress or a union", characterised by strong bonds of solidarity and a unity of thought, which would enable them to draw up an agreed nationalist programme and to become the source of national guidance and leadership. The organisation structure of this "Congress", he suggested, could be founded on the graduates' clubs throughout the country, using the respective clubs as its organisational units and the Omdurman Club in particular as the organisational headquarters. The "Congress" would elect "a group of leaders from amongst" its members, who would serve as

the only official link between the graduates and the government.¹

Ahmad Khayr's lecture became the subject of widespread discussion and controversy not only for what it stated but also for what it omitted to state. His scheme certainly contained some guidelines for organising the graduates into a united front, but at the same time it left many essential questions unanswered. For example, he assumed rather naively that the graduates would heed his call and organise the "Congress", but he failed to explain how this could happen when the graduate class was already beset "by diverse opinions and antagonistic tastes". He probably expected that the graduates would be induced to adopt the proper political attitudes. But how and by whom? Did his veiled distinction, in the same lecture, between the "enlightened" and the "educated" suggest that the "Congress" should be organised on an elitist basis, with

1. Contrary to some interpretations, Ahmad Khayr did not actually call for a graduates' conference to set up the "Congress". Rather, he called for the establishment of a political organisation, by transforming the graduates' clubs into a "Congress". The actual call for a graduates' conference did not come until much later, and from Al-Fajr.

the "enlightened" assuming the role of leadership?¹ Furthermore, Ahmad Khayr's restriction of the "Congress" membership to the graduate class necessarily excluded the greater part of influential notables and merchants, who undoubtedly carried significant political weight with the Government. Could such a "Congress", therefore, speak with equally valid authority on matters affecting these other sectors of the community? Finally, Ahmad Khayr had suggested that the graduate clubs be gradually transformed into a political "Congress". But from where would that initiative originate and what would the nature of that initiative be?

The idea of a "Graduates' Congress" found widespread support among the intelligentsia, although there was significant disagreement as to the nature of this "Congress" and the means whereby it could be inaugurated. The Shawqist-Filist feud was still having an effect on the graduate class. A faint-hearted attempt was made

1. In connection with the political duties of the graduates, Ahmad Khayr state: "Our first duty is to achieve unity of thought ... (by which) I mean the organisation of the enlightened class -- and I do not say the educated -- into a well-organised body that will exploit the sources of power..." Op. cit., p. 183.

by Isma^cīl al-Azhari¹ to remedy the situation by calling on the graduates to form a new club, animated by a new spirit, but apparently his appeal met with little or no response.²

The Graduates' General Conference.

The explicit call for a graduates' conference was not actually made until mid-August 1937, and it was largely a reaction to Mahdist activities at that time. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi had for a number of years been considering another visit to England as a tourist and, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, he thought that the time was then most opportune to derive some political benefits as well from such a visit.

He had followed closely the evolution of political tendencies among the intelligentsia, and he thought that the time was ripe to make a bid for undisputed political

-
1. Isma^cīl al-Azhari: Born 1902; educated at the American University in Beirut; served in Education Department 1921-1946; resigned to engage in politics full-time; Secretary of Graduates' Congress 1938 and 1939; President of Congress 1940, 1943, 1945 and after; President of Ashiqqā' party 1944-52; President of the National Unionist Party 1952 onwards; Prime Minister of the Self-Governing Sudan 1954; declared independence 1955; resigned 1956; appointed President of the Republic 1964-69. Died 1971.
 2. Hadārat al-Sūdān, 2.8.1937. Isma^cīl al-Azhari was then Vice-President of the Graduates' Club in Omdurman.

leadership in the country. He worked out a scheme which would exploit British fears of renewed Egyptian influence. According to this scheme, he would point out to the Government that Egyptian propaganda was affecting the intelligentsia once again, and that it was imperative that something should be done to preserve the separate political identity of the Sudan. He would then express his readiness to assist the Government, as he had done in 1924, to counteract the dangers of Egyptian penetration but that, in his view, the best plan would be for the Government to allow him, and a committee of representative Sudanese working with him, to formulate and define the position and the aspirations of the Sudanese under the new regime.¹ To obtain the Government's concurrence to this scheme, however, he felt that he would have to argue convincingly that he was the only man with sufficient influence to achieve the desired objectives. A warm reception by the governments of Britain and Egypt would go a long way to enhance his prestige, particularly among the intelligentsia.

In mid-June 1937, therefore, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān

1. In fact, some suggestions along these lines were subsequently voiced by one of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's lieutenants, Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf, in August 1937. Cf. SMIS, No. 43, August 1937, para 1059, PRO, FO.141/534 (file 227).

expressed to the Government his wish to visit England and pay his respects to the King.¹ Symes was not basically opposed to such a visit. He had come to believe that the first step towards a successful solution of the Mahdist problem must be the maintenance of a "correct, consistent and reasoned attitude" towards Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.² In view of previous visits to England by other official and unofficial Sudanese missions, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's desire to visit England was seen as quite reasonable, provided he did not advertise himself too ostentatiously. One aspect of the visit, however, worried Symes: Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's desire to have an audience with the King of England. Such an audience would arouse grave Mirghanist suspicions, and Mahdist prestige would at the same time rise very sharply. The policy adopted, therefore, was that the British Government should avoid too much publicity for the visit, and should not arrange for a special audience with the King. At the same time, in partial satisfaction of the wishes of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the British Government would arrange to get

-
1. "Extracts from Note by J.C. Penney on an interview with Sayed Abdel Rahman on 16.6.1937", PRO, FO.141/710 (file 444/4/37); also, FO.371/20919 (J3330/3133/16).
 2. J.C. Penney (Public Security) to M.S. Lush (Sudan Agent Cairo), 28.6.1937, Ibid.

him an invitation to a royal garden tea party, in the course of which he would be presented to the King.¹

In spite of these measures, the trip did in fact provide an opportunity for significant publicity of Mahdist influence. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's reception at Port Said, on his way to England, was well advertised in the Egyptian press, with strong implications that, on his return journey through Egypt, he would meet with a far better reception.² As it turned out, however, this grand reception did not materialize; British pressure on the Sayyid to avoid "undue advertisement" of himself induced him to turn down a number of important invitations. But considerable publicity was nevertheless given to his visit by the Egyptian press, in which he was invariably referred to as "al-Mahdi".³ Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān himself did not miss the opportunity to publicise, in the course of an interview with Al-Muqattam newspaper in Cairo, elaborate details of his visit to England, particularly of his meeting with the King in the garden tea party. In the Sudan itself, the Mahdist headquarters spread rumours to the effect that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had gone

1. Sir Stewart Symes to Secretary of Foreign Office, 12.7.1937, PRO, FO.141/710 (file 444/4/37).

2. Sir Miles Lampson to Mr Anthony Eden, 15.7.1937, Ibid.

3. SMIS, No. 43, August 1937, para 1054, loc. cit.

to England, at the express request of the King, to discuss the vexed question of the future sovereignty of the Sudan, and that he would be offered the post of Emir or Viceroy of Sudan.¹

These Mahdist activities offended the sensitivities of the modernist and secular sections of the intelligentsia, as well as supporters of the Mirghanist sect. The modernists responded swiftly. In an editorial of an issue published in August, Al-Fajr argued that the Government could ascertain the needs and demands of the people only through the enlightened class. The editorial went on to call once again for the formation of a body which "will be given authority by the enlightened class to speak for them, to express their hopes and ideals and to defend their case socially and politically. Such a body must gain the support of all the graduates or at least the majority... And here we face a difficulty: How will this body be organised, and of whom will it consist?" The editorial then made, for the first time, an explicit call for a graduates' general conference, to be organised at the Graduates' Club in Omdurman:

"Despite all that happened in the past, the Sudan Schools' Club remains the centre for the enlightened class and it forms the

1. J.C. Penney to M.S. Lush, 10.7.1939, PRO, FO.141/710 (file 444/4/37).

connecting link that binds the graduates together. So the first step towards the formation of this body is to call all graduates to come to the club and so they will form a united front. Their activity will begin by holding a general conference, to be attended by the largest number of graduates possible, who will elect a representative body that will speak on their behalf. Once the body of representatives is formed, the Congress will be called upon to put down the programme and principles of the enlightened class and the functions of the elected body... The day in which the graduates will hold their congress and elect their representatives, will be the day in which we will be able to say that the club has started to play its important part in the history of the Sudan and that the Sudan has made the first step towards prosperity."¹

The object of the Fajr group was, inter alia, to set up in opposition to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's attempts an organised and independent body of graduates to act as leaders and representatives of the Sudanese people.² This initiative came at a time when Mahdist influence was beginning to decline among the intelligentsia. One of the main causes of this decline was the fiasco that resulted from Mahdist attempts to capture the leadership of the Sudanese Club in Cairo. Since the foundation of this

1. "The Enlightened Class and the Prosperity of the Sudan", Al-Fajr, Vol. III, No. 12, p. 355.

2. SMIS, No. 43, August 1937, para 1070, loc. cit.

club in April 1935, 'Ali al-Birayr¹, a prominent Mirghanist, had been its President. From July 1935 onwards, the Mahdists had been trying to displace him, but without success. 'Ali al-Birayr, whatever his shortcomings, was popular with the majority of the members, and the club continued to flourish. The Mahdists, however, persisted in their attempts to remove him.

In April 1937, the Mahdists escalated their attacks on 'Ali al-Birayr. They began to publish articles in an Egyptian magazine (Al-Rādiu), attacking him and gibing at the Mirghanists. At the same time, Al-Nīl in Khartoum belittled the club and called for a new President.² When visiting Egypt in August 1937, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had an excellent opportunity to remedy the situation. Instead, he rejected an invitation to a reception at the Sudanese Club, thereby giving offence to al-Birayr and his Committee.

By the beginning of September 1937, the Cairo feud had become heated, and what started as an offshoot of the main Mirghanist-Mahdist contest was in turn

-
1. 'Ali al-Birayr: Influential Sudanese animal trader and merchant, resident in Egypt; President of Sudanese Club in Cairo for many years; editor of Al-Sūdan magazine 1944; appointed member of the Board of Directors of Egyptian Chamber of Commerce 1945.
 2. SMIS, No. 44, September 1937, para 1088, PRO, FO.141/534 (file 227).

aggravating the situation in Khartoum. In a series of articles in Al-Nīl, the Mahdists repeatedly called for al-Birayr's retirement. The latter responded by ridiculing Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān in the Egyptian press. An abusive duel then began between the two factions. The virulent articles by al-Birayr did considerable damage to Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān's prestige. Under headlines such as "The Simple-Minded Exploited" and "Slavery in the name of Religion", al-Birayr rattled the bones of every skeleton in the Mahdist cupboard. Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān, it was argued, was lifting himself to leadership "on the foundation of blood and death inherited from a destructive and ruinous revolt"; and his wealth was allegedly derived from a wood contract completed by labourers who were collected from "the remainder of his father's ignorant and simple-minded followers", who were paid "ten square metres of paradise for every cubic metre of wood".¹ The last blow to Mahdist prestige came in the latter part of September, when ʿAli al-Birayr managed to arrange for free education for forty-four Sudanese students at Egyptian schools.²

The declining influence of the Mahdist faction

1. SMIS, No. 44, September 1937, para 1088, loc. cit.

2. Ibid, para 1090.

and the declared support of the Fajr group were two factors which encouraged members of the Graduates' Club Committee to take positive measures towards the organisation of a Graduates' Congress. In October 1937, a general meeting of all Club members was called, at which it was decided to convene a general conference, in the sense of an extraordinary Annual General Meeting of the Club, to inaugurate the Congress organisation and to draw up its programme. The date was set for 12 February 1938. In the meantime, the existing Club Committee was to act as a Preparatory Committee, responsible for making all the necessary arrangements for convening the conference and also for drawing up an agenda for its discussion. The foundation stone for the organisation of the Graduates' General Congress had firmly been laid.

For the next three months, the graduate class was pre-occupied with the preparations for the conference. First of all, the Club Committee needed to acquaint itself with the opinions of the graduates, whether members of the Club or not, who resided in the capital and in the provinces. Accordingly, the Club Committee requested a number of prominent graduates, representing various opinions and generations, to submit their suggestions for the programme of the Congress and the work which it

should undertake. In this connection, it organised these graduates into groups of four speakers each of whom, in a series of meetings to be held at the Club premises in Omdurman, would expound their views on the Congress proposal and make suggestions for the agenda. At the same time, the Committee requested clubs in the provinces to do likewise, and it also encouraged other graduates to submit their individual views directly.¹

The first of these meetings was held on 25 November, the first speaker being Shaykh Ahmad¹ Uthmān al-Qādi. The other speakers were Muḥammad² Uthmān Mirghani, Yaḥya al-Faḍli³ and Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad.⁴ The meeting was well attended, but the audience consisted chiefly of

-
1. Makki Shibayka (Secretary) in Al-Sūdān, 23 November 1937.
 2. Muḥammad¹ Uthmān Mirghani: Educationalist, graduate of the University of Beirut and teacher at Gordon College.
 3. Yaḥya al-Fadli: Born 1912 (of Egyptian father and Sudanese mother); educated at Gordon College and joined the Finance Department; resigned in 1942 and became a merchant; a founder of the Graduates' Congress and a very active nationalist, nicknamed by his colleagues as "al-dinamu"; founder and leader of the Ashiqqa' party, and later of the National Unionist Party.
 4. Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad: Born 1917; educated at Gordon College and subsequently at Exeter and Oxford; President, Debating Society, Gordon College 1936; Secretary, Sudan Cultural Centre 1948-56; Sudanese Ambassador to Arab countries, United Kingdom and the United Nations; Permanent Under-Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retired 1970. He wrote several books, including his well-known Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism.

the younger graduates, although few of the older ones were also present.¹

In his opening speech, Shaykh Ahmad insisted that the chief objective of the Congress should be to establish unity and combat partisanship among the graduates, and that Congress should concern itself with matters of general interest and should avoid setting itself up as a body representing (and attempting to secure material advantages for) the graduates as a class at the expense of the rest of the community. His speech was well received, particularly his remarks attacking partisanship.²

The second meeting in the series was held at the club premises on 2 December. The principal speaker was 'Ali al-Birayr. The speeches made did not contain anything of special political interest, but it was at this meeting that the first attempts were made to widen the membership of the conference. A proposal was forwarded by 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad³, supported by Shaykh Ahmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi, requesting that graduates should

1. SMIS, No. 46, November 1937, para 1163, PRO, FO.141/534 (file 227); also, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 2 December 1937.

2. The views of most of the speakers in this series of discussions will be presented in a summarised form later on.

3. 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad: Prominent Mirghanist, graduate of Gordon College and government official; later transferred to the War Supply Department 1940-45.

not be compelled to become members of the Graduates' Club in Omdurman in order to qualify for participation in the conference. Instead, all the graduates, whether members of the Club or not, should be invited to attend the general conference in February 1938. The object of the proposal was to enable people like Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fil, Dardiri Muhammad¹ Uthmān¹, Mirghani Hamza² and others (who as a result of the old Club dispute found it difficult to join it again as members) to participate in founding the Congress. A general meeting of the Club was accordingly convened for 15 December to decide on this point.

-
1. Dardiri Muhammad¹ Uthmān: Prominent Khatmi and strong critic of the British administration; graduated from Gordon College in 1914 and joined the Legal Department; was the first Sudanese to be selected as a judge in civil courts and the first Sudanese to be promoted to Judgeship in the High Court; member of the Constitutional Commission 1951; elected by Parliament in 1956 as a member of the Supreme Commission, which acted as Head of State; his interest in Club activities dated back to 1918, when he served on its first Executive Committee.
 2. Mirghani Hamza: Born 1897; graduated from Gordon College as an engineer in 1914; Public Works Department 1916-1951; later took up private practice as an architect; a founder of the Graduates' Congress 1938; member of its Executive Committees 1938-42; member of the Advisory Council 1944-7; leader of the Khatmiyya group 1955; Prime Minister 1956.

↳ Deputy

A second proposal, forwarded by Khidr Hamad¹, requested that a special ad hoc committee, consisting of three members of the existing Club Committee and three members from outside it, should be set up to take charge of organising the conference, replacing the ordinary Club Committee which was then discharging this task. Considering the political predilection of Khidr Hamad, the object of this proposal apparently was to introduce militant elements into the Preparatory Committee. The suggestion was resented by the Club Committee as implying a lack of confidence in it, and no decision was taken at the time. This proposal was, however, to re-appear at the general meeting of the Club on 15 December.

The third meeting in the series was held on 9 December. The principal speakers were Abd al-Majid Ahmad and Ahmad Muhammad Khayr, two influential nationalists of opposite political disposition, the former a moderate and the latter a militant. Ahmad Khayr denounced the tendency among some graduates to make of the Congress "a mere advisory body to beg and entreat the Government" and demanded instead "a Congress to

1. Khidr Hamad: Born 1910; graduated from Gordon College and joined the Finance Department; resigned in 1946 and joined the Finance Department of the Arab League; a leader of militant nationalists; eventually became Secretary-General of the National Unionist Party.

represent Sudanese nationalism, on the model of the Wafd and the National Assembly of Ankara."¹ Muhammad Ahmad Maḥjūb², irritated by the thought that the Congress might act as a "begging body", condemned such a tendency in somewhat strong language. There was no question, he said, of begging the government for favours. The Congress must "demand" the national rights of the Sudanese, and if the government refused to allow its officials to demand such rights, ten or fifteen persons of the graduate class could easily be found who would be prepared to resign from government service in order to devote themselves to this task.

To this outburst, Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad replied in a speech which severely criticised Maḥjūb and Khayr for advocating a militancy that would inevitably bring the Congress into a conflict with the government. There could be no question of such a conflict, he argued. The basic principle of the Congress must be co-operation with the government, and it was merely idle to talk of government

1. Al-Nīl, 12 December 1937.

2. Muhammad Ahmad Maḥjūb: Born 1908; graduated from Gordon College as a civil engineer and later as a lawyer; District judge until 1946 when he retired to engage in political activity; Secretary-General of Independent Front 1946-7; member of the Legislative Assembly 1948-53; Foreign Minister 1957-8; Prime Minister 1965-6 and 1967-9; died 1976.

officials resigning to strive for national aspirations. The Congress must realise that what it proposed must be achieved through the Government, and not against it. The speech was warmly applauded by the audience, an indication that the greater majority of those present agreed with this moderate approach.

The general meeting of the Club, convened on 15 December, was marked by heated discussions. There were two issues for consideration: Firstly, if it was advisable to invite all the graduates, whether members of the Club or not, to participate in the conference; and secondly, whether additional members should be appointed to the existing Committee for the purpose of organising the said conference. Opinion on both issues was divided. Some believed that unless all the graduates were represented, and that unless the Preparatory Committee was authorized to speak in the name of all, the efforts then being made to organise the Congress would be doomed to failure. Others held the view that participants to the general conference must necessarily be members of the Club. The determination of this issue was crucial to the other issue regarding the appointment of additional members to the Preparatory Committee. For if it was decided that the graduates who were not members of the Club could participate in the general conference, then it would have

been almost impossible to defeat a motion to appoint their representatives on the Preparatory Committee. Accordingly, the existing Club Committee threatened to resign en masse if the decisions, taken previously by the general meeting in October, were altered. A deadlock developed and Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb, seeing that a decision could not be forced on these issues without damaging consequences, proposed that the status quo be maintained, and that both issues should be re-examined at the first meeting of the Congress in February 1938.¹ Maḥjūb's proposal was finally agreed to .

The demand for open participation by all the graduates, however, continued to gain momentum, and increasing pressure was put on the Club Committee to change their decision. In a conciliatory move, fourteen members of the Club called personally on some senior graduates, who were not members, and requested them to forget the old misunderstanding and to join the Club for the sake of the nation and the Congress.² There is no record of the outcome of this conciliatory move, but it appears that a face-saving compromise was agreed to. The older graduates would rejoin the Club, provided that

1. Al-Nīl, 18 December 1937.

2. Al-Nīl, 6 January 1938.

the Club Committee retracted its stand on the outstanding issues. Accordingly, in the course of a general meeting held at the Club on 19 January 1938, it was decided to elect a special new Preparatory Committee, and to allow all graduates, whether members of the Club or not, to participate in the founding conference.¹

These decisions marked the start of an extensive campaign by all club committees, in the capital and in the provinces, to register prospective participants to the conference. By 9 February, the number of registered participants reached 1500 and it was expected to top 2000 before the opening of the conference.²

The participants had been influenced to a considerable degree by the views expressed by leading graduates in club discussions and in the local press so that, on the eve of the founding conference, graduate opinion was already formulated along some general lines.

In regard to the scope of Congress activities, opinion

1. Al-Nīl, 23 January 1938. The members of the new Preparatory Committee were Isma'īl al-Azhari, Makki Shibayka, Isma'īl 'Uthmān Ṣāliḥ, Aḥmad Muḥammad Yasīn, 'Ali Muḥammad Aḥmad, Aḥmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi, Ḥasan 'Ali Karrār, 'Abd al-Mājid Aḥmad, Ma'ani Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muḥammad 'Uthmān Mirghani, Ibrahim Aḥmad Ibrahim, 'Uthmān Shandi, 'Abdallah Mirghani, Yahya al-Fadli, and Jamāl Muḥammad Aḥmad. Cf. Mohamēd Omer Bēshir, Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan, (London 1974), p. 135.

2. Al-Nīl, 9 February 1938.

was divided into two main schools of thought. On the one hand, there were those who believed that the activities of Congress should be limited mainly to the immediate interests of the graduates (such as strengthening their unity and solidarity by the formation of public opinion among them) and to the improvement of their conditions, whether as government officials, merchants or artisans.¹ On the other hand, there were those who held that Congress activities should have a broader scope. The primary concern of the Congress would certainly be to obtain a cancellation of the Government regulations enacted during the retrenchment period (i.e. the Pensions Ordinance, the Personnel Regulations, and the Transport and Leave Regulations).² But that would not be all. Congress would have to concern itself with questions of national interest, both of a political and social nature.³ On the political front, the primary objective of the Congress should be

-
1. Ahmad Mutwakil al-'Atabāni, Al-Nīl, 14 December 1937; also, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭi, Al-Nīl, 21 December 1937.
 2. Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Al-Nīl, 13 December 1937; Ibrahim Yūsif Sulaymān, Al-Nīl, 14 December 1937; and Isma'īl Fawzi, Al-Nīl, 16 December 1937.
 3. Muḥammad 'Umar Muḥammad, Al-Nīl, 17 November 1937; Ibrahim Yūsif Sulaymān, Al-Nīl, 14 December 1937; Dr Muḥammad Amīn al-Sayyid, Al-Nīl, 29 December 1937; Muḥammad Ahmad 'Umar, Al-Nīl, 9 January 1938; and Beshīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 20 January 1938.

to mould and to enlighten nationalist opinion among the graduates throughout the country.¹ The Congress should also work for the eradication of tribalism and its replacement by a sense of nationalism among the population.² With reference to Sudan Government policies, Congress should press for the faithful implementation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty clauses affecting the Sudan, for the institution of municipal councils in every town, and for the formation of an Advisory Council which would include Sudanese members as well.³ On the social front, the Congress was expected to play an active role in providing free education for the poor, in arranging for Sudanese students to go abroad for higher education, and in encouraging foreign residents in the Sudan to open new schools in the country.⁴ In the economic sphere,

-
1. Yahya al-Fadli, Hadarat al-Sudan, 9 December 1937; Ahmad Mutwakil al-'Atabani and Ibrahim Yusif Sulayman, Al-Nil, 14 December 1937.
 2. Jamal Muhammad Ahmad, Al-Nil, 9 December 1927; Al-Amin al-Tum, Al-Nil, 24 December 1937.
 3. Ibrahim Yusif Sulayman, Al-Nil, 14 December 1937; and Bashir 'Abd al-Rahman, Hadarat al-Sudan, 20 January 1938.
 4. Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad, Al-Nil, 17 November 1937; Jamal Muhammad Ahmad, Al-Nil, 9 December 1937; and Bashir 'Abd al-Rahman, Hadarat al-Sudan, 20 January 1938.

Congress should work for the gradual transformation of the Sudan into an industrial country, either by persuading wealthy Sudanese to establish factories which would provide employment for Sudanese artisans, or by undertaking itself to establish such industries through public collections and in agreement with the government to support them by annual subsidies.¹ The institution of a special bureau to examine workers' conditions and to combat unemployment was also suggested.² Finally, Congress would have to undertake publication of a magazine on a regular basis, as an instrument for moulding and fostering nationalist consciousness, as well as a means of informing its members of its activities.³ The funds for maintaining the publication of such a magazine, as well as some other schemes of the Congress, would have to be provided in the form of regular subscriptions exacted from its membership, and by contributions solicited from the public supporters of the Congress.⁴

-
1. Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad, Al-Nīl, 9 December 1937; Muḥammad 'Umar Muḥammad, Al-Nīl, 17 November 1937.
 2. Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 20 January
 3. Muḥammad 'Umar Muḥammad, Al-Nīl, 17 November 1937; Jamāl Muḥammad Ahmad, Al-Nīl, 9 December 1937; and Yahya al-Fadli, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 9 December 1937.
 4. Muḥammad 'Umar Muḥammad, Al-Nīl, 17 November 1937; Ahmad Muḥammad Khayr, Al-Nīl, 9 December 1937; and 'Uṭhmān al-'Umrābi, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 20 January 1938.

In regard to the relation between Congress and the Government, there were again two main schools of thought. On the one hand, there were the more militant younger members of the intelligentsia who viewed Congress as a nationalist body struggling for the political progress of the Sudanese, and they recommended the adoption of militant political action, irrespective of whether government co-operation was forthcoming or not.¹ On the other hand, there were those who advocated a more moderate approach. The proposed programme of the Congress, they argued, consisted of two parts: The first involved matters of direct interest to the graduate class only; the second part involved matters of interest to the nation as a whole, and as such they would have to be examined in consultation with the whole nation.² In this sense, most if not all of the objectives of the Congress required contact with the Government, whether in a representative or a consultative capacity. In order to achieve its objectives, Congress would have to encourage a sympathetic understanding between it and the Government with whom, unavoidably, policies which were inconsistent with the interests of

-
1. Ahmad Muhammad Khayr, Al-Nīl, 12 December 1937; Muhammad Ahmad Mahjub, SMIS, No. 46, November 1937, para 1163, loc. cit.
 2. Jamāl Muhammad Ahmad, Al-Nīl, 8 December 1937; and Muhammad Šālih al-Shinqīti, Al-Nīl, 21 December 1937.

the Sudanese would have to be discussed. The general tenor of Congress's activities must, therefore, be "co-operation with the Government".¹ Such an attitude would dissipate the old atmosphere of reserve and fear which used to prevail and would rather tend to develop bonds of confidence and friendship between the intelligentsia and the Government.² It was pointed out by some that the Government had significantly so far not opposed these initiatives to set up the Congress, probably because they wanted to see what the thoughts and demands of the intelligentsia would be. If the Government considered these demands sensible and within the limits of their political aims, they might carry them out. If, on the contrary, they found these demands extremist and unreasonable, they would certainly disperse the Congress.³ In order to lay a sound foundation for co-operation, it was recommended that the Preparatory Committee should contact the authorities and determine to what extent Congress would be recognized by the Government and what

1. Jamāl Muhammad Ahmad, Al-Nīl, 8 December 1937; Yahya al-Faḍli, Hadārat al-Sudan, 9 December 1937; and Muhammad Sālih al-Shinqīṭi, Al-Nīl, 21 December 1937.

2. Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Rahmān, Al-Nīl, 13 December 1937.

3. Muhammad Farīd Rashīd, Al-Nīl, 21 December 1937.

the limits of its activities should be.¹

In regard to the organisational structure of the Congress, there seems to have been a general agreement. Membership would be restricted to the graduate class only, from whom the Congress would derive its authority to make representations to the Government. Congress would have a Central Committee, sited in Omdurman, with Branch Committees in the provinces and the districts.² The Central Committee would be responsible for drawing up the programme of the Congress, which would then be entrusted, together with a few recommendations on the best way of carrying it out, to the Branch Committees in the provinces for its execution.³ Special bye-laws for the election of the Central Committee would have to be drawn up and approved by a general assembly of the Congress members.⁴ It was also suggested that these bye-laws should provide for Congress members in the provinces to elect the Central Committee by means of a secret ballot which would be

-
1. Isma'īl Fawzi, Al-Nīl, 16 December 1937;
Dr Muḥammad Amīn al-Sayyid, Al-Nīl, 29 December 1937.
 2. Aḥmad Muḥammad Khayr, Al-Nīl, 12 December 1937;
Aḥmad Mutwakil al-'Atabani, Al-Nīl, 14 December 1937;
Ṭāha Ṣāliḥ, Al-Nīl, 3 January 1938.
 3. Al-Amīn al-Tūm, Al-Nīl, 28 December 1937.
 4. Jamāl Muḥammad Aḥmad, Al-Nīl, 8 December 1937.

certified by the local Branch Committee.¹ Once formed, the Central Committee would be divided into sub-committees, each of which would be entrusted with the examination of a determined number of questions.² The Central Committee would be headed by a President, who would be elected for a specified period of time, and who would be expected to devote his time entirely to Congress matters, sustained by an adequate salary.³ Finally, the Central Committee would become a two-way link between the Congress and the Government on matters of particular and general interest.⁴

The graduates' general conference was held at the Sudan Schools' Club in Omdurman on 12 February 1938, with 1180 graduates participating in the deliberations. An introductory speech was delivered by Isma'īl al-Azhari, the President of the Preparatory Committee, in which he described the origins and development of the idea of the Congress, and expounded its objectives and the results which should be expected. The aims of the Congress, he maintained, were to formulate and express a collective

1. Ḥasan Nūri, Al-Nīl, 3 January 1938.

2. Jamāl Muḥammad Aḥmad, Al-Nīl, 8 December 1937; Abu Bakr al-Malik, Ḥadārat al-Sūdān, 17 January 1938.

3. Ṭāhā Ṣāliḥ, Al-Nīl, 3 January 1938; Mirghāni 'Uṭhmān Ṣāliḥ, Al-Nīl, 3 February 1938.

4. Aḥmad Mutwakil al-'Atabāni, Al-Nīl, 14 December 1937; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭi, Al-Nīl, 21 December 1937.

point of view representing graduate opinion; to promote a national consciousness by combating partisanship and tribalism; and to lay the foundation of a sound national life by carrying out a programme of social reform. 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad dwelled on the subject of the Congress's finances and explained that the funds for national schemes would have to be raised through regular subscriptions by the members and contributions by the public. Shaykh Ahmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi stressed the necessity of publishing a magazine as the mouthpiece of the Congress. Finally, Makki Shibayka¹ submitted to the general conference a draft which, he suggested, could form the constitution of the Congress. According to this draft, the aim of the Graduates' General Congress, as the new organisation was to be called, would be to "serve the general interests of the country and of the graduates". Membership would be open to "all the graduates of Sudanese schools (above the elementary level) who were eighteen years old, against a registration fee of fifty milliemmes and an annual subscription of thirty piasters". The Congress would hold its general meetings annually "on the second day of Qurban Bayram, to hear reports and

1. Makki Shibayka: Educationalist, teacher at Gordon College and presently Professor of History at the University of Khartoum.

to elect a new Committee of Sixty" which in its turn would meet on the following day "to discuss and approve the work of the Congress and to elect a Committee of Fifteen from amongst its members, who would be called the Executive Committee of the Congress". An amendment to the rules of the Congress would be made only with "the approval of two-thirds of Congress members."¹

The draft was approved, and the Congress then proceeded to elect the members of the proposed supervisory Committee of Sixty which, in turn, convened on 13 February and elected the Executive Committee of Fifteen. In its first meeting, held on 14 February, the Executive Committee decided against the rule of electing a permanent President on an annual basis and adopted instead the principle of rotating the office among its members every month. The decision was probably motivated by the desire to defuse the personality conflicts that had accompanied the Filist-Shawqist feud. A Bureau was established to attend to the routine affairs of the Congress, and Isma'īl al-Azhari (who had secured the highest number of votes) was appointed General Secretary, with 'Abdallah Mirghani²

1. Al-Nīl, 15 February 1938.

2. 'Abdallah Mirghani: Employed in the Finance Department; member of the Congress Executive Committee 1938-42; a founder of the Ittihadiyyīn party 1944; editor of Sawt al-Sūdān 1944-5.

as Assistant Secretary, Dardiri al-Nuqud¹ as Treasurer and Hamad Tawfiq² as Accountant.³

The Committee spent some time drafting a constitution, and on 12 March 1938 it submitted an official copy to the Governor of Khartoum.⁴ The Graduates' General Congress was finally born.

-
1. Dardiri al-Nuqud: Prominent Mahdist and clerk in the Finance Department.
 2. Hamad Tawfiq Hamad: Born 1904; joined Finance Department as accountant; a founder of the Graduates' Congress; Secretary of National Front 1946; member of the Executive Committee of National Unionist Party; Minister of Finance 1954.
 3. Al-Nil, 16 February 1938.
 4. J.A. Gillan, "Note on the Graduates' Congress", PRO, FO.371/21999 (J2919/220/16).

CHAPTER THREE

THE GROWING CONFLICT BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE GOVERNMENT.

The Politics of British Tolerance.

The movement for the establishment of the Graduates' Congress had coincided with, and in some respects even caused, a modification in the Government's policy towards the educated class. Symes and Gillan were convinced that the graduates had finally grown tired of sectarian rivalry, and they regarded the intelligentsia's desire to form a moderate but influential nucleus (to which they could attach themselves without surrendering either their independence or their identity) as both natural and politically healthy. At the start, therefore, the Government's response to the general idea of the Congress was basically sympathetic.

At the same time, however, Gillan considered the movement as a new departure which could not be viewed without some concern, particularly at its early stages when political ends and means were still not yet clearly defined. In such a fluid situation, he regarded even

the outcome of the graduates' conference as basically uncertain.

"The Congress may be a fiasco; it may be sabotaged by sectarian interests; the promoters themselves may lose their heads and formulate demands; indiscreet speeches may be delivered on prohibited subjects; the anti-partisan campaign might be carried too far. All we can say today is that as things are going now (the promoters are behaving with particular good sense), we have no cause for apprehension. But it would be interesting to hear how provincial invités are reacting to the congress idea. Much may happen in the next six or seven weeks /until the conference is held/. We may have to intervene. In the meantime we are 'on the fence', maintaining a neutral attitude of general interest by no means hostile, but not too sympathetic."¹

In the event, the activities of the graduates in the process of organising the Congress did not finally necessitate Government intervention. Instead, the opinions expressed during this period stimulated further reforms in regard to the Government's attitude towards the graduate class. An important initiative along this line came from the Department of Education in a minute which openly blamed the British administration for the absence of satisfactory relations between British and Sudanese officials. It was pointed out that the old belief of

1. SMIS, No. 46, November 1937, para 1163, PRO, FO.141/534 (file 227).

the 1920's, that "the Gordon College was the root of all evil", had inevitably influenced British officials to look askance upon, and to deliberately decry, the educated class, with the unfortunate result that it grew up in a atmosphere of professional neglect. Although times had changed, this old attitude of mind still persisted in many British officials, and the spirit of fellowship and co-operation had not become widespread.

It was therefore considered essential that Government policy should be amended to allow a "freer admission of Sudanese to the council chamber" and "a greater enterprise and confidence in the delegation of substantial authority and responsibility to the educated section of the community."¹ To be able to achieve this, British officials in the Sudan had to undergo "a change of heart and outlook", which would lead them to entertain "a higher conception of their duty towards the Sudanese". In this regard, British officials had to be reminded that one of their defined duties was to so administer to the well-being of the Sudanese as to carry them further along the road of progress and enlightenment, leading to an enhanced responsibility and

1. Minute by C.W. Williams (Assistant Director of Education) on "Cultural Contact Problems", 8.1.1938, Minutes of the Northern Governors' Meeting (1938), CRO, NORTHERN 1/16/101; and DARFUR 1/13/73.

an ever-growing share in the administration of the affairs of their own country. It was emphatically argued that the way to win the respect of the Sudanese in this common task was to treat them in a frank and natural manner as ordinary human beings, eschewing any air of conscious or unconscious superiority. In other words, it was not so much the action that counted as the spirit prompting and underlying that action.

In addition to the question of attitudes, the minute also raised the question of consultation on matters of departmental policy and administration. The general practice was for these matters to be decided entirely by the British officials, sitting behind closed doors and legislating in secret for the common weal. The Sudanese, it was pointed out, preferred to be consulted and to have their say. They did not mind so much whether their advice was taken or not as long as they were afforded the opportunity to offer it and to put forward their views. In this connection, the Government was accused of having been excessively cautious, lest matters got out of hand, and it was strongly pointed out that unless and until the Government changed its attitude there could be no real progress in the integration of Sudanese officials in the administration of their country. Mistakes by these officials were bound to occur, but such prospects should

not be allowed to fog the political development of the Sudan. "The Sudanese must learn by their mistakes, yet they cannot do so unless we give them the chance."¹

Copies of this minute were eventually circulated by Gillan to all the Governors and Heads of Department, and it formed the central matter of discussion at the Northern Governors' Meeting in February 1938. Gillan emphasized that the issue had become very acute, particularly in the capital, where there was a high concentration of Sudanese intelligentsia and British officials. He supported the motion to "educate the British official up to his duties of contact", and in this connection he proposed to establish a cultural centre where the British and Sudanese could meet on neutral ground.²

Opinion among the Governors, however, was divided on the nature and emphasis of such contacts. One school of thought held that the problem could best be tackled by encouraging a more personal contact between British and Sudanese officials in the capital, and they supported the

-
1. Minute by C.W. Williams (Assistant Director of Education) on "Cultural Contact Problems", 8.1.1938, Minutes of the Northern Governors' Meeting (1938), loc. cit.
 2. "Opening meeting held at the Palace on Thursday, February 3rd, 1938", Ibid.

proposal for the establishment of a cultural centre for such a purpose. Their belief was that the lack of such personal contacts was peculiar to the capital and, to a lesser degree, to some major provincial towns, but that no such problem actually existed in the provinces. In these rural areas, the intelligentsia were believed to be generally contented, and it was only when they were transferred to the capital that they were drawn into the agitation for cultural or political objectives.¹

The other school of thought held the view that too much emphasis was unnecessarily put on personal contact and too little on cultural development. Social contact, it was argued, would not satisfy the Sudanese intelligentsia, the majority of whom sought after real culture and would not be content with efforts designed to give them merely a "pleasant Sunday afternoon". What they really aimed at was an education and a culture that would put them in a position to rule and occupy higher posts in the government. "Western education is revolutionary and, once imbued with it, some at least of the intelligentsia are bound to turn their

1. "Opening meeting held at the Palace on Thursday, February 3rd, 1938", loc. cit. Supporters of this view comprised J.A. Gillan (Civil Secretary), E. Campbell (Deputy Civil Secretary), J.A. Reid (Personal Assistant to the Civil Secretary), D. Newbold (Governor Kordofan), B. Kennedy-Cooke (Governor Kassala), C.L. Armstrong (Governor Khartoum), and R.C. Mayall (Governor Blue Nile).

knowledge to political ends."¹

Despite the divergence in emphasis between these two viewpoints, it was generally agreed that the aims of the intelligentsia were political at bottom, and that it would therefore be better for the Government to encourage the existing nationalist tendencies to develop rather than to leave things alone, "since if we do not take the chance, someone else will".² This meant that the Government should actively guide, restrain and enlighten such tendencies wherever possible in order to prevent them from evolving along undesirable lines. Such objectives naturally favoured the adoption of a policy that would encourage more personal contact between British and Sudanese officials, as well as provide further opportunities for the educational and cultural development of the educated class.

Within this perspective, therefore, and with the inauguration of the Congress, Gillan circulated a note defining the Government's policy towards the Congress. He pointed out that the Sudanese intelligentsia was motivated by a genuine desire "to co-operate with Government in furthering what it sincerely imagines to be

1. Ibid. Supporters of this view comprised J.C. Penney (Director of Public Security), C.W. Cox (Director of Education), and J.P. Gorman (Legal Secretary).

2. Ibid.

the best interests of the Sudan as a whole."¹ He emphasized that what they basically wanted was to be taken further into the confidence of the Government. In this sense, he viewed their aspirations as genuinely patriotic and the natural result of a growing feeling of nationalism, which was no new thing in the Sudan and which, subject to proper direction, was not necessarily a bad thing either.

Gillan believed that the Congress presented the Government with a two-fold problem. On the one hand, there was the more general "political" aspect regarding the role of Congress in the Sudanese community. Legitimate intelligentsia aspirations, he believed, had "a way of becoming obscured by personal or party interests; of being distorted by misdirection and misunderstanding; or by being translated by unbalanced enthusiasts into precipitate demands for as yet unmerited privileges. These dangers we may here also have to face in the future. Today, however, the Congress movement is in the hands of the more balanced members of the graduate class."² This class was nonetheless numerically an inconsiderable minority, and its attempts to assert itself beyond its limits would most certainly be

1. Gillan to All Governors and Heads of Department, 28.3.1938, CRO, DAKHLIA (I) 1/10/26.

2. Ibid.

criticised, or even resented, by tribal notables or other elements in the country. Gillan, therefore, considered it necessary to discourage the Congress from making extravagant demands which might bring it into a conflict with other political elements.

On the other hand, there was the more particular problem involved in the fact that the Congress membership was practically identical with the class of government officials. Gillan believed that these officials were confronted with a difficult problem of behaviour: they had obligations to the Government as civil servants and, at the same time, they naturally felt an obligation to their own country. They were therefore experiencing great difficulty in reconciling these loyalties, when and if they opposed each other. It was primarily because of this difficulty that the Government had relaxed in 1936 the existing Administrative Regulations in a way to provide a reasonable outlet for constructive political and press activities by Sudanese officials.¹ For exactly the same reason, Gillan was now prepared to accept the establishment of the Congress provided proper safeguards were also imposed to

1. Ibid. The Government had in 1936 allowed Sudanese officials to write articles in the local press, but with one important restriction: They could write only on internal matters (i.e. municipality affairs, education policy, etc) and they were barred from writing on external affairs (i.e. Anglo-Egyptian relations, the future of the Sudan, etc.).

discourage "unbalanced" enthusiasm. The best way to do this, he argued, was "to re-state, in the form of amendments to the Administrative Regulations, the principles which should govern the conduct of our civil servants in their relation to the public generally, and particularly in their relation to politics and the press."¹ According to the amendments subsequently brought into force, Sudanese officials were barred from writing articles in the press which were defamatory of the Government's internal or external policy; nor were they to act as editors of newspapers or take part in the management of a newspaper, without the explicit consent of the Civil Secretary. Civil servants were also barred from taking part in any public demonstration organised for party or political purposes. In particular, officials of the Police and Legal Departments were categorically barred from engaging in any public controversy or political activity whatsoever. In order to avoid misinterpretation of these amendments, Gillan issued an explanatory note to all Sudanese officials, expressing his sympathy with their difficulty and stressing that the amendments aimed at a reasonable compromise, "ensuring on the one hand the maintenance and development of a sound civil service

1. Gillan to All Governors and Heads of Departments, 28.3.1938, loc. cit.

tradition and on the other a reasonable latitude to the Sudanese official class for serving their country in legitimate and constructive public activities."¹

Despite this precautionary measure, the intelligentsia interpreted the amendments as moves that were basically designed to obstruct the programme of the Congress, and they were consequently faced with a major problem of policy.² On the one hand, they could not assume for Congress the role of a political organisation without simultaneously being confronted with massive, though involuntary, resignations by officials from Congress membership. On the other hand, they could not very well deny to the Congress the political role they earnestly expected it to play in the political development of the country. A satisfactory compromise had to be devised, and quickly.

As a first step, and in an effort to placate the apprehensions of Congress members, the Executive Committee held a meeting on 11 April 1938, in which it was decided to announce that the responsibility of government officials as members of the Congress did not in fact conflict with their official duties as civil servants.³

1. Ibid.

2. Al-Nīl, 5 April 1938; and Al-Sūdān, 12 April 1938.

3. Al-Nīl, 13 April 1938.

The second step was for the Executive Committee to stabilize the situation by formalising the relationship between Congress and the Government. After lengthy deliberation, and not without some trepidation, the Committee sent a letter to Gillan, on 2 May 1938, in which they formally declared the objectives and methods of the Congress. In this document, Isma'īl al-Azhari eschewed any intention of embarrassing the Government or pursuing lines of activity that were incompatible with its policy. The graduates, he argued, were prompted by a sense of duty towards their country and by a strong desire to co-operate with the Government, in such ways as may be open to them, in furthering the welfare of the Sudanese.¹ He defined the duties of Congress as being concerned with two main and distinct spheres: Firstly, social reform and other internal matters lying outside the ambit of official Government concern; and secondly, matters of public

1. J.A. Gillan, "Note on the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit.; also, "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", PRO, FO.371/31587 (J2664/1528/15). There is some evidence which suggests that two members of the Executive Committee, Dardiri Muhammad 'Uthman and Ahmad Muhammad Ṣālih, held informal discussions with Penney, during which the role of the Congress was defined (cf. G.M.A. Bakheit, op. cit., p. 305). But no written record of such meetings survived. The sequence of events strongly suggests that they were held shortly before Azhari's letter of 2 May, which was accordingly drafted along lines agreed with Penney.

interest involving the Government or lying within the scope of its policy and concern. With regard to the former category, Azhari promised a friendly co-operation and obedience to the requirements of the law, and he expressed the hope that the Government would give due consideration to such views and suggestions as Congress might submit in connection with the latter. He did not regard the position of the Congress as "prejudicial to that of important elements in the country", but he clearly claimed for it a peculiar responsibility "as its only educated element" to contribute in thought and effort to the progress and welfare of the country as a whole. He expressed the hope that a new era would begin, in which the Government would abandon its practice of taking the advice of individual educated Sudanese and instead consult the Executive Committee as a separate body representing collectively the educated class.¹

Gillan had no illusions about the basic intention of the graduates to establish the Congress as an embryonic instrument of Sudanese nationalism, "an advisory body", initially representing only the intelligentsia but gradually widening its basis to include other elements as

1. Ibid; also, P.M. Holt, op. cit., p. 141.

they became politically conscious.¹ For the time being, however, he looked upon the Congress's "self-imposed terms of reference" as essentially unobjectionable and in conformity with the overall Government policy regarding the growth of the nationalist movement.² Accordingly, on 22 May 1938, he sent to the Executive Committee a sympathetic, but carefully-worded, reply. He formally welcomed the formation of the Congress and its avowed desire for co-operation with the Government, and he promised in return that due consideration would be given to any communications which the Congress might submit from time to time. But he took pain to emphasize that the Government's attitude was based on the definite understanding that "the Congress was neither seeking formal recognition as a political body not claiming to represent the views of any but its own members, but wished to be regarded as a semi-public organisation interested in philanthropic and public affairs"; and that the inclusion in its membership of a number of government officials must necessarily preclude participation "in any line of action likely to bring it into conflict with Government

1. SMIS, No. 64, June 1939, para 1304, PRO.
FO.407/224 (No. 4, Enclosure 1).

2. J.A. Gillan to British Ambassador Cairo (Despatch 98), 5.7.1938, PRO, FO.371/21999 (J2919/220/16).

policy or with constitutional authority."¹

In this way, Gillan formalised the formation of the Congress and gave it the green light to proceed with its activities. At the same time, however, by his emphasis on the "self-imposed" terms of reference, he retained for the Government an effective political stick with which to beat the Congress back into line, if it ever strayed beyond undesirable limits.

The Tug of War Between Moderates and Militants.

The nature of this relationship between Congress and the Government was almost immediately put to the test. In early May, the Government published amendments to the Personnel Regulations covering its classified staff, and soon thereafter it followed with the publication of amendments to the Leave Regulations. Both sets of amendments were received with great disappointment, and even deep resentment, by the majority of the Sudanese officials. The new cadre regulations were seen as essentially depriving the Sudanese officials of their prospects for promotion and of blocking the way to senior posts in government service. Every scale in the

1. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit. For the text of the letter the Committee sent to the Civil Secretary, and his relative reply, cf. Al-Nil, 11 June 1938; and, J.R.S. Duncan, The Sudan: A Record of Achievement, (London 1952), pp. 190-193.

new regulations, it was pointed out, had been divided into a number of categories that were subjected to severe conditions; the starting rates of pay in most scales had been lowered, and sub-normal rates of pay had been introduced to deprive Sudanese officials of substantial jumps in salaries; and promotions in clerical posts had been subjected to special tests, in addition to the required minimum period of service.¹ The amendments to the Leave Regulations increased the leave of Egyptian officials to sixty days annually or ninety days every other year, while improving only slightly the leave of Sudanese officials in Division One by increasing it to fifty days annually or seventy days every other year. Sudanese officials who thus benefited from these amendments were very few in number, while for the majority nothing had been done.² In addition, the amendments were characterised by the paradoxical, and to the Sudanese unacceptable, contradiction that the leave of a senior Sudanese official would be fifty days while that of his most junior Egyptian subordinate would be sixty days.³ Sudanese officials had expected that, after the Treaty,

1. Al-Nīl, 4 May 1938 and 25 May 1938.

2. Al-Nīl, 19 May 1938.

3. Al-Nīl, 24 May 1938.

the principle of equal treatment would be applied to all government officials and that consequently all regulations discriminating between Sudanese and foreign officials would be abolished.¹

Telegrams of protest against these amendments were sent to the Executive Committee from nearly all government departments, urging it to approach the Government with the view to obtaining better conditions. On 19 May, the Committee of Sixty discussed the matter and decided to bring to the notice of the authorities the general resentment felt at the publication of these amendments, and to do all they could to obtain better treatment for the Sudanese official.² In an effort to encourage a favourable government response, Congress spokesmen emphasized that acquiescence by the Government to Congress's reasonable demands would never be construed by the intelligentsia as a sign of weakness, but rather as a further basis for confidence in the Government.³

In the days that followed, the Executive Committee held several meetings, at which it drew up two notes on these amendments, expressing the views of the graduates

1. Al-Nīl, 23 May 1938.

2. Al-Nīl, 22 May 1938.

3. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 28 May 1938.

and the changes they would like to see made to the respective regulations.¹ In the meantime, the Committee sent a delegation of three Congress members to initiate personal contact with the Government and to hold informal discussions on the matters in question.² With the atmosphere thus properly prepared, the Committee then submitted its notes to the Government.³

Gillan's reply was totally unexpected. His liberalism apart, Gillan was not prepared to allow the Congress to assume a role as a "trade union" for Sudanese civil servants. He was apprehensive that, in the aftermath of the 1936 Treaty, and under pressure from impatient militants, such a "trade-unionist" Congress might find itself in continual conflict with the Government, which after all was the largest employer in the country. With a view to minimising precisely this potential for conflict, Gillan notified the Congress that "in no circumstances could the Government allow such matters (i.e. the contractual relationship between itself and its officials) to be the subject of negotiation or discussion with

1. Al-Nīl, 28 May 1938.

2. Statement by Isma'īl al-Azhari, Al-Nīl, 11 June 1938.

3. Al-Nīl, 28 May 1938.

the Graduates' Congress."¹ Whether he knew it or not, he had adopted a position that was eventually to have a profound impact on the evolution of the Congress, and on future government policy towards it.

For the moment, however, his reply marked the start of a crucial conflict between the militant and the moderate elements within the Congress. The Executive Committee had already come under severe criticism, particularly from the more militant elements of the intelligentsia, that it was essentially inactive, in spite of the fact that it held several meetings every week.² Gillan's reply did not help matters at all, and a markedly depressing mood clouded the Committee. The militants launched a campaign against Gillan's position, arguing that the Government's basis of reasoning was essentially discriminatory, overlooked the valid needs of Sudanese officials and granted to foreign staff more than they deserved.³ Under such pressure from the militants, the Executive Committee took the view that the position of Sudanese officials in government service was a matter of

-
1. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit.
 2. Al-Nīl, 29 May 1938.
 3. Al-Nīl, 4 July 1938; 10 July 1938; 14 July 1938 and 19 July 1938.

public interest and not merely a contractual relationship, and that if this was to be the Government's attitude towards their submissions, then Congress might as well disband altogether.

The majority of Congress members, however, held a more moderate view. They were no less resentful of the Government's response but they seriously believed that the disbandment of the Congress would be a severe loss to the country.¹ They had no illusions that some of the duties of the Congress were by their nature rather difficult, and they did not in fact expect the Executive Committee to achieve success on every matter it undertook to discuss with the Government. They argued that it was quite sufficient, in such cases, for the Committee to submit notes to the authorities concerned and draw their attention to the views and interests of the Sudanese.² They sincerely believed that a moderate and sensible attitude by Congress would gain increasing co-operation from the Government and would thus enable it to reap all the political benefits it possibly could at a later date.³ Against the position of their more militant colleagues,

1. Al-Nīl, 1 June 1938.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 27 June 1938.

3. Editorial, Al-Sūdān, 7 June 1938.

they argued that the Congress should be allowed sufficient time to study problems thoroughly and to carry out their schemes properly. During this period, all members had a duty to support and strengthen the Congress by every means possible, remembering that, as the Executive Committee was elected for only one year, it could be easily removed at the expiration of its term of office if it proved unsatisfactory.¹

The agitation of the militants gradually subsided, and the Congress continued to occupy itself with its own internal organisation. After submitting the constitution to the Governor of Khartoum, the Executive Committee drafted and distributed the administrative and financial bye-laws of the Congress. By early May 1938, it embarked on a programme of founding Branch Committees in all the major towns throughout the country, including Malakal, Juba and Wau in the southern Sudan. The duties of these Branch Committees were defined, and they included a number of essential tasks: the spread of propaganda for the Congress in their respective areas; the collection of subscriptions and donations on behalf of the Executive Committee; the submission of their own suggestions in regard to matters of interest to the Congress; and the execution of instructions

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 26 June 1938.

issued by the Executive Committee in regard to Congress activities.¹

On the national level, the Executive Committee set up four central sub-committees to study matters connected with education, economic problems, social questions and the publication of a magazine.² By the end of May, and in connection with the amendments to the Personnel and Leave Regulations, a separate sub-committee was set up to deal with matters covering the government officials.³

The subject that eventually gained top priority and mostly preoccupied the Executive Committee was the Government's policy on education. The intelligentsia had for a long time deplored the lack of adequate school facilities to absorb the ever-growing number of Sudanese students. They attributed this to what they believed was the Government's mistaken assumption that the primary aim of Gordon College graduates was to obtain government employment -- an assumption which led to a policy of

-
1. Statement by Isma'īl al-Azhari in Al-Nīl, 11 June 1938. The Branch Committees were elected by local Congress members, with the resident members of the Committee of Sixty being ipso facto members of these Committees. Their term of office ended with the Congress's annual meeting.
 2. Statement by Isma'īl al-Azhari in Al-Nīl, 1 May 1938.
 3. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 30 May 1938.

linking the admission of new students to the absorbing capacity of the civil service. The intelligentsia argued against such an assumption, pointing out that the general development and progress of the Sudan was essentially dependent on substantial advances in education.¹ The recommendations of the De La Warr Commission and of 'Ali Bey al-Qārim were unanimously approved by the graduate class as measures that would have undoubtedly raised the standard of education in the Sudan and would have also laid the foundations of a Sudanese culture, of which they could be proud.² The sending of Sudanese for higher education abroad was strongly urged as one step in implementing the Treaty provisions, namely by qualifying Sudanese to fill senior government posts.³ Simultaneously, the Government was alerted that, since the number of senior posts reserved for Sudanese was insignificant, higher education should not be mistakenly linked to civil service requirements.⁴ The funds appropriated for education, at that time about

1. Al-Nīl, 8 January 1938; Hadārat al-Sūdān, 13 January 1938; Al-Sūdān, 18 January 1938.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 4 January 1938. For a summary of the report submitted by the De La Warr Commission, cf. Mohamed Omer Beshir, Educational Development in the Sudan, 1899-1956, (Oxford 1969) pp. 110-118.

3. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 28 February 1938.

4. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 10 March 1938.

four percent of the annual budget, were deemed quite insufficient to meet educational requirements, and the intelligentsia proposed instead that this proportion should be raised to about 15 percent of the annual expenditure.¹ Such an increase in funds could be arranged, they argued, by effecting cuts in certain sections of the budget, particularly by the suppression of subsidies to the missionary societies in the southern Sudan.²

The Government's new plan for educational expansion was largely based on the recommendations of the De La Warr Commission, and as such it was gratifyingly welcomed by the Sudanese as the realisation of their demands. Certain objections were raised, however, the most important of which were that the plan did not refer to any industrial training, though the Sudan was in need of industrial schools; that the funds assigned for educational purposes did not reach the proportion required, which ought to amount to at least 12 percent of the total expenditure; and that the plan should be applied to the whole of the Sudan and not be limited to the northern part only, as otherwise the latter would progress alone while the former

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 8 January 1938.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 26 July 1938.

would be left in a primitive state.¹ These views were eventually incorporated in a Note on Education that the Executive Committee submitted in 1939 to the Government for consideration.²

When the second Annual General Meeting of Congress was held on 31 January 1939, the Executive Committee could claim, with some justification, a satisfactory record of achievements on a number of matters. It had obtained formal Government recognition of, and co-operation with, the Congress. It began the publication of a magazine as its official mouthpiece, and expanded its organisational structure by forming Branch Committees in Wad Medani, Port Sudan, Dongola, Kassala, Shendi, Juba El Obeid and Abu Hamad.³ In education, the Government's policy was evolving along mutually acceptable lines, and this very fact augured for Congress an era of improving relations between

-
1. Editorials, Al-Nīl, 25, 27, 28 and 29 August 1938; and 11 October 1938.
 2. The full text of the Note is given in M. O. Beshir, Educational Development in the Sudan, App. V. Work on the Note commenced in April 1938 and was completed by June the same year, but discussion on it by the Committee of Sixty did not start until the end of October. The Note was eventually submitted to the Government in July 1939.
 3. Isma'īl al-Azhari, "The Congress in its Firsty Year", Majalat al-M'utamar, No. 2, February 1939.

itself and the Government. Certainly Gillan's rejection of the Committee's initiative to discuss the interests of Sudanese officials had disappointed the Congress, but it was still felt that the Government might eventually be convinced to change its attitude, as it did on education.

The realities of the first year had taught the majority of Congress members that the road ahead was difficult and uncertain. Committees would be formed and dissolved; projects and requests would be submitted, and either rejected or accepted; men would go and others would replace them; obstacles would appear and be surmounted or prove unsurmountable.¹ But Congress, as a living principle, had to continue its work through all these vicissitudes, and in the meantime it had to learn how to wait.

The more militant members, however, led by Muḥammad 'Amir Bashīr², did not share these views. They believed that the Executive Committee should adopt a bolder programme of action and a more adamant attitude in pursuit of its objectives. Accordingly, a few weeks before the annual meeting was held, these militants launched a

1. Editorial, "The Message of the Congress", Majalat al-M'ūtamar, No. 1, January 1939.

2. Muḥammad 'Amir Bashīr: Born 1908; employed in Survey Department; actively engaged in journalism under the pseudonym of "al-Furawi"; translator to Legislative Assembly 1948-53.

campaign deploring the "unsatisfactory" performance of the Committee of Sixty and the Executive Committee, and called for their replacement by younger men. To enable such younger representation on these Committees, the militants sought to amend the bye-laws of the Congress and to lower the age limit to 24 years. They distributed circulars containing the names of "approved" candidates for the forthcoming elections and urged the members to vote only for them.¹

The spirit of discussion in the second General Meeting was consequently quite different from that which characterised the founding conference of 1938. Almost immediately after the report of Isma'īl al-Azhari (President for the month), the militants went on the offensive. They proposed that the minutes of all the meetings held in 1938 should be read by the Secretary, in order to identify those who were regular attendants and to prevent the re-election of those who showed little conscientiousness. But the motion was defeated when it was put to the vote. Another proposal, submitted by Mubarak Shaddad in connection with the administration of the Ma'ahad al-'Ilmi, was seized upon by the militants as an issue that could be exploited in pursuit of their

1. "Annual Congress Meeting held on 31st January 1939", CRO, DAKHLIA (I) 1/11/27.

objectives. The Sudanese Students' Union in Cairo had sent a telegram urging the Congress to adopt a resolution in favour of the affiliation between the Ma'ahad and the Azhar. The militants agitated to have Congress commit itself, vis-à-vis the Government, to a formal and public resolution of such an affiliation. Congress members present were also unanimously in favour of such an affiliation, but the majority were opposed (from motives of prudence) to committing the Congress to such a public resolution. A stormy discussion ensued and the matter came to a deadlock. Isma'īl al-Azhari eventually came to the rescue. Arguing on a point of procedure, he reminded the Congress meeting that it was not the function of the annual meeting to pass resolutions on specific questions, but that this was essentially the task of the Committee of Sixty. At the same time, in order to placate the more militant elements, he gave assurances that the Committee of Sixty had in principle endorsed the proposal of affiliation with the Azhar.¹ The matter was thus

1. It was not until April 1939 that the Executive Committee submitted to the Government a well-worded and reasonable memorandum containing recommendations for the reform of the Ma'ahad. Although this action was marred by the simultaneous publication of the memorandum in the local press, it was generally regarded as the most concrete and useful thing Congress had achieved to that date, and the Government indicated its appreciation.

dropped without being put to the vote.

The militants grew increasingly frustrated at what they considered to be an extreme moderation exhibited by the majority of the Congress members. Motivated by contempt for such an attitude, Ahmad Khayr ironically proposed that it might be better for the Congress to adopt openly a policy of concentrating its efforts only on social reforms and refrain altogether from interfering in matters affecting government officials -- an obvious reference to the Committee's handling of the amendments to the Personnel and Leave Regulations. The proposal brought into question the raison d'etre of the Congress. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim¹ a staunch nationalist of moderate persuasion, strongly opposed the proposal, on the grounds that the adoption of such a policy would serve as an argument against the Congress, if it ever considered it necessary in future to openly interfere in these questions. On this point of policy there was general agreement, but the militants insisted on knowing what further action was planned by the Executive Committee in response to Gillan's reply. Azhari then

1. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim: Born 1905; clerk Omdurman Shari'a court upto 1935; editor of Al-Nil 1936-1944; editor of Al-Sudān al-Jadīd; strong critic of the British administration and a leader of younger members of the intelligentsia; member of Legislative Assembly, 1948-53.

stated that, for the time being, the Committee simply recorded in their minutes that the question would be re-examined at a later date, and he proposed to send a notice to this effect to the Government. Not satisfied with the way the matter was being handled, the militants agitated that Congress should not accept the rejection of the Government, and they pressed for a vote to be taken on Ahmad Khayr's proposal, seeking to embarrass the Executive Committee by forcing the Congress members to commit themselves on this major issue. But the moderates were not to be so easily outmanoeuvred. They argued instead that the constitution had clearly laid down that questions of public interest were in fact one of the basic concerns of the Congress and that there was, therefore, no need for a vote on Ahmad Khayr's proposal which, after all, constituted a fundamental departure from the originally defined objectives of the Congress. The trick worked and the agitation of the militants was defeated once again.

The general meeting then proceeded to elect the new Committee of Sixty, which turned out to be substantially the same as the previous one in its political temperament. There were altogether 23 new members, 19 of whom were at the bottom of the list, where changes were to be expected due to the transfer of officials from Khartoum and the general preference given for the election of candidates

who were generally stationed in the capital. The campaign launched by the militants failed to exert any significant influence on the outcome of the elections, but they derived some consolation from the fact that two of their leading members, Muḥammad ‘Amir Bashīr and Muḥammad Ḥamad al-Nīl, managed to get elected to the Committee of Sixty. Isma‘īl al-Azhari again topped the poll by a large margin, and he was thus elected, for the second time, the Secretary of the Committee.¹ In the elections for the new Executive Committee, the majority of the incumbent members were re-elected. Among the new members, the most notable were ‘Ali al-Birayr and Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fīl, both of whom were ardent Mirghanists, so that their election, coupled with the exit of Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf² and ‘Abd al-Munaim Muḥammad³, gave the Khatmiyya a preponderance in the new Executive similar to that enjoyed by the

-
1. Hamad Tawfīq was elected Assistant Secretary, and ‘Abdallah Mirghani Treasurer.
 2. Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf: Eldest son of the Khalīfa Sharīf (a cousin of the Mahdi) and a nephew of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān; employed as a clerk in the Education Department.
 3. ‘Abd al-Munaim Muḥammad: Prominent merchant and a strong supporter of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.

Mahdists in the previous one.¹

With the elections over, the Executive Committee settled down to a consideration of the major issues that confronted the Congress in 1939. Apart from the traditional problem of educational expansion, the intelligentsia were becoming increasingly concerned over the Government's policy in regard to the southern Sudan. They were extremely disappointed to observe that the Governor-General's annual report for 1938 did not proposed any changes to this highly-controversial policy. Special permits were still necessary to obtain entry to the southern provinces, and subsidies continued to be paid to Christian missionaries.² In fact, the Government's policy in the whole field of administrative activity was of deep concern to the intelligentsia, and the Executive Committee was urged to study the Governor-General's Report carefully and to express its views on its contents, particularly in regard to the development of local government and the policy of native administration.³ The general feeling was that the

1. There were 5 definite Mirghanists, 3 definite Mahdists, and 7 neutrals, of whom several inclined slightly one way or the other. The Mahdists were disconcerted at the result, seeing in it (especially in Shaykh al-Fīl's appearance) a calculated Mirghanist drive to influence the Congress.

2. Editorial, Al-Sūdān, 11 February 1939.

3. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 8 February 1939.

Report contained many points which needed to be amended and settled in a way that suited the Sudanese point of view, and the Committee was pressed to make these views known to, and accepted by, the Government.

The outbreak of the Second World War cut short the public activity of the Congress, as the nation concentrated all its efforts to encounter the threat of aggression. The attitude of the Sudanese to the eventuality of war had evolved, slowly but surely, ever since the Munich agreement in 1938. After that international crisis, the intelligentsia became increasingly aware of the fact that the destiny of the Sudan was linked to that of the rest of the world, and that consequently it would not escape catastrophic results in the event of war. The majority held the view, effectively expressed by Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb, that whatever the result of a war might be the Sudan would still be a loser. For, if Britain won, she would be so weakened and impoverished that she would have to exploit the Sudan's wealth to the uttermost for her own reconstruction; and if she lost the war, the Sudan would be considered as booty for the victors and thus inevitably suffer the fate of Abyssinia.¹

The international crisis thus raised vital questions

1. Al-Nīl, 19 September 1938 and 20 September 1938.

about the Sudan's ability to defend itself, and the intelligentsia called upon the Government to make all the necessary military preparations to repel any eventual aggression.¹ The prospect of entrusting British and Egyptian forces stationed in the Sudan with the defense of the country was not heartily acceptable, for the intelligentsia feared that special circumstances might necessitate the despatch of these forces to other battlefields where they would be more urgently required. In such an eventuality, what would happen to the Sudan? The Sudanese preferred to be in a position to defend their own country by themselves and they suggested, therefore, that the Sudan Defense Force be expanded, a military school be opened, and retired Sudanese officers be re-appointed in the service.²

On the question of support for the British and their allies, the attitude of the intelligentsia was divided. The militants advocated that the Sudan should remain neutral and let the strongest imperialist country triumph. Other nations, they argued, fought to preserve their independence. But, as the Sudan was not independent, why should it go to war on the side of the Allies? To preserve its subjugation?

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 5 October 1938.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 4 January 1939.

No country, it was emphasized, would ever throw its men into the furnace of war without expecting some benefits from that war. The Sudanese, therefore, should support the Allies only on the condition that the Government would no longer ignore their views or demand, especially in regard to public matters.¹ They even suggested that a clause defining the aim of Condominium rule as being "to train the Sudanese for self-government" should replace the existing clause in the Treaty of 1936, which had defined this objective as being "the welfare of the Sudanese".²

The majority of the intelligentsia, however, favoured a policy of open support for the Allied powers. As nationalists, they certainly did not approve of the subservient political status of the Sudan. There were many modifications to this status that they would have like to see effected and many internal reforms that they desired the Government to carry out. But British imperialism, whatever its demerits, was for them far better than either Italian or German rule and they feared that, if the Sudan ever fell under the control of the latter, it would suffer a painfully-long subjection, since it would

1. Al-Nīl, 2 April 1939

2. Al-Nīl, 16 March 1939.

be at the mercy of colonial powers that believed in nothing but brute force. In this respect, they believed that it would be better for the Sudanese, when the day came for the nationalist movement to demand independence, to find themselves facing the British and Egyptians, rather than the Italians and the Germans.¹ For the time being, they were not allowing either internal questions of detail or "lofty aspirations" to blind them to the need of clearly defining their attitude towards the Sudan Government in hours of danger. They advocated full and active support for the Allies and they pointed out that, if Britain emerged victorious, the Sudanese would not dare to demand anything for their country if they had failed to contribute to its defense.² They suggested, of course, that they were prepared to offer their help and sacrifice because they expected to live a new and dignified life after the war, but they did not make this a condition for their support.

When war broke out, therefore, Congress acted swiftly to commit its support and collaboration to the Government. In a message to the Governor-General, the Executive Committee pledged that "Congress itself is ready and

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 17 January 1939.

2. Editorial, Al-Sūdān, 21 January 1939; also, Al-Nīl, 21 January 1939.

prepared to give any service that can possibly be demanded of it" in safeguarding the Sudan's vital interests and restoring world peace.¹ At the same time, the Committee issued an appeal to the Sudanese people, urging support for the Government and the Allied cause.²

For Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi, the outbreak of the war brought back reminiscences of the First World War, and awakened him to the possibility of exploiting the situation, just as he had done in 1915, to exact some political concessions from the Government. In a private conversation with Penney, the Director of Public Security, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān raised the question of shūra (i.e. collective consultation) stating that, in his opinion, the time had come for the Government to make a start in this direction.³ What he probably had in mind was the formation of an official advisory body, which would include members of the Congress as well as other elements (like himself, the other sectarian leaders, merchants

-
1. Letter to the Governor-General, signed by Isma'īl al-Azhari, 1.9.1939, quoted in K.D.D. Henderson, The Making of the Modern Sudan, (London 1953), p. 116.
 2. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit. Douglas Newbold had just then (August 1939) taken over from Gillan as Civil Secretary.
 3. SMIS, No. 67, October-November 1939, Appendix I, para 89, quoted in HQ Troops in Sudan Intelligence Summary, No. 4, December 1939, para 2, CRO, HALFA 36/1/3.

and tribal notables), and which would supersede the Congress. He must have felt certain that, if the Government had acceded to his proposal, his own prestige would have increased tremendously and Mahdist candidates would win the Congress elections by a landslide. The Government, however, were not quite certain whether his proposal was basically anti-Congress or not, and they preferred not to take any action on it, lest they antagonised the Khatmiyya-dominated Congress at such a critical period. Besides, the urgent preoccupation with the war itself left the Government little time for embarking on such a major project.

Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's initiative ran parallel to the growing restiveness of the militant intelligentsia at the Government's continuous refusal to accept the principle of collective consultation through the Congress. As on the eve of the Congress elections of 1939, the militants launched a campaign against the existing Congress Committees, attacking them for being too moderate and submissive to the Government, and demanded instead an attitude of more "active" opposition. A body, they argued, that merely put forward proposals and did not strive to secure their acceptance was not much use as an instrument of growing nationalism. What they wanted was some kind of nationalist party which would stand in

political opposition to the Government.¹

The third General Meeting of the Congress, which was held on 20 January 1940, was attended by only 250 members, and this factor enabled the militants to get a significant number of their members elected to the Committee of Sixty.² Despite such successes, they failed once again in their objective of securing a more militant representation on the new Executive Committee, which as a result remained fundamentally unchanged.³

The Deterioration of Relations with the Government.

The visit of the Egyptian Prime Minister, 'Ali Māhir Pasha, afforded the militants another opportunity to challenge the hegemony of the moderates in the Congress. When the Governor-General was in Cairo in November 1939, he invited 'Ali Māhir to visit the Sudan and see something of the country for himself. 'Ali Māhir accepted the invitation and began an intensive campaign, indirectly

-
1. SMIS, No. 68, December 1939, quoted in HQ Troops in Sudan Intelligence Summary, No. 5, January 1940, Part I, para 3, CRO, HALFA 36/1/3.
 2. SMIS, No. 69, January 1940, para 1350, PRO, FO.371/24633 (J826/826/16).
 3. Hamad Tawfīq was elected Secretary, Khidir Hamad Assistant Secretary, 'Abdallah Mirghani Treasurer, and Ibrahim Yūsif Sulaymān Accountant. Although Azhari was removed from the Bureau, he was a member of the Executive Committee.

inspired through the Egyptian press, deliberately designed to give the impression that the visit was to be the occasion of talks between the Prime Minister and the Governor-General on the political questions still outstanding between the two countries.¹ Discussions, it was alleged, were to be undertaken in Khartoum to "regularise the administrative jurisdiction", and to arrive at a settlement of the Egyptian debt. Conversations were to deal also with the preaching of Islam in the south, and with the extent of the authority of the Egyptian Ministry of Defense over the Sudan Defense Force.²

Leading Sudanese nationalists were genuinely perturbed by these extravagant claims in the Egyptian press, particularly at the attack implicit in these claims on the autonomous identity of the Sudanese. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān expressed grave misgivings about the proposed visit and again urged the need for the Government to encourage Sudanese nationalism as a bulwark against Egyptian claims.³ The general feeling among the intelligentsia was also accompanied by a mixture of intelligent interest, less intelligent

1. SMIS, No. 69, January 1940, para 1351, loc. cit.

2. Director of Public Security to All Governors, 8.2.1940, CRO, PORT SUDA 2/28/176.

3. SMIS, No. 69, para 1349, loc. cit.

curiosity and mild enthusiasm, surrounded by a vague atmosphere of hope and doubt: Hope that the visit might bring some material benefits in the shape of subsidies for existing Sudanese establishments; and doubt of Egyptian sincerity or seriousness.

The hope of material benefit was amply realised. Shortly after his arrival, 'Ali Māhir began to distribute donations to various Sudanese social and educational institutions, and these were followed by further donations throughout the whole period of his visit in the country.¹

The Congress looked upon the visit as an opportunity to explain its real character and aims to the Egyptians, and so convince them that it was not anti-Egyptian but that it represented a genuinely local nationalist aspiration that deserved sympathy and encouragement. Accordingly, the Executive Committee intimated to the Government their wish to invite the visitors to a tea-party. The Government initially refused to arrange such a party, on the grounds that the official programme could not fit any additional engagements, but the Committee insisted that, as other communities (i.e. British and Egyptians) were given

1. SMIS, No. 70, February-March 1940, para 1357, PRO, FO.371/24633 (J1399/826/16). A total sum of about 6070 Egyptian pounds was distributed in donations during the visit.

the opportunity to entertain the visitors, so also Congress (as a representative Sudanese body) should be given the same opportunity. This plea was difficult for the Government to resist, primarily because it was recognized that the educated Sudanese elements had certain claims to consideration which it would have been both impolitic and unreasonable to disregard. Accordingly, a tea-party was arranged under the auspices of the Congress for 21 February.

The affair, which was well-organised and attended by some one thousand persons, was intended by Congress to be something of a demonstration. After tea, Naṣr al-Ḥaj 'Alī¹ (President for the month) delivered a speech which was in fact a restatement of the original Congress manifesto, but this time addressed to the Egyptians. From the very start, the Egyptians had felt unfriendly towards the Congress, believing that it had been created by the Sudan Government with the aim of resisting Egyptian political claims. The genuine Sudanese emphasis on an autonomous identity was dismissed by the Egyptians as a disingenuous British invention. In answer to these Egyptian suspicions and accusations, Sudanese nationalists had written several articles in their local press, setting out the aims of

1. Naṣr al-Ḥaj 'Alī: Teacher at Gordon College; member of the Administrative Conference 1946.

the Congress, and the Sudanese point of view in general. The most important of these efforts was an interview given by Isma'īl al-Azhari to a correspondent of the Cairo newspaper al-Ahrām. In this interview, Azhari had emphasized that the principal aim of the Congress was to substitute national solidarity for tribal separatism, and that as between the two Condominium partners the Congress was strictly impartial. Other articles by Congress spokesmen had appealed to the Egyptians to understand and sympathize with the Sudanese desire to develop their own nationalism.

At the tea-party in honour of 'Alī Māhir, Naṣr al-Ḥāj 'Alī seized upon the occasion to re-affirm the Congress's position. In a clever and carefully-worded statement, he made it quite clear that the Sudanese did not regard themselves as Egyptians, but that they were a separate and autonomous entity, which wished to develop along its own lines, though in the closest possible co-operation and friendship with Egypt.

The overall effect of the tea-party was far-reaching. It restored to the Congress its lost prestige and gained for it, in urban circles and in the press, a recognition and a distinction it had never enjoyed before. The affair also convinced some Egyptians that the Congress was in fact the embryo of a genuine Sudanese nationalist

movement in which Egypt had to take a sympathetic interest and which she had to court as a potential ally in the pursuit of her claims. The door was thus opened for contacts between the Egyptians and the Congress -- contacts which were destined to play a very crucial role in later years.

Encouraged by the success of the party, and by the generosity of the Egyptian largesse, the militants increased their pressure on the Executive Committee to submit to ^CAli Māhir a memorandum for financial and social assistance. The proposal had originally emanated from the younger men on the Committee of Sixty and was basically motivated partly by a desire to appeal against the reduction of the Egyptian subvention, and partly by a belief that such assistance from Egypt would prod the Government into outbidding the Egyptians, with the inevitable result that the Sudanese would derive the greatest possible benefits from both.¹ The proposal had become the subject of informal discussions ever since the general elections in January, but the Executive Committee doubted the wisdom

1. The Egyptian subvention of 312500 pounds to the Sudan Government was reduced to 62500 for 1940, and ceased altogether in 1941. Cf. Report on the Administration of the Sudan for the Years 1939 to 1941, (Cmd 8097), H.M. Stationery Office, London 1950, p. 22.

of such an action and had opposed it from the start. The case of the militants, however, had become increasingly stronger by every donation that 'Ali Māhir made, and at a subsequent meeting of the Sixty, on 25 February 1940, the moderates opposing the proposal finally found themselves in a minority. The motion to submit the memorandum to 'Ali Māhir was thereby approved.

At this juncture, reports of the proposal reached the Government, who naturally regarded a direct approach to the Egyptian Government, over the head of the Governor-General, as being clearly and uncompromisingly "unconstitutional". On the same evening, Newbold¹ delivered a friendly but categorical warning to the Congress Secretary, pointing out the seriousness of the step contemplated and making it clear that, if it were taken, the Government would reconsider its attitude and might even withdraw the recognition accorded to the Congress movement on the basis of its foundation manifesto. In addition, Newbold arranged for an urgent meeting on the following day, at which it was his intention to re-emphasize to the Executive Committee the warning he had delivered the

1. Douglas Newbold: Joined Sudan Political Service 1920; District service 1920-32; Governor Kordofan 1933-8; Deputy Civil Secretary 1938-9; Civil Secretary 1939-45; Died in Khartoum March 1945.

evening before.

The militants interpreted Newbold's warning both as a challenge and as confirmation of their belief that the British were literally scared of the prospect of Egyptian support for the Congress. Accordingly, they pressured the Executive Committee to go ahead with the submission of the memorandum. The moderates, apprehensive of the implications in Newbold's warning, tried to resist but they eventually retreated in the face of accusations that their opposition was dictated by fear of the Government. They did not yield unconditionally however. Under their pressure, the form of address and the contents of the memorandum were revised in such a way that the requests embodied in it became in themselves largely innocuous. Even so, four or five members of the Executive Committee stood out firmly against the proposal and one of them, Mirghani Hamza, actually resigned.¹

1. The requests were six in all: financial help for the Piastre Orphanage; financial help for the Ma'ahad, on the basis of the recommendations contained in the Congress's Note submitted in April 1939; the sending of Egyptian Muslim preachers for missionary and educational activity in the southern Sudan; the setting up of an Arabic library; the establishment of a hospital in Omdurman, to be staffed with specialists and doctors; and the provision of Egyptian capital for commercial and agricultural enterprise in the Sudan. For the full text of the memorandum in Arabic, cf. Ahmad Khayr, Kifah Jil, (Cairo 1948) pp. 209-218.

On the morning of 26 February, Newbold learned that the memorandum had already been sent by the hand of a special courier, Ma'ani Muhammad Hasan, to be delivered to 'Ali Mahir at Gordon's Tree. Although he was extremely disappointed at what appeared to him a fait accompli, he decided nevertheless to hold the scheduled meeting and to use the opportunity to convey to the Congress representatives, in no uncertain terms, the Government's displeasure.¹

The Congress representatives argued that the memorandum had been addressed, not to the Egyptian Government or to the Egyptian Premier in his official capacity, but to the "Egyptian people" through 'Ali Mahir as its distinguished personal representative; that the submissions it contained were merely requests for private financial assistance and had no administrative or political significance; and that, in this sense therefore, they believed that their action was essentially innocuous. In reply, Newbold informed them that, while he was prepared to believe that they had intended no deliberate disloyalty to the Condominium Government, there was no getting away from the fact that they had been guilty of a serious political and tactical indiscretion, and that they had done so in spite of the

1. The Congress representatives were Nasr al-Haj 'Ali (President), Hamad Tawfiq (Secretary), Muhammad Salih al-Shinqiti (member of the Executive Committee).

warning they had received. He deplored the fact that Congress was organised on a basis which permitted intelligent moderate opinion to be "swamped" by the political thoughtlessness of its militant members. The damage, however, had been done, and he proposed that on another occasion he would inform them of the action the Government would take in connection with this matter.

The defeat of the more moderate elements of the Congress over the issue was attributed by Newbold to the composition and functioning of the Committee of Sixty. He believed that, in the absence of a deposit system and a qualifying minimum figure, any "inexperienced and irresponsible" person could manage to secure election to the Committee on no more than ten votes at times when there was a small attendance at the general elections.¹ Furthermore, he felt that the Committee of Sixty met much too often and this factor enabled it to interfere constantly with the "calmer deliberations and wiser decisions" of the Executive Committee. This meant that although the moderates might be prepared to take a "proper attitude" on a major issue, they still lacked the ability to defend it

1. Newbold to Mirghani Hamza, 20.2.1940 (?), in Henderson, op. cit., p. 134. There is apparently some mistake as regards the date of this letter, since the memorandum was submitted on 26 February.

effectively against militant opposition in a joint session. In addition to this, Newbold felt, the determination of the moderates was weakened by the fact that they were genuinely anxious to avoid a breach with the militants which might force the latter into an undesirable and independent opposition.

In these circumstances, therefore, Newbold was convinced that the time had come for the Government to put political pressure on the Congress with the view to achieving two vital objectives. Firstly, the Government had to emphasize, in the strongest possible terms, the seriousness of the Committee's action in submitting the memorandum to 'Ali Māhir, and in so doing discourage any prospect of a similar repetition in the future. Secondly, the position of the moderates within the Congress had to be strengthened, so that irresponsible action by the militants would henceforth be minimised. At the same time, Newbold was quite conscious that such Government pressure had to be so gauged as to avoid either creating unnecessary political martyrs or polarising irrevocably Congress opinion, which could create indirectly a militant nucleus in opposition to, and uncontrollable by, the moderates. He appreciated the fact that Congress had not yet acquired either a mature political sense or an understanding of proper procedure, and he therefore felt that its vagaries at this stage,

though they might require correction, were not of such importance as to justify extreme measures by the Government.¹

In the meantime, the Executive Committee had debated the desirability of sending a deputation to the Governor-General with a view to giving him formal assurances of the Congress's good faith. But some of the members, led by Hamad Tawfīq, were already growing impatient with what they regarded as undue restriction on the Congress's activities by the Government, and they took the position that their representatives had fully explained their attitude and that it was now for the Government to take such action as it thought fit. In the face of such opposition, the idea of a deputation was accordingly dropped altogether.

After a few weeks, during which period he gauged public reaction to the issue, Newbold held another round of discussions with Congress representatives.² He pointed out to them that some actions of the Congress appeared to be in conflict with their professions of loyalty and that

1. SMIS, No. 70, February-March 1940, para 1357-xi, loc. cit.

2. The meeting was held on 27 March and the Congress representatives consisted of Naṣr al-Hāj 'Alī, Hamad Tawfīq, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭi and 'Abd al-Mājid Aḥmad.

these actions indicated a line of policy which, if pursued, could destroy the mutual confidence which should govern the Congress's relations with the Government. He did not disregard the possibility that such actions might have been influenced primarily by a desire to advertise the Congress or to exert pressure on the Government but he warned that, whatever their motivation, the course to which the Committee had rather thoughtlessly committed themselves might ultimately lead to a situation in which members of Congress, who were also government officials, would find themselves compromised or in a conflict of loyalties. He assured them that he was anxious that such a situation should not arise, as otherwise the only course open to the Government might be to compel its officials to withdraw from Congress membership and, if need be, dissolve the Congress altogether. He suggested, therefore, that government officials (like themselves) who formed by far the most influential elements in the Congress should take immediate and effective steps to forestall the adoption of an ambiguous line of policy which would lead to the frustration of their own, and the Government's good intentions. The first step to be taken in this regard, he emphasized, was to review the organisation of the Congress itself.

Newbold's political pressure on the Congress came at a time when it could have had little effective result. The fortunes of war in Europe were already beginning to modify, in a significant measure, the attitude of the various sections of the Sudanese urban community. The Norwegian setback, followed by the collapse of Holland, Belgium and France, strengthened the militants' growing belief in Germany's apparent invincibility, and correspondingly weakened the moderates' conviction of the Allies' ability to win even an ultimate victory. A feeling of satisfaction at the discomfiture of Britain had thus pervaded the militant intelligentsia, as well as other urban semi-literate groups who, being less politically conscious, had therefore no ideology or political aspirations that conflicted with the Fascist creed.¹

While Sudanese public opinion swayed and staggered under the shock of war events in Europe, Italy entered the war on the side of Germany. On 11 June 1940, the day after Italy's declaration of war, the Governor-General assembled at the Palace 21 leading Sudanese personalities, including

1. SMIS, No. 71, April 1940, para 1365, PRO, FO.371/24633 (J1399/826/16). In an attempt to counter the effects of Axis radio propaganda, the Sudan Government commenced at this time its own propaganda broadcasts from a radio transmitter available in Omdurman.

the three sectarian leaders and representatives of the Graduates' Congress.¹ He communicated to them personally the texts of a proclamation and a message to the Sudanese people in connection with Italy's entry into the war. There were no formal speeches in reply to his words, but the three sectarian leaders expressed in emphatic terms their support for the Allied cause. Speaking in a Churchill style, Sharīf Yūsif al-Hindi proclaimed his readiness to fight the Italians wherever he might sight them -- on the river banks, in the desert and in the hills. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi, in less impassioned though equally emphatic manner, repeated the assurances he had so often given before that he and his followers were ready to do whatever might be asked of them in the defense of the country and its existing Government. Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, in conformity with his characteristic attitude, was the least vigorous and most non-committal of all. He confined himself to merely saying that there could be no doubt of benefits enjoyed by the Sudanese under the existing Government or of their loyalty to it.² After the meeting,

1. Civil Secretary's Monthly Letter, 8.6.1940, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 151.

2. SMIS, No. 72, May-June-July 1940, para 1374, PRO, FO.371/24633 (J2048/826/16).

Mirghani Ḥamza and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shinqīṭi personally assured Newbold that the educated class, including the militants, "would drop all criticism and sink any differences" in a co-operative effort to defeat the Italians.¹

The Government's inclusion of three Congress members among the group of Sudanese leaders that gathered at the Palace was received with an uninhibited sense of gratification by the Congress. Articles appeared in the local press expressing deep appreciation of this mark of recognition accorded to the Congress as an active element in the life of the country, and declaring the Congress's readiness to co-operate with the Government in all measures required by the emergency of the war.

Spurred by this apparent rapprochement, the Executive Committee addressed a letter to Newbold on 15 June, expressing the wish of the Congress to communicate with the "people of the Sudan" with the object of giving them such advice and guidance as might be required to bear the grave conditions through which the country was then passing. Attached to the letter was the first of these proposed messages with a request that the Congress might be allowed

1. Civil Secretary's Monthly Letter, 8.6.1940, loc. cit.

to broadcast it from Omdurman.¹

The message was admirable in sentiment and substance, being essentially an exhortation to the people to remain calm and steadfast, to have complete confidence in the Government and to display the qualities of patience, endurance and fortitude for which the Arabs had always been famous. But the addressing of it to "the Sudanese people" was considered by Newbold as definitely presumptuous, implying an arrogation of status and influence to which Congress was not entitled, and which could have offended other elements in the country. Besides, the proposed use of the broadcasting station by private or semi-private bodies like the Congress was regarded by Newbold as an undesirable precedent, which could open the door to such requests by others (e.g. Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān) -- requests that would have been extremely difficult to refuse with any valid justification. Newbold therefore explained his objections to Ḥamad Tawfīq, the Congress Secretary, and he suggested instead a different procedure, whereby the message would be addressed to the "members and friends of the Congress", published in the local press and then quoted in the ordinary news bulletin broadcast from Omdurman. The suggestion was accepted, and the message

1. SMIS, No. 72, para 1376, loc. cit.

was duly published and broadcast in the news bulletin.

The Italian invasion from Abyssinia in July 1940, and the subsequent occupation of Kassala, Galabat and Kurmuk, had shaken public morale in the Sudan. The Sudanese had expected rapid British successes against the Italians, and it was therefore particularly alarming for them to see the Italians occupy Sudanese territory. For a few days, there was something approaching panic among the population. The belief rapidly spread that the Italian attack was a large-scale invasion, and that nothing could stop it. The Government tried to explain that it had all along been the official plan to evacuate these territories in the face of an attack with superior forces, but the Sudanese were reluctant to accept such an explanation. They had already heard similar explanations about "strategic retreats to prepared positions" in connection with the battles in Belgium and France.

Within this atmosphere of uncertainty, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān became extremely worried about what might happen if the British were, even temporarily, turned out by the Italians. He was genuinely apprehensive that Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani would enjoy, through his connection with the Eritrean branch of the Khatmiyya, considerable influence with the Italians, and would thus be in a position to destroy him and Mahdist influence in the Sudan.

Consequently, he inspired some Mahdist members of the Congress to solicit the support of the militants in an attempt to set up a National Front. The objective of the movement was to bring the two Sayyids and other elements (such as tribal leaders and urban notables) into a closer relationship with the Congress, and so form a National Committee to represent the Sudan at this critical time.

The idea of a National Front was welcomed by the militants, who had been trying for some time and by various means to enlarge the basis of the Congress and to convert it openly into a political assembly working for the realisation of Sudanese aspirations. But the move was rejected by Sayyid 'Ali and the Mirghanists, who argued that there were no "political" leaders in the Sudan and that religious leaders could have nothing to do with the Congress or National Fronts.¹ Sayyid 'Ali had grown increasingly disappointed with the intelligentsia, in view of the desertion of several of his former followers among the graduates to the Mahdist camp. He had decided, as early as January 1940, to turn his attention to organising his followers on the lines of a coloured-shirt movement.²

1. SMIS, No. 73, August-September 1940, para 1385, PRO, FO.371/24633 (J2048/826/16).

2. SMIS, No. 70, para 1355, loc. cit.

Detachments of Mirghanists were accordingly drilled by Mirghanist ex-sargeants, and they were paraded regularly through the streets of Khartoum and Omdurman, chanting slogans in praise of Sayyid 'Ali and against his opponents. From May onwards, sectarian feeling in both Mirghanist and Mahdist circles ran very high, and eventually Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was provoked to start a similar movement of his own. The Government, however, soon intervened and pressured the Sayyids into stopping such activities; but the experience had already resulted in estraging the two Sayyids even further and accentuating the rivalry between the two sects. Without the support of the Mirghanists within the Congress, the attempt to set up a National Front thus ended in failure.

In such an atmosphere, the conflict between the moderates and the militants in the Congress became increasingly and inevitably fused with the Mirghanist-Mahdist rivalry. Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fīl and Mirghani Ḥamza led the Mirghanist-moderate alliance; while Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Faḍīl¹ and Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim led the Mahdist-militant coalition. Any Congress issue was therefore bound to be treated out of proportion and out of proper perspective.

1. Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Faḍīl: Son of al-Faḍīl (son of the Mahdi) and nephew of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān; active member of the Graduates' Congress.

The conflict came to a head in August 1940. When the Government decided to extend the broadcasting service and include in it a programme of general cultural talks, Congress was informally invited to co-operate with the broadcasting organisation in drawing up this programme. After demurring a little to this method of informal approach, the Executive Committee waived the question of procedure and decided to accept the invitation, delegating four members to join the broadcasting organisation in a consultative capacity. The Committee of Sixty, however, disapproved of the action taken by the Executive Committee, on the grounds that the decision had been taken without reference to the Sixty and that the Congress should have not consented to co-operate except in return for the right to broadcast talks in its own name.

A crisis followed. The Executive Committee was defeated in a vote of censure in the Sixty and, on 31 August, its members resigned.¹ A new Committee was elected, on which none of the retiring members consented to serve, except for Isma'īl al-Azhari. By August 1940, Azhari was emerging as the unofficial leader of the younger militant nationalists. His first contact with them

1. Civil Secretary's Monthly Letter, 3.9.1940, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 164.

dated back to 1931 when, as a teacher at Gordon College, he had indirectly encouraged the students to continue their strike. But, at a time when nationalist sentiment expressed itself through literary activities, his profession as a mathematician robbed him of political limelight. The situation began to change after 1937 with the founding of the Graduates' Congress. His election in 1938 and 1939 as General Secretary on the Executive Committee pushed him to the foreground of nationalist activity and his post as teacher at Gordon College brought him into daily contact with the young militants. Together with Ahmad Khayr, who joined the College in 1940 as a law student, Azhari took an active part in the efforts to establish a National Front. Thus, when the conflict over the broadcasting issue occurred in August, Azhari had already been predisposed toward militant action.

The refusal of moderates to serve on the new Executive Committee presented the militants with the rare opportunity to take over the control of the Congress. The system of rotational presidency was abolished and Azhari was elected President for the remainder of the session. The new Committee then conveyed to the Government its desire to continue its co-operation in the broadcasting service, but made it a

condition of this co-operation that Congress should be allowed to broadcast talks on social questions in its own name. The Government naturally refused to accept this condition, and the Congress withdrew its participation in the broadcasting service.

With themselves now in control of the Executive Committee, the militants began a determined effort to convert the Congress into a political assembly. They sought to make it more representative from within, by getting the largest possible number of Sudanese to join it as individuals. At the same time, they hoped to widen the base of their support by extending the franchise beyond the proper limits of the graduate class, so as to include all "enlightened" urban elements, particularly the merchant class which was not envisaged by the original title of "Graduates' Congress". They adopted a national anthem and a national flag, and they emphasized quite strongly that the Congress represented "the whole of the Sudanese people".¹

Newbold had known all along that the ultimate long-term objective of the Congress was political, but he had hoped that the moderate elements would manage to keep

1. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit.; also, Civil Secretary's Monthly Letter, 15.10.1940, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 176.

the political aspect latent and not raise it for a long time. The defeat of the moderates and the new activity of the militants had turned the political aspect into the main and immediate objective of the Congress. Furthermore, with the militants firmly in control, his efforts to get the Congress re-organised in favour of the moderates were thus unexpectedly and totally neutralised. He realised that, for the time being, there was little he could do other than to warn the militants off the newly-adopted political trend.¹

Newbold was by then beginning to become sceptical about the state of the Congress itself. The absence of a number of senior and distinguished graduates on its Executive Committee, and the lack of any co-operation between Mahdists and Mirghanists within the Congress, had destroyed any appearance of national unity. In the circumstance, he felt, the Congress could not justifiably claim either to have a mandate from the majority of the educated class, or even to represent a unity among the graduates, transcending sectarian partisanship.²

1. SMIS, No. 73, para 1389, loc. cit.

2. Ibid, para 1388. The Government's argument was based on the fact that out of some 5000 graduates throughout the country, only about 550 were Congress subscribers in 1940, out of whom 250 attended the Third Annual General Meeting in January. Seen from this angle, Congress was not considered to be representative of the graduate class as a whole.

Believing that the time was ripe to administer an official check to the militants' activities, Newbold summoned Azhari to his office and handed him a letter, dated 30 October 1940, which dealt comprehensively with the situation. In his letter, Newbold traced the events of the previous few months and reminded Azhari of the danger the Congress ran of forcing the Government to instruct its officials to withdraw from membership of the Congress, if not to dissolve it altogether. He also pointed out that the Committee's attitude over broadcasting and similar matters could not have been calculated to win the sympathy of the Government, and that their claims to represent the whole nation "were not only ridiculous but constituted also a fundamental departure from the original manifesto of the Congress", upon which the promise of the Government's sympathetic treatment had been based. He concluded by emphasizing that the Government was in fact far from being unsympathetic towards the growth of a national consciousness among the Sudanese, but that it could only regard the Congress, in spite of frequent advice, as having departed in spirit and letter from its constitution and that, as a consequence, the Government would have no other choice but

to withdraw its sympathy.¹

Newbold's letter created sharp divisions of opinion among the Congress members. The militants were naturally in full support of the Executive Committee's policies, but the moderates and the Mirghanists accused it of having blundered and having placed the Congress in an embarrassing position. The Mahdists found themselves in a difficult situation: They certainly needed the support of the militants in their struggle against the Mirghanist-moderate alliance; but at the same time they did not want to place themselves, or the Congress, in a conflict with the Government. Besides, the annual elections were only a few weeks away and something had to be done to stabilise the situation and neutralise the criticism of the opposition. Accordingly, and under heavy pressure from the Mahdists, the Executive Committee arranged an interview with Newbold, with the object of removing Government misapprehensions and preventing any further deterioration in the relations between the Congress and the Government.²

At this interview, held on 6 December, Azhari assured Newbold that the Congress had no desire whatsoever to come

1. SPIS, No. 1, October-November 1940, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16); also, "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 2, December 1940, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16).

into conflict with the Government, and he expressed the hope that the latter on its part would continue to look on the Congress with confidence and sympathy. Newbold sensed immediately that he had struck a sensitive chord, and he promptly seized the opportunity to increase his pressure on the Congress. He emphasized that they could certainly count on the Government's sympathy so long as they tried to put their house in order, and that they could count on enjoying its confidence once they had done so. Azhari, on the other hand, made no firm commitment to review the organisation of the Congress, but simply affirmed in general terms the Congress's intentions to co-operate with the Government and its readiness to do the utmost to retain the latter's support and sympathy.

The Mahdist Ascendancy in the Congress.

With the situation thus temporarily stabilised, both the Mahdists and the militants turned their attention to the forthcoming elections and geared up for their respective campaigns. At the fourth General Meeting, held on 9 January 1941, the militants made a concerted effort to amend the bye-laws of the Congress by introducing age and other qualifications, in the hope of electing a higher

percentage of their members to both Committees.¹ Their campaign, however, was unwelcomed by the other factions in the Congress. The moderates were definitely not prepared to allow the Congress to fall under the control of what they regarded as "irresponsible hotheads", an event that would have compromised even further its relations with the Government. The Mirghanists, who honestly believed that the militants were crypto-Mahdists, were likewise strongly opposed to measures that would have strengthened Mahdist influence in the Congress. The opposition of the Mahdists to the proposed amendments was based on a combination of two motives. On the one hand, they shared with the moderates the apprehension of a strong militant lobby in the Sixty that could lead to a conflict with the Government; on the other hand, they were unwilling to extend the franchise to the merchant class, as they believed that this class was solidly pro-Mirghanist, and their inclusion in the Congress would have tilted the balance of power in favour of their rivals. As a result of this joint opposition, the campaign of the militants

1. SPIS, No. 3, January 1941, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16). The number of attendants was 473 and of subscribers 1083, nearly double that of 1940. This was due partly to an increased interest in the Congress and partly to the reduction of the subscription fee from 30 piastres to 10 piastres.

to amend the bye-laws was defeated and the Sixty were elected on the old basis.

The Mahdists, who had canvassed vigorously and lavishly for days beforehand, secured a handsome majority of 44 seats in the Committee of Sixty, and the newly-elected members of the Executive Committee were, therefore, almost entirely Mahdists, with only one or two being neutral.¹ The greater majority of them were from the older and more respectable members of the graduate class, a factor which encouraged the Government to look more favourably on the Committee. Isma'īl al-Azhari was re-elected again President for the year.

The new Executive Committee was determined to make a success of its term of office, no doubt believing that in so doing they would lay the foundation of continued Mahdist predominance in the Congress. Since overt political activity was precluded for the time being, the Committee focussed its attention to the social questions of major public interest. The burning issue at the time was education and the annual crisis, resulting from the failure of a large number of boys to gain admission to government schools, was then at its height. The Mahdists knew that

1. Ibid. The only two Mirghanists elected to the Executive Committee had resigned and were replaced by pro-Mahdist elements.

high value was placed by the Sudanese on education, and they immediately realised that they would gain enormous prestige if they tackled this problem effectively. They devised therefore a scheme, which came to be known as the "Education Day Festival", according to which the Muslim new year day would be set aside each year for the purpose of collecting public donations in aid of education.

The scheme was implemented almost immediately. Having missed the Muslim new year day for 1941, the Committee fixed on 28 February as a substitute to launch the scheme. They obtained the permission of the authorities to make such collections, and they then convened a meeting of some 100 leading merchants and notables of the capital, representing both sects, to discuss the details of the project.¹ In the meeting, a number of suggestions were put forward for raising the required funds: that the Government should tax every Sudanese one piastre per year; that a surcharge on telegrams and railway policies be imposed; that merchants should levy a small sum on every purchase made in their shops; and so forth. But no agreement could be reached and the meeting broke up in some confusion.

1. SPIS, No. 4, February 1941, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16).

The Mahdists, however, did not despair, and they sought instead to raise the funds by appealing for voluntary contributions from prosperous citizens and business firms. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi, the real patron of the scheme, led off with a donation of 500 pounds, and this was followed by substantial contributions from a number of Sudanese and foreign trading firms. Encouraged by these initial responses, the Executive Committee addressed a circular letter to a large number of individuals of all nationalities throughout the country, informing them of the project and soliciting their contributions. By 28 February, some 2500 pounds had been collected as a fund for the scheme.

In the meantime, the Mirghanist camp became enviously apprehensive at the growing prestige of Mahdists within the Congress, and to a lesser degree among the urban populations as a whole. When the Executive Committee called on Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani to solicit his support and assistance, he responded only with an evasive promise that he would let them know his decision at a later date, and he instructed his followers instead to sabotage the scheme by spreading insidious propaganda against it. The scheme, however, commanded widespread support, and the Mirghanist campaign was severely criticised by the majority of the graduates and the public at large. As a result of their obstructive

behaviour, Sayyid 'Ali and other leading Mirghanists became increasingly isolated from the mainstream of moderate support, especially within the Congress.

The second issue of importance confronting the Congress was the subject of co-operation with the Government. The Mahdists traditionally believed that a policy of co-operation was undoubtedly more beneficial, and wiser, than one of aloof co-existence. Soon after the elections were over, the Mahdists began a cautious and low-keyed approach to restore relations with the Government. In private conversations with senior British officials, some members of the Executive Committee intimated that they were prepared to resume participation in the broadcasting service and on the original Government terms. But apparently the details of a face-saving formula had still not been worked out and the Committee did not follow up these suggestions with any immediate official action.

By March 1941, the successful offensive against the Italian invasion and the re-occupation of Sudanese territory had removed the threat of an Italian conquest of the Sudan. The British administration was once again firmly seated on the saddle, and its prestige had increased enormously in the public view. The Mahdists realised, therefore, that a restoration of good relations with the Government would inevitably enhance the prestige of Congress itself, and

may even shed some of the limelight on its Mahdist members. With the need for a National Front fading, the Mahdists felt less constrained to initiate a bolder attempt to resume Congress's participation in the broadcasting service. A meeting was, therefore, arranged between Congress representatives and the Broadcasting Officer to devise a formula acceptable to both sides. The Congress representatives argued that they could not approach the Committee of Sixty without having some new cause, however slight, on which to base a move for a reconsideration of the ban. They agreed with the principle that Congress should not broadcast talks in its own name, and they accepted the original offer that Congress should select four advisory members to form, with four of the broadcasting staff, a committee to supervise the cultural side of the programmes. They insisted, however, that a notice to this effect be published in the press and broadcast from the studio. On its part, the Government was prepared to make some small concession. Congress pronouncements on matters of social importance or reform would be broadcast over the radio, provided they had first been broadcast as ordinary items in the news bulletins, and they could be followed by an explanatory talk on the matter after the bulletin by one of the four Congress members of the Broadcasting Committee, speaking in his personal capacity. But the Government

attached certain conditions to such a scheme; that such pronouncements would have to be a reasonably rare occurrence; that they should be passed by the Broadcasting Officer as suitable news items for broadcast; and that the subjects of pronouncement should be commendable to the Government.¹

The formula was accepted unanimously by the Executive Committee, but it did not have such an easy passage in the Committee of Sixty. The opposition, composed mainly of the Mirghanists, put up a fight based entirely on personal and sectarian motives, but in the end the scheme was approved with only five dissenting votes.

The decision to resume participation provided the occasion for the seven Mirghanist members of the Committee of Sixty to resign. Their action was not essentially anti-Government, but it was prompted by the underlying conflict between the Mirghanists and the Mahdists, and by the painful realisation that they could have little influence in the formulation of Congress policies. With their resignation, they wanted to expose the Congress for what it had actually become -- a purely Mahdist body, at least as far as its Committees were concerned.

The stabilisation of relations between the Congress and the Government left the Executive Committee free to

1. SPIS, No. 7, June 1941, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16).

concentrate on other social matters. Committees were formed to deal with a number of specific subjects, two of which had special political implications. One was a committee set up to study labour matters and it had drawn up a scheme for "organising the lives of the workers".¹ However, it was not clear to the Government whether the scheme was merely one of social welfare or whether it was intended to be in some way political, and consequently the attempts by Congress to publicise its activities in the local press and on the radio were stopped. The other Committee was concerned with a study of affairs of the southern Sudan, but again the Government imposed a ban on all discussions in the local press of the political aspects involved in its Southern Policy.

Despite such setbacks and a growing dissention from the militants, Mahdist influence continued to increase and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān emerged once again as the patron of the intelligentsia and a powerful leader of the country. At the fifth general elections of the Congress, held in December 1941, the Mahdists won again a resounding victory, thereby retaining their control of both Committees in the

1. SPIS, No. 9, August 1941, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16).

Congress.¹ Isma'īl al-Azhari, who had increasingly associated himself with the militants and assumed their leadership, was replaced by Ibrahim Ahmad Ibrahim² as President for the new term, probably in an attempt to maintain a more stable and balanced political overtone in the Congress's activities. 'Awad Sātti³, who headed the poll for the Executive Committee elections, became the Secretary, Khidir Hamad the Assistant Secretary, and Ibrahim Yūsif Sulaymān the Treasurer.⁴ With such individuals on the Bureau of the Executive Committee, the Government felt relieved that the spirit of moderation had finally returned to the Congress, and that 1942 would prove to be a year of fruitful co-operation.

-
1. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", loc. cit. The total number of subscribing members stood at 1390, of whom some 464 attended the general elections in December 1941.
 2. Ibrahim Ahmad Ibrahim: Engineer, taught at Gordon College and was eventually made Students' Warden in 1945; Vice-Principal Khartoum University 1950; member of Omdurman Town Council 1938-44; President of the Graduates' Congress 1942 and 1944; member of Khartoum Town Council 1944; Minister of Finance 1956; subsequently became a banker.
 3. 'Awad Sātti: Teacher at Gordon College.
 4. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, July 1940, para 14, CRO, CIVSEC 57/15/56.

The Congress Memorandum of 1942.

The lull on the surface, however, was concealing a growing discontent, not only among the graduate class, but also among significant sections of the population as a whole, particularly in urban areas. The outbreak of the war in September 1939 heralded an era of economic hardships for the Sudan. In 1938 and 1939, the Sudanese economy was going through a recession. With the bogey of the international situation taking on a more menacing aspect, the export trade of the Sudan was adversely affected, in spite of the comparatively low prices ruling at that time. Stocks of export produce accumulated while the availability of cash declined simultaneously -- a factor which inevitably also affected movement in internal trade and led to a decline in the import of consumer goods. When war broke out, and as the sources of supply in Europe and maritime communications became uncertain, the merchant class dealing in the import trade sensed a golden opportunity to make enormous profits from the sale of their goods in the black market. Accordingly, the prices of imported commodities soared sharply, and the Government responded promptly by introducing emergency legislation to control the prices and supply of consumer

goods.¹ The Department of Economics and Trade fixed the prices of certain foodstuffs and other main commodities at the level ruling during August 1939. At the same time, the export of groundnuts, millet, sesame and maize was prohibited, and the export of cattle and sheep was made subject to permits from the Government.

The wholesale merchants reacted by refusing to sell their goods except on a cash basis and, since there was already a lack ^{of} cash liquidity, the effect was to bring about an acute shortage of goods in retail stores, and this in turn encouraged what the Government sought to avoid in the first place -- a brisk black market trade. The entry of Italy into the war in 1940 and of Japan in 1941 cut off the supply of Abyssinian coffee, Japanese textiles and Australian wheat flour, thereby leading to further increases in the prices of these commodities.

The export trade of the Sudan during this period did not fare any better. The closure of sea traffic through Port Sudan and the lack of orders for Sudanese produce from abroad affected the export trade considerably. By April 1940, the export merchants began to complain more loudly of the continued stagnation in the trade, and they

1. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, September 1939, para 14, CRO, CIVSEC 57/9/36.

sought to make their voices heard through the Sudan Chamber of Commerce.¹ The Italian invasion of eastern Sudan had upset grain cultivation in that area and, in order to stave off famine in that region after the re-occupation in January 1941, the Government began to purchase grain from other provinces (particularly the White Nile Province) for distribution to the population in the affected areas.

In addition, the commitment of Sudanese resources to the war effort led the Government into huge purchases of grain and meat for British forces in the Middle East. By autumn 1941, the trade in grain began to improve, but the Government's policy of fixing a maximum for grain prices came under increasing criticism from traders and cultivators, who looked on it as an obstacle to lucrative profits. The Government's main objective in fixing grain prices was to prevent speculation and hoarding of produce by the traders, and to discourage the growth of a black market in what constituted the staple food of the population. However, in the absence of provincial government purchasing centres, the traders were able to use these fixed prices as levers against the cultivators, and they were thereby able to purchase grain at levels much lower than the prices fixed by the Government. In the meantime, the cultivators

1. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, July 1940, para 14, CRO, CIVSEC 57/13/49.

themselves needed the liquid cash to purchase the other necessities of life and they were therefore forced to sell at such lower prices. Accordingly, at a time when imported consumer goods, as well as such other local commodities as milk and meat, were being sold at exorbitant prices in an uncontrollable black market, the Government's policy of restricting grain prices inevitably generated an increasingly hostile opposition both from the traders and the cultivators.

The lot of Sudanese government officials was the hardest hit of all. Living in urban areas, where they did not have their own little "vegetable gardens", they bought their daily needs from the market, mostly at ruling black market prices. The cost of living had increased by about 150 percent since September 1939, and the salaries of Sudanese officials were consequently insufficient to make ends meet.¹ They had petitioned the Government for a war allowance to supplement their earnings, but they received no positive response, except some assurances that the matter was under due consideration. A deep sense of

1. According to Newbold, by September 1941 "the budget of the Sudanese man-in-the-street has proved that food is 67% of his expenditure and clothing 17%", which left little for transport and other necessary expenses. Cf. Newbold to Margery Perham, 6.9.1941, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 224.

discontent, therefore, pervaded the graduate class as a whole.

It was against this background of general discontent that the Congress submitted a memorandum to the Government in April 1942. Since the declaration of the Atlantic Charter, the intelligentsia had become increasingly encouraged by what appeared to them Britain's official recognition of the principle that all nations had the right "to choose the form of government under which they will live". The incorporation, by reference, of the Atlantic Charter in the Declaration of the United Nations in January 1942 had confirmed to the intelligentsia that this principle had now become fundamentally accepted worldwide, and that in effect it promised self-government and independence after the war. They were elated at this "reward" for their support of the "democratic countries".

The status of the Sudan, however, was of a special nature, and the nationalists realised all too well that they had to get a similar commitment from Egypt, whose attitude to the war in general, and to the Sudan in particular, was unsatisfactory and uncertain. The occasion to obtain such a commitment presented itself in March 1942 when the Government decided to send Sudanese troops to fight on the side of British forces in Libya. In an interview with Penney, Ibrahim Ahmad pointed out that the Government's

decision had nothing to do with the defense of the Sudan, and that in any case why should the Sudanese defend Egypt while the Egyptians did nothing to defend themselves?¹

He left no doubt whatever that the Sudanese nationalists intended to exploit politically this decision to the maximum possible advantage.

The offensive of the nationalists was not long delayed. They began by hammering at the fact that, although Sudanese were being used to fight for democracy, the Condominium partners had so far made no concessions to Sudanese aspirations, and they suggested to the Sudanese officers that they should demand a Government declaration on future policy before setting out for Libya. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's position, though more diplomatically expressed, was essentially identical. In private conversations with senior British officials, he emphasized that the Sudanese would certainly demand "a big advance towards a democratic government as their reward". But he went one step further and prodded British sensitivities. There would certainly be resentment against the Egyptians, he argued, and some of this resentment would fall on the British for putting the Egyptian half of the Condominium yoke on the Sudanese neck.

1. SPIS, No. 17, April-May-June 1942, para 144, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

He warned, in the most emphatic terms, that this resentment might be greatly intensified if, after the war, Egypt claimed greater privileges in the Sudan as a reward "for not joining the Axis powers."¹ He was, in fact, suggesting to the Government that this was the best opportunity for the British to drive a permanent wedge between the Sudanese and the Egyptians and that in such a move they would enjoy the solid support of the Sudanese nationalists. Alternatively, failure to satisfy Sudanese aspirations would inevitably turn these nationalists into a hostile and militant opposition to the Government.²

The announcement that Sir Stafford Cripps would stop over in Khartoum on his way back from India, presented the Congress with an excellent opportunity to obtain their desired commitment from both Britain and Egypt regarding Sudanese independence after the war. A sub-committee, consisting of Isma'īl al-Azhari, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad,³ 'Abdallah Mirghani and Ahmad Khayr, hastily prepared a memorandum in draft form, which was later endorsed by

1. Ibid.

2. Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, characteristically enough, made no comment on this subject, and neither did any of his lieutenants.

3. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad: Doctor in the Sudan Medical Service; leading member of the Fajr group, and later of the Qawmiyyīn party.

both Committees of the Congress.¹ A delegation, consisting of Ibrahim Ahmad, Ibrahim 'Uthmān and Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, then consulted the sectarian leaders and solicited their support. Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān gave his consent outright.² But Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani was more sceptical of the Government's response, particularly of the Egyptian consent, and he stated in a non-committal way that, if the Congress felt they must submit it, then they should do so. He was no doubt pleased at the prospect that, if the Government rejected the memorandum, Congress and Mahdist influence might suffer considerably throughout the country.

On 3 April 1942, and encouraged by the widespread support for the memorandum, the Executive Committee submitted it to the Governor-General. The Memorandum contained the following demands:³

(1) The issue, on the first possible opportunity, by the British and Egyptian Governments, of a joint declaration, granting the Sudan, in its geographical

1. SPIS, No. 17, para 140, loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 19, August-September 1942, para 157, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

3. President of the Graduates' General Congress to the Governor-General of the Sudan, 3.4.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J2664/1528/16); also, Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, op. cit., pp. 127-8.

boundaries, the right of self-determination, directly after the war; this right to be safeguarded by guarantees assuring full liberty of expression in connection therewith; as well as guarantees assuring the Sudanese the right of determining their natural rights with Egypt in a special agreement between the Egyptian and Sudanese nations.

(2) The formation of a representative body of Sudanese to approve the budget and the ordinances.

(3) The formation of a Higher Educational Council, composed of a Sudanese majority, and the devoting of a minimum of 12 percent of the budget for education.

(4) The separation of the judiciary from the Executive.

(5) The abolition of ordinances on closed areas, and the lifting of restrictions placed on trade and on the movements of the Sudanese within the Sudan.

(6) The promulgation of legislation defining Sudanese nationality.

(7) The stopping of immigration, except within the limits agreed upon in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.

(8) The termination of the Sudan Plantations Syndicate contract at its expiration.

(9) The carrying out of the principle of the welfare of the Sudanese and their priority to Government posts as follows:-

- (a) By giving the Sudanese an opportunity to share effectively in ruling the country; this is to be attained by the appointment of Sudanese in posts of political responsibility, in all the main branches of the Government.
- (b) By limiting the appointments to Government posts to Sudanese.

As regards posts for which it is necessary to appoint non-Sudanese, they shall be filled with persons serving on definite term contracts; in the meantime Sudanese to be trained to fill the posts at the expiration of the contract.

(10) The Sudanese to be enabled to exploit the commercial, agricultural and industrial resources of the country.

(11) The promulgation of an ordinance imposing on companies and commercial firms the obligation of reserving a reasonable proportion of their posts for the Sudanese.

(12) The cancellation of subventions to missionary schools and unification of syllabus in the Northern and Southern Sudan.

The primary objective of the Memorandum was to request for the Sudan the status of independence after the war, and the Congress hoped that it would be given to Sir Stafford Cripps for transmission to the British and the Egyptian Governments. If the Memorandum had contained only a carefully-worded expression of the Sudanese desire for independence, Newbold's response might have probably been somewhat different, and subsequent political events in the Sudan might have consequently followed a different course altogether. Most of the demands were already known to the Government, as they had been repeatedly ventilated in the local press, and they had apparently not been considered serious enough to prompt the course of Government reaction in the past. But this time, the official nature of the Memorandum placed the combination of these demands in quite a different perspective, clearly implying a formal condemnation of existing, and sometimes controversial, administrative policies.

One such policy was that concerning the southern Sudan. The intelligentsia had opposed, from the start, the restrictions laid on the entry of northern Sudanese into the southern provinces, and they were especially apprehensive that Christian missionary activities in the area would eventually create a Christian minority which would pose

serious problems of national integration, additional to that of tribalism.¹ Congress's attempt to ventilate the issue in the autumn of 1941 were stopped by the Government with a ban on discussions of the Southern Policy in the local press, and it was therefore a painful disappointment for Newbold to see this issue formally raised again in the Congress Memorandum.

The other policy, on which the Government was particularly sensitive, was the pace in the Sudanisation of government posts. There was a general consensus of opinion among the intelligentsia that this pace was unjustifiably slow. The number of Sudanese officials promoted to higher posts was considered to be insignificantly small, and the quality of the promotion itself was regarded as being far from satisfactory or complete. The Sudanese replacement, it was argued, was not given either the grade or the salary of his British predecessor, although he was believed to be performing the same work.² After 1940, as the cost of living soared, the Sudanese officials became more conscious of the inadequacy of their earnings, and the disparity in grades and salaries between them and foreign officials came under increasingly hostile attack. The Government's

1. Al-Nīl, 18 October 1938; Al-Sūdān, 1 April and 14 June 1938.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 12 January 1938.

policy of recruiting British or Egyptian personnel to fill posts for which "qualified" Sudanese could not be found was criticised as prejudicial to the prior rights of the Sudanese, and it was recommended instead that either the Government should appoint Sudanese who held degrees from foreign universities, or should appoint expatriates on the basis of short-term contracts, after which they would be replaced by trained Sudanese.¹ Such measures, it was argued, would save the Sudan valuable sums of money in the future, which would otherwise be paid out in pensions to colonial officials. As the war progressed and many British officials were temporarily recruited for military service abroad, Sudanese officials expected to replace them in their posts, and they were therefore extremely disappointed when this did not occur and when British women, resident in the country, were instead recruited temporarily into the government service.² Within this perspective, the

1. Al-Nīl, 26 February 1938; 9 May 1938; and 16 June 1942.

2. By the end of 1940, approximately 220 British officials (i.e. one in five of the total adult British male civilian population in the Sudan) had been released from the civil service for the war. The demands for more releases increased and Newbold was forced to complain that the "Sudan has bled itself, especially the Political Service and the Syndicate, to supply them, but we are now drying up, and we must maintain some facade of Government and essential services here." Cf. Henderson, op. cit., pp. 175 and 187.

intelligentsia grew increasingly bitter, and a number of them in fact accused the Government of being unfaithful to the provisions of the 1936 Treaty and of unduly delaying the promotion of Sudanese officials in the civil service. In support of their criticism, they pointed out that the promotion of Sudanese officials to higher posts, which began after 1936, had proceeded in such a slow pace that by 1942 only eight percent of the posts in Division One were in fact occupied by Sudanese. They urged the Government to proceed more rapidly with the promotion of Sudanese officials, and they emphasized repeatedly that such promotions should be accompanied with the concomitant political power and responsibility that would enable these officials to participate in the confidential decision-making processes of the Government.¹ By the eve of the Congress Memorandum, therefore, relations between British and Sudanese officials had already begun to be clouded with an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment.

The Government's view on the pace of Sudanisation was essentially different from that held by the intelligentsia. The general outlines of this policy were laid down by

1. Al-Nīl, 16 June 1942 and 20 June 1942; also, Al-M'ūtamar, 4 July 1942.

Gillan in the Northern Governors' Meeting in February 1939. The role of Sudanese sub-Inspectors in the administrative machinery had created a big cleavage in the Governors' opinion. One group believed that the appointment of a permanent cadre of Sudanese sub-Inspectors would inevitably result in an Anglo-Sudanese Political Service. The sub-Inspector, they argued, was the lowest rung of the administrative service ladder, and pressure would eventually be put on the Government for his admission to higher administrative posts. There were no guarantees whatever that such pressures could be successfully resisted. Therefore, they believed that Government policy should aim at getting the intelligentsia into local government units, and not at encouraging them on the rival course of the Political Service.¹ In opposition to this view, another group advocated that Government policy should proceed, deliberately and carefully, with the substitution of some British personnel by educated Sudanese of proven administrative talent, and they assured their dissident colleagues that such substitutions did not constitute the "bogey" of a Sudanese Political Service. Gillan drew a distinction between the political and administrative parts

1. This group consisted of P. Ingleson (Governor Darfur), M.W. Parr (Governor Equatoria), B. Kennedy-Cooke (Governor Kassala), and C.L. Armstrong (Governor Khartoum).

of government service, and he envisaged the Sudanese sub-Inspector as playing an integral part in the administrative machine without being a part of the Political Service. He expected the sub-Inspectors to serve initially as the link between the central government and the local government units and eventually, as the role of the British Governor was gradually transformed into that of a Resident or Political Advisor, these sub-Inspectors were expected to become Deputy Governors.¹ It was still not clear to the British authorities what form the evolution of government would finally take in the Sudan, but in one thing they were all agreed: The Sudan would not emulate the native administration system of other countries (like Nigeria), but would evolve instead along its own lines, pursuing the solution of its own peculiar problems within a system of local government units. In this regard, therefore, the fate of the Sudanese sub-Inspector was linked to the development of local government, and the pace of expanding their numbers (and by inference, the pace of promoting more Sudanese to these posts) was consequently determined

1. "Record of Discussion: Item 4", Minutes of Northern Governors' Meeting (1939), CRO, DARFUR 1/13/73. This group included J.A. Gillan (Civil Secretary), D. Newbold (Deputy Civil Secretary), R.C. Mayall (Governor Blue Nile), C.W. Cox (Director of Education), M. Lush (Governor Northern), and E. Campbell (Governor Kordofan).

by the pace of development in local government.

When Newbold succeeded Gillan in the autumn of 1939, he inherited the extremely difficult task of devising a system of local government for the Sudan. The absence of models which could be adapted to Sudanese conditions dictated that he should proceed slowly and cautiously along this path, and his pace was further retarded by his subsequent preoccupation with the war.¹ The Government's original design was to channel pressures for the promotion of Sudanese officials into a horizontal direction, by expanding the class of sub-Inspectors, but the slow pace in the development of local government inevitably diverted these ever-mounting pressures into a vertical direction. Newbold was apparently aware of this, and a few days before the Memorandum was submitted he urged that the Government should

"start now clarifying and intensifying our plans for (i) local government (ii) Sudanese dilution of the British cadre which means the proper use and after-care of Higher School graduates and (iii) Sudanese association with Central Government. I am preparing a note on all this and will send you a copy. I am sure it's wrong to retard education or self-government in the colonies, because of the War. It's the worst kind of propaganda; rather we should accelerate it. Plain acts

1. Newbold to Margery Perham, 6.9.1941, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 228.

and facts carry the day with the educated classes who distrust vague post-dated pledges. We are still in the Golden Age in the Sudan with no communal problems (as India), no racial problems (as Palestine), no settlers (as Kenya), no poor whites (as S. Africa) no slums or trade unions (as W. Africa). So we should act while we still have time and not wait for internal or external pressure."¹

Although the Congress Memorandum actually made no explicit reference to the pace of Sudanisation, Newbold was probably influenced by circumstances to interpret the document essentially in such terms. Whatever his sympathies for the aspirations of the intelligentsia, he clearly felt that the time was not opportune for a formal commitment on the major issues involved. Firstly, with the German threat looming in North Africa, he was convinced that it was indeed impolitic to antagonise the Egyptians by forwarding to them a demand for the independence of the Sudan. The scenario of the 1924 disturbances inevitably came to mind. He probably feared, as did Huddleston², that pro-Egyptian interests might respond by submitting rival petitions, which in turn might be followed by political demonstrations and counter-demonstrations.

1. Newbold to Mayall, 9.2.1942, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 233.

2. Sir Hubert Huddleston: Officer Commanding British Army units in the Sudan; became Commander-in-Chief of Sudan Defence Force 1925-1940; Governor-General of the Sudan 1940-47; left the Sudan 1947.

He must have hence felt that an ounce of political prevention was worth a pound of military cure. Secondly, Newbold believed that the Memorandum was the product mainly of the militant elements in the Congress, who were hoping to exploit recent British setbacks in the Far East and North Africa to extract political concessions and who had thus "stampeded" the Executive Committee into submitting it.¹ He decided, therefore, to discourage any further adventures along this line by "beating" the Congress back onto a non-political path.

On 29 April, despite verbal assurances by at least one of the drafters that the Memorandum did not mean what it literally stated, Newbold returned it to Congress with a stiff reply, pointing out that the political status of the Sudan was based on the Condominium Agreement of 1899 and the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, and that as such it could not be altered except by a joint act of the Condominium powers, at which time responsible Sudanese opinion would be consulted. He castigated the Congress for persisting in the claim to represent all the Sudanese and in its attempts to turn itself into a political national body. As in October 1940, he brandished his political

1. "Memorandum on Sudanese Nationalism and the Graduates' Congress", op. cit.

stick and advised the Committee that, by submitting the Memorandum, Congress had forfeited the confidence and co-operation of the Government. He did not conceal his displeasure at the fact that they had disregarded his suggestion to review the organisation of the Congress, and he stated unequivocally that there "can be no restoration of that confidence until the Congress has so reorganised the direction of its affairs that the Government can rely on having its wishes respected and its warnings observed."¹ He concluded by affirming that the Government, and not the Congress, would determine the pace of political development in the country.

In a move probably designed to isolate the militants in the Congress, Newbold instructed all the Governors and Heads of Department not to discuss the contents of the Memorandum, in any way whatsoever, with any Sudanese officials or notables. Even those demands, which by themselves might have been unobjectionable, were to be regarded as contaminated so long as they were associated with the Memorandum, and as such they were not to be discussed. He advised them to make it absolutely clear

1. Civil Secretary to President Graduates' General Congress, 29.4.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J2664/1528/16); also, in Henderson, op. cit., pp 542-3.

that Congress had forfeited the Government's confidence, and that the onus was now on the Congress to show their good faith by so amending their constitution and reorganising their machinery that a repetition of such an incident would be impossible. Furthermore, in order to restore the Government's confidence, the Congress was expected to drop any claim to be the mouthpiece of the whole country; to ensure that their future communications to the Government would represent the considered views of the majority of their members, and not merely of a caucus of the Committee; and to show an intention to confine their representations to the Government only to internal administrative and social issues, except where those issues had been the subject of specific agreements with other governments.¹

Congress was extremely surprised and severely shaken by Newbold's rebuff, particularly by the announcement that it had lost the Government's confidence. The return of the Memorandum itself was considered, by Sudanese standards, as a most serious political insult. For some time, confusion reigned in Congress circles. The majority were in favour of replying to Newbold's letter, but they were

1. Civil Secretary's Circular to All Governors and Heads of Department, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J2664/1528/16).

divided as to what form the reply should take. Some urged an apologetic explanation, others a defiant comeback, while a small minority advocated some practical demonstration of protest such as a strike. Finally, a reply was drafted and delivered to Newbold on 12 May 1942.¹

In this letter, Ibrahim Ahmad stated that certain clauses in the Memorandum had been misunderstood by the Government. The Congress recognised the fact that the political status and constitution of the Sudan was determined by the Condominium powers. Therefore,

"when we asked for the right of self-determination after the war our object was merely to reserve to our country the rights guaranteed to all people by the Atlantic Charter and the pledges of the Democratic leaders. We were not oblivious, however, when we made that demand, to the detailed elaboration which its fulfilment might involve, and which might well have been made the subject of discussion. Nor were we unaware of the fact that it was not in the power of the Sudan Government to take a decision on this point, or to make promises either in the name of the two Condominium partners or in its own name."²

In view of the above, Ibrahim Ahmad stressed that the Memorandum should have been forwarded by the Government to

-
1. SPIS, No. 17, para 140, loc. cit.
 2. President Graduates' General Congress to Governor-General (through the Civil Secretary), 12.5.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16); also, in Henderson, op. cit., pp. 543-546.

the Condominium partners and support it by its testimony as "to the standard attained by this people under its orderly supervision".

In regard to the reorganisation of the Congress, Ibrahim Ahmad raised the Congress's own political stick. The war, he argued, had divided the world into two camps struggling for world domination. In this struggle, the Sudan "has taken up an attitude involving moral and material sacrifices, and is playing its part in order to secure a place in the new era. All these things must inevitably modify a people's attitude towards life and towards its rights. They must prompt every individual and everybody in every country to think along new lines, and this new thought in its turn necessitates a modification in existing arrangements." The spirit and objectives of the Congress were inevitably affected by such modifications, and the terms of reference, specified in Gillan's letter of May 1938, could therefore no longer be applicable. Such being the case, the Congress did not expect the Government to meet this natural manifestation of Sudanese aspirations with a withdrawal of its confidence, "so long as the methods adopted by [Congress] in putting forward the demands of the country did not go beyond legitimate means"; not did it expect that the restoration of that confidence would be made dependent on "undefined and unintelligible conditions".

Ibrahim Ahmad reaffirmed that, in the absence of any other representative body, the Congress expressed public opinion in the country and that it would not abdicate that position in spite of the Government's tendency to "monopolise the right to decide [Sudan] affairs". He pointed out that the Government had rejected all the demands contained in the Memorandum, when it could have confined its rejection to some demands, and discussed the form and substance of the others. In an apparent attempt to initiate a discussion on the Memorandum, he reaffirmed the demands and expressed the hope that nothing would "prevent understanding concerning those demands if the country's welfare is the common object."¹

The way was thus opened for negotiation on the contents of the Memorandum, and Congress spokesmen moved swiftly to clarify the position of the intelligentsia. In the Memorandum, they argued, the Sudanese were merely putting forward their point of view and expressing certain hopes which they had cherished for a long time with occasional doubts.² However, if the Sudan had not yet achieved the necessary qualifications for complete independence, it was then quite idle for the Sudanese to speculate on the

1. Ibid.

2. Al-M'utamar, 9 May 1942.

political status of the Sudan after the war, and they would therefore be prepared to confine themselves to discussions on purely local matters, like education and greater responsibilities for Sudanese officials.¹ In addition, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān made every effort to ensure that the Government became fully aware of the serious view that the intelligentsia took of the matter. In a number of private discussions with senior British officials, he indirectly defended the Congress point of view, and he expressed his appreciation that, if autonomous Sudanese nationalism was not encouraged, many Sudanese nationalists might, against their better judgement, throw themselves into the arms of Egypt.²

Newbold must have realised that he had probably over-reacted to the submission of the Memorandum. He had, however, already committed the Government to a position from which he could not easily retract without strengthening the hand of the militants in the Congress -- the very thing he had so anxiously sought to avoid. He wanted to restate the case, partly in an attempt to prevent a final breach

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 21 May 1942.

2. SPIS, No. 17, para 138, loc. cit. It is interesting to note that Mirghanist quarters accused Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān of having engineered the Memorandum and of using his influence to win for Congress the support of tribal chiefs.

with the Congress and also partly in an effort to regain the support of the moderate elements within the Congress. Accordingly, in a letter dated 16 June, he reaffirmed the Government's position on the Memorandum and declared that, despite new tendencies of thought deriving from the war, the Government would not modify its attitude to the Congress as described in Gillan's letter. The fact that Congress was the only organised body of educated Sudanese did not "give it a monopoly of representation, or advice, or wisdom". The Government

"has never restricted its consultation with the Sudanese to one particular organisation, or any one group of individuals, and intends to continue to consult the Sudanese, whether educated or uneducated, individually or corporately, as widely as it wishes with a view to a full understanding of the needs and wishes of all classes, who, as His Excellency is well aware, have given loyal and valuable assistance in men, money and effort to the defense of the Sudan and the prosecution of the war."¹

While thus denying to Congress the role of sole mouthpiece of the Sudanese nation, Newbold nevertheless indirectly confirmed the Government's readiness to continue consultations with the Congress in carrying out the "numerous measures for the further development of the Sudan whether political, social or economic." But he

1. Civil Secretary to Congress President, 16.6.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16); also, Henderson, op. cit., pp. 546-547.

then committed an unfortunate tactical error. He delivered an unequivocal warning that, if the Congress persisted in its assuming a political role, the Government "will have no choice but to forbid its officials to become or to remain members of the Graduates' Congress" -- a warning that made it extremely difficult for the moderates to manoeuvre for a rapprochement without appearing to yield to Government threats.

On 20 June, in an effort to ensure that there would be no misunderstanding again, Newbold arranged for Penney to hold a private discussion with Ibrahim Ahmad on the Civil Secretary's letter.¹ Penney stated that, while the Government's two letters meant precisely what they said and stood as a statement of the Government's attitude, they did not infer any innate hostility to the Congress, nor did they close the door to a restoration of confidence and co-operation. He emphasized that there was nothing in the situation, from the Government's viewpoint at least, that would warrant any hasty and irrevocable action by the Congress, or by individual members of it, that could likely lead to a complete rupture.²

1. Newbold to Mayall, 21.6.1942, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 245.

2. SPIS, No. 17, para 140, loc. cit.

The moderates, however, on whom Newbold pinned his hopes to salvage the situation, were already losing their leverage in the Congress. Developments in the country had been already strengthening the hand of the militants. On 25 May 1942, the Government announced details of the long-awaited war allowance to Sudanese officials, but the latter were bitterly disappointed and resentfully criticised it as being totally unsatisfactory.¹ The militants in particular, both within the Committee of Sixty and outside it, agitated vigorously for the rejection of the allowance as a sign of protest.² At the peak of this agitation, the Government also announced that, due to increasing pressure of work resulting from the war, it had decided not to exercise the option to retire British officials on their attaining the age of 50, except for medical or other serious reasons; and that, failing the adequate supply of qualified young Sudanese, the Government

1. Al-Nīl, 28 May 1942; Sawt al-Sūdān, 28 May 1942, and Al-M'utamar, 30 May 1942. The Government's programme provided an allowance of 30 piastres a month to a person whose pay was 3 pounds or less (i.e. 10% or more for this salaried group); 50 piastres to those paid over 3 pounds upto 6.50 pounds (i.e. 7.7% to 14%); and 70 piastres to those paid over 6.5 pounds upto 17 pounds (i.e. 10% to 4%). The Sudanese reaction was summed up in Al-Nīl's cynical statement: "The mountain laboured and gave birth to a mouse."

2. SPIS, No. 17, para 143, loc. cit.

had decided to re-engage some of the already-pensioned British officials.¹ This announcement flared up widespread criticism of the Government for not choosing instead either to promote competent Sudanese to higher posts or to employ Sudanese with a university education from abroad. The militants agitated in several provinces for the support of local government leaders, cultivators and merchants and, in view of the growing dissatisfaction resulting from the deteriorating economic situation, their efforts met the encouraging responses.

In such circumstances, the verbal assurances given by Penney were considered by the Executive Committee as insufficient to satisfy the Committee of Sixty, and Ibrahim Ahmad therefore asked for a written record of the conversation. This was refused, on the grounds that an informal and discursive conversation of this nature could not properly be committed to writing, and instead Penney addressed a personal letter to him, explaining clearly what his objective had been in arranging the meeting.²

-
1. In 1942, 114 officials of different nationalities (38% British, 38% Sudanese and 24% other) reached retirement age. Of these, 73 were retained (40% British, 40% Sudanese and 20% others), and the remaining 41 were retired. Cf. "Government Communique No. 13", in Al-Nil, 28 May 1942.
 2. SPIS, No. 18, July 1942, para 150, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

The Executive Committee, however, were again not satisfied with this letter, and the impression grew in Congress circles that the aim of the conversation had been merely to lull the Congress into a state of acquiescence. At this point, Newbold decided to see himself the President and two other members of the Executive Committee ('Abd al-Mājid Ahmad and Dr 'Abd al-Halīm) in order, if possible, to stabilise the situation and lessen the danger of precipitate action by the Congress that could unfortunately lead to a complete and final breach.

In a frank discussion held on 16 July, Newbold took the same line as Penney had done. Explaining why he had written his two letters, and that those letters stood in every respect, he emphasized that the Government was not actuated by any hostility towards the educated class. On the contrary, he assured them, the increase of the Sudanese share in the administration of the country was indeed a fundamental part of its policy. But, in the process, the Government intended to maintain contact with all sections of responsible Sudanese opinion, and not only with the Congress. He told them that the undoubted hardening in attitude of British officials towards the Congress, of which they had complained, was due partly to war distractions and a distaste for politically-minded officials, but mainly due to the increasing carping and hostile attitude of

Al-Nil; to the "foolish and persistent" claim of the Congress to represent the whole Sudan; to Congress's undemocratic habit of regarding Sudanese officials who declined to join it as renegades or "dogs of the Government"; and above all, especially as regards the alienation of the District Commissioners, to the widespread campaign in the provinces to canvass and enrol villagers, artisans and tribesmen, with scant regard to the educational qualifications laid down by the founders of the Congress themselves. How could, he asked, ex-khalwa lorry-drivers be regarded, by any stretch of the imagination, as "graduates"? If they did not stop such recruitment, the Government would have to dilute its recognition of the Congress. He urged them to go for quality rather than quantity, as the Government was unimpressed by large membership and judged the Congress neither by its noise nor by its numbers. He urged them also to damp down Al-Nil for a period, and to curb their younger "exhibitionists", whose antics were seriously damaging some of the very aims of the Congress for which he had been actively working -- e.g. the greater dilution of British posts and the closer association of the educated Sudanese with the Government, both in the provinces and in the capital. He also pointed out the effect that their Memorandum had in Egypt -- namely, the annoyance on the

part of that Government and an immediate recrudescence of the Egyptian "colonial" attitude to the Sudan.¹ Congress was urged to leave diplomatic matters to the Sudan Government, who were experienced in these delicate subjects and had an open record of defending Sudanese interests against outside exploitation whether British, Egyptian, Indian or otherwise. He made clear the Government's objection to civil servants indulging in public political controversy and the reasons why the Congress could not be recognised as a political body. He added that, until such time as adequate machinery existed for the official representation of Sudanese opinion in matters of policy, there was no objection to Sudanese leaders of opinion and responsible government officials, whether members of the Congress or not, intimating their views on such matters either by personal approach or private delegation, provided that such contacts were treated by them as confidential and were not used as material for self-advertisement. But no Government, he argued, could countenance the overt political agitation of the previous months by its afandiyya, unless it adopted the method of promoting such officials on the basis of loyalty rather than merit. He affirmed that he still had confidence in

1. In fact, the Egyptians had suspected that the Memorandum was British-inspired and had refrained from playing it up in the Egyptian press.

the Executive Committee but little in the Committee of Sixty, and he urged them to act courageously to dissuade the Sixty from folly or defiance, which could only result in a clash with the Government.¹

The Congress representatives professed to be personally satisfied with Newbold's assurances, but they again asked for some record of the discussion in writing, which they could show to their Committees. On the following day, therefore, Newbold handed Ibrahim Ahmad a personal letter, summarising certain points of the conversation and saying that, while announcements of Government policy were and would continue to be made from time to time, it was obviously right that they should be made to the public of the Sudan and not to any particular section.² In this way, while recognising the Congress as representing "a considerable body of educated opinion", he denied to it the status of "sole mouthpiece" of the whole nation.

Newbold's letter proved to be on the whole acceptable to the moderate elements in the Executive Committee, particularly the Mahdists who had by now become apprehensive

-
1. SPIS, No. 18, para 151, loc. cit.; also, Newbold to Mayall, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 252 and 268.
 2. Newbold to Ibrahim Ahmad, 17.7.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16); also, Henderson, op. cit., pp. 548-9.

of the growing and undesirable conflict with the Government. But when the Committee of Sixty met on 24 July to discuss Newbold's letter and consider the action to be taken, the Executive Committee was virtually confronted with a revolt by the militants, led by Isma'īl al-Azhari, who openly accused it of "weakness and cowardice". Ibrahim Ahmad and some others, however, pressured to Sixty to accept the position as put to them by Newbold and to avoid any tendency to place the Congress in political opposition to the Government. In an attempt to reach a compromise, the Committee of Sixty finally adopted a resolution that the reply to the Civil Secretary, while expressing an acceptance of the existing position, should also make it clear that the Congress stood by the demands contained in the Memorandum and reserved the right to pursue the matter at a future date. A heated discussion followed and the meeting broke up without a clear agreement being reached as to the character of the proposed reply. Ibrahim Ahmad was, however, authorised to draft the reply to Newbold, and to submit it to the Sixty for approval.¹ Everybody, including Newbold, wondered whether he would be able to produce a draft likely at once to be acceptable to the Government and to satisfy the expectations of the

1. SPIS, No. 18, para 151, loc. cit.

Sixty.

In the event, Ibrahim Ahmad drafted a carefully-worded letter, which was delivered to Newbold on 24 August. In his reply, Ibrahim Ahmad expressed the gratification of the Congress at the assurances given by Newbold and Penney of the Government's sympathy for "the hopes and aspirations of Congress" for the progress of the Sudan and its future. He accepted the Government's affirmations, expressed in those conversations, that the Sudanese would be consulted when the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was reconsidered, and that the Sudanese share of responsibility in the administration of the country's public affairs would be increased "by endeavouring to set up a representative advisory Sudanese body, and by increasing the number of responsible Sudanese posts in the Government." He welcomed these as the realisation of some of the demands embodied in the Memorandum, and he expressed the hope that continued contact between the Congress and the Government would "lead to complete understanding on all its demands." But, by simultaneously emphasizing "the Government's sincere wish that contact should continue between it and the Congress", he gave the impression, whether intentionally or not, that such continued contact was conditional on the eventual

realisation of all the demands embodied in the Memorandum.¹ Apparently, in an attempt to convey the impression that the letter was not influenced by militant opposition in the Committee of Sixty and thereby presenting it as a product of the moderates, Ibrahim Ahmad back-dated the letter to 23 July -- one day before the adoption of the resolution by the Sixty.

Newbold had expected a more favourable end to the whole affair. He had apparently misinterpreted developments in the Congress and, only a few days before receiving Congress's reply, he thought that the moderates had

"won through, and I am awaiting a final epistle, which will 'call it a day' and accept the Government letters with, probably, some reservation of 'inalienable rights'. The delay is rather unaccountable and may be due to events in India. I went as far as I could."²

Newbold must have therefore been sadly disappointed at the reply of the Congress, which he interpreted again as another victory of the militants. The letter was a "cleverly drafted document which could not be allowed to remain on record unchallenged", for fear that any future

-
1. Ibrahim Ahmad to Newbold, 23.7.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16); also, Henderson, op. cit., p. 550.
 2. Newbold to Mayall, 14.8.1942, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 268.

co-operation with the Congress might be coloured by that implied condition.¹ But how was he to respond, and what were the options open to him in the event the Congress insisted on the stand it had taken?

Newbold appreciated the fact that the Congress could not confine itself to purely social matters and that it would inevitably interest itself in politics. But he was definitely not prepared to allow it then to become a political body in the sense of an opposition party, as otherwise the Government might be faced with the alternatives of a policy of appeasement on the one hand, or of suppression on the other, neither of which he was inclined to adopt unless forced to do so. A policy of appeasement would have opened the door to a "sequence of blackmail and premature concessions, and would bewilder the non-Congress body of enlightened Sudanese; suppression would create a sense of frustration, clashes, and probably 'martyrs', and might drive the movement underground and into the arms of Egypt."²

Newbold therefore delayed his reply until he had

-
1. Civil Secretary's Circular to All Governors and Heads of Department, 22.9.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16).
 2. D. Newbold, "The Graduates' Congress: Directive Statement", 21.9.1942, Ibid.

put his own house in order first. On 10 September 1942, he submitted a Note to the Governor-General's Council, outlining certain proposals on how the Government could best meet the legitimate aspirations of Sudanese nationalism.¹ These proposals, which included the establishment of an indigenous Advisory Council, were approved in principle on 14 September and, armed with this mandate, he felt politically confident to respond firmly to the Congress's letter.

In his reply to Ibrahim Ahmad, Newbold pointed out that the renewed reference to the demands embodied in the Memorandum showed a misunderstanding of the Government's position regarding the role and membership of the Congress, and he regretted that there was nothing in the President's letter to indicate any intention on the part of the Congress to "examine those aspects of its activities and organisation" which were considered as manifestly contrary to their expressed desire for co-operation with the Government. He reiterated the evidence proving the British intention to associate the Sudanese in the government of the country and expressed his confidence that "all enlightened Sudanese will see in [these] measures tangible proofs of the earnest

1. The Note is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

intention of the Government to execute its policies." He hoped that the Congress, on its part, would realise its own responsibility and make a serious effort to co-operate both in the restoration of good relations and in the execution of Government policy. With this clear implication that the restoration of good relations was conditional on the Congress putting its house in order, Newbold officially terminated further correspondence on the subject.¹

This action was indeed unfortunate, for it inevitably limited the options for manoeuvres, both by Newbold and the Congress. As it has already been shown, Newbold misinterpreted the submission of the Memorandum as being essentially the product of a well-orchestrated lobbying by the militants and his respective responses were consequently based on that misconception. The correspondence on the Memorandum had convinced him that the moderates were either unable or unwilling to check the pressures of the militants, and he therefore felt that the best way to achieve this objective was to bring effective Government pressure to bear on the Congress. Accordingly, in a move obviously designed to threaten the existence of the

1. Newbold to Ibrahim Ahmad, 19.9.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16); also, in Henderson, op. cit., pp. 551-2.

Congress, Newbold instructed the Legal Department to issue a circular directive forbidding its judges and legal assistants to serve on any Congress central or branch Committees, except those whose sole function was to deal with educational or social matters. Soon thereafter, he authorised all Province Governors to impose a similar ban on sub-Inspectors, māmūrs, sub-māmūrs and police officers.¹

These two circulars, together with Newbold's final reply, deeply distressed the Congress, who clearly interpreted these measures as open acts of hostility from the part of the Government. The subsequent appointment of a Sudanese Relations Officer in the Civil Secretariat was interpreted by the graduates as an additional attempt to undermine the Congress by developing individual contacts with educated Sudanese, instead of encouraging a policy of collective consultation through it.

The breach between the Congress and the Government, which both tried so hard to avoid, had finally materialised in spite, and probably as a result, of each other's attempts to devise a face-saving formula to solve the crisis generated by the submission of the Memorandum.

1. SPIS, No. 19, August-September 1942, para 158, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

C H A P T E R F O U R

THE GROWTH OF FACTIONS WITHIN THE CONGRESS

The Triumph of the Militants.

Despite the rapture with the Congress, Newbold was convinced that a very large proportion of its members were genuinely anxious to co-operate with the Government, and he urged British officials to make contact with them and to strengthen their hand against the more vocal "but less responsible hot-heads". He sought to reassure these persons that, despite the conflict resulting from the ill-timed manifesto, the Government was still "interested in them and their views, that we want to understand and appreciate their outlook and that we are prepared to tell them frankly when and why we disagree with them."¹ At the same time, he counselled against any tendency by British officials to simply disregard the "less responsible elements", or to treat them as a mere nuisance. Newbold urged instead that personal contact should be maintained with them as well, though discreetly and through occasional sympathetic

1. Newbold to All Governors, "The Graduates' Congress: Directive Statement", 21.9.1942, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4388/1528/16).

discussion of their more reasonable aspirations. His objective was to establish mutual confidence, in the hope of inducing them to adopt a more friendly and co-operative attitude toward the Government's policies.

In either case, Newbold sought to impress on all the Congress members that, while the Government was prepared to continue to give due consideration to their views on public matters, it would only do so on two conditions: Firstly, that if they had any doubt about the propriety of the subject, or the method of presentation, they should seek advice from a responsible British official; and secondly that, having presented their views and recommendations, they should be prepared to abide by the result and not oppose declared policy by political agitation or other means.

The contents of Newbold's directive became known verbatim to Congress members and reactions to it varied according to political attitudes.¹ Mirghanist quarters were somewhat pleased to see the Government finally drawn into a conflict with a Mahdist-dominated Congress, and they grasped the opportunity to blame British officials for the failure of moderate (and by inference Mirghanist)

1. SPIS, No. 20, October 1942, para 163, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

elements to smooth the relations between Congress and the Government. The authorities, they argued, had failed to pay sufficient attention to their presence in the Congress and had not given due consideration to their opinions.¹ Other moderate nationalists, however, Mahdist and non-Mahdist alike, took exception to the Government's repeated reference to "responsible public opinion" which, being then clearly undefined, could mean all things to all men. In the absence of a parliament, they argued, or an advisory council which could speak on behalf of the whole nation, the Government had better give primary consideration to views expressed by the Congress which had the greatest influence over the public. They warned that individual unripe opinions expressed at tea parties or in the course of other private meetings could not be taken seriously, and they counselled Newbold not to expand the official practice of individual consultations, but to encourage instead a policy of collective consultation through the Congress.²

The reaction of the militant elements was, as expected, uncompromising. Not only did they reject Newbold's stipulated procedure for submitting future Congress

1. Editorial, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 27 September 1942.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 5 October 1942.

memoranda, but they also viewed with deep concern the Government's deliberate efforts to strengthen the position of the moderates, both inside and outside the Congress. In the days that followed, they quietly watched the situation while they evaluated the various alternative courses of action open to them. In the end, they decided to concentrate their efforts in winning decisively the forthcoming elections and imposing their effective control over the Congress.

The task did not appear easy at first sight. Two newly-formed groups had already entered the field. The first, the Abu Rūf group, comprised mostly graduates who were employed in the Finance Department and who shared a common devotion to Fabian principles.¹ They viewed the Congress as a cultural and political movement whose final goal was to achieve the cultural and political independence of the Sudan. In this respect, they were not prepared to accept the limitations imposed by Newbold on the Congress's role. The second group, calling itself Al-M'ūtamirrīn al-Ahrār, was born of a split between 'Abd al-Rahīm

1. The group first made its appearance in the late 1920's as a literary society and it gathered for discussion at the house of Hasan and Husayn Ahmad 'Uthmān in Abu Rūf. It included also Makāwi Sulaymān Akrat, 'Abdallah Mirghani and Khidir Hamad.

Shaddād¹ and Yahya al-Faḍli, both of whom were close associates of Azhari -- a split probably arising from some disagreement about sectarianism in Congress's activities.² The Ahrār consisted of petty merchants, artisans and other non-afandiyya elements who, unhampered by the restrictions of civil service regulations, were anxious to take an effective part in the Congress's activities and who, like the Abu Rūf group, were determined to keep themselves independent of either Sayyid. On the question of the Congress's relations with the Government, however, both of these groups held views more akin to those of Ibrahim Ahmad, than to those of Azhari, and they were consequently expected to side with former in the elections.

The appearance of these two groups probably suggested to the militants that they should concentrate their efforts along two lines of action. On the one hand, they should seek to undermine further the base of electoral support on which their opponents depended. In this connection, they courted the alliance of Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Faḍil. During the debates following the submission of the Memorandum, Sayyid 'Abdullāhi had increasingly

1. 'Abd al-Rahīm Shaddād: Employed in the Posts and Telecommunications Department; as President of the Football Association, he was a popular figure in the Sudanese community, especially in the sporting clubs, where the Ahrār counted on wide support.

2. SPIS, No. 21, November 1942, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2856/200/16).

associated himself with the position adopted by the more militant wing of the Congress. This posture had been calculated to win for him a personal influence over the Congress and, in so doing, to counter-balance the rising influence of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's sons (Ṣiddīq and al-Hādī) who, backed by the powerful Ya'qūb al-Ḥilu¹, had gradually rendered his position as the Sayyid's chief lieutenant very precarious indeed.² When he was

-
1. Ya'qūb al-Ḥilu: Son of Khalīfa 'Alī wad al-Ḥilu (one of the Mahdī's khulafā') and nephew of the Khalīfa 'Abdullāhi; employed as a clerk in the Intelligence Department and later retired to an agricultural scheme.
 2. In the 1930's, Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Fāḍil and Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf were quite successful in extending Mahdist influence among the intelligentsia. In December 1935, under strong Government pressure, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān grudgingly replaced 'Abdullāhi al-Fāḍil with Ya'qūb al-Ḥilu as his wakīl in Khartoum. The former, however, continued his activities and, with the appearance of the Congress idea, he gained increasing favour with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. By the end of 1937, both 'Abdullāhi al-Fāḍil and Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf had come to enjoy paramount influence in Mahdist circles and, with matters becoming extremely uncomfortable, Ya'qūb al-Ḥilu resigned and retired to an agricultural scheme on the White Nile. From then onwards, owing to his position as Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's wakīl in Khartoum and to his membership in the Congress Committees, Sayyid 'Abdullāhi's personal influence and ambition had grown continuously. In August 1941, however, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Shingīti and Muhammad 'Alī Shawqī launched a movement designed to replace him with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's son, al-Ṣiddīq, whom they believed more suitable as a successor to the Sayyid's role in the nationalist movement. Cf. SPIS, No. 9, August 1941, PRO, FO.371/27382 (J1/1/16).

approached, therefore, Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil decided to throw his support behind the militants led by Isma'īl al-Azhari and Yahya al-Fadli.¹ Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān did not approve of 'Abdullāhi's intrigues but, probably not realising the serious consequences that were to follow, he did not do anything definite to stop them. As usual, he wanted to have it both ways, believing that Yahya al-Fadli could still prove useful to him. In the circumstances, the Mahdist camp was split, one part supporting 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil and Azhari, and the other part supporting Ibrahim Ahmad and the influential Hashmāb group.²

The second line of action open to the militants was to mobilise as much support as possible, particularly among the newly-recruited members of the Congress. The endeavour to expand Congress membership had constantly been an important activity of the graduates, becoming particularly intense during the election season. In

-
1. SPIS, No. 21, November 1942, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2946/200/16). In August 1941, Yahya al-Fadli had clashed with Ahmad Yusif Hashim over some petty issue, and there gradually evolved a personal animosity between these two individuals. His decision to back Azhari was very much motivated by this animosity.
 2. Ahmad Yusif Hashim's faction, which also included some of his relatives, were popularly known by this name.

November 1942, however, this drive assumed an unprecedented and peculiar form. In response to Newbold's circulars, the graduates wanted to make Congress less open to government pressure by increasing the proportion of its non-afandiyya membership and, in this way also, to offset the compulsory withdrawal of government officials from its Committees. Accordingly, the Sixty approved an alteration to the membership application form, which had previously required a candidate to state the school at which he had been educated and the length of time he had spent at it. The new form merely asked whether the "educational and cultural level" of the candidate was above the elementary.¹ The militants exploited this alteration and registered, as members of Congress, a large number of ineligible persons, particularly from among the artisan and petty merchant classes. On realising this, the Executive Committee tried to bring the situation under control. They announced that no member would be admitted to vote unless he carried a special pink card, signed by the President, as proof of his identity and membership, and that members had to call individually to collect and sign for their cards beforehand. A member who could not sign his name and write his address freely was to be

1. SPIS, No. 21, November 1942, loc. cit.

regarded as unqualified for membership and would not be given a voting card. The measure proved only partially successful. While it kept out illiterate elements, it did not prevent the registration of persons with elementary educational standards (or less) -- persons who knew how to write but were not necessarily qualified to be regarded as "graduates". 'Abdullāhi al-Fāḍil and Yaḥya al-Faḍli successfully canvassed this new electoral bloc of petty merchants and shopkeepers and, with additional support from some Mahdist elements and the militants, they were able to defeat the opposition in the Congress elections.

Ibrahim Ahmad apparently did not gauge properly the general feeling among the voters. He based his campaign on the issue of "responsible" versus "irresponsible" leadership, inappropriately associating the former with the senior graduates and the latter with the junior ones. He called upon the moderates not to leave the field entirely to the subyān, but to step in with their experience and to lead them along the proper path. He emphasized that the real threat to the Congress came not so much from external forces but rather from internal disruptive influences. His admonitions, however fell mostly on deaf ears. For, given the aftermath of the Memorandum, the economic hardships of wartime conditions and the hard line proposed in Newbold's directive, the

majority of Congress members felt that Ibrahim Ahmad's moderation now verged on submission.

The elections resulted in a resounding victory for Azhari's faction, which secured about 40 seats in the Committee of Sixty.¹ Azhari himself headed the poll with nearly 200 votes more than Ibrahim Ahmad, and his election to the Presidency of the Congress thus appeared a foregone conclusion. It was equally obvious that the new Executive Committee, to be elected the following afternoon, would consist almost entirely of Azhari's faction and that, if any members of the Hashmāb group managed to find a place, they could be no more than an insignificant minority. Ibrahim Ahmad, Shawqi, Shinqīti and the Hashmāb were furious, and they held several meetings to decide whether, if elected, they should remain on the Executive Committee or withdraw.

Meanwhile, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and his lieutenants met to consider various means of effecting a compromise and preventing an irreparable split in the Mahdist ranks. He instructed 'Abdullāhi al-Fāḍil to stay away from the

1. SPIS, No. 22, December 1942, PRO. FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16). The remaining 20 seats were shared by the Hashmāb, the Ahrār and the Abu Rūf factions in about equal proportions. About 1250 members took part in the elections. Isma'īl al-Azhari was elected President, Amīn Zaydān Secretary and Isma'īl 'Uthmān Treasurer.

meeting which would elect the new Executive Committee, believing that, without Abdullāhi's attendance and nomination, Azhari's ticker would lose considerable Mahdist support. On a different line of action, Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf and others proposed to Yahya al-Fadli and his caucus that they should elect a fair proportion of the Hashmāb group to the Executive Committee, that Ibrahim Ahmad should be elected President and that both Yahya al-Fadli and Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim (the principal protagonists) should keep out of the Executive Committee. The proposals were definitely unacceptable but, in order to prevent further canvassing by the opposition, Yahya al-Fadli gave the false impression that they had agreed to them. When voting time came, however, the militants elected an entirely partisan Committee, with only Ibrahim Ahmad from the opposition managing to squeeze in. To Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's additional chagrin, 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil was nominated, and elected, in absentia to the new Executive Committee.

As soon as the results were announced, Ibrahim Ahmad, 'Awad Sātti and Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi resigned from the Committee of Sixty.¹ All efforts to persuade them to

1. Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi and 'Awad Sātti did not belong to the Hashmāb group. They were indeed among Yahya al-Fadli's nominations, but they did not like him nor wished to be associated with his caucus against Ibrahim Ahmad.

withdraw their resignations failed, and reservists had to be taken in their place.

During those first few days, there was much talk to the effect that some provincial branch committees might pass a vote of no confidence in the new Executive Committee. In fact, the members of the Wad Medani branch committee (the most influential Congress body in the provinces) did consider such a step, but they ultimately decided against taking any action at that moment. The general feeling, both at Wad Medani and other provincial centres, was that while the new Executive Committee was not worthy of such confidence, any open action against it at this stage would endanger the existence of the Congress itself. Even the vanquished Hashmāb, in fear of bringing down the whole structure of the Congress, preferred to abstain from such drastic action as resigning en masse from the Sixty.¹ They took comfort instead in the time-honoured belief that personalities changed but that political institutions remained. If the new Executive Committee lived up to their responsibilities all would be well; if not, they and not the Congress would disappear.²

1. SPIS, No. 23, January 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).

2. Muḥammad 'Amir Bashīr in Al-Nīl, 24 December 1942.

The 1942 elections mark a turning point in the evolution of the Congress. Whereas in previous years the elections had been contested by the two traditional parties (the Mahdists and the Mirghanists) with their sub-divisions working within each, in 1942 four distinct factions entered the field on the basis of a new alignment, completely superseding the old sectarian division. The interplay of personal animosities that engulfed the elections, coupled with an uncompromising pursuit of personal power by the principal protagonists, not only subverted sectarian solidarity, but had also seriously undermined unity within the Congress itself, leading to a split with far-reaching consequences. On the one hand, coming on the eve of a renewed Anglo-Egyptian tussle over the future of the Sudan, such a split fostered the evolution of various factions into distinct political parties, each advocating its particular path to independence. On the other hand, this split gradually subordinated nationalist aspirations to personal ambition which, unable to succeed on its own, subsequently mobilised sectarian support on a basis that was to influence politics for many years to come.

In the light of Government restrictions on political activities by its Sudanese officials, the outcome of the 1942 elections had an additional serious impact on the evolution of the Congress. The defeat of the moderates

devalued further the authority of the Congress in the eyes of the Government and undermined any prospects of an immediate rapprochement. This factor, in its turn, caused increasing difficulty for the Congress in pursuing effectively the implementation of its programmes, even with regard to those projects which were purely concerned with social matters. Thus, when the Executive Committee delegated a number of government officials to collect from their office colleagues their annual Education Day subscriptions, the Government directed these officials not to undertake the task, pointing out that in doing so they would be giving the collection an official colour.¹ Again, when the Executive Committee addressed a circular to senior graduates soliciting their views on higher education, many of the recipients, not knowing what use the Committee proposed to make of such views, were reluctant to express any.² Finally, when a number of Sudanese officials presented the Government with a petition setting out the cost of living hardships and asking for relief, they did so directly, rejecting Congress's mediation on

1. SPIS, No. 23, January 1943, loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 27, May-June 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).

the grounds that it had nothing to do with the matter.¹ The 1938 subtle distinction between social and political activity thus became blurred and, in the absence of Government co-operation, Congress's activities henceforth inevitably assumed political overtones.

Under the direction of Yahya al-Fadli, the Executive Committee embarked on a public relations campaign, apparently designed in part to restore Congress's public image. They organised numerous tea parties, at which Azhari featured as the main speaker, and they arranged political tours to various parts of the country where Congress leaders could come into personal contact with tribal shaykhs and notables.² The campaign proved successful in projecting Congress's lively concern with the social issues confronting the community; but a more important consequence was that the campaign established Isma'īl al-Azhari as an increasingly prominent national figure and closely identified the Congress with him.

The Beginnings of Flirtation with Egypt.

The year 1943 witnessed major constitutional

1. SPIS, No. 28, July 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).

2. SPIS, No. 25, March 1943, Ibid.

developments in the Sudan. Early in 1942, Newbold had begun to study lines of further associating the Sudanese, and especially the educated elements, with local and central government. But his preoccupation with urgent war matters, coupled with a desire to acquaint himself more fully with the future trend of British colonial policy, imposed on him a delay in completing the details of his proposed scheme. The submission of the Congress manifesto, however, and the sequence of events that followed it, incited Newbold to resume his task. From replies he had received to a circular sent to the Governors of the northern provinces in March 1940, he had become convinced that the majority of British officials did not realise in what a sadly backward state local government was at the time. He was apprehensive that Congress's political agitation in Khartoum, and its ill-advised "electioneering" in the provinces following the submission of the Memorandum, would undesirably polarize the position of most British officials on the whole question of relations between the Government and the educated class. He was determined to save the situation and accordingly, in September 1942, he submitted a Note to the Governor-General's Council, recommending certain proposals for achieving a more substantial

association of the Sudanese with the administration of their country.¹

In this Note, Newbold advised his colleagues not to allow "this Congress sandstorm" from fogging the basic issue lying before the Government, "of how to meet adequately the legitimate and reasonable aspirations of the enlightened Sudanese, both in the towns and in the countryside, and including the more progressive tribal leaders and merchants as well as the mainly official class known as 'effendia'." He viewed this basic issue as having two aspects: One concerned the nature of the proposed association, while the other involved the pace at which this association could be implemented. In regard to the first aspect, Newbold impressed on his colleagues that the future trend of British colonial policy aimed at converting "trusteeship" into "partnership", and that these progressive sentiments were being propagated by Colonial Ministers and responsible ex-Governors, and not merely by people normally described as "left-wing idealists" or "humanitarian cranks". Good Government, he declared, was indeed no lasting substitution for

1. D. Newbold, "Note on Further Association of Sudanese with Local and Central Government in the Sudan", 10.9.1942, CRO, NORTHERN 2/1/11; also, PRO, FO.371/31587 (J4413/1528/16); and in Henderson, op. cit., pp. 553-560.

self-government. In his view, the episode of the Congress Memorandum had high-lighted the urgent and genuine need to move from trusteeship to partnership, a need which was manifestly obscured by the extravagant demands of a section of the educated Sudanese, but which nonetheless must not be neglected or overlooked. No colonial Government, he warned, could conduct for long a progressive or happy administration without the co-operation of the educated classes. "To deny or delay their effective participation in the various branches of government means that disgruntlement turns into despair, and despair into revolt, of which the end is Amritsar."¹

In regard to the second aspect -- the pace of moving towards partnership -- Newbold counselled against the view that war-time was no time for far-reaching schemes of political or administrative development, and that Government should await the piping times of peace before it embarked on such paths. He pointed out that the times of peace would not be wo piping after all. "There will be a psychological malaise among British officials, a reaction from war-effort, an exodus on long leave, a spate of retirements with consequent changes in higher posts, an influx of raw recruits, a restlessness among Sudanese

1. Ibid.

for the removal of economic restrictions (which may well have to be kept on awhile) and a probable distraction of the Central Government on to external affairs (future of Eritrea, Lake Tsana, increased attention from Egypt, pan-Arabism, winding up of Imperial finance questions)."¹ It was imperative, therefore, to begin immediately laying the foundations of a full Sudanese share in the Government not only to honour local and Allied pledges, but also to present a united front to the outside world, particularly to any renewed claim by Egypt to sovereignty over the Sudan.

Newbold's proposals were approved in principle by the Council and in his broadcast to the people on Muslim new year's day in January 1943, Huddleston announced in unequivocal terms this new basis in Government policy. He identified local government councils and administrations as "the foundation on which the part to be played by the Sudanese in the future of their country will be built".² On these bodies, which he regarded as giving the individual Sudanese a fuller chance of representing his opinion, Huddleston proposed to confer a very real and constitutional

1. Ibid.

2. Governor-General's Message to the Sudanese People, PRO, FO.371/35576 (J1024/50/16).

transfer of executive power and responsibility, and he appointed a high-powered Special Committee to examine the best method of implementing these proposals.¹

Huddleston's message made a deep impression in Sudanese political circles. For several days, it was the subject of widespread and generally favourable comment in the capital, since it was regarded as the first official pronouncement on the Government's intention of admitting the Sudanese to a closer and increasing association in the administration. Coming from the Governor-General on a public occasion, it had the added effect of confirming all previous assurances and putting them on a new plane as an approved and proclaimed policy. But, despite the realisation that this was an important political step forward, Sudanese nationalists did not think it went far enough. In their view, local councils and administrations could not give the Sudanese as full and real an opportunity for closer association in government as would a general representative Advisory Council authorised to express opinions on the political, social and economic development of the country. Local councils and administrations, it was argued, acted in narrow circles

1. Newbold to Mayall, 30.1.1943, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 293.

and for limited objectives which were only part of a general policy. It was imperative that the Sudanese should participate in laying down this general policy for the whole country, otherwise their opportunities for self-expression would remain only of secondary importance. In this respect, therefore, Sudanese nationalists believed that only the establishment of a higher representative Council would constitute genuine political progress in the Sudan.¹

While these serious reservations still lingered on in the minds of the nationalists, the Government announced the formation of a Local Government Advisory Board, a departmental committee whose function was to advise the Civil Secretary on matters pertaining to local government. The composition of the Board was designed to secure the representation both of the departments chiefly interested in local government development and of "responsible Sudanese opinion". Misinterpreting the function of this Board as being to make political recommendations in connection with the new line of Government policy, the nationalists resented the fact that representatives of the Congress had not been included on it. They were furthermore upset by the Government's reference to the appointed

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 14 January 1943.

Sudanese officials as representatives of "responsible Sudanese opinion". This phrase had been used by Newbold repeatedly in rejecting the Memorandum and Congress's claim to represent the Sudanese people. Its use again in this particular reference carried with it implications which the nationalists were not prepared to leave unchallenged. Sudanese opinion, they retorted, could only be represented by an elected, not appointed, body and they felt that, since the Congress was the only such body, it alone could rightfully claim to reflect "responsible" opinion and it should therefore have been represented on this Board.¹

The Government eventually clarified the role of the Local Government Advisory Board as being purely administrative, not political or representative, in character; and the agitation finally subsided. But the incident had jolted some members of the Executive Committee. Winston Churchill's controversy with Wendell Wilkie over the future of the British empire, Sir Stafford Cripps's exit from the War Cabinet, and the tone of the speeches made by various British statesmen on the position of the empire in the post-war world had already generated a deep sense of apprehension among nationalists that the

1. Editorial, Sawt al-Sūdān, 10 February 1943; also, Editorial, Al-Nīl, 10 February 1943.

determination to build a new world based on new ideals, so often expressed in times of defeat, might be forgotten in the hour of victory.¹ Thus, the events surrounding the formation of the Local Government Advisory Board were interpreted by some members of the Executive Committee as prefiguring some of the ominous impediments that the new Government policy presented to the Congress. Firstly, there was a very real danger that, with the withdrawal of Government co-operation, Congress would neither be consulted nor actively participate, let alone take the lead, in the anticipated political developments. Secondly, with the Congress so excluded, these developments could be diverted onto an undesirable path, culminating into a configuration of local councils with a strong rural flavour and with appointed, not elected, members -- a path which ultimately meant more delays in self-government and independence. Both of these impediments, the nationalists felt, had somehow to be neutralised effectively.

The primary concern of the new Executive Committee was to pursue further the realisation of the demands in the Congress Memorandum and, despairing of any prospects of sympathetic co-operation from the Government, Azhari and his confidants turned to Egypt for political support.

1. SPIS, No. 22, December 1942, loc. cit.

There had been a renewed interest by the Egyptian Government in Sudan affairs and, in fact, some attempts had been made to initiate contacts with the Congress. In October 1942, as a result of efforts by 'Ali al-Birayr and the Cairo Congress Committee, the Egyptian Government agreed that applications by Sudanese students for free admission to Egyptian schools should be channelled through the Congress instead of through the Sudan Education Department.¹ Furthermore, when the sandstorm of the Congress Memorandum was still blowing, the Egyptian Economic Expert in Khartoum had held political discussions with prominent Sudanese nationalists on the future of the Sudan and had requested them to submit to him a statement of Sudanese aspirations for transmission to Naḥḥās Pasha.²

In June 1943, therefore, Azhari visited Egypt with the view of discussing the Memorandum with Egyptian leaders. Ostensibly, he went alone and in a private capacity as an official going on leave, but two other members of the

1. Al-Nīl, 15 October 1942. The Cairo Committee was first established by the Congress in April 1942, and originally comprised 'Ali al-Birayr, Maḥmud 'Abu'l-'Ila and Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

2. SPIS, No. 19, August-September 1942, para 160, CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

Committee of Sixty, Maḥmūd al-Faḍli¹ and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān², also left by the same train. The three arrived in Cairo as one party and let it be known that they were a delegation from the Congress on a political mission.

Almost immediately, Azhari set about arranging private meetings with influential government and other political personalities, particularly members of the Watanist party known for their interest in the Sudan. He intimated that the Congress wanted to open secret negotiations with Egyptian politicians concerning the future of the Sudan, and more particularly to concert measures for eliminating British influence from the Nile valley after the war.³

Azhari also tried to see the Prime Minister but Naḥḥās evaded him believing, as most Egyptians did at that time, that the Congress Memorandum was conceived and submitted at the instigation of the Sudan Government with a view to stimulating Sudanese autonomy at the expense of Egypt.

Azhari persisted and followed Naḥḥās to Alexandria where, on the intervention of Maḥmūd Sulaymān Ghannam (Minister of Commerce), he finally secured an interview.

In the meeting, Azhari assured the Prime Minister that the

1. Maḥmūd al-Faḍli: Brother of Yahya al-Faḍli; teacher at Omdurman National School; leading member of the Ashiqqā' party and later of the National Unionist party.

2. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān: an accountant employed in a private business firm.

3. SPIS, No. 38, July 1943, loc. cit.

Congress was not a British-sponsored movement and that it was not pursuing a "separatist" policy, but Nahhās remained unconvinced and gave him to understand as much in a courteous manner.¹

Although Azhari's first exploratory mission to Egypt was unproductive, the publicity given by the Congress magazine to the exalted contacts he made inevitably enhanced his personal prestige at home even more. The experience of the visit had a more direct impact on Azhari's political attitude as well. Exactly what scheme Azhari had in mind in connection with securing Egyptian support for the Congress is not known, for the subject was not developed in depth in the interview with Nahhās. But the scepticism

1. Apparently, Nahhās Pasha consulted Shaykh Ahmad ʿUthmān al-Qādi, who was in Egypt at the time, about the importance of Congress, the status of Azhari and whether he should see him or not. Shaykh Ahmad advised against the interview and deliberately sabotaged Azhari's mission. A few weeks earlier, Shaykh Ahmad had tried to convince Egyptian politicians that the Memorandum was a genuinely spontaneous expression of Sudanese aspirations and that the Congress was not a Government-sponsored movement. But "when Azhari arrived and embarked on the same attempt and I found the Egyptians sceptical about him and his assurances that Congress did not represent a separatist movement, I decided to reverse my tactics and leave them in their error so that they should continue to mistrust Azhari". Note by Sheikh Ahmed Othman al Qadi on his stay in Egypt from 1.5.43 to 12.10.43, 23.11.1943, PRO, FO.371/42363 (J713/185/16); also, in FO.141/939 (file 31/9/44).

exhibited by his Egyptian hosts about the integrity of the Congress, and his resulting anxiety to neutralise such scepticism, became two contributory factors that subsequently induced him to adopt a defiantly anti-Government, and openly pro-Egyptian, position.

The Advisory Council and Nationalist Reaction.

In September 1943, after Azhari's return from Egypt, the Government published legislation regarding the formation of Provincial Councils and an Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan. These ordinances were the implementation of some of the recommendations proposed by Newbold in his Note to the Governor-General's Council a year before. He had believed for some time that the first step was to build up Provincial Councils and then to have these send up delegates to an "advisory council of chiefs, saints, intelligentsia and merchants." He did not know, however, what system should be used to compose this Council. Of one thing he was definitely certain: That all general interests in the Sudan should be represented - religious, social and economic - without "sacrificing the vast majority of inarticulate peasants and villagers

to the cleverer minority of townsmen and merchants."¹

In drawing up the draft legislation for the Advisory Council, Newbold and his colleagues on the Special Committee

"tried to strike a balance between educated and uneducated, town and county, merchants and farmers. We wanted to ensure a level or a leaven of intelligence and sophistication which would lift the Council above the place of a glorified tribal gathering and yet have a sufficient, even preponderant group of 'countrymen' so as not to allow the cultivator and the nomad to be butchered to make the effendia's holiday. It is not an easy balance to strike but the draft law is flexible enough to enable a shift of appointment if the ratio shows signs of becoming overweighted in one direction or another."²

Newbold was faced with yet another major difficulty - that of relating the proposed Advisory Council to the next stage in the process of Sudanese political development. His attempts to visualize what that next stage should be proved extremely frustrating. Many pundits of colonial reform, like Hailey and Lugard, had rejected Legislative Councils as ideal and had discarded Parliamentary institutions as unsuitable for Africans and Arabs, urging instead that something new should be devised.

1. Newbold to Margery Perham, 18.5.1940, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 139.

2. Newbold's note introducing draft legislation in March 1943, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 561.

"But what that something is they don't know and won't say, which is like a doctor saying, 'I don't advise an operation or medicine, but am unable to suggest an alternative'. Meanwhile the patient gets restless. What is the next step? Are we to hand over all the reins of Government to a Sudanese Assembly? If we reserve military defense, currency, solvency, policy, racial and religious issues, minorities, foreign relations, etc., to the Sudan Government (i.e. G.G.) then we may get clashes or frustration.

How can we have an official majority if officials are mainly Sudanese? British officials may walk tamely into a lobby behind the Governor of Kenya or Fiji, but can we ask Sudanese to do so on an unpopular issue? What is the answer?"¹

As a consequence of these uncertainties and apprehensions, the Advisory Council legislation was characterised by a strict limitation of the scope of the Council's function, and a set of heavy safeguards on the regulation of its procedure. The determination of the Council's agenda was the sole responsibility of its President (the Governor-General) and, although a partial provision was made for the addition of any other subject at the request of five Council members, the inclusion of the requested item was entirely subject to the discretion of the President. Furthermore, not all subjects on the agenda were open for discussion by the Council. On some subjects, the Government merely explained its respective policy, and

1. Newbold to J.A. Reid, 14.3.1944, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 357.

the Council's opinion was neither sought nor allowed. Even where discussion on a subject was allowed, procedural safeguards authorised the Civil Secretary (as Chairman of the Council) to terminate further debate at any time.¹

Newbold was conscious, and even privately admitted, that excessive restrictions had been imposed on the Advisory Council. He was confident, however, that although these safeguards looked more formidable on paper they would prove not to be so in practice, and that they would actually facilitate the conduct of Council affairs by preventing the congestion of its agenda or the discussion of trivial and premature subjects. He probably did not anticipate then that the Congress would subsequently boycott the Council. Presupposing instead some participation by Congress members, he felt more secure by having these safeguards inserted from the start and diluting or amending them gradually, than to have them omitted initially and then be faced with the difficult task of inserting them at a later date, when found necessary.²

The provisions of the Advisory Council were greeted

-
1. For a more elaborate exposition on the Advisory Council, cf. Muddathir 'Abd al-Rahim, op. cit., Chapter V.
 2. Newbold to Mayall, 30.10.1943, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 345.

with a tirade of disapproval by the nationalists. The general feeling was effectively summed up by Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim in a sarcastic comment. "The proposals", he wrote, "give an accurate idea of the Sudan Government's estimate of the progress so far achieved by the country and it can be regarded as the Government's considered judgement on the results of its own administration over half a century".¹ As expressed in the Congress Memorandum, Sudanese nationalists had aspired to a Legislative Assembly, which would have the authority to approve the Budget and Ordinances of the British Administration and which would form the basis of self-government.² In contrast to their expectations, however, they were given a Council whose functions were purely advisory with, as Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān explicitly complained, no hint whatever of any obligation on the Governor-General to act upon the Council's reasonable advice.³ Universal criticism was directed against the plethora of the safeguards imposed, which were interpreted

1. Al-Nīl, 5 September 1943.

2. Al-Nīl, 7 September 1943; Al-M'ūtamar, 11 September 1943.

3. E.J.N. Wallis, "Summary of Criticisms of Advisory Council Legislation", 29.9.1943, PRO, FO.371/35576 (J3678/J4998/50/16).

as designed to stifle all criticism or free discussion of any important or controversial subject. In this respect, therefore, the nationalists gravely doubted whether the voting patterns of the members themselves could genuinely be regarded to reflect their own opinions.¹ This element, together with the fact that the majority of the members were local government representatives, discredited the Council as truly representative of "responsible public opinion" and featured it instead as a Council for the Governor-General, not for the Sudanese.

Another aspect of the legislation which drew heated criticism was the limitation of the Council to the northern Sudan only. Newbold's reasoning behind such a limitation was that the ethnic diversity and comparative backwardness of the southern tribes precluded the selection of suitable indigenous representatives. This pretext, however, was altogether unconvincing for, as some had pointedly argued, missionaries or Government administrators could alternatively be appointed to represent the South.² Furthermore, the nationalists felt that, although the proposed Council fell far short of their expectations,

1. Editorial, Sawt al-Sūdān, 4 September 1943.

2. E.J.N. Wallis, "Summary of Criticisms of Advisory Council Legislation", loc. cit.

the Government should not, as a matter of principle, deprive the southerners from enjoying the same limited rights and privileges that were at that time being granted to the northern Sudanese.¹ But the limitation of the Advisory Council to the northern Sudan was unacceptable for a basically pragmatic reason. The legislation itself contemplated eventually either a separate Advisory Council for the Southern Sudan, or one for the whole country. For the nationalists, both alternatives were fraught with political dangers: In the former case, a separate advisory council prefigured the partition of the Sudan; and in the latter case, the persisting regional disparities could subsequently be used by the British Administration as a justification to retard further progress towards full self-government and independence, until such time as the southern provinces caught up with the level of political development in the northern Sudan. The form of the proposed Council was, therefore, viewed as basically detrimental to national unity and aspirations.

Whereas there was universal agreement among nationalists in censuring the constitution of the Advisory Council, there was no such consensus as to the line of action they should adopt towards it. A significant

1. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, Al-Nīl, 5 September 1943.

minority, mostly from among the moderate elements, were prepared to grant a qualified acceptance to the Advisory Council. From the beginning of 1943, as the theater of war pushed farther away from Sudanese borders, there had been a gradually reviving interest among the intelligentsia regarding the political future of the Sudan. British Government assurances to Egypt that the Sudan Question would not be discussed at the Peace Conference without the participation of Egypt had enraged the old ghosts of 1936 and spurred Sudanese nationalists to refuse again to be treated as a "flock of sheep to be disposed of in the market" without any reference to their wishes.¹ The Sudan Question, they insisted, should not be settled without the consultation of the Sudanese people, and their legitimate aspirations should not be ignored in any post-war settlement.² It was in preparation of such consultations that they had urged the speedy formation of a Central Advisory Council to represent public opinion as a whole and to express authoritatively the aspirations and wishes of

1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 23 December 1942; also, "The Future of Freedom after the War", Sawt al-Sudān, 2 February 1943.

2. Editorial, Al-M'ūtamar, 13 February 1943; also, Editorial, Al-Nīl, 16 March 1943.

the country.¹ In this sense, although they begrudged the very small and restricted political role given to Sudanese under the Advisory Council legislation, many nationalists nevertheless regarded the very institution of such a Council as an extremely important step forward down an uncharted path towards the complete attainment of Sudanese aspirations.² They confidently believed that, with the proper amendments to the legislation and with the presence of suitable members, the Advisory Council could eventually be transformed into a more acceptable body, not only for expressing legitimate Sudanese aspirations but also as an institution of self-government. Babikr Badri³ and Ibrahim Ahmad took the initiative in this respect and suggested that the Government should make an authoritative pronouncement to the effect that the safeguards in question would not actually be used, except in the most exceptional circumstances.⁴

The posture of the militants, however, was quite

-
1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 21 February 1943.
 2. Editorial, Sawt al-Sūdān, 4 September 1943; also, Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, Al-Nīl, 5 September 1943.
 3. Babikr Badri: A leading educationalist; serve in Education Department until 1929; quite popular among the graduates, particularly for his efforts to expand private education; strong supporter of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman
 4. E.J.N. Wallis, "Summary of Criticisms of Advisory Council Legislation", loc. cit.

different, influenced also to a great degree by their growing opposition to the Government's economic policies. British officials had for long been convinced that the real culprits for their failure to control prices and keep the lid on economic inflation were the hordes of merchants swarming on the rungs of the distribution ladder in the commercial community. No "middleman", they believed, would sell goods at fixed prices but rather at whatever price above it he thought a customer would pay. Worse still, owing to a lack of public spirit or moral courage or both, consumers would not give evidence in court against these "profiteers", so that the Government's tussle with them was turning out to be futile. A change of policy and tactics were, therefore, obviously required and the Government finally decided

"to reduce gradually - if not eradicate temporarily - the number of middlemen. The latter are vociferous and their plaint may be heard on all sides but they neither deserve nor receive the sympathy of anyone. The middlemen must be made to realise that they are parasites - necessary for customers' convenience in the piping times of peace, but a luxury in war-time if they demand more than their quota of blood. If they cannot accept changed conditions, they must be scrapped with other articles the public are being forced to give up."¹

1. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, November 1942, para 14, CRO, CIVSEC 57/17/65.

This policy was in part a response to earlier comments in the nationalist press in connection with the rising cost of living. From as early as April 1942, the press had called on the Government to institute special courts which would inflict severe penalties on merchants or cultivators accused of hoarding and profiteering.¹ Later on, when consumer goods and grain disappeared from market shelves altogether, the press repeatedly urged the enforcement of stricter controls on all merchants (wholesalers, middlemen and retailers) in regard to those commodities whose prices had been fixed, and the limitation of the merchant's profit on the other goods to a maximum of 20 percent.² In fact, in the case of some extremely vital commodities (like sugar and paraffin), the press had strongly urged the Government to supervise effectively their distribution through a workable system of rationing cards.³

In February 1943, therefore, as the cost of living continued to rise unabated, the Government embarked on a

-
1. Al-Nīl, 30 April 1942; also, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 30 April 1942.
 2. Editorials, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 2 July 1942; and, Al-Nīl, 7 July 1942.
 3. Editorials, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 20 June 1942; and, Al-Nīl, 23 August 1942.

new programme. They closed certain agricultural areas to the merchants and undertook instead to distribute the grain under an arrangement whereby stocks would be collected and sent from Gezira by the province authorities, taken over by Grain Boards at the receiving ends, and sold to the public at the fixed prices through a restricted number of approved retailers.¹ But the new system soon proved to be inadequate for ensuring the availability of abundant grain in the market. The Government suspected that either people bought more grain than they actually required or that the merchants themselves bought grain indirectly and hoarded it, or both. They decided accordingly to extend their new policy one stage further -- namely, to place grain on a rationed basis and to control its distribution in the strictest possible manner.²

In addition to alienating the merchants, particularly the very large number of retailers who had thereby lost a most important source of their livelihood, the Government's new policy extended the spirit of discontent to the agricultural community as well.³ A combination

1. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, February 1943, para 3(c) and 14(c), CRO, CIVSEC 57/19/71.

2. Ibid, April 1943, para 14.

3. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 21 July 1943; Ahmad Khayr, "The Difficulties of the Retailer in Omdurman", Sawt al-Sūdān, 22 July 1943.

of factors had brought the Government's fixed prices into disharmony with the actual costs of cultivation. Firstly, agricultural labour wage had risen quite sharply as a result of an increasing labour shortage. The brisk animal trade had placed a lot of money into the pockets of tribesmen who had hitherto worked in agriculture to supplement their earnings, and who consequently felt no such need anymore. Furthermore, the Government's own widespread labour recruitment efforts in connection with the execution of various military projects had absorbed much casual labour that had previously been employed in agricultural schemes. Secondly, petrol rationing had caused vehicle transport charges to rise sharply, and the latter in turn increased the cost of pump fuel supplied to agricultural schemes. With such high expenditure in agricultural production, and with other essential commodities available only at exorbitant prices, cultivators found it extremely difficult to make ends meet, and they agitated to have the Government reconsider the principles on which fixed prices were based.¹

The agitation was especially acute in areas where export crops were grown, particularly in the Northern Province. Crops exported to neighbouring countries,

1. Editorial, Sawt al-Sūdān, 20 July 1943.

it was argued, should not be subjected to the Government's fixed maximum price, but rather they should be allowed to fetch what price they could in the world market. The Government was criticised for carrying out blindly Allied policies of supply to the Middle East at the expense of the Sudan's own prosperity, particularly since the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation, through which Sudanese produce were exported, had failed to reciprocate by supplying imported consumer goods at reasonably low prices.¹ Sudanese nationalists were distressed to observe that, while other nations accumulated wealth by leaps and bounds, the standard of living in the Sudan fell lower and lower as a result of the Government's "faulty policy".² They called for an urgent reconsideration of this policy if the country's wealth was to be preserved for post-war reconstruction and if cultivators were not to be discouraged from continuing to grow their valuable

1. Editorials, Sawt al-Sūdān, 24 March 1943; and Al-Nīl, 30 March 1943. It should be noted that Sudanese nationalists were mistaken in assuming that the UKCC was responsible for supplying imported consumer goods. Some of these items were imported under an arrangement with the Middle East Supply Centre at ruling market prices, and rationed to the Sudanese consumer at fixed prices, the difference being subsidized from the Price Stabilization Reserve Account.

2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 1 May 1943.

cash crops.¹

By the time the Advisory Council legislation was promulgated, therefore, the agricultural and commercial communities had already lost confidence in the Government's capacity to administer the country for the "welfare of the Sudanese". The greater majority of the subyān, in fact over 40 percent of the educated class, came from agricultural and commercial communities along the Nile, and their attitude towards the Advisory Council was, quite understandably, influenced by developments in these areas.² Their fundamental political objections to the proposed Advisory Council were now augmented by economic ones: A Council so restricted in its function and composition, they lamented, could not afford them the means of reversing such unacceptable Government policies, but rather would serve perfectly the role of merely rubber-

1. Ahmad Muḥammad Yasīn, "Financial Inflation", Al-M'ūtamar, 16 June 1943.

2. An investigation into the background of students attending Gordon College during the period 1934-1944 reveals that about 50% of these came from Khartoum Province, some 22% from Northern Province, and about 13% from Blue Nile Province. Another aspect of such an investigation reveals that the students' fathers were mainly occupied as government officials (50%), or as farmers (16%), or as merchants (22%). For detailed tables of figures, see M.O. Beshir, Educational Development in the Sudan, 1899 to 1956, (Oxford 1969), pp. 200-1.

stamping them. In the circumstances, they turned to the Congress as the only genuine forum of nationalist opinion and the best potential instrument of opposition to the Government and its Advisory Council.

Despite such strong criticism of the Council, the Congress's initial reaction did not display any serious signs of antagonism. A special meeting of the Committee of Sixty was held in early September 1943, at which a special sub-committee was formed to study the new ordinances and to report on them. After a few days, this sub-committee duly submitted its report and the Sixty, after approving it, decided to send a Note to the Government, embodying the criticism raised and suggesting a number of amendments to the respective legislations.¹ Briefly, the Note argued that a Council with even partial Executive or Legislative powers had proved in practice to be more efficient and effective than a purely advisory body; that the number of members was far too small in proportion to the population, with representatives being nominated and not elected by popular vote; that in view of the restrictive provisions the Council could not be expected even to carry out the advisory duties for which

1. SPIS, No. 30, September 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).

it was constituted; and that the legislation reflected the widely condemned Southern Policy of the Sudan Government.¹

The impatience of the militants, however, did not allow matters to rest there. At the annual meeting of Congress Provincial Committees, which was held in Omdurman on 2 October 1943, the militants obtained an endorsement of the Congress's Note to the Government, and they proposed a resolution boycotting the Advisory Council and forbidding Congress members to accept nomination to it on pain of expulsion.² The more moderate elements in the Congress campaigned feverishly to block the resolution. They were convinced that, apart from its myopic political overtones, the motives behind it were mainly personal --

-
1. F.D. Rugman to A. Stone (Cairo), 8.11.1943, PRO, FO.371/35576 (J4998/50/16).
 2. This meeting must not be confused with the annual general meeting of the Congress. In September 1942, taking advantage of Id al-Fitr holidays, Ibrahim Ahmad summoned all provincial committees of the Congress to a general meeting at the capital to discuss developments regarding the Memorandum and other Congress matters. At this meeting it was decided to form a special bureau, to be supervised by the General Secretary, whose function would be to co-ordinate activities between the Executive Committee and the provincial branch committees in the implementation of the Congress's programmes. Henceforth, a general meeting of all these committees was held annually during the Id al-Fitr holidays.

namely, Azhari's desire to force on Ibrahim Ahmad the choice between withdrawing from the Congress and declining nomination to the Advisory Council if, as expected, he was nominated by the Government to sit on it.¹ In the end, the resolution was adopted first by the meeting of the Provincial Committees and subsequently by a small majority of the Congress Sixty.

The opportunity for Azhari's opponents to have their revenge was not long delayed. In a letter to the Financial Secretary on 13 October 1943, Azhari committed the indiscretion of recommending a Sudanese official for promotion. The letter was on Congress notepaper and was signed "President of the Graduates' General Congress", though the word "unofficially" was inserted in ink into the last paragraph. The letter was written and sent without the knowledge of the other Executive Committee members. When news of this letter were leaked out by the Finance Department, the Executive Committee became furious and Azhari's opponents were delighted. Azhari became alarmed and tried without success to withdraw the letter. He pleaded before the Executive Committee that he had not written it in his capacity as President, and

1. SPIS, No. 31, October 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).

that his official title at the bottom had not been put in by himself but that it had been either inserted by the person who was recommended in the letter, with the object of giving it more weight, or as a plant by one of his enemies.¹

Azhari's opponents, however, were determined to pursue the matter further, and they arranged for a special meeting of the Committee of Sixty to call him to account for his extraordinary action. In the meeting, the opposition accused Azhari of unconstititutional and irresponsible behaviour, dismissed with derision his plea that he had written to the Financial Secretary in his private capacity, and demanded his immediate resignation. But Azhari stood his ground and, in the voting that followed, he was upheld by his supporters who formed the majority of the Committee.² Ibrahim Ahmad, Muhammad 'Ali Shawqi, Muhammad 'Uthmān Mirghani and Makki Shibayka, walked out of the meeting when the results were announced and, a few days later, resigned from the Sixty altogether.

These developments caused grave concern both within and outside Congress circles. The Executive Committee met to consider possible means of healing the rift with the

1. Ibid.

2. Out of 58 members attending, 40 supported Azhari.

seceding members, but all subsequent attempts at a reconciliation failed. It was normal, the militants had argued, for persons in public bodies to resign when they realised that their views conflicted sharply with those of their colleagues; but to resign from the Committee of Sixty at a critical moment of its life was an ill-considered and unpatriotic act.¹ Faced with such taunts, the moderates found it impossible to acquiesce to the Executive Committee's public call for a withdrawal of their resignations without at the same time incurring unacceptable political humiliation.

The Split between Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and Azhari.

The resignation of the moderates from the Committee of Sixty provided the occasion for Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to put an end to his unusual association with the Azhari-Fadli faction in the Congress. The relation between Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the militants had begun to deteriorate as far back as August 1942 when, in an effort to avert a clash with the Government, he counselled moderation in the Congress's responses to Newbold's rejection of the Memorandum. The relationship deteriorated even further at the annual elections in December 1942,

1. Al-M'ūtamar, 13 November 1943.

when the Mahdist camp was split into two main groups. After the elections, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān found himself on the horns of a painful dilemma. His personal sympathies were with the defeated Ibrahim Ahmad and the Hashmāb but, at the same time, he was reluctant to repudiate the victorious Azhari-Fadli faction and lose their allegiance. In an attempt to check 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil's ambitions, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had privately ordered him to resign from the new Executive Committee but, when the latter refused, he refrained from openly compelling him to do so. He was apprehensive that such a public stand would not only alienate the victorious Azharists but, worse still, would polarize even further the latest split in the Mahdist ranks. In the circumstances, he decided that the best policy was to play a waiting game.

As the months passed, however, various factors combined to force Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to finally come out against Azhari. Firstly, the feud between the Azhari and Ibrahim Ahmad factions intensified steadily, and it became extremely difficult for Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to retain a foot in each camp. Secondly, he grew increasingly alarmed at Sayyid 'Abdullāhi's personal ambitions, which were overtly supported by Azhari. Thirdly, he disapproved strongly both of Azhari's mission to Egypt, which seemed

to him to lead Congress into a pro-Egyptian policy running counter to his own ideas about the future of the Sudan, and of the Congress's decision to boycott the Advisory Council. He therefore seized the opportunity presented by the secession of the moderates and he compelled Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil to resign from both Committees of the Congress, and to sever all connections with the Azhari-Fadli group. In order to further combat 'Abdullāhi's ambitions, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān decided to keep Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf in Khartoum for some time to come.¹

Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's posture naturally alienated Azhari who, like his great grandfather, now decided to combat Mahdist ascendancy in the Sudan.² Azhari had earlier been a member of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's "salon", an informal preparatory school in the politics of

-
1. SPIS, No. 32, November 1943, PRO, FO.371/42348 (J58/58/16). Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf was the leader of that section of the Mahdist family who supported the claims of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's son, al-Siddīq, to the succession against those of 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil.
 2. Isma'īl al-Azhari's great grandfather, Sayyid Aḥmad Kurdufāni al-Azhari, had strenuously opposed the claims of Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdi and denounced them in a risāla, written in 1882. He accompanied Ra'ūf Pasha, the then Governor-General, on an expedition against the Mahdi and was killed in battle. Cf. P.M. Holt, "Holy Families and Islam in the Sudan", Studies in the History of the Near East, (London 1973), p. 128.

nationalism, and there he had learned to appreciate fully the political implications of sectarian support. Accordingly, he contacted Shaykh Ahmad al-Sayyid al-Fīl and Muhammad Nur al-Dīn¹, the two principal political advisors of Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, and sought the political support of the Mirghanist camp. Sayyid 'Ali was attracted by the idea of replacing Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān as the patron of the Congress and he allowed Shaykh al-Fīl to promise Mirghanist support to Azhari.²

Sayyid 'Ali's commitment, however, was strongly resented by many Mirghanist members of the Congress who were opposed to Azhari, and these openly disagreed with

1. Muhammad Nur al-Dīn: Born in Wadi Halfa in 1897; after completing his intermediate education, he entered the employment of the National Bank of Egypt; he studied economics by correspondence and in 1925 he was appointed manager of the bank's branch in El Obeid; he was transferred to the Khartoum branch in 1937 and to Omdurman in 1940. He had been interested in politics since 1918, and had been President of the Graduates' Club in El Obeid and the Nubian Club in Khartoum. He helped in the formation of the Graduates' Congress in 1938 and was a member of its first Executive Committee. On the foundation of the Ashiqqā' party in 1943 he was made one of its top leaders and in 1946 he was Vice-President of the Sudanese Delegation to Egypt. During the split in the Ashiqqā' party in about 1952, he was a leader of one of the factions and of the Congress. When the National Unionist Party was formed, he was elected Vice-President.

2. SPIS, No. 32, November 1943, loc. cit.

Shaykh al-Fil's policy of building up a Mirghanist-Azhari alliance. Towards the end of November 1943, as the annual Congress elections drew near, they joined forces with other senior graduates in a last attempt to preserve the unity of the Congress. They agitated for a compromise, whereby half the seats on the Committee of Sixty would be filled partly by supporters of Ibrahim Ahmad and partly by neutral graduates of recognized standing, while Azhari himself would retire from the presidency in favour of Ibrahim Ahmad.¹ The compromise formula was naturally rejected by Azhari and, in the Congress elections on 11 December 1943, his faction won 40 out of the 60 Committee seats.² It seemed, therefore, that the election of a strong pro-Azhari Executive Committee and the re-election of Azhari himself as President was a foregone conclusion.

At this point, new influences suddenly appeared and snatched a last minute victory for Ibrahim Ahmad, Muhammad al-Khalifa Sharif (who had arrived from his White Nile agricultural scheme on the eve of the elections) and

1. SPIS, No. 33, December 1943, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16).

2. Out of 1300 members qualified to vote, 966 turned up at the elections, and of these one-third were government officials, the remainder being petty merchants and artisans.

Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim (who also had just returned from a trip to Egypt) lobbied the newly-elected members of the Council and succeeded finally in healing the Mahdist split.

In addition, they won over some other graduates who had been elected on the Azhari ticket. These, mostly the Mahdist, had initially shown little concern about the outcome of the elections but, when they were advised of the Mirghanist support for Azhari, they reacted swiftly and reversed the result at the last minute. Azhari's faction secured only seven seats on the Executive Committee, with another seven captured by the opposition. The fifteenth place went to Muḥammad‘Uthmān Mirghani, a neutral, who thus found himself with the fate of the presidency in his hands. Muḥammad‘Uthmān had in fact cherished hopes of the presidency for himself and, at one moment, it seemed that the opposing factions might compromise on this basis. No agreement was reached, however, and Muḥammad‘Uthmān, already sceptical of Azhari's qualities as a President, was persuaded to cast his vote for Ibrahim Aḥmad, electing

him President by a majority of one.¹ The same majority also put supporters of Ibrahim Ahmad into all the other offices, thus denying Azhari the control of the Executive Committee and its Bureau.²

After the excitement of the elections had subsided, the moderates began to consider ways and means of bringing about a repeal of the resolution boycotting the Advisory Council. Their task was to prove a difficult one. Although they enjoyed a bare majority on the Executive Committee, they had an actual minority on the Sixty, and this fact made their control of the Congress precarious indeed. They realised that they would have to move very carefully and avoid raising this controversial issue until they were definitely sure of carrying the majority of the Sixty with them.

The situation began to change in mid-January 1944. In a broadcast from Omdurman radio, Newbold replied to

-
1. There is an interesting episode which illustrates Muḥammad ʿUthmān's growing disillusionment with Azhari. In February 1943, at a meeting of the Committee of Sixty, Muḥammad ʿUthmān pressed Azhari to consider the proposal for setting up a board of trustees to administer the Education Day Fund. Azhari by a quibble on a point of procedure, refused to do so, whereupon Muḥammad ʿUthmān appealed to the Committee for support. Meeting with a stony silence all around, he sat down exclaiming "This Congress deserves this President!" Cf. SPIS, No. 24, February 1943, PRO, FO.371/35580 (J2956/200/16).
 2. ʿAwad Sāṭṭi was elected General Secretary, Ismaʿīl al-ʿAtabāni Assistant Secretary, ʿAbdallah Mirghani Treasurer, and Muḥammad ʿUthmān Mirghani Accountant.

the criticism that had been directed at the Advisory Council legislation. Briefly, he sought to assure the nationalists that the Advisory Council would not be merely a "talking shop", but that it would play an effective role in the legislative process; that the advisory state proposed for the Council was only a transitional phase, "a school of self-government", one more station on the railway to the final realisation of Sudanese aspirations; that the Government was genuinely prepared to amend any of the restrictions that might actually hinder the Council's work; and finally, that the British Administration harboured no designs to separate the southern from the northern Sudan. This broadcast was supplemented by an article in the Sudan Star on 17 January 1944.¹

Following a prolonged period of cautious reconnaissance, and taking their cue from the assurances given by Newbold in his broadcast, the moderates decided to make their move in February 1944. They calculated that the best strategy was to avoid making a confidence issue of the repeal motion. Although they had a majority on the Executive Committee, they did not take a vote on it

1. For the full text of the broadcast, cf. PRO, FO.371/41363 (J514/185/16); extracts of the broadcast are also available in Henderson, op. cit., pp. 562-7.

there, lest they should be thus committed to repeal when they appeared before the Sixty and be compelled to resign if the move failed. They merely invited the Committee of Sixty to reconsider the matter, and they themselves took part in the debate as individual members and not as a bloc committed to either side. In that debate, the moderates took the line that the Advisory Council was not an isolated institution but that it was, as Newbold had declared in his broadcast, part of the Government's whole scheme for associating the Sudanese with the administration of the country and for training them towards self-government. In this respect, they pointed out, to boycott the Advisory Council while co-operating with the Government on other councils and in other ways was not only inconsistent but essentially detrimental to the Congress itself and to the country's own political progress.¹

The opposition, however, maintained that no new element had come into the situation since the boycott was adopted and that consequently there were no grounds for repealing it. Newbold's confirmation that the British aimed at achieving self-government for the Sudan had

1. SPIS, No. 35, February 1944, PRO, FO.371/41358 (J58/58/16).

certainly impressed the militants; but his declaration, that the road of self-government was a long and arduous one, only added to their apprehension that the proposed form of the Advisory Council would ultimately serve to make it so. Unlike the moderates, they were more concerned with what Newbold failed to mention -- the methods by which the British planned to give the country self-government. They believed that nothing short of vigorous measures for social, cultural and economic development (particularly the lifting of the detested economic restrictions) could guarantee the achievement of this goal.¹ Besides, Yahya al-Fadli's unsuccessful proposal during the Congress elections, that a Legislative Council be formed by the Congress to submit draft legislation to the Government,² had noticeably impressed some members and these could not be persuaded to look instead on the Advisory Council with interest. All these factors, combined with Azhari's obsession with preventing Ibrahim Ahmad from becoming a member of the Advisory Council, eventually defeated the repeal motion by 29 to 19 votes.³

1. Şawt al-Sūdān, 3 February 1944.

2. SPIS, No. 33, December 1943, loc. cit.

3. SPIS, No. 35, February 1944, loc. cit. Also, Newbold to J.A. Reid, 14.3.1944, in Henderson, op. cit., p. 357.

The decision had profound consequences for future developments in the Congress and the country. Firstly, it forced on some prominent leaders of the Congress the uncomfortable choice of either accepting or rejecting the Governor-General's nomination as ordinary members of the Advisory Council. Ibrahim Ahmad eventually chose to decline the nomination, genuinely convinced that he could do more good by remaining President of the Congress and preventing the Azhari faction from asserting their influence on the Executive Committee.¹ 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad was more critical in his reaction: He resigned from the Committee of Sixty in protest against their decision to maintain the boycott, but he also declined the nomination to the Advisory Council lest his opposition to the boycott be ascribed to motives of personal interest. Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi, on the other hand, accepted the nomination and ceased to be a member of the Congress.² Secondly, the decision to maintain the boycott had the long-term effect of gradually eroding graduates' allegiance to the Congress. Whatever the shortcomings of the Advisory Council, some graduates considered it an important symbol of Sudanese

1. SPIS, No. 36, March 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16).

2. SPIS, No. 35, February 1944, loc. cit.

national identity and, in the light of subsequent Egyptian machinations on the future of the Sudan, these nationalists found the fetters of the boycott unbearable. They revolted against it and they sought to articulate their aspirations through channels of political expression other than the Congress. This situation led to the rise of political parties.

The Sudan Question and the Polarization of Nationalist Sentiment.

Congress's boycott of the Advisory Council was to become the crucial factor for Azhari in winning Egyptian support. The formation of the Advisory Council had been universally interpreted by Egyptian nationalists as an additional convincing proof that, under the protection of the Treaty, the Sudan Government was encouraging a separatist Sudanese movement inimical to Egypt's interests, and that unless they did something about it quickly they might lose the Sudan for good.¹ Accordingly, in the debate on the Speech from the Throne in November 1943, speakers from all parties insisted that, immediately the war was over, the Egyptian Government should demand

1. Newbold to G.E.R. Sandars (Sudan Agent Cairo), 24.11.1943, PRO, FO.371/41363 (J264/185/16); also, FO.141/905 (file 840/69/43).

total evacuation from, and the union of, Egypt and the Sudan.

Nahhās Pasha shared the same sentiments, but he was convinced that the problem should be approached in a more subtle manner. He had become increasingly aware that with the evolution of Sudanese political consciousness since 1936, with an Advisory Council in existence and the Atlantic Charter in the background, it would be impossible for the Condominium partners, separately or jointly, to modify the status of the Sudan or even make any new decisions about its future without some formal consultation of the wishes of the Sudanese people. Since the 1936 Treaty had been signed, he had also come to know the Sudanese better and to appreciate that any Egyptian claim to sovereignty over the Sudan, deriving from rights of conquest, was highly offensive to them. He had even come to realise that some Sudanese nationalists really wished to preserve and develop an autonomous identity. In the circumstances, he considered that the best approach might be to base the Egyptian case on a direct appeal to the Sudanese so that, when the Sudan Question was raised again, it would not be merely in the form of bilateral negotiations with the British Government about Egyptian rights in the Sudan, but rather in the form of political proposals to be put to the Sudanese. Accordingly, while

emphasizing to the Egyptian Deputies that the 1936 Treaty had reserved the question of sovereignty over the Sudan for the future, Nahhās concurrently assured Sudanese nationalists that Egypt's relationship with the Sudan would not be that of ruler and subject. "Egypt and the Sudan are one nation," he said. "Its sons have the same rights and obligations as we have."¹

The speech formalised a tactical change in the Egyptian approach to the Sudan Question. Henceforth, the new line put out by Egyptian nationalists was that they fully accepted the desire of the Sudanese for an autonomous identity; that they did not regard the Sudan as a dependency of Egypt; that they had no desire to force the Sudan into any union with Egypt which would be prejudicial to its distinctive identity but that, on the contrary, they would like to see the Sudanese attain full self-government and preserve an autonomous status on the basis of equal rights and obligations with Egyptians in a common allegiance to the Egyptian crown. It was probably in connection with such a changing tactic that Prince Umar Tusūn suggested to Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf that there would be no objection to the Sudan having its own local government under a

1. Nahhās's speech at the Wafdist Congress, 14.11.1943, in SPIS, No. 32, November 1943, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16).

Sudanese walīy representing the Egyptian Crown;¹ and it was probably an indication of things to come that Yahya al-Fadli and 'Ali al-Birayr took an active part in an Egyptian by-election, in March 1944, campaigning for a candidate who advocated the unity of the Nile Valley.²

The above instances were the overt manifestations of a new Egyptian strategy, aiming at mobilizing the support of both Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the Sudanese nationalists. Nahhās evidently believed that to gain the one but lose the other would only complicate matters in any negotiations with the British Government. The doubts that previously plagued him about the nature and objectives of the Congress were almost totally dispelled by the Congress's boycott of the Advisory Council; and, aware of the nationalists' distaste of the purely advisory nature of the Council, he offered to them instead the more palatable prospect of a higher political status in a Legislative Assembly under the Egyptian crown. His gamble, as far as the Congress was concerned, paid off: The Executive Committee, under Azhari's Presidency, sent a telegram to Nahhās, expressing their appreciation of his views concerning the fraternal character

1. Newbold to G.E.R. Sandars, 24.11.1943, loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 36, March 1944, loc. cit.

of the relations between Egypt and the Sudan.¹

In regard to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the Mahdists, however, Nahḥās's speech solicited a different response altogether. Since June 1943, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had become increasingly apprehensive about the revival of Egyptian interest on the Sudan. His attitude hardened as he grew more convinced that the Egyptians planned to seek a settlement of the Sudan Question immediately after the war.² Like other pro-independence nationalists, he resented both Nahḥās's implication that Egypt, by the 1936 Treaty, had not surrendered her sovereignty over the Sudan, and his declaration that the two countries formed one nation. He decided, therefore, to come right into the open and make his attitude known in unequivocal terms. In an editorial in Al-Nīl, written on his instructions as a reply to Nahḥās's speech, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān strongly advocated that independence should definitely be the ultimate goal of the Sudan, that the Sudanese should openly proclaim their aspiration for it, and that they should "set out to reach it by deserving steps with the help of the

1. SPIS, No. 32, November 1943, loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 27, May-June 1943, loc. cit.

friendly guardian (Britain) and the loving sister (Egypt)."¹ Neither Britain nor Egypt, he argued, could deny the right of the Sudanese to seek independence, firstly because they had already proclaimed their aim to be the "welfare of the Sudan", and secondly because they had morally bound themselves by the principles of the Atlantic Charter.²

This was indeed a most categorical repudiation of Egyptian claims publicly made by a Sudanese leader since 1924, and it constituted a major setback to Nahhās's initial tactical objectives. A faint-hearted and indirect attempt was made to court Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān again in April 1944, but the latter snubbed Egyptian approaches and

-
1. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 30 December 1943. Aḥmad Yūsif Hāshim, who did not himself write the article, refused at first to publish it as an editorial since he was unwilling to commit himself personally to the clearly anti-Egyptian policy which it expressed. He demanded that Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf, who had brought it to him, should sign it himself. He was informed that the Sayyid's wish was that the article should appear as an editorial representing the policy of the paper and that he must either publish it as such or resign from the editorship. He finally agreed to publish it, but only on the understanding that he would absent himself from the offices of Al-Nīl on the day of its appearance and insert in the same issue a note announcing his absence on "account of illness". Cf. SPIS, No. 33, December 1943, loc. cit.
 2. In his memoirs, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān refers to this article but he erroneously connects it with the Congress Memorandum in 1942. Cf. Jihādun fi Sabīl al-Istiqlāl, (Khartoum, n.d.), p. 42.

blocked firmly any chances of collaboration with Egypt.¹ With Italy's surrender heralding an early termination to the war, and under increasing pressure from both King Farūq and the Wafdists to do something about the Sudan, Naḥḥās concentrated instead on a political cultivation of the Azhari caucus in the Congress and, at the same time, launched a press campaign against the "separatist" policies of the British in the Sudan.² The main theme of this

-
1. 'Abd al-Hādī Bey (the Grand Qādi) and Ḥāmid Bey Sulaymān (Director of Egyptian Irrigation Department in Sudan) purposely visited Aba just as Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān was about to leave for Khartoum, and they invited him to return with them in their steamer. They probably intended to discuss matters in more detail during the long trip to Khartoum and they probably also hoped that, by arriving together at Khartoum docks, they would effectively convey the impression that the Sayyid was not uncompromisingly hostile to Egyptian interests in the Sudan. Quite aware of these implications, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān naturally declined their invitation. Cf. SPIS, No. 37, April 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16).
 2. British Ambassador (Cairo) to Foreign Office, June 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J2147/185/16); also, Defense Security Summary of Egyptian Affairs, 29.6.1944 to 5.7.1944, PRO, FO.371/41363 (J2639/185/16), Al-Sayyid al-Maḥrūqi, who was the Chef de Bureau at the Office of the Egyptian Economic Expert in Khartoum, was believed to have spearheaded such activities. He kept in close touch with Azhari and other pro-Egyptian members of the Congress and allegedly assisted them to organise the campaign against the Advisory Council and the general line of the Government's policy of political development in the Sudan. In September 1944, he was transferred to Cairo, at the request of the Sudan Government.

campaign was that the British planned to separate the Sudan from Egypt by nominating Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān independent Sultan of the Sudan and concluding a separate treaty with him. The campaign reached its climax in September 1944 when Nahhās, in an interview with the Cairo correspondent of the London Times, categorically repudiated the belief that the welfare clause of the 1936 Treaty provided for self-government by the Sudanese. Self-government, he asserted, or any other political reform for that matter, comprised one of the questions still pending settlement by further negotiations between the British and the Egyptian Governments.¹ A few weeks later, on 8 October, Nahhās was removed from office by King Farūq, but his campaign on the Sudan Question had already affected considerably the various schools of nationalist thought in the Sudan.

The first of such schools comprised those who believed in complete independence for the Sudan immediately after the war. Apart from staunch Mahdist nationalists, it included a significant number of the intelligentsia who did not

1. SPIS, No. 42, September 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16). Nahhās's statement was probably a response to an article published in Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd on 7 July 1944, in which Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim expounded the various schools of Sudanese nationalist opinion on future Sudanese-Egyptian relations.

regard the Sudan as a territorial part of Egypt but rather as a national entity aspiring to an independent existence of its own. In their view, the Condominium Agreement did not transform the Sudan into a colony of either Britain or Egypt but, on the contrary, conferred on the Sudan a special status, which was expressed more explicitly in the welfare clause of the 1936 Treaty.¹ In return for the Sudan's active contribution to the Allied cause, and in accordance with the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, this school of nationalists genuinely expected the victorious "United Nations" to reward the Sudanese with a greater recognition of their right to self-determination.² This national aspiration, they felt, had already been clearly expressed in the Memorandum of 1942 -- a document which commanded the unanimous support of the Congress.³

For these nationalists, the renewed Egyptian campaign threatened to obstruct the Sudan's path to independence by imposing the undesirable continuation of Condominium rule. A political status, based solely on the "welfare" clause of

-
1. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's statement to Scrivener (Head of the Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office), 26.2.1944, PRO, FO.371/41363 (J1274/185/16).
 2. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 21 February 1944.
 3. "The Sudan in Egyptian Circles", Al-Nīl, 21 August 1944.

the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, was rejected outright both as an inadequate recognition of Sudanese aspirations and a most unsatisfactory basis for their future political development.¹ They feared that such an ambiguous status would provide the Egyptians with an opportunity to intrigue for the restoration of their sovereignty over the Sudan, a claim to which they were convinced Egypt had no right, especially as she had remained neutral and refused to defend the Sudan in 1940. Furthermore, they believed that such an unsettling atmosphere would, like in the 1920's, promote confusion of direction in nationalist circles and thus jeopardize Sudanese political development towards self-government and independence.² Finally, they were genuinely concerned that a successful Egyptian campaign would undermine the territorial integrity of the Sudan. Convinced that the Southern Policy aimed at shielding East Africa from the "subversive" influences of Arab nationalism, they feared that, if Egyptian pressure became unbearable, the British Government might decide to partition the Sudan, retaining the southern region under

1. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's statement to Scrivener, 26.2.1944, loc. cit.

2. "Note by Sheikh Ahmed Othman al Qadi on his stay in Egypt from 1.5.43 to 12.10.43", 23.11.1943, loc. cit.

British domination. In the circumstances, the pro-independence nationalists believed that one of their basic concerns was to preserve the geographic unity of the Sudan, and that this could best be achieved by pursuing a policy of complete independence immediately after the war.¹

The second school of nationalist thought represented those who sought to acquire independence from British rule through some association with Egypt. They consisted mainly of the more militant members of the intelligentsia who were deeply disappointed with Newbold's response to the Congress Memorandum, and who were consequently very sceptical about the British Administration's readiness to concede independence to the Sudan after the war. They saw in the institution of the Advisory Council further proof of the Government's plans to delay Sudanese self-government, a measure reminiscent of the Native Administration policies adopted in the 1920's in response to earlier nationalist agitation. Under such conditions, they genuinely doubted whether the intelligentsia could successfully promote nationalist aspirations against an alliance of the preponderant rural interests in the Advisory Council with the Sudan Government, an unholy alliance which could

1. 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Rahmān Nuqḍallah, "The Sudan Question in Egyptian Papers", Al-Nīl, 2 September 1944.

effectively block steps for immediate independence when the time came to consult the Sudanese on the future of their country.¹

Under the direction of Isma'īl al-Azhari and Yaḥya al-Fadli, this group of nationalists decided to appeal over the head of the Sudan Government to, and collaborate with, Egypt for the independence of the Sudan. In the early stages their blue-print for action was largely obscure and their initial approaches to Egyptian politicians were, as already noted, discouraging. With the change in Naḥḥās's tactics, however, they were able to formulate a persuasive platform of Sudanese collaboration with Egyptian nationalists, a platform which they believed to be the quickest way to independence. They advocated the unity of the Nile Valley under the Egyptian Crown, on the condition that the Sudan would be a self-governing partner managing its own internal affairs with Egypt representing it in foreign policy, on an analogy of "the system followed by

1. "Summary of Criticisms of the Advisory Council Legislation", loc. cit.

England and Scotland in older times".¹ In such a union, they argued, the Sudanese would enjoy equal rights and responsibilities with their Egyptian brethren and they would be represented in both chambers of the Egyptian Parliament.

The third school of nationalist thought comprised those who sought independence through a more balanced approach. It had included, in its earlier stages, the bulk of what had been previously referred to as the "moderates", and its more prominent figures included Ibrahim Ahmad, 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad, and Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim. They had grown increasingly sceptical about their earlier joyful predictions of the Sudan's political salvation through the Atlantic Charter, realising that the intelligentsia had initially merely imitated people in other countries without really knowing what it was all about.² Unlike their pro-independence

-
1. Badawi Mustafa, "The future of the Sudan", Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 23 July 1944. The author was editor of Al-M'ūtamar and wished to publish it as an editorial in the Congress magazine. Isma'īl al-'Atabāni, however, acting as a censor for the Executive Committee, did not allow it on the grounds that the editor had no right to commit the Congress to a particular point of view on this paramount question before the Congress had officially declared its policy. 'Atabāni nonetheless offered to publish the article in Ṣawt al-Sūdān as a personal contribution from Badawi Muṣṭafa.
 2. "The Dreams of the Expected Tomorrow", Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 17 March 1943.

colleagues, they believed that the Sudan, at its then existing stage of political development, could not possibly become viably independent since the Sudanese lacked the political institutions, including the economic capacity and military power, to shoulder the burdens of preserving it.¹ In this perspective, therefore, they were most apprehensive that, if independence was imposed on the Sudan in opposition to Egyptian demands, the ambitions of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān would lead to the institution of a monarch without real independence.² Such a situation, they argued, would be catastrophic to the Sudan's political development because the King would be, or at least appear to be, a mere tool in the hands of the ruling power, a facade behind which the real rulers would exercise their power without responsibility to the Sudanese people.

In opposition to their pro-union colleagues, these nationalists suspected that, given the Sudan's undeveloped political state, any union with Egypt would ultimately result in the weaker partner being submerged by the stronger

-
1. Editorial, Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 7 July 1944. An English translation can be found in PRO, FO.371/41363 (J2634/185/16).
 2. "Extract from Conversation between Ibrahim eff. Ahmed, President of Graduates' Congress and Mr. E.S. Atiyah, Public Relations Officer on 7.1.44", PRO, FO.141/939 (file 31/9/44); also, FO.371/41363 (J713/185/16).

in every field. They argued that, if personal qualifications constituted the only valid title to senior government posts, it would be impossible for the less-qualified Sudanese to obtain even a small proportion of these posts in competition with Egyptians. The same consideration applied in the fields of commerce and industry, indeed in any field in which there could be competition between Sudanese and Egyptians. Finally, the same arguments applied to the question of parliamentary representation, in that a minority of Sudanese members might fail to obtain the agreement of a joint sitting of Parliament to any proposal vital to the interests of the Sudan, if that interest happened to be in conflict with the interests of the northern part of the Valley.¹

In the circumstances, they believed that the Sudanese still needed political guidance and training for self-government. They held a good opinion of the British as administrators, and they wanted to benefit from the British presence and become adequately trained before assuming the government of the country themselves. But, at the same time, they did not wish the British to be present without the Egyptians. Much as they admired the British as administrators and desired their help, these nationalists

1. Editorial, Al-Sudan al-Jadīd, 7 July 1944.

did not trust them sufficiently to be willing to place the Sudan entirely at their mercy. They realised that the Sudan was a small and weak country and that, if the British obtained exclusive control over it, the Sudanese would have no safeguards against political exploitation. They also recognized that, while the Sudan might not benefit directly from the Egyptian presence, nevertheless Egyptian partnership in the Condominium constituted a significant limitation on British prerogatives in the country. In their view, therefore, the best course for the Sudanese was to maintain, for the time being, the existing Condominium Administration, in which Egypt's share was nominal and real control in the hands of the British. Within this framework, the Sudanese would be able to press for quicker training in the arts of self-government and also steadily increase their share in the administration until, at a specified future date, they were ready and capable to assume fully the burdens of independence.¹ Only then, when they were free from confusion of thought and uninfluenced either by sentiment or fear, would they be

1. Report by the Political Intelligence Centre of the Middle East, paper No. 66 (1944), PRO, FO.371/41363 (J3521/185/16). This report is a revised version of the Admiralty Intelligence Report on Egypt and the Sudan, 7.5.1938, PRO, FO.371/22004 (J2106/2106/16).

able to determine wisely and safely their external connections with Egypt, Britain and the Arab world.

When Nahḥās's campaign intensified, these nationalists became apprehensive that their colleagues might underestimate Egyptian designs on the Sudan and commit themselves by ill-advised and premature pledges from which they might find it difficult to free themselves. They blamed the Government for the resulting confusion of direction in nationalist circles, which they attributed to official neglect in working out beforehand constructive schemes, showing the stages towards the realisation of self-government and obtaining the views of the intelligentsia as to whether the pace could or could not be hastened.¹ They took advantage of the situation, however, to urge the Government to translate the policy of guardianship to one of partnership by taking immediate steps to Sudanize senior government posts, and by announcing a clear programme with a specified time limit

1. Editorial, Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 11 February 1944; also, "Note on the Discussion between Scrivener and Sudanese officials, 26.2.1944", PRO, FO.371/41363 (J1418/185/16).

for the achievement of self-government.¹ This programme, they pointed out, should cover educational, economic and administrative progress in the country; and, a democratically-elected Legislative Assembly should be instituted to discuss and draft the relevant measures, while Sudanese representatives should be included on the Governor-General's Council to take part in the execution of Government policy.²

Ibrahim Ahmad and Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim struggled endlessly to get the Congress onto the train of political development before the whistle had gone. They emphasized the common obligations, rather than the divergent views, shared collectively by all nationalists, and they exhorted their fellow Congress members to abandon their unproductive attitude of critical aloofness toward government policy, to examine instead the subjects of paramount importance set out in the agenda of the Advisory Council, and to express their opinions with a view to

-
1. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, "Senior Posts are the first step toward Self-Government", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 3 March 1944. Ahmad Yūsif suggested a time limit of 12 years, being the balance of the period remaining before the 1936 Treaty expired, during which time the Condominium powers would continue to rule the Sudan as a mandate.
 2. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, "To where is our Country Drifting?", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 28 July 1944.

enlightening the Council members.¹ After all, the primary aim of the Congress was to work for the general welfare of the country, irrespective of whether Congress adopted a critical attitude towards the Advisory Council or collaborated with it. One aspect of that general welfare was to cultivate a sense of national consciousness among all Sudanese, and this task required the highest degree of co-operation between all graduates. They reminded their colleagues that people were still largely ignorant of their duties, both political and social, to the community, and that a significant number still relied blissfully on a wrong conception of Providence.² A great deal of both social education and national consciousness therefore needed to be acquired before these people could become useful citizens. Carefully-studied plans must be drawn up promptly for the educational and economic development of the country, otherwise the delays involved in prolonged discussions by technical boards after the war would enable foreign interests to obtain an undesirably strong foothold in the Sudanese market;³

-
1. Editorials, Al-Nīl, 15 April and 24 April 1944.
 2. Ibrahim Ahmad, "The President of the Congress Speaks", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 26 May 1944.
 3. Editorial, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 23 April 1944.

committees must be set up to study the Beveridge plan and other similar social schemes, and to find out which of these suited the Sudanese life-style; and finally, irritating labour problems and the growing migrations to urban areas must be dealt with effectively if social disharmony was to be checked.¹ All these were important tasks for the Congress, the fulfilment of which was considered to be vital to a sound political development of the Sudan.

These were indeed praiseworthy sentiments and a restatement of one of the Congress's main objectives but, in the conditions of 1944, they fell mostly on deaf ears. Opposing schools of thought discarded them as measures which, though important, nonetheless needed a long time to be realised and, as such, would therefore have to take second place to the more urgent matter of national independence. To reverse the priorities, they felt, meant that the progress towards self-government and independence would inevitably continue at an unsatisfactory pace, a course which, wittingly or unwittingly, would have suited perfectly British designs on the Sudan. On the contrary, they argued, the desired developments could not take place unless Sudanese nationalists had a decisive say in

1. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, "To where is our Country Drifting: Internal Developments", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 4 August 1944.

formulating the policies of the country -- until,
that is, they had gained first "the political
kingdom".

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The Sectarian Involvement in Nationalist Politics.

The Sudan Question and the accompanying polarization of nationalist sentiment had profound repercussions on subsequent developments in the country. Not only had these issues undermined the solidarity of the Congress and sowed the seeds of mutual distrust among the nationalists themselves; worse still, they accentuated sectarian rivalry and involvement in the nationalist struggle. When, early in March 1944, rumours about the names of likely candidates for the Governor-General's eight nominations to the Advisory Council began to circulate, Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani became extremely alarmed at what he considered to be a preponderance of Mahdists among them. He had already been seriously shaken by the provincial results which, apart from four Mirghanists and a few neutrals, were seen as definitely favourable to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. These members were, if not adherents, at least personal friends of the latter and had no relations with Sayyid

'Ali.¹ Muṣṭafa Abu'l-'Ila's² election by the Chamber of Commerce was another disappointment to Sayyid 'Ali for the same reason, his own candidate for that seat being the octogenarian Sid Aḥmad Suwār al-Dhahab.³

Having no legitimate grounds, however, for protesting against the results, Sayyid 'Ali concentrated his attack on the Governor-General's nominees. In an interview with the Governor of Khartoum Province, he protested against the preponderance of Mahdists among them and he put forward the names of some of his friends and adherents for consideration as alternative candidates. He remained impervious to subsequent Government arguments that the selection had been made on the sole basis of individual qualifications and without any regard to sectarian leanings, and he consequently sent a letter to Newbold excusing himself from accepting honorary membership on the Advisory Council, on the grounds "that the majority of the country (was) not represented" on it.

The Government moved swiftly to neutralize the implied threat of Sayyid 'Ali's boycott of the Advisory Council.

1. SPIS, No. 36, March 1944, loc. cit.

2. Mustafa Abu'l-'Ila: Prominent Mahdist merchant and trader in Khartoum, with branch offices in Egypt.

3. Sid Aḥmad Suwār al-Dhahab: Prominent Mirghanist merchant and trader in Omdurman.

In a letter to him, followed by an interview with the Governor-General, Newbold assured him first that the Advisory Council had neither been formed as a partisan body nor that it would be allowed to behave as such; and secondly, that the Government was neither committed to any sectarian leader nor that it had any ulterior policy which it wished to carry out through the Council. In an effort to dissuade him from further arm-twisting, Newbold impressed on him that a refusal to co-operate with the Government in such an important matter would be interpreted as an extremely unfriendly act.¹ Sayyid 'Ali reluctantly conceded. But, at the same time, he decided to make the most out of Newbold's assurances, and he flashed the letter about with a view to countering any impression that the Government contemplated a change in the status of his arch-rival.

Sayyid 'Ali's passivity did not last long, however. If he had any doubts left about the prospects of a Mahdist control of the Advisory Council, these were soon dispelled by a number of other events. Firstly, in preparation for the first session of the Council, the local members held meetings in the house of Ya'qūb al-Ḥilu and discussed the

1. SPIS, No. 37, April 1944, loc. cit.

various items on the agenda.¹ This initiative by the Mahdists naturally angered Sayyid 'Ali and increased his hostility to the Council. Secondly, in the inaugural address, the Governor-General described the Advisory Council as the first concrete manifestation of Sudanese nation and clearly implied that the aim of the Government was to create such a self-governing Sudanese nation. Whatever impressions the speech had in other quarters, Sayyid 'Ali did not relish it much for, given his apprehensions about an autonomous Sudan, he interpreted this statement as a negation of the assurances previously given to him. Finally, contrary to the initially expressed scepticism about the role and the performance of the Council, the first session turned out to be a notable success, and the belief widely spread that the Council would prove to be a truly valuable institution in the political life of the country. Some observers went even further and expressed the view that, if things developed normally, the Council would push the Congress completely into the background for at least the next few years.

Under these circumstances, Sayyid 'Ali became extremely alarmed when, in June 1944, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān toured

1. SPIS, No. 38, May 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16). Only Mirghani Hamza (a Khatmi) refused to attend.

hitherto reputedly Mirghanist spheres of influence. On his way back from a vacation in Arkawit, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān broke his journey at Atbara for a one-day visit to Berber, Abadiya and Damer. In all of these places, he was met by large crowds and feted at parties given in his honour by the local notables, parties which were noticeably attended by most of the local Mirghanists. At Damer, the capital of the Province, he dined with the Acting Governor just before he boarded his train to resume the journey, a courtesy inevitably loaded with serious implications.

The tour alarmed Mirghanist quarters in two respects. Firstly, it had demonstrated, as Sayyid Abd al-Rahmān no doubt intended, his high standing and increasing prestige in a part of the country which had previously been regarded as Sayyid 'Ali's preserve.¹ Secondly, Mirghanist

1. SPIS, No. 39, June 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16). Organised Mahdist incursions into Mirghanist preserves started in the early 1940's. In June 1942, Sayyid 'Abdullāhi al-Fādil, under the pretext of purely private motives, visited the Northern Province with the general object, and cumulative effect, of boosting Mahdist influence and linking up various Mahdist pockets in the area. But the Mirghanists' initial apprehensions were later compensated for by the split in the Mahdist camp initiated by 'Abdullāhi and the consequent loss of Mahdist control of the Congress. For details of Sayyid 'Abdullāhi's tour and initial Mirghanist reactions, cf. SPIS, No. 17, 18 & 19 (April-September 1942), CRO, PORT SUDAN 2/19/133.

khulafā', and particularly Sayyid 'Ali, were enraged that the Government had even allowed the trip to take place at all. In the atmosphere prevailing at the time, they saw in the Government's acquiescence to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's tour one more indication of a covertly-orchestrated campaign to make him Sultan of the Sudan. They had warned Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān off such a dreaded course earlier when, in their reply to his article in Al-Nīl on the future of the Sudan, they had expressed a veiled preference to a union with Egypt. They had then argued that there were some definite benefits to be derived from the formation of ties between Arab countries which could not, for one reason or another, survive as separate independent entities.¹ Their growing suspicions that the Government supported Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's ambitions increasingly motivated them to come out unequivocally against the policy of an independent Sudan under Mahdist control.

In August 1944, the occasion presented itself to

1. Editorial, Sawt al-Sūdān, 9 January 1944. In its original form, the article contained a veiled attack on Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān in a paragraph expressing the hope that the victorious democracies would not try to create in the Sudan "the hated and obsolete system of the sultans". Although the sentence was deleted by the censor from the published form, it nonetheless indirectly served to drive the point home to the Government.

Sayyid 'Ali to make his feelings known both to the Government and to the public at large. Egyptian papers reported then that he had proposed to visit Egypt to express his loyalty to King Farūq and his solid support for the unity of the Nile Valley, but that the visit had unexpectedly been postponed. Sayyid 'Ali did not circulate or publish a dementi on these reports in order to show quite forcefully what his attitude would be if the possible constitution of a separate kingdom in the Sudan under Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān were to materialize.¹ He wished to remind the British that, unlike his rival, he did not entertain any dynastic or national aspirations that would be definitely opposed to Egyptian sovereignty; and that consequently, if the choice between Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and King Farūq was forced on him he would naturally choose the latter.

For the time being, the primary concern of the Mirghanists was to defeat a renewed Mahdist endeavour to reassert their influence in the Congress, the only political institution which the Mirghanists felt was capable of putting up an organized resistance to Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's ambitions. In an effort to counter the

1. SPIS, No. 41, August 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16).

Egyptian attacks on him as the patron of a separationist movement, Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān had taken the initiative and had proposed a reconciliation with Sayyid 'Ali as a step toward the formation of a united front which would speak with authority in the name of the whole country.¹ Sayyid 'Ali, however, sensed quite clearly that such a move would inevitably strengthen his rival's position, and he was definitely not prepared to do so, particularly with the Congress elections only a few weeks away. In 1943, he reasoned, the Mahdists had managed to heal the split among their ranks and to impose their control on the Executive Committee; if, in the forthcoming elections, the Mahdists appeared to have healed the rift with the Mirghanists, they would probably extend their influence in the Committee of Sixty as well. With the war coming to an end, and with the prospect of both the Advisory Council and the Congress Committees under Mahdist domination, Sayyid 'Ali shuddered at the sinister likelihood that any British consultation of Sudanese "responsible" opinion on the future of the country might, under such conditions, well result in the setting up of an independent Sudan under Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān. He therefore rejected these conciliatory initiatives and instructed his lieutenants instead to rally

1. SPIS, No. 41, August 1944, loc. cit.

Mirghanist support behind Azhari, and to thus return a predominantly anti-Mahdist majority to the Congress Committees.

In the meantime, the main Congress factions had geared up for the 1944 elections. But, on this occasion, a new element had been added to the political equation: Whereas the previous two elections were fought on mainly personal alliances, this time the issue of union versus independence affected considerably factional re-alignment within the Congress. Azhari's group, henceforth officially adopting the name of al-Ashiqqā', adopted a new political programme.¹ They had previously pursued a policy of rigid adherence to the demands of the 1942 Congress Memorandum but, under the influence of the Sudan Question debates, they now advocated a policy of complete political amalgamation of the Sudan

1. The name, al-Ashiqqā', originated as an innocent jest, first put out by 'Abd al-Rāziq al-'Atabāni in referring to the Azhari and Fadli brothers who formed the nucleus of the faction in 1942. Subsequently, under the intensification of personal animosities, Badri al-Rayih gave the term a more sarcastic connotation, using it to ridicule the Azhari-Fadli caucus. In a more neutral sense of reference, the term gradually gained widespread use among the graduates in Khartoum and in 1944, seeking to connote a special relationship with their Egyptian nationalist brethren, the Azhari faction adopted it as their official name. Apart from Isma'īl al-Azhari, the leading members of the group included Yahya al-Fadli, Muḥammad Nur al-Dīn, Ahmad Muḥammad Yaṣīn, Maḥmūd al-Fadli, 'Alī Ḥamid, Babikr al-Qabāni, Badawi Muṣṭafa, and Hasan 'Awadallah. Cf. Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 17 November 1944.

with Egypt under one Crown.¹ Despite this significant change in political objectives, the Ashiqqā' programme proved to be quite popular with a large number of Congress supporters, particularly among the ranks of the junior officials and commercial employees, who nurtured strong anti-Government feelings.

To meet the election challenge of the Ashiqqā', the other Congress factions modified their own platforms accordingly. Like the Ashiqqā', they too shared, to some degree, the growing feeling among the graduates that, if the Sudan were to be completely separated from Egypt, it might be cut off altogether from the caravan of the Arab world. Unlike the Ashiqqā', however, they were apprehensive, also to varying degrees, that too close a tie would ultimately lead to Egyptian domination and the subjugation of progress in the Sudan to Egypt's insurmountable needs. The Abu Rūf group, joined by other graduates and re-naming itself al-Ittiḥadiyyīn, advocated a dominion status for the Sudan under Egypt, "similar to the union of Australia and Canada, for instance, with

1. SPIS, No. 42, September 1944, loc. cit.

Great Britain."¹ The Ahrār, on the other hand, sought nothing more than a federation between two self-governing and equal nations.²

The Hashmāb, who had earlier advocated that the Sudan should be placed under an Anglo-Egyptian mandate with independence to follow by 1956, found themselves practically isolated. They basically repudiated Egyptian claims to the Sudan and they strongly opposed the programme of the Ashiqqā'. Accordingly, they would have preferred to confine their political platform only to a call for the granting of national independence at the end of the mandate and to refrain from any reference to relations with Egypt, thereby reserving for the Sudanese the sole right to determine, freely at a later stage, the question of a political connection with Egypt. But the paramount need of the moment to defeat the Ashiqqā' "fusionists" dictated a tactical change in their campaign, a change calculated to secure as large a body of supporters as possible for the

1. Programme of al-Ittihadīyyīn in SPIS, No. 43, October 1944, PRO, FO.371/41348 (J58/58/16). Leading members of the group were Isma'īl al-Ātabani, 'Abdallāh Mirghani, Ibrahim Yūsif Sulaymān, 'Uthmān Ibrahim Ishāq, and Mahmūd al-Faki.

2. Leading members of the Ahrār included 'Abd al-Rahīm Shaddād, Ahmad al-Bashīr al-'Abādi, Muhammad al-Dīb, Muhi al-Dīn al-Birayr and Al-Tayyib Shībayka.

ideal of autonomy. They decided, therefore, to include in their programme an article calling for the formation of a union with Egypt following the expiration of the mandatory period. They purposely left undefined the nature of such a union believing, like their Ittihadīyyīn and Ahrār colleagues, that a loose "union" formula would provide a wide basis of agreement against the Ashīqqā'. Furthermore, they believed that such a loose formula had a propitiatory element: Given the strong feelings of Egyptian nationalists on the status of the Sudan, such a formula conceivably helped to preserve friendly relations with Egypt and to avert an otherwise sharp conflict which might ultimately prove embarrassing to the Sudanese, if not detrimental to the realisation of their national aspirations. With their platform thus redefined, and with new recruits joining their ranks, the Hashmāb group renamed itself al-Qawmiyyīn.¹

Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān had spent most of October 1944 at his home in Aba island, quietly supervising his cotton plantations. On his return to Khartoum, he was dismayed

1. The group set up a "Secretariat" of 12 members, under the direction of Al-Sayyid al-Fīl (the ex-Mufti's son, then a clerk in the Finance Department), to co-ordinate their activities. Other leading members were Aḥmad Yūsif Hāshim, 'Abd al-Halīm Muḥammad, Yūsif Muṣṭafa al-Tinay, Muḥammad Ḥamad al-Nīl, Amīn Babīkr and Ja'afar Babīkr Ja'afar. Cf. Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 20 October 1944.

to learn of the new positions adopted by the various factions, and he became extremely angry with the Qawmiyyīn for having adopted the "union" formula in their published declarations. Aḥmad Yūsif attempted to justify his change of tactics but Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān remained uncompromising on this point. He objected unequivocally to any suggestion of ultimate union, however vague and conditional, and he told the Qawmiyyīn that he would not support them in the elections, unless they pledged to pursue a policy of full independence in the Congress Committees and cut out all talk of an ultimate union with Egypt.¹ Several meetings were held between him and the Qawmiyyīn but no compromise formula was found that would satisfy both sides.

While these meetings were still going on, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān learned of the Mirghanist commitment to the Ashiqqā'. He realised immediately that, without the counter support of his Anṣār followers, the elections would most probably result in a decisive defeat of the other (anti-Ashiqqā') factions in the Congress. He hesitated at first on whether to intervene or not, for fear of incurring Government disapproval, but he finally decided to do so. Accordingly, he instructed both Sayyid ʿAbdullāhi al-Fāḍil

1. SPIS, No. 43, October 1944, loc. cit.

and Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf to mobilize all the Mahdist elements in the capital in support of his nominees.

By election day, on 27 November 1944, the whole campaign had clearly resolved itself into a struggle on the old sectarian basis between the Mahdists and the Mirghanists, and practically all the groups that had formed themselves as professedly independent bodies were definitely ranged under the Anṣār or Khatmi banner.¹ The result had become inevitable from the moment that the two sects decided to throw their numerical weight into the elections. Under such circumstances, no independent group could hope for any success if it did not enjoy the backing of one side or the other. The Mirghanist support for the Ashiqqā' left the rival factions (Qawmiyyīn, Ahrār and a section of the Ittiḥadiyyīn) with no other choice but to ally themselves openly

1. In 1944, the number of registered Congress members stood at 9400. Admission cards had been issued to 5864 of them, but the number who actually attended and voted was 4667. They were mostly sectarian adherents, workers, small tradesmen and cultivators from Khartoum North rural areas. In order to "qualify" as voters under the rules of the Congress, illiterate sectarian followers were required only to demonstrate an ability to write their own names. Consequently, potential voters were seen practicing, under the direction of their convassers, writing their names on the soles of their margubs outside the balloting booth. Cf. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, November 1944, para 3(a), CRO, CIVSEC 57/21/81.

with the Anṣār and depend on the Mahdist block vote.¹

The prevailing conditions, however, strongly favoured the Ashiqqā'-Mirghanist alliance. Firstly, the year 1944 saw the increased migration into Khartoum of people from rural areas.² The Government's system of ration cards, which had been imposed on grain, sugar and textile goods on the basis of specific amounts per person, had acted as an attractive stimulus to such migrations. Under the ration card system, people felt secure that they were guaranteed the supply of their personal requirements and, by bringing in their relatives, those already resident in Khartoum were able to actually increase their family quotas. Coming from neighbouring villages around Khartoum, the greater number of those involved in such migrations were Mirghanist adherents, and they thereby augmented the traditionally-existing Mirghanist majority in the population of the Three Towns. The sectarian dice was thus heavily loaded in favour of the Ashiqqā'. Secondly, the Anṣār did not enter the field in earnest until a short time before the elections. Until the very end, they were in a divided state of mind as to whether they should ally themselves

1. SPIS, No. 44, November 1944, PRO, FO.371/45872 (J97/97/16).

2. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, December 1944, CRO, CIVSEC 57/21/81.

with any of the existing groups or not, whereas the Mirghanists had committed themselves solidly behind the Ashiqqā'. Finally, quite apart from their sectarian support, the Ashiqqā' were a far better organised and a more united party than any of their opponents, and they enjoyed the support of the bulk of the younger graduates in canvassing for votes.

The election results were consequently a sweeping victory for the Ashiqqā'-Mirghanist alliance. This outcome was largely due to the success of their propaganda, which threatened the voters with the return of the Mahdiyya, and with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān as King of the Sudan, if they failed to support the Ashiqqā' party. The folly of some of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's own followers, who had themselves been propagating the kingship idea, contributed considerably to the Mahdist defeat. The failure of the Sayyid himself to make any attempt to refute the idea inevitably lent support to the Ashiqqā' propaganda. In the event, the Ashiqqā' won 36 seats on the Council of Sixty and on the following day, with the Mahdist and Ahrār members abstaining, this majority voted into office an all-Ashiqqā' Executive Committee under the presidency of Isma'īl al-Azhari.¹

1. SPIS, No. 44, November 1944, Appendix "A", loc. cit.

The Formation of the Umma Party.

The result of the 1944 Congress elections was a decisive stage in a series of events that eventually led to the formation of the Umma party. Newbold had believed that the majority of the intelligentsia, as well as Sayyid 'Ali and provincial tribal notables, were inclined to favour the continuation of the Condominium for a further period of 10 to 15 years. By August 1944, however, he had become apprehensive that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's political ambitions would drive the Mirghanists and other non-sectarian elements into the Egyptian camp; that Sayyid 'Ali would go to any length to counter his rival's campaign to cash in on Sudanese self-government; and that the result of all this would be the inevitable emergence of a definite "union with Egypt" movement. He sought to persuade the more moderate graduates to damp down the Sayyids' rivalries, and to form some sort of a united front which would devote its immediate energies to the practical realisation of his internal self-government programme, without prejudice to the eventual political issue.²

In a characteristic stroke, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān

-
1. Report by the Political Intelligence Centre of the Middle East, Paper No 66. (1944), loc. cit.
 2. Robertson to Sudan Agent (Cairo), 8.4.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J1457/165/16).

began to steal the show from Newbold. He had himself become extremely concerned with the renewed Egyptian press campaign for unity of the Nile Valley, a campaign in which Sudanese students in Egypt, and especially 'Ali al-Birayr, had taken a very active part. In June 1944, 'Ali al-Birayr had commenced publication of a weekly magazine in Egypt, called Al-Sūdān, which was strongly anti-British and which continually urged the Egyptian Parliament to tackle immediately the settlement of the Sudan Question. In July, Al-Sūdān declared that its aim was to propagate the policy of unity of the Nile Valley under the Egyptian Crown. This pro-Egyptian commitment by Al-Sūdān induced Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān to consider with interest the proposal put forward by some senior nationalist to set up the publication of a new independent daily, quite separate from him and Al-Nīl, which would be unequivocally dedicated to the cause of "the Sudan for the Sudanese".¹ He felt that the scheme, while not satisfactorily amenable to his control, nonetheless promised to mobilize the widest support possible against Egyptian claims on the Sudan and that, coming at a time when Newbold was making parallel initiatives, it would

1. SPIS, No. 41, August 1944, loc. cit. Some of the nationalists who had discussed this subject with Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān included 'Abdallah Khalīl, 'Abd al-Karīm Muḥammad, Shaykh Aḥmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi and Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi.

expectedly gain the approval and support of the Government.¹

Newbold's hopes subsequently foundered, and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's expectations of hammering out a united front collapsed with Sayyid 'Ali's rejection of his proposal of reconciliation. By the time the Congress elections were held, graduate attitudes to a union with Egypt had evolved in exactly the opposite direction to that anticipated by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān. Even the Hashmāb, his long-standing allies in the Congress, had deserted the fold. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, therefore, realized that he could no longer safely sit on the sidelines and depend on others to preserve the sovereignty of the Sudan. He had already seriously contemplated, even before the elections were held, that if

1. In fact, the idea was basically attractive to Newbold. In December 1944, the promoters of the scheme seized the opportunity of the presence in Khartoum of the provincial members of the Advisory Council to broach to them the idea of the proposed newspaper, to be called Al-Umma, which was to serve as the organ of the "Sudan for the Sudanese" movement. Some of these provincial notables did not wish to commit themselves to the scheme until they had consulted their Governors. The attitude of the Government, expressed to them informally, was that, although there was no likelihood of concrete results from this idea, "a new paper, representing rural as well as urban interests and not completely under the control of either the Mahdist or Mirghanist party, would be welcomed." [Cf. SPIS, No. 45, December 1944, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16)]. This earlier approval of the newspaper scheme subsequently led to the suspicion that the Umma party was a creation of the British Administration.

the Ashiqqā' won decisively he would instruct his supporters to secede from the Congress and form themselves into a new party, opposed to the Congress and pledged to work for self-government and independence.¹

Apart from interpreting the election result as a slap in his face, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān regarded it as posing a more immediate and specific danger. He suspected that the Ashiqqā' had been pressured by their Egyptian connections to produce, in return for material and moral support, a Congress resolution calling for a union with Egypt -- a measure ostensibly intended to counter in advance any unsound expression of Sudanese national aspirations that might come from the Advisory Council, but which could be used ultimately by Egypt to settle the Sudan Question in her favour. The Ashiqqā' had already contemplated such a move in April 1944, when they made an unsuccessful manoeuvre to table a motion in the Congress Committee of Sixty deprecating any Government policy or action that would be calculated to sever the Sudan from Egypt.² Unlike then, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān was alarmed that this time, with a clear majority in both Congress Committees, there was virtually nothing to block the Ashiqqā' from passing

1. SPIS, No. 43, October 1944, loc. cit.

2. SPIS, No. 37, April 1944, loc. cit.

such a resolution.

To meet this threat, the Mahdist camp rejected the interpretation of the Ashiqqā' that the election result constituted a vote of confidence in the "unionist" platform, and they also sought to deprive the Congress of undisputed authority to speak on behalf of all the nationalist factions. Taking their cue from the general criticism voiced by graduates on the indiscriminate canvassing of voters in the elections,¹ leading Mahdist members of the Committee of Sixty manoeuvred to convince all opposition members to table a motion demanding the strictest enforcement of membership qualification requirements at every election and if defeated, as they expected to be, to resign and repudiate the Congress in its then existing form.²

The manoeuvre failed, however, for a number of reasons. In the first place, some opposition members regarded it as motivated primarily by sectarian considerations and they were not prepared to be dragged into the sectarian feud. In the second place, the attitude of the Ashiqqā' themselves began to change in December 1944. Sayyid 'Ali, comfortably confident as a result of his victory over his rival,

1. Editorials, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 2 December 1944; and Al-Nīl, 3 December 1944.

2. SPIS, No. 44, November 1944, loc. cit.

became noticeably reluctant to sanction any move by the Ashiqqā' to produce a formal resolution in the Congress on union with Egypt. He realized very well that such a step would not only alienate the Government but would also most probably push it into Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's arms. Without Mirghanist support, the Ashiqqā' dared not make any adventurous moves. This factor, together with the growing criticism, even within his own party, of Egyptian attacks on the idea of Sudanese nationality, induced Azhari to declare that the aim of the Ashiqqā' was not actually fusion with Egypt, but a dominion status under the Egyptian crown and flag.¹

A third factor which defeated the Mahdist manoeuvre was a growing attitude among opposition members to accept

1. SPIS, No. 45, December 1944, loc. cit. In September 1944, six members of the Advisory Council (including Shaykh Ahmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi, 'Abdallah Khalīl, and Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi) officially requested that the subject of Sudanese nationality should be included in the agenda of the next session. This subject had constantly been looked upon as a very effective means of asserting Sudanese national identity. It formed one of the demands in the 1942 Congress Memorandum and, since late 1943, it became a vital objective of those seeking complete independence. However, as it was a sensitive issue for the Egyptians, the Government simply made a factual statement on the legal and constitutional difficulties of establishing Sudanese nationality, and did not allow any debate on the subject. Egyptian reactions to the raising of the subject itself were noticeably hostile and this in turn caused considerable resentment among Sudanese nationalists. Cf. Editorial, Al-Nīl, 30 December 1944.

the election results. In presenting the Congress programme of action to a meeting of the Committee of Sixty in January 1945, Azhari affirmed that the Executive Committee would first make a careful study of the aspects regarding the future status of the Sudan before arriving at "a resolution suitably expressing the hopes and aspirations of the country."¹ The opposition members were not satisfied with such assurances and they sought to amend the programme by including the Congress Memorandum of 1942 as an item of priority for implementation by the new Executive. The Memorandum contained a demand for the legalization of Sudanese nationality, and the object of the opposition in pressing for its inclusion in the programme was to tie down the Ashiqqā' to this demand, making it virtually impossible for them to pursue a policy of fusion with Egypt. Azhari resisted the amendment on the grounds that, since the substance of the Memorandum was contained in the various items of the programme, its inclusion as an item by itself would be superfluous. The opposition, however, supported by a significant number of the Ashiqqā', succeeded in carrying the motion for its inclusion. The outcome of the debate encouraged

1. SPIS, No. 46, January 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16).

opposition members to believe that they could play an effective role in the Congress and consequently increased the already evident willingness of most moderates to acquiesce for the moment to the election results. Thus, the earlier tendency to condemn and challenge the new Executive Committee died down considerably.

Pro-independence nationalists, however, did not feel secure any more in the wake of these developments in the Congress movement, and they persisted in the task of organising themselves to meet effectively any determined move by Egypt to reassert her claims to the Sudan. In early January 1945, some thirty graduates held a meeting in Omdurman to frame the rules and programme of a new political organisation.¹ Proposals were put forward and a committee, consisting of Shaykh Ahmad 'Uthmān al-Qādi, Muḥammad 'Ali Shawqi and Muḥammad 'Uthmān Mirghani, was appointed to study them and to draw up the necessary rules and a relative programme. On 18 February, with all preparations completed, 'Abdallah Khalīl² submitted the constitution of the newly-formed Umma party to the

1. These graduates, mostly Mahdists and Qawmiyyīn, included 'Abdallah Khalīl, Ibrahim Ahmad, Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf, Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim and 'Abd al-Karīm Muḥammad.

2. 'Abdallah Khalīl: Born 1888; served in Egyptian army 1910-1924; continued in Sudan Defence Force 1926-44, when he retired as brigadier; member of Advisory Council 1944-47; Secretary General of Umma party 1945-58; Leader of Legislative Assembly 1948-52; Prime Minister 1956-58.

Government for approval.¹

The proposed constitution was an innovation in many respects. Adopting the motto of "The Sudan for the Sudanese", the Umma party committed itself quite clearly to a definite political objective -- namely, "to work for the realization of the independence of the Sudan within its present geographic boundaries, and for the maintenance of friendly relations with Egypt and Great Britain."² Unlike the Congress, the party did not restrict its membership to the graduate class only but left it "open to every Sudanese, over eighteen years of age, who embraces the principle of the party and works for its realization". In this regard, it was surely the first political organisation based on mass membership, at least in the letter of its constitution.

-
1. SPIS, No. 47, February 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16). 'Abdallah Khalil was elected Secretary of the Umma party. The rules provided for the founders to elect a permanent Administrative Committee of 50, who would then elect an Executive Committee of 12 members to serve for a period of 2 years, after which another election for the Executive Committee would be held. This Executive Committee was headed by a Secretary General and each of its members had specifically defined duties to perform. It was more like a shadow Cabinet, with members individually responsible for Agriculture, Finance, Education and so forth.
 2. Dastūr Hizb al-Umma, Al-Tamadun Press, Khartoum, 1945. An English translation of this constitution is available in PRO, FO.371/45984 (J1457/165/16).

By the time the Umma party was formed, Newbold had already become sceptical of the British Government's practice of not disclosing its aims and intentions on the Sudan. He felt that, unless this silence was broken, pro-Egyptian propaganda would gradually erode Sudanese loyalty and eventually render it extremely difficult for the British to retain the support of such Sudanese opinion as was at that time disposed to align itself behind them. He thought it desirable to encourage the growth of an active pro-British sentiment that would be founded firmly on self-interest and mutual understanding. Accordingly, he advised the Governor of Khartoum to approve the Umma constitution and to recognize the party as a club under Section 165 of the standard Local Government (Municipalities) Regulations of 1938 -- the same legislation under which the Congress was formed.

Some of the founders were initially disappointed with the wording of the reply, regarding the term "club" as an inadequate and false description of the party and suspecting an unwillingness on the part of the Government to approve the political aims set out in their constitution. They also interpreted the fact that the reply had come from the Governor of Khartoum, instead of the Civil Secretary (to whom the application was originally addressed), to mean that the Government intended the party

to confine its activities to Khartoum Province. It was, however, privately explained to them that there was no provision in the law for approving "parties" as such, and that the only approval they could obtain was one to set up a "club" which, as defined by the law, fully covered the purposes of such an association as their own.¹ After this assurance, the party proceeded to register itself as a private company with the purpose of publishing a new daily paper, called Al-Umma, which was intended to serve as the party's mouthpiece.

The Formation of Other Political Parties and the Eclipse of the Graduates' Congress.

News of the formation of the Umma party caused a great deal of perturbation among the Ashiqqā' and Mirghanist circles. There were two features which, from the start, placed the Umma party in a disreputable position. In the first place, there was its close association with prominent Mahdists. The party promoters held their meetings in, and were largely financed by, the Mahdist daira, and they had selected as their main propagandists persons like Muḥammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf and Muḥammad Ali Shawqi, both of whom were widely known as doctrinaire

1. SPIS, No. 47, February 1945, loc. cit.

Mahdists. Rumours inevitably spread to the effect that the new party was formed to impose a Mahdist monarchy on an independent Sudan. When these were not immediately refuted by either the Government or the party, they had the double effect of driving many moderates into the Ashiqqā' camp and ensuring whole-hearted Mirghanist support for the Ashiqqā'. The Umma party was thus branded as merely an instrument designed to secure a crown for Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān as a puppet king under the British and, within this perspective, its adopted slogan ("The Sudan for the Sudanese") assumed quite a different meaning from that which it was originally intended to convey.¹

In the second place, the programme adopted by the party was essentially similar to the Government's long-term policy of eventually transferring the administration of the country to the Sudanese themselves. This feature, together with exaggerated claims by Umma party members themselves that they had Government support, inevitably

1. Yaḥya al-Fadlī, "In Whose Name are These Men Working?", Sawt al Sūdān, 15 February 1945; also, ʿAli Ḥamīd, "The Sudan for the Sudanese", Sawt al-Sūdān, 19 February 1945. From early February 1945, ʿAli Ḥamīd (Ashiqqā') acted as editor in the place of Ismaʿīl al-ʿAtabānī who had resigned to run his own newly-established independent daily, Al-Ray al-ʿAmm, making its first appearance on 15 March. The "neutrality" of the newspaper did not last long and it soon became the organ of the Ittīḥadiyyīn.

laid the party open to the obvious charge that it was created by the Government with a view to opposing the Ashiqqā' and the Congress. Reports that Newbold had encouraged, before the Umma party was constituted, the formation of a new independent daily paper of the same name with a non-sectarian rural bias, appeared to confirm the alleged Government connection with the party.

In an effort to neutralize this criticism, 'Abdallah Khalīl and Shaykh Surūr Muhammad Ramli¹ called on Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani and invited him to join the Umma party. They explained to him the objectives of the party and assured him that it was a bona fide association which was formed to serve the cause of the country as a whole and not to be subservient to any special quarter or sectional interests. Sayyid 'Ali received them well, expressed in the usual platitudes his sympathy with the project and said that he would reserve his judgement until their words and intentions had been translated into action.²

The formation of the Umma party came at a time when relations between the Government and the Congress underwent further deterioration. On 26 December 1944, the Governor

1. Shaykh Surūr Muhammad Ramli: Local Government administrator and Vice-President of Khartoum North Rural District Court; member of the Advisory Council 1944-47; founding member of the Umma party.

2. SPIS, No. 47, February 1945, loc. cit.

of Khartoum had addressed a letter to Azhari, calling his attention to the fact that the clause defining the educational qualifications for membership in the Congress was disregarded in the 1944 elections, and that such departure from the rules, without their previous amendment with the Government's consent, was an infringement of the relative 1938 Regulations and should be set right by the submission of amended rules to cover this change in the constitution. Azhari apparently was mainly concerned with confirming the validity of the elections and, on 29 December 1944, he replied to the effect that the Congress rules had not been changed. Azhari's affirmations provided a justification for further Government action and, on 7 February 1945, the Governor of Khartoum addressed a second letter to him, pointing out that the rule defining the educational qualification for membership was violated at the elections and that, owing to the unconstitutional manner in which these elections were conducted, "the nature and character of the Graduates' Congress have in fact undergone a radical change, and any claim by it to speak for, or to represent, the educated classes of the Sudan bears no relation to the true facts of the situation."¹

1. E.H. MacIntosh to Isma'īl al-Azhari, 7.2.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J982/165/16).

In these circumstances, the Government's approval of the Umma constitution naturally suggested that the party would enjoy a special status vis-à-vis the Congress and other political factions. The Ashiqqā' leaders were extremely annoyed at this and they were initially prompted to apply for a similar recognition as a political body.¹ On second thought, however, they decided against making such a move. They probably realized that, if it was granted, such a recognition would only serve to endorse the Government's assertions that the Congress was no longer representative of the graduate class, and also confer on the Umma party the authority of a representative organisation equal to, and working outside, the Congress. Besides, the Ashiqqā' were unwilling to undermine their own credentials as the spokesmen of the Congress, which a recognition of them as a separate club with

1. SPIS, No. 48, March-April 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16).

open membership would have inevitably brought about.¹

While all parties were contemplating what their next step would be, external events began once again to influence politics in the Sudan. The Yalta Conference had decided that only those states which had declared war on the Axis powers by 1 March 1945 would have the right to take part in the San Francisco Conference and become founding members of the United Nations. On 24 February, therefore, in order to ensure that Egypt would not be

1. This painful dilemma was to plague the Ashiqqā' for some years to come. Their obsession to identify themselves with the Graduates' Congress, and their insistence that this Congress represented the educated class, posed serious obstacles in turning the Ashiqqā' into a mass party without undermining the special status they claimed for the Congress. They were thus compelled to depend heavily on the sectarian organisation of the Khatmiyya for popular mobilization. In December 1945, a suggestion was floated that amendments should be made to the Congress constitution allowing for two types of membership: Firstly, an "open membership", comprising Sudanese whose educational standard was below elementary (or, if conditions permitted, all Sudanese) and who would neither be eligible for election to the Committee of Sixty nor allowed to vote for its members; secondly, a "special membership", restricted to those whose educational standard was above the elementary, and who would be eligible both to vote for, and be elected to, Congress Committees. [Cf. Al-Ray al-'Amm, 15 December 1945]. By late 1948, when the political eclipse of the Graduates' Congress had been virtually completed and the Ashiqqā' decided to set up their own "clubs", these two types of membership crept into their constitution -- being then defined as "ordinary" and "working" members respectively. Cf. Ashiqqā' Club Constitution (1949), CRO, Lands Office File Km.P/10.D.42.

excluded from the peace conference as it had been from the Versailles, Ahmad Māhir declared war on Germany.¹

The entry of Egypt into the war alarmed the Umma party and its supporters. Like most other nationalists, they had misread or misinterpreted various articles which had appeared in Egyptian and British papers, and they had formed the wrong impression that the San Francisco Conference would also settle the future of the Sudan. They became apprehensive that, with Egypt thus securing a seat at the Conference, she would be in a better position to press for the realization of her national demands, which included her claim to the Sudan. But what about the Sudan itself? Who would press for its national aspirations at the Conference?² The Umma resented the fact that this belated and nominal declaration of war was to give Egypt an advantage otherwise denied to the Sudan which, though not a recognized state, had nonetheless been officially at war with the Axis powers since 1940 and whose sons had participated in the actual fighting. They argued that the Sudan was entitled to have its aspirations represented to

-
1. Ahmad Māhir was assassinated as he left the Chamber of Deputies to put the case to the Senate. He was succeeded as Premier by Maḥmūd Faḥmi al-Nuqrāshi.
 2. Editorial, Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 2 March 1945; and, Editorial, Al-Nīl, 4 March 1945.

the makers of the new world, and that some means of doing this had to be found. The Sudan Question, they pointedly emphasized, could not be solved without the Sudanese.

Spurred by the desire to preserve the interests of the Sudan, the Umma party despatched a letter to the Governor-General, requesting in effect that steps be taken to ensure direct Sudanese representation at the Conference.¹ The Civil Secretary eventually replied that the Sudan would be represented at San Francisco by the delegates of the two Condominium powers, and that the future of the Sudan would not be decided there.²

The Umma party initiative, however, started a new series of events rolling. In the absence of a formal publication of the Umma letter, rumours began to spread that the party had submitted a memorandum to the Government, in which it had demanded complete independence for the Sudan. The Ashiqqā' and the Mirghanists became alarmed and they condemned the Umma for allegedly acting as if they alone were the arbiters of the Sudan's destiny.³

-
1. 'Abdallah Khalīl to Governor-General, 19.3.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J1457/165/16).
 2. Robertson to 'Abdallah Khalīl, 9.4.1945, *Ibid.* Sir James W. Robertson had succeeded Douglas Newbold as Civil Secretary, after the latter died on 23 March 1945. He joined the Sudan Political Service in 1922 and left in 1953; was Deputy Civil Secretary 1941-45; Civil Secretary 1945-53; Governor-General of Nigeria 1955-60.
 3. Editorial by 'Ali Ḥamid, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 28 March 1945.

They felt compelled to respond effectively and to formally declare their position that the Sudan's future lay through some close ties with Egypt.¹

In the circumstances, Azhari summoned the Committee of Sixty to an emergency session on 2 April to discuss the future of the Sudan and the correspondence exchanged between him and the Governor of Khartoum on the subject of the Congress constitution. Remembering the opposition's success in January 1945, Azhari adroitly combined the discussion of these two issues in order to generate opposition to the Government and thus whip up support for his proposed resolution. The manoeuvre succeeded in holding most of the Ashiqqā' in line and in forcing a significant number of the opposition (particularly among the Ittiḥadiyyīn and Ahrār) to abstain in the vote. With a handsome majority, the Ashiqqā' adopted a resolution, calling for the Sudan to "be ruled by a Sudanese Democratic Government within a union with Egypt under the Egyptian crown."²

1. Editorial by 'Ali Hamīd, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 29 March 1945.

2. SPIS, No. 48, March-April 1945, loc. cit. The vote on the resolution was 32 in favour, 17 against and 11 abstentions. In response to the Governor's letters, the Congress insisted that the constitution remained unaltered; that the Committee of Sixty were responsible for its interpretation; and that the 1944 elections had been conducted in strict accordance with the approved rules. On 16 May 1945, the Governor affirmed that, as the Congress had allowed large numbers of uneducated persons to vote in the elections, the Government no longer "recognized the Graduates' Congress, as at present constituted, as representative of the educated classes."

The resolution was published in the local press on 5 April and copies of the Congress manifesto containing it were published in the Egyptian press about a week later.

In nationalist circles, the resolution had a mixed reception. Some of the provincial Congress committees sent congratulatory telegrams; others, unsure or dissatisfied with the implications, simply took no action. The Kassala and Gedaref committees were initially unsympathetic but, after visits by Ashiqqā' leaders from Khartoum, they were brought round to support the resolution. Some of the senior graduates, like Ḥasan Zāhir and Naṣr al-Ḥāj 'Alī, publicly criticised the resolution as having gone too far. The Sudan, they insisted must reserve its right to self-determination.¹ Other senior graduates, drawn from the various parties, called for further negotiations for a revised, and more acceptable, formula in order to prevent an irreparable split in the nationalist ranks.

In Government circles, the general verdict on this bold dictum was that the Congress should be reminded once again to confine itself to activities concerning education and social services.² On 14 April, Robertson directed

1. "The Present Political Situation", Al-Ray al-Ḥamm, 25 April 1945.

2. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, April 1945, para 3(b), CRO, CIVSEC 57/21/83.

all Governors and Heads of Department to remind Sudanese officials of their obligations under the Administrative Regulations, the gross abuse of which he was not prepared to tolerate. In this connection, he referred both to the Congress's boycott of the Advisory Council and to their resolution, which evidently demanded the removal of the British from the Condominium partnership, as examples of such abuses. He then warned that

"if Government officials, as members of a political party or body, take part in any further incident which, in the opinion of the Government, is subversive of its authority, or make an attack on any general policy of the Government, or on the Condominium status of the Government, or on the British or Egyptian Governments, (the Sudan Government) will be compelled without further warning to forbid its officials from serving on any committee or taking any other active or prominent part in the political party or body concerned."¹

The circular caused considerable, and mostly unfavourable, comment in the press and in political circles. It was criticized as essentially regressive. In addition to the fact that it ostensibly refused to allow the free expression of nationalist opinion as to the shape of self-government suitable for the Sudan, the circular was also seen as an unjustified obstacle to Newbold's declared

1. Robertson to All Governors and Heads of Department, 14.4.1945, CRO, DAKHLIA (I) 1/12/30.

policy of increasingly associating the Sudanese with the government of their country.¹ Moreover, the circular's references to specific acts of the Congress strongly implied that the Government's objections were aimed at the former and, in this respect, it confirmed, even more emphatically, suspicions that the Government discriminated unfairly between the two main parties. If the Umma were allowed to canvass support for their platform, why should the Congress not also be allowed to do likewise? The implications were too strong to refute.

Coming at a time when the war in Europe was swiftly ending and when Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān publicly committed his support behind the Umma party,² the circular had the added effect of intensifying sectarian involvement in nationalist politics. Sayyid 'Ali disliked intensely any prospect of being forced into active participation in any political movement. He generally preferred to live in the obscurity of his favourite religious background, where he could merely let things slide, leaving himself free to deny complicity if they slid too fast. But rumours about the Umma letter of 19 March, and the active canvassing

-
1. Editorial by 'Ali Hamīd, Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 18 April 1945.
 2. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's Statement in Al-Nīl, 17 April 1945.

undertaken by Mahdist khulafā' in the provinces, finally forced him to take to the field once again. For him, the triflings in intelligentsia circles with pro or anti-Egyptian political formulae were of negligible importance, the real issue being the threat posed to the country by Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān's ambitions. He considered it his duty, as well as the duty of all non-Mahdists to whatever religious order they belonged, to resist actively and unitedly a movement which under the cover of a political label had "as its primary objective the restoration of the old dictatorship in the person of the Mahdi's son".¹ The Mirghanist sectarian organisation was placed at the disposal of Ashiqqā' emissaries in the provinces and the stage was thus set for a two-party contest on a national scale.

The Government became alarmed at these developments. They had believed that, if the various parties were left to themselves, they would sooner or later founder on the shoals of personalities. The active involvement of the two Sayyids, however, transformed the situation. The rival political mobilization of thousands of illiterate and semi-literate tribesmen and provincials foreshadowed the dreaded prospect of sectarian strife. To these

1. SPIS, No. 48, March-April 1945, loc. cit.

masses politics were meaningless and the jargon of the party canvasser would most probably have been interpreted as a "call" to support their own particular Holy Man. The activities of the two sectarian headquarters grew mutually more provocative and the Government felt that, if these were left unchecked, public order would inevitably be disturbed and old sores reopened -- events which, with post-war problems coming to the front and the grain situation unpleasantly tight, could cause unnecessary strains within the community. Under these circumstances, the Government concluded that the best thing to do was to confine, as far as possible, the political clamour to the capital and the major towns; to keep a close watch on attempts by party emissaries to exploit administrative or economic grievances (real or imaginary) in rural areas; to discourage Mahdist or Mirghanist attempts to beat up sectarian feeling; and to keep local tribal authorities out of the political game.

Accordingly, on 26 May 1945, Robertson wrote officially to both Sayyids, calling on them to do all that was in their power to maintain public tranquility and, in particular, to abstain from participation in politics. He also requested them to instruct their agents in the provinces to cease canvassing for the rival parties. Directing himself to both Sayyids, Robertson affirmed quite clearly that the

rumours, claiming that the Government backed the Umma party and contemplated the institution of a monarchy in the Sudan, were completely untrue, and he called on both of them to denounce these rumours as lies. The Government's policy, he reminded them, had been frequently defined and was not to be diverted by tendentious agitations.¹ The letter, of which each Sayyid received a copy, was delivered by hand, and the various points were emphatically driven home in the accompanying conversations.

At the same time, Robertson requested province Governors to advise all local authorities to keep out of politics. Although they were not government officials within the meaning of the Administrative Regulations, these authorities were nevertheless salaried public servants and, as such, they were required to observe certain standards of conduct. He reminded them that only local and tribal politics were their legitimate sphere of activity and he warned that, while it was natural that they should take an interest in the development and future of their country, their active participation in party or sectarian politics, and the use of their position to influence or canvass their people for the benefit of central political parties, would

1. SPIS, No. 49, May 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972.
(J97/97/16).

not be tolerated. Finally, he pointed out that Al-Umma newspaper had, contrary to initial expectations, turned out to be a party organ, and he advised all local authorities to steer clear of it.¹

Robertson's assault did not stop there. An additional opportunity presented itself on 12 June, when he held a press conference with Sudanese journalists. He had tried earlier to counter allegations of a connection between the Umma and the Government. On 9 April he had sent a circular to all the Governors, giving them a brief background to the formation of the Umma party, and instructed them to "make it clear to the public at large that this claim (of Government support) is quite untrue".² He even warned off the promoters of the party themselves, notably Shaykh Ahmad ʿUthmān al-Qādi and Muhammad al-Khalīfa Sharīf, from spreading such claims, and he subsequently compelled Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahmān to transfer the latter to his agricultural scheme in the White Nile Province. This faint-hearted approach was not followed up by stronger measures at the time, probably because Robertson believed that, although the Umma's tactical errors should be genuinely deprecated,

-
1. Robertson to All Northern Governors, 24.5.1945, CRO, HALFA 36/2/8; also, DAKHLIA (I) 1/12/30.
 2. Robertson to All Governors, 9.4.1945, CRO, DAKHLIA (I) 1/12/30.

the party itself should not be totally discouraged.

"If we so neglect or mishandle it as to lose its support," he wrote, "we may find ourselves a trifle friendless when the inevitable showdown occurs."¹ As these earlier indirect measures proved ineffective to dispel Mirghanist suspicions, and as the desired unequivocal renunciation of monarchy was not forthcoming from Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, Robertson felt compelled to take a clearly defined stand. He officially refuted at the press conference the rumours about the establishment of a monarchy and confirmed that the Government did not back the Umma party but rather took a neutral stand towards all political groups.

This explicit declaration by Robertson had a markedly moderating effect on the ardour of sectarian politics. Sayyid 'Ali and the Mirghanists welcomed it as an outright rebuff to Mahdist ambitions. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and some Anṣār, realizing that the threat of a monarchy had undesirably served as a potent recruiting slogan for their opponents, were not altogether unhappy to see it refuted. Indeed, although beset by mixed feelings, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān politely sent his son, Ṣiddīq, to compliment Robertson on the wisdom of his "well-timed

1. Ibid.

frankness".¹

Robertson's measures succeeded in partly damping down sectarian agitation, at least temporarily, but they did not muffle nationalist preoccupation with politics in the Sudan. On the contrary, some of the statements in the press conference actually augmented nationalist apprehensions about the Government's intentions for the future of the country. Robertson had stated that there was usually no reward after a war, and that the Sudanese had already received "some notable gain from their association with the British in this war, in that their country was protected by the British army, navy and air force from fascist aggression, and as a result of the Allied victory they were now able to continue their social, economic and political development in peace under sympathetic guidance."² The statement came as an insult to Sudanese participation in the war and as a shocking disappointment to their nationalist aspirations. How could it be that there was no reward? Were the principles of freedom, they asked, declared by the leaders of Allied democracies merely intended to act as propaganda weapons, or were they

1. SPIS, No. 50, June 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16).

2. Full text of the press conference in Şawt al-Sūdān, 13 June 1945.

intended to form the basis of a new world order? If the former was the case, they argued, then there was no meaningful benefit in having defended the Sudan against fascist aggression for tyranny, whatever its form, could not be worse than denying people their right to freedom, national pride and independence. If, however, the latter supposition was true, then there must be a reward for all those nations who stood by the side of the Allies, and this reward should be nothing less than granting them the right of self-determination.¹ Robertson's pointer that the Sudanese had already obtained "some notable gain" was therefore universally rejected as an unsatisfactory reward for the Sudanese contribution to the war effort.

Another statement which irritated the nationalists was Robertson's declaration that the Government regarded the various parties as representatives of small groups, not of public opinion generally, and that "the Government" will continue to develop the Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan and Province Councils as the constitutional channels whereby it may be advised of the opinions of the people as a whole."² This statement was challenged both for

1. Editorials in Ṣawt al-Sūdān, 16 June 1945; Al-Ray al-ʿAmm, 15 June 1945; and Al-Nīl, 17 June 1945.

2. Full text of the press conference, loc. cit.

underestimating the status of political parties and for overestimating the role of the Advisory Council, particularly in regard to determining Sudanese aspirations. It was true, argued the nationalists, that these political parties did not count on large membership; but it was equally true that they commanded the political sympathy of significant sections of the community, including members of the Advisory Council. In this respect, they were political instruments for expressing public opinion and, without them, all councils were basically incomplete political bodies.¹ This was particularly so in regard to the Advisory Council, firstly because it was restricted to the northern Sudan, and secondly because its jurisdiction did not extend to politics.²

Apart from these theoretical considerations, Robertson's statement had ominous implications for the nationalists. The Government's programme of achieving complete Sudanization within 20 years had generated grave suspicions that British official policy aimed at the perpetuation of Condominium rule in the Sudan after

1. Editorial by 'Abdallah Mirghani, Sawt al-Sūdān, 17 June 1945. From May 1945 onwards, 'Abdallah Mirghani (Ittiḥadiyyīn) took over the editorship of this newspaper.

2. Isma'īl al-Ātabāni, Al-Ray al-Āmm, 16 June 1945.

the war.¹ Leading nationalists had already criticized this Sudanization schedule as carrying too far Newbold's reference to the "long and arduous" road to self-government. A period of 20 years, they had argued, was enough to create a new Russia; it should be more than enough to realize full independence for the Sudan.² Besides, it was inconsistent with the context of the 1936 Treaty which was due to expire in 1956 at the latest, while Sudanization was to be completed ten years thereafter.³ In the light of these implications, nationalists suspected that the Government's build-up of the Advisory Council as the only constitutional channel of public opinion ultimately aimed at the prolongation of Condominium rule to 1966. This interpretation, together with the realization that the status of the Sudan could best be

-
1. On 17 March 1945, the Governor-General's Council had decided to accelerate the pace of Sudanization and, in his statement to the Advisory Council in May, Robertson indicated that the review extended over a 20-year period. Cf. "Statement by the Civil Secretary of Government Policy on Substitution for non-Sudanese in Government Service," 9.5.1945, Proceedings of the Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan, Session III, Part II of the Agenda, Item No. 7, CRO, NORTHERN 2/1/15.
 2. Editorial, Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 25 May 1945; and "Long and Arduous", Al-Umma, 6 June 1945.
 3. Editorial, Al-Umma, 20 June 1945. Al-Umma commenced publication on 16 May 1945, with Yusif Muṣṭafa al-Tinay as its editor.

changed by a direct approach to the Condominium powers themselves, finally alienated even the hard core of Newbold's "moderates", who had been originally prepared to accede to a continuation of the Condominium after the war on the condition of achieving substantial economic and political progress towards independence.

The cumulative effect of Robertson's measures was to drive all the political parties, including the Umma, into a common opposition to the Government. The termination of the war in Europe, in early May, had generated an urgent need among leading nationalists to heal the split in the Congress and to form a united front in pursuit of a common objective. A start along these lines had already been made in January 1945 when the Ashiqqā' initiated talks with the Ittihadīyyīn and the Ahrār in an effort to arrive at a formula, concerning relations with Egypt, that would be acceptable to all of them.¹ These efforts bore fruit in April and the Ashiqqā', together with the Ittihadīyyīn and a small section of the Ahrār, formed a coalition in support of the Congress

1. SPIS, No. 46, January 1945, loc. cit.

resolution.¹ Appeals to heal the resulting split with the Umma grew in intensity as the war came to an end, and in mid-May 1945 a United Parties' Committee, composed of three representatives from each party, was set up to work out a formula that would accommodate the various principles on the political future of the Sudan.

Under the chairmanship of 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad, the Committee held several meetings between May and August, and managed finally to arrive at some basis of reconciling the various viewpoints.² Two general premises formed that basis: Firstly, all the parties agreed to work for the formation of a free democratic Sudanese Government; and secondly, all the parties admitted the principle of "union" with Egypt, a union dictated by historic, cultural and economic relations between the two countries. The coalition front (Ashiqqā', Ittiḥadiyyīn and Aḥrār-

1. SPIS, No. 48, March-April 1945, loc. cit. This small section of the Aḥrār was led by 'Abd al-Rahīm Shaddād and subsequently called itself the Aḥrār-Ittiḥadiyyīn. Thus, the original objective of establishing a party independent of sectarian influences was finally abandoned under the pressure of sectarian rivalry.

2. 'Abd al-Mājid Ahmad, "Report to be submitted to the Congress Executive Committee by the United Parties' Committee representing the Ashiggas, the Ittiḥadiyeen, the Qawmiyeen, the two groups of Aḥrār, and the Umma Party", n.d. (1945), PRO, FO.371/45985 (J2977/165/16).

Ittihadīyyīn) initially insisted on defining this union as one under the Egyptian crown, but the Umma party representatives opposed such a definition even as a tactical measure towards ultimate independence. They had been particularly sceptical of their opponents' argument that, by limiting their demands in regard to the Sudan's future political status, they would thereby be enhancing the chances for Egyptian acceptance of Sudanese aspirations. If Egypt, they reasoned, was not prepared then to recognize the independence and sovereignty of the Sudan, she would definitely not be so prepared in the future when the British presence had been removed.¹ With the two positions proving irreconcilable, the Committee members unanimously agreed not to define the nature of such a union or the time within which it should take place. Instead, they simply admitted the principle that a reference to a union with Egypt was inevitable when submitting a demand regarding the sort of Sudanese Government that would be acceptable, provided that the said union did not in any way affect the "autonomy" of the Government or limit its powers to act in the interests of the country. Within this context, the Umma party finally accepted to form a united front with the other parties in the Congress, and to refrain from

1. Editorial, Al-Umma, 20 May 1945.

publicly opposing the principle of a union with Egypt. The Umma, however, made one important reservation: While they would not oppose the other parties' call for a union with Egypt, they themselves would neither endorse nor promote such a policy but would rather work separately, and independently of the Congress, for the formation of a free democratic Sudanese Government only -- that is, independence from both Britain and Egypt.¹

On 25 August 1945, therefore, in compliance with these shaky definitions and reservations, the United Parties'

1. The apparent contradiction in the Umma compromise might be explained by reference to the impact which the Arab Union movement had on Sudanese nationalists. Under the impression that a post-war settlement would divide the African continent into Arab and African blocs, the intelligentsia had grown increasingly interested in the movement and universally sought to identify the Sudan with the Arab world. By early 1945, they began to relate the movement to their respective aspirations of independence. While the "unionists" argued that Egypt was the Sudan's natural link with the Arab world and that only through a union with her could the Sudan become a part of the Arab world, the "separationists" saw in the prospect of an independent participation in the Arab Union a satisfactory alternative to the Sudan's individual connection with Egypt. By July 1945, when the San Francisco Conference had recommended that mandates be given independence, Sudanese nationalists affirmed that the Sudan was, on the basis of the "welfare" clause of the 1936 Treaty, a mandate, and they anxiously sought to disassociate their country from colonies in the African world. In the light of this prevailing mood, the Umma compromise was subtly coherent: They would not oppose the principle of ultimate Arab union, but they would reject the subjugation of the Sudan to Egypt.

Committee submitted its report officially to the Congress Executive Committee, and recommended that the latter should approach the British Administration with the following demands:¹

- "(a) The issue of a joint declaration by the two Condominium Powers, stating that their aim is to work for the formation as soon as possible of a free democratic Sudanese Government, with a union with Egypt and an alliance with Great Britain.
- (b) To ask for the formation of a joint Committee, composed of an equal number of representatives of the Sudan Government and of the Sudanese educated class - the latter to be nominated by the Congress - with a view to laying down a scheme for the Sudanization of the administration in the shortest possible period, provided the Government gives this Committee all necessary facilities to carry out its mission and undertakes to execute its recommendations.
- (c) To ask for the lifting of restrictions on public freedoms such as the freedom of the press, of gathering, of movement, within the frame of the law; to ask for an amendment to the existing special ordinances restricting these liberties."²

This precarious, and laboriously-worked out, United Parties' wathīqa (charter) was primarily designed to confer

1. SPIS, No. 52, August 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (J97/97/16).

2. "Report to be submitted to the Congress Executive Committee by the United Parties' Committee", loc. cit.

on the Executive Committee an undisputed status as the representative of the Congress movement as a whole, and thus enable it to press quickly and effectively for the realization of the commonly-shared objectives. The war in the Pacific had come to an end, a prospectively more sympathetic Labour Government had won the general elections in England and the Egyptians were already stirring to have the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty revised. In the light of these developments, the nationalists prepared themselves for a post-war Peace Conference, like that at Versailles, which they erroneously expected to take place, and they were anxious to ensure that, unlike 1936, their aspirations regarding the future of the Sudan would be given due recognition at such a Conference.

The charter, however, was short lived. Although the Executive Committee agreed to adopt it as the statement of the official Congress policy and to transmit it to the respective Governments, Azhari had in fact already jumped the gun. In late May 1945, Azhari had gone to Egypt for his usual summer vacation, and he took advantage of the occasion to monitor reactions in Egyptian political circles to the Congress's resolution of April. Like most of the Ashiqqā', he had been considerably disappointed that such a call for union with Egypt had manifestly received very

little support in the Egyptian press.¹ He sought to arrange an interview with Nuqrāshi Pasha but he failed, the latter excusing himself on the plea of being too busy with important international and Arab affairs.²

Receiving little response from the Egyptian Government and the Palace, Azhari courted the Wafd instead. At the coaching of 'Ali al-Birayr and Muḥammad al-Amīn Ḥusayn³, Azhari became convinced that only Nahḥās could do anything for the Sudan since, as the latter had already shown before, he did not hesitate to take a firm stand against the British on this issue.⁴ On 6 June, therefore, Azhari

-
1. Sudan Agent (Cairo) to Civil Secretary, 13.6.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J2171/165/16).
 2. Sudan Agent (Cairo) to Civil Secretary, 4.6.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J2076/165/16).
 3. Muhammad Al-Amīn Ḥusayn: Graduated from the American Mission School in Khartoum; worked for some time at the Agricultural Research Farm in Wad Medani; in late 1930's he left for Egypt where he studied law, subsidized by the generosity of Prince 'Umar Tusūn. He was prominent in Sudanese Club (Cairo) politics, and in 1944-45 he became editor of Al-Umdurmān magazine, an organ of early Sudanese communists. He returned to the Sudan in the summer of 1945 and, failing to obtain a permit to practice law, he became a journalist. He was among the first persons to secede from the young Sudanese Communist Party, joined the "unionists" bloc and later became a very prominent figure in the Mirghanist-inspired Peoples' Democratic Party (Ḥizb al-Sha'ab al-Dimuqrāṭi).
 4. Sudan Agent (Cairo) to Civil Secretary, 26.6.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J2412/165/16).

called on Naḥḥās at his home and sought both material and moral support for the Ashiqqā' party. He described at length the objectives of the Congress, which he summed up as aiming at a future unity with Egypt, with a common foreign policy and army under one crown, and with internal administration only being reserved for the Sudanese.¹

He asked Naḥḥās to induce the Wafdist papers to support the Congress, intimating his genuine apprehension that, although the Mirghanists at that time supported the Ashiqqā', Sayyid 'Alī might alter his policy in the future, or withdraw from political involvement, if he found it convenient or necessary to do so.² Naḥḥās assured Azhari

1. Sudan Agent (Cairo) to Civil Secretary, 8.6.1945, PRO, FO.371/45984 (J2171/165/16); also, in PRO, FO.141/1013 (file 41/71/45).

2. Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's indirect refutations of dynastic ambitions, and Robertson's subsequent dementi, had apparently generated strains between the Ashiqqā' and Sayyid 'Alī al-Mirghani. The latter, continuing to suspect the ulterior aims of his rival, wanted to organize anti-Mahdist forces into a new party (comprising also the Ashiqqā') in opposition to the Umma, and he suggested the adoption of the political motto "No royalty in the Sudan". Azhari, however, was reluctant to accept such a motto, manifestly because he felt that it was anachronistically ineffective, since Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān's dementi had already neutralized much of the anti-Umma opposition; but also because he realized that, by rejecting all royalty (and by inference that of King Farūq as well), such a motto would basically undermine the platform of union with Egypt. Cf. Translation of Interview given by Azhari to Al-Sudan magazine, in PRO, FO.371/45984 (J2412/165/16).

that the Sudan Question was the primary subject on the Wafdist programme for discussion at any revision of the Treaty and that, since the Wafd was the majority party in Egypt, no future settlement of this question could be concluded unless it participated in the negotiations.

But then, under the form of an additional assurance, Naḥḥās gave Azhari a diplomatic twisting of the arm: He confirmed unequivocally that he would never agree to a separation of the Sudan from Egypt. The implication, which Azhari probably well noted, was that if the Congress intended to pursue a policy of union with Egypt as a tactical measure in gaining independence first from the British before ultimately turning on the Egyptians, then they had better think twice.

When he therefore returned to Khartoum around mid-August, Azhari was considerably predisposed to underline the option of a union with Egypt.¹ The United Parties'

1. Some evidence suggests that an additional element exerted pressure on Azhari. Apparently, a committee had been newly formed in Egypt with the object of supporting the Congress policies against those of the Umma party. Azhari and 'Ali al-Birayr had allegedly become members of this committee, which also included 'Abd al-Mājid Ṣāliḥ, 'Abd al-Qawī Aḥmad, Fikri Abāza and Sulaymān Ghannam. Reportedly, these Egyptian personalities had earlier been disturbed about the formation of the Umma party, and they had raised some 14,000 Egyptian pounds to finance a counter movement in the Sudan. With Mirghanist support wavering, Azhari might have felt a sense of dependence, and possibly relief, on this alternative source of support. Cf. Sudan Agent (Cairo) to Civil Secretary, 26.3.1945, PRO, FO.141/1013 (file 41/41/45).

charter had been hammered out and only awaited the formal submission of the report to the Congress Executive Committee for further action. But then an unfortunate incident happened. Probably due to his absence in Egypt, Azhari lacked a comprehensive appreciation of the subtleties of the agreement and, misinterpreting the recommendations unofficially conveyed to him, he despatched prematurely a letter to the Acting Governor-General, enclosing a memorandum that was addressed to the British and Egyptian Governments. In this memorandum, Azhari censured the slow pace at which the country had progressed and affirmed Congress's desire to put an end to such a policy which was in some ways also attributed to the Sudan's abnormal political status. To this end, he argued, Congress had determined to seek "the formation of a democratic Sudanese Government in a union with Egypt, under the Egyptian Crown", and he called upon the Condominium powers to issue forthwith a joint declaration approving this aspiration. With an evident sense of confidence, Azhari emphasized that the memorandum was presented by the Congress on behalf of all the political parties who had now agreed to unite under its banner.¹

1. President of the Graduates' General Congress to H.E. the British Prime Minister and H.E. the Egyptian Prime Minister, 23.8.1945, PRO, FO.371/45986 (J3152/165/16); also, PRO, FO.141/1013 (file 41/108/45).

The memorandum had been discussed and approved by the Executive Committee at an extraordinary and secret session which was held on the morning of 25 August, only a few hours before the United Parties' Committee submitted officially its report to the Congress. When news of the Azhari memorandum broke out, the delicate alliance established by the United Parties' wathīqa inevitably collapsed. The other parties denounced the Ashiqqā' for their deceitful breach of faith, published a summary of the charter in the local press, and called on the United Parties' Committee to submit their demands directly to the Government.

One of Azhari's main ambitions was to maintain the Congress's claim to be the channel of communication with the Government, and this threat of the United Parties' Committee to submit their demands directly imposed a change in his attitude. In his desire to avoid being thus by-passed, he began to hedge without knowing what to do next. His dependence on Egyptian support precluded a retraction of his earlier declarations, and he was faced with the painful problem of reconciling the irreconcilable -- of having to present the Condominium partners with the United Parties' declaration on the one hand and the completely contradictory Ashiqqā' union with Egypt formula on the other. Eventually, forced by the pressure of

opposing opinion and alarmed at the possible loss of Mirghanist support, Azhari decided to forward the full text of the United Parties' declaration to the Government under a covering letter in which, "after considering all aspects of the matter", he defined the word "union" in that text to mean "a union with Egypt and under the Egyptian Crown."¹

The move did not improve the situation. The August incident had again set into motion the divisive forces within the nationalist movement, and in effect split the Ashiqqā' camp itself. Sayyid 'Ali had become increasingly aware that, owing to the extreme pro-Egyptian attitude of the Ashiqqā', his association with this party adversely affected his own reputation in the country and threatened to lead to an unwelcome embarrassment in his relations with the Government. By August 1945, he sought to disassociate himself of their alliance and he began to consider the formation of a new political party, whose outlook would be in conformity with that of the Government on matters of general policy.² A group of graduates, among whom Dardīri Muḥammad 'Uthmān played the leading role, was assigned the task of working out a formula that would

1. Azhari to Governor-General, 15.10.1945, SPIS, No 54, October-November 1945, Appendix, PRO, FO.371/53328 (J54/54/16).

2. SPIS, No. 52, August 1945, loc. cit.

satisfactorily express Mirghanist political aims. The task, however, proved extremely difficult, for the Umma party had already overrun the field which Sayyid 'Ali normally occupied.¹ The group was thus forced to restrict their immediate aim to simply asserting their independence from Ashiqqā' control, while at the same time offering their political co-operation to the latter as a weapon with which to counter effectively Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and the Umma party, both within and outside the Congress.² Notwithstanding such co-operation, Azhari's monopoly of Mirghanist support had been severely shaken.

At the same time, Azhari's hedging caused a serious split in the Ashiqqā' party itself. A small extremist pro-Egyptian wing, led by Dardīri Ahmad Isma'īl³, had from

1. SPIS, No.53, September 1945, PRO, FO.371/45972 (97/97/16).

2. Such a co-operation subsequently proved imperative until the Sudan Question was finally settled and, as a result, the proposed party did not effectively emerge until June 1956, when it assumed the name of Hizb al-Sha'ab al-Dimuqrāṭi.

3. Dardīri Ahmad Isma'īl: A lawyer, educated at Leeds University with the generosity of Prince 'Umar Tusūn. In 1924, he supported the White Flag League, and he evidently never wavered from the conviction that the Sudan and Egypt formed one political kingdom. In 1936, when al-Fajr called for the Sudanese voice to be heard in the negotiations, Dardīri assured his compatriots (in an article in al-Shabāb on 27 April 1936) that Egypt's intention was that the two countries should enjoy complete equality of rights when they were united.

the start disapproved of the United Parties' charter and, as Azhari moderated his tone in order to preserve Mirghanist support, they broke away and formed the Wādi al-Nīl party, with a programme calling for the complete political fusion of the Sudan with Egypt.¹

For the parties on the other side of the political spectrum, the Ashiqqā' memorandum to the Condominium powers confirmed their long-standing doubts about the wisdom of pursuing the realization of Sudanese national aspirations through a Congress dominated by Azhari. The situation became more insufferable when the Egyptians officially demanded, on 23 September 1945, the return of the Sudan to Egyptian sovereignty. Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān, who had been profoundly discouraged by the attitude of the Government toward the Umma party, was now even more disturbed by the apparent silence of the British in the face of this renewed Egyptian drive. He decided to commit the Mahdist camp behind the Umma party in a determined drive to oust the Ashiqqā' from the control of Congress and reverse the pro-Egyptian tide; but it soon became evident that, with the Mirghanist khulafā' again mobilizing sectarian support in the rural districts around Khartoum, the election

1. SPIS, No. 53, September 1945, loc. cit. The leadership of the Wadi al-Nīl party also included the famous 'Ali al-Birayr and Khidir Hamad.

results were a foregone victory for the Ashiqqā'.¹

At first, some faint-hearted attempts were made by Umma leaders to bargain with the Ashiqqā' for an agreed number of seats in both Committees of the Congress for 1946, but these initiatives met with no success. The Umma party then, with their Qawmiyyīn and Ahrār supporters, demanded the setting up of a neutral committee, composed of representatives from all the parties, to ensure that the elections were regularly carried out. This demand was also refused.

At about the same time in early November, Robertson announced in the Advisory Council that, should the question of the future of the Sudan be raised by the Condominium powers in any revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the Government intended to consult the Advisory Council and transmit their views to these powers. He subsequently added that the Government would also give due consideration to the opinions expressed by other representative bodies. These declarations impressed on the pro-independence parties

1. SPIS, No. 53, September 1945, loc. cit. This early inter-dependence between party and sect was to influence considerably the later development of the respective party structures. In the case of the Ashiqqā', the zawāya ("cells") of the Khatmiyya sect tended to take over the functions of branches of the party. The Umma, on the other hand, adopted the cellular structure of the Anṣār sect: Every group of eight had an overseer, and every group of thirty-two a supervisor.

the advisability of disassociating themselves from an Ashiqqā'-dominated Congress, and they decided therefore to boycott the elections. In this way, they spared themselves the humiliation of an inevitable defeat and they deprived the Congress itself of any claim to pose as the accredited representative of the nationalist movement.¹

The outcome of the Congress elections on 16 November, which inevitably led to the formation of a predominantly Ashiqqā' Committee of Sixty and an all-Ashiqqā' Executive, provided the occasion and justification for Robertson's belated reply to Azhari's letter of 15 October.² Apart from a non-committal acknowledgement, this letter had remained unanswered because Robertson feared that, if a reply had been sent before the elections were held, the Ashiqqā' might have made use of it as an electioneering instrument. If the tenor of the reply was conciliatory, it could have been waived at the face of voters as indicating the Government's support or sympathy; if the tenor was unfavourable, it could have helped Azhari to boost himself as a political martyr and to rally votes

1. SPIS, No. 54, October-November 1945, para 434, loc. cit.

2. In 1945, there were some 10,000 registered members of the Congress, of whom only 3512 voted in the elections. Azhari, topping the poll with over 3000 votes, naturally became President.

against an arbitrary alien Government.¹ With the elections over, Robertson replied to Azhari that the Government did "not recognize the Congress as entitled to speak for the people of the Sudan as a whole" and that the "claim of your committee to represent the educated classes, and in particular to interpret the All Party Declaration enclosed with your letter under reply, has according to my information been challenged recently by elements of the educated classes themselves."² After a faintly-sarcastic assurance that the Government intended to consult all sections of the community on the future of the country, Robertson informed Azhari that his letter and the enclosed declaration had "been filed for future reference."

By the end of 1945, therefore, the Graduates' General Congress had virtually ceased to be what it was when first

-
1. J.C. Penney to Sudan Agent (Cairo), 26.11.1945, PRO, FO.371/45986 (J4163/165/16).
 2. J. Robertson to Isma'īl al-Azhari, 23.12.1945, SPIS, No. 55, December 1945, Appendix, PRO, FO.371/53328 (J336/24/16). On 19 November, Penney held a meeting with the signatories to the United Parties' charter and solicited their reaction to Azhari's definition of "union". They generally confirmed that they did not subscribe to his interpretation, and had not approved of his covering letter, which they had not seen until it was published in the local press. Cf. Huddleston to Killearn, 8.12.1945, PRO, FO.141/1013 (file 41/134/45).

formed in 1938 -- namely, the sole political organization representative of the nationalist intelligentsia.

Instead, the political parties that rose from its ashes were to dominate Sudanese politics in the years to come.

C H A P T E R S I X

THE BETRAYAL OF INDEPENDENCE AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

The period between 1946 and 1952 was very crucial for the evolution of nationalist party politics in the Sudan. The Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the status of the Sudan, and the trend of constitutional developments in the country, inevitably affected deeply the relations between the political parties and the Sudan Government. But what is more significant is that these two factors exacerbated intensely the relations between the parties themselves in such a manner that it eventually became impractical to build up a sound political foundation for democratic government in the Sudan.

The Mission of the Sudan Delegation to Cairo.

As expected, in the closing weeks of 1945, the Egyptian Government submitted a formal note to the British Government, requesting that negotiations be initiated with a view to revising the Treaty of 1936. At the same time, Egyptian nationalists launched an extensive propaganda campaign, both in the Sudan and in Egypt, to convince all Sudanese parties to join them in terminating once and for all the

British occupation of the Nile Valley. The Egyptian demand for unity, it was then argued, was not actuated by any imperialistic designs, but was rather a natural aspiration resulting from the common bonds of race, language and tradition. The form of such a union was not an insurmountable issue. If the Sudanese wanted a sort of union similar to that existing between England and Scotland, the Egyptians were prepared to reach an understanding on that basis.¹ The more essential and crucial issue, as they saw it, was that both Sudanese and Egyptian nationalists should adopt a common stand to end British domination of the two countries. In this regard, therefore, Sudanese political parties were urged to define their aspirations in such terms as would be acceptable to the Egyptian negotiators. The whole question of the Sudan's political status, it was emphasized, depended on the ability of the latter to obtain the best results possible for the whole Nile valley.² Unity with Egypt was thus implicitly bound to British evacuation and independence.

-
1. "An Interview with Ḥusayn Pasha Haykal", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 11 January 1946. Ḥusayn Pasha was the President of the Egyptian Senate.
 2. "An Interview with Naḥḥās Pasha", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd 4 January 1946.

This line of Egyptian propaganda was to influence the attitude of Sudanese political parties in the light of subsequent developments. The British reply to the Egyptian note was disappointing to Sudanese nationalists, for it contained nothing more than a mere acknowledgement of the Egyptian desire that the negotiations should include the Sudan Question. This vague reference to the Sudan inevitably raised grave fears that official British policy was to perpetuate the existing condominium status, a prospect that was to the Sudanese definitely unacceptable. The nationalists were convinced that both the British and Egyptian Governments had for long been well acquainted with Sudanese aspirations, and they were distressed to observe that none of the announcements issued by these Governments conveyed a satisfactory solution to the Sudanese national problem. They grew increasingly more determined to take part in the intended negotiations by any means whatsoever, lest another Anglo-Egyptian agreement be concluded at the expense of Sudanese interests.¹

The obsession to be party to such negotiations had

1. Yahya 'Abd al-Qādir, "The Sudan should be party to the negotiations", Al-Nīl, 4 February 1946; also, Isma'īl al-Ātabāni, "The British reply has disappointed the Sudanese", Al-Ray al-Āmm, 4 February 1946.

haunted Sudanese nationalists since 1936 and had been one of the primary motives in forming the Graduates' Congress. But, in February 1946, the Congress's ruling bodies were no longer representative of political party sentiment in the country. Since the election in November 1945, Azhari and his Executive Committee had pursued a strongly pro-unionist line and the opposition were not prepared to entrust a purely Congress delegation with the role of representing the Sudan in the treaty negotiations. Alternative forms of representation had thus to be found. A suggestion was made that the Congress Executive should form a special body which would only be concerned with the liberation of the country and which would include in its membership representatives from the various parties.¹ Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim recommended instead that the existing United Parties' Committee should be used for this purpose.² The call thus went out for a meeting of party representatives with a view to arriving at an agreed

1. Ahmad Mukhtār, "The Sudan and the forthcoming negotiations", Al-Ray al-Āmm, 5 February 1946.

2. Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, "The duty of the Coalition Parties", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 8 February 1946; also, "A Question", Al-Umma, 8 February 1946.

formula and course of action.¹

For the rest of February, the political parties were involved in extensive discussions designed to narrow down the gap of disagreement that existed between them. The Ashiqqā' proposed that the Congress resolution of April 1945 should form the basis of the intended formula, whereas the Umma and other opposition parties insisted that the United Parties' declaration of August 1945 should be used as such a basis instead.² In the light of the Egyptian identification of unity with evacuation and independence, the matter of which came first began to play a very crucial role. 'Abdallah Mirghani subtly pointed out to his colleagues that complete evacuation could only be achieved in successive stages over a period of time. To bind independence to evacuation meant that the question of Sudanese sovereignty would be subjected to a solution inevitably involving successive stages as well. In view of this, he considered it imperative for his fellow-nationalists to set aside for the moment the question of

-
1. Khartoum Province Monthly Diary, February 1946, Section 3a, para 4, University of Khartoum, Sudan Library (ref. 87-BGD).
 2. Editorial, "The Sudan in the forthcoming negotiations", Al-Umma, 4 February 1946; and editorial, "The Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations", Al-M'ūtamar, 9 February 1946.

evacuation and to concentrate instead on demanding the recognition of the Sudanese right to sovereignty.¹ Isma'īl al-Ātabāni was further concerned with Egyptian misinterpretations of Sudanese aspirations, and he counselled his colleagues to make it quite clear from the start that when the Sudanese spoke of a union with Egypt they did not mean amalgamation.² Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim argued very much along similar lines, pointing out that the Egyptians should have been guided by the Syrian-Lebanese experience. In view of a mutual desire to shake off the French yoke, Syria had agreed to Lebanon becoming an independent entity, provided that the latter would not continue to be subjugated to foreign domination. Egypt, he emphasized, should be induced to act like Syria and to agree to the Sudan forming a separate entity with a political status like that of Lebanon.³ It was generally felt, therefore, that the basic principle of the proposed

-
1. "The Sudan's national aspirations and evacuation", Sawt al-Sūdān, 12 February 1946.
 2. "The Sudanese aspirations and the Egyptian negotiators", Al-Ray al-Āmm, 9 February 1946.
 3. "The Similarity between the Sudanese-Egyptian case and the Syrian-Lebanese one", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 25 January 1946; also, "Sovereignty over the Sudan belongs to the Sudanese", Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 15 February 1946.

formula should be to secure independence prior to any union with Egypt.

The wording of the formula, however, proved to be extremely controversial. The Umma objected categorically to any mention being made of the Egyptian crown. The Ashiqqā' offered to cut it out, if the Umma would leave out the reference to an alliance with Great Britain. The Umma in their turn were prepared to do so, if the Ashiqqā' left out the "union with Egypt". The Ashiqqā' suggested the inclusion of a demand for evacuation of the British from the Sudan; the Umma agreed provided it covered also the removal of all Egyptians. And so it went on.¹

Azhari grew impatient and, following an upsurge of anti-British feeling in Khartoum as a result of bloody Cairo riots in late February, he decided to end all attempts at a compromise with the other parties. On 11 March, he announced that he would be heading an Ashiqqā' delegation to Cairo to represent his party's "union under the Egyptian crown" policy, and he invited the other parties to join him.² The latter refused the invitation out of hand. They were, however, anxious to prevent

1. Civil Secretary to All Governors, 3.4.1946, CRO, DAKHLIA (I) 1/12/31.

2. E.C. Haselden to C.H. Johnson, 4.4.1946, PRO, FO.371/53252 (J1671/24/16).

Azhari going to Cairo on his own, and before they could themselves organize a rival delegation. At this point too, 'Ali al-Birayr and Egyptian nationalists contacted Azhari and pressed him to broaden the basis of his delegation, otherwise it could not fairly claim to represent the united political parties of the Sudan and would thus fail to carry much weight in Egyptian political circles. It was extremely important, the Egyptians emphasized, to avoid disagreement between two delegations in Cairo.

When discussions between the parties resumed, therefore, both sides were ready to make concessions in order to secure an acceptable political formula.¹ On 21 March, and with the mediation of the Students' Union of Gordon College, the parties finally agreed to a common programme. According to it, Sudanese nationalists would request the Condominium partners to issue a joint statement, accepting the formation of a free Sudanese government in a union with Egypt; this free Sudanese government would then decide what form the union with Egypt should take; and against the background of that union enter into an alliance with Great Britain. It was further agreed that the delegation to Cairo should be composed of representatives from all the

1. SPIS, No. 56, January-April 1946, para 454, PRO, FO.371/53328 (J2622/54/16).

parties and that a United Front Committee be set up in Khartoum to ensure that no decisions were taken in Cairo which might prejudice the realization of the agreed programme.

The course of the negotiations, however, eventually created a schism within the Sudan delegation. On 7 April, Azhari addressed a note to the condominium governments, demanding sovereignty for the Sudan and full participation of the delegation in the impending negotiations.¹ This note aroused fierce criticism among Egyptians who had hoped to use the Sudan delegation for their own purposes. A rift appeared between the Sudanese programme and Egyptian aims, and the British exploited it for their own interests. Public and official attention had been focussed on the demand for the evacuation of British troops from Egypt, and the British delegates accordingly decided to disregard the question of the Sudan until this matter of evacuation was settled. In addition, they informally advised Azhari and his colleagues that the Sudan delegation could not be party to the negotiations and that it should submit its proposals to the Sudan Government.²

1. Azhari to Bevin, 7.4.1946, PRO, FO.371/53251 (J1596/24/16).

2. Campbell to Bevin, 18.4.1946, PRO, FO.371/53252 (J1816/24/16).

This state of affairs reversed the political priorities set down by Sudanese nationalists and threatened to undermine completely the purpose of their mission to Egypt. They became apprehensive that, if evacuation and the Sudan Question were separated, there would be nothing to compel Egypt to continue with the negotiations on the latter once evacuation had been agreed to. In such circumstances, there was a genuine fear that the lifetime of Condominium rule in the Sudan would be indefinitely extended. Accordingly, the Sudan delegation thought it advisable to strike some deal with Egyptian politicians in order to ensure that the Sudan Question would be fully covered in the negotiations.

Sensing the anxiety of the Sudanese, 'Ali Māhir Pasha and others pressured them to withdraw their declaration of Sudanese aims and to reinforce the Egyptian negotiators by throwing in the Sudan's lot with Egypt. But the Sudanese would not do this unconditionally and the Umma members in particular held out for a written undertaking from the Egyptians to the effect that, if the Egyptians got evacuation, the Sudanese should have independence.¹ The Egyptians understandably did not accept such a

1. Sir R. Campbell to Foreign Office, 12.5.1946, PRO, FO.371/53252 (J2176/24/16).

condition. Azhari tried feverishly to work out a formula which would satisfy the demands of Egyptian nationalists and which at the same time would prove acceptable to his colleagues. In the end, the Egyptians submitted to him a "final" offer. They would consider the aspirations of the Sudanese with sympathy, if the Sudan delegation would accept, as a preliminary to any further discussion, the Egyptian demands for evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley. On 20 April, a party of four delegates (Ahmad Yūsif Hāshim, ʿAbd al-Rahmān Nuqḍallah, Yahya al-Fadli and ʿAbdallah Mirghani) returned to Khartoum to discuss this final proposition with their parent parties and the United Front Committee.¹

By this time, however, the inevitable split in the Sudan delegation could no longer be avoided. Umma party opinion in the Sudan had already begun to harden as a result of Huddleston's statement to the Advisory Council on 17 April. He had then confirmed that the fundamental aim of the Sudan Government was "a free independent Sudan which will be able as soon as that independence has been achieved to define for itself its relations with Great Britain and Egypt". In pursuance of this objective,

1. SPIS, No. 56, January-April 1946, para 455, loc. cit.

Huddleston proposed "to build up the organs of self-government ... and to accelerate the transfer of responsible posts to Sudanese in consultation with Sudanese representatives".¹ In this connection, on 21 April, Robertson announced to the Advisory Council the constitution of an Administrative Conference to study methods of associating the Sudanese more closely with the government of their country, and he invited the political parties to send representatives to this Conference.²

The Government's measures were regarded by the Umma party as basically an acceptance of some demands contained in both the United Parties' declaration of August 1945 and the all-party programme of March 1946. It may have been a case of "too little offered too late", but it was certainly more than what the Egyptians were then prepared to grant. When the Egyptian proposal was presented, therefore, the Umma leadership rejected it and instructed their representatives to adhere adamantly to the originally agreed all-party programme. The four visiting

-
1. Speech delivered by the Governor-General at the opening Session of the Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan, Proceedings of the Fifth Session, 17-21 April 1946, pp. 1-2; also, in PRO, FO.371/53252 (J1743/24/16).
 2. Sudan Monthly Record, No. 193, March-April 1946, para 6569, CRO, PORT SUDAN 1/10/47.

delegates thus returned to Cairo on 26 April with no real decision taken on the Egyptian proposition.

In the meantime, in Cairo, Azhari had been enraged by Huddleston's statement which he clearly recognized as a measure primarily aimed at sabotaging the delegations' unity and mission to Egypt. In response to it, and prematurely anticipating an acceptance of the Egyptian proposal by the United Front, he began to advocate more vigorously the policy of "unity under the Egyptian crown". By the time the mission returned from Khartoum, he had already committed himself firmly to a line of "one crown, one army and one system of representation". The Umma representatives, however, refused to go beyond the delegation's original mandate from the United Front and on 3 May, finally disillusioned, they withdrew and returned to Khartoum. A few days later, they were similarly followed by the representatives of the Qawmiyyīn and the Ahrār.

The Effect of the Sidqi-Bevin Protocol.

In the months that followed, the nationalist struggle became once again increasingly resolved into the old straight rivalry between the Umma and Ashiqqā' parties with, inevitably, Mahdist and Mirghanist connotations. Unlike the unionists, the pro-independence parties accepted

Robertson's invitation and nominated representatives to attend the Administrative Conference. After the split in the Sudan delegation, the Umma decided to transform the Conference into a "home" opposition to Azhari in Cairo. They discreetly suggested to the Government that particular Khatmiyya individuals be nominated to fill the seats left unoccupied by the unionist parties, not in a sectarian capacity but as prominent citizens or civil servants. Their inclusion, they argued, would broaden the basis of the Conference and secure for it, and any subsequent recommendations it might make, the support of a large section of the public which was then hostile on purely sectarian grounds. Such an enlarged Conference, moreover, would be in a position to challenge effectively any claims that might be put forward by the remnants of the delegation in Cairo to represent the Sudan.¹

The Umma proposal, though seriously explored by the Government, failed to gain the desired Mirghanist concurrence. The composition of the Conference itself, the latter feared, would have reduced the Mirghanist bloc to an insignificant minority, unable thus to block effectively any proposals that favoured, directly or indirectly, their Mahdist opponents. At the same time,

1. SPIS, No. 56, January-April 1946, para 461, loc. cit.

the decision of the Government to allow the rebuilding of the Mahdi's qubba irritated Mirghanist circles even further. In the light of the resulting Mahdist propaganda, this decision was seen as a rather sinister indication of a premeditated build-up of Mahdist influence and the precursor of a corresponding fall in the Mirghanist holding. Since they genuinely believed that the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations would actually result in defining the future status of the Sudan, the Mirghanist felt more secure in rejecting the Government's overtures and continuing their support of the unionist cause.

In fact, the outcome of the negotiations eventually accentuated the polarization of political relationships in the Sudan. The British and Egyptian delegations could not agree on the Sudan Question, and the negotiations were consequently broken off. In October 1946, however, Isma'īl Ṣidqi went to London in search of some sort of a compromise. In connection with his departure, Egyptian press reports emphasized that Ṣidqi had been bound by a resolution of the Egyptian Senate to secure, among other things, the unity of the Nile Valley. Furthermore, these reports alleged, Ṣidqi had promised to bring back to Egypt sovereignty over the Sudan. On 27 October, Ṣidqi returned to Cairo with a draft treaty in his pocket which, he claimed, recognized Egyptian sovereignty over the

Sudan. The famous Sidqi-Bevin protocol, as it came to be known, read as follows:

"The policy which the High Contracting Parties undertake to follow in the Sudan (within the framework of the Unity between the Sudan and Egypt under the common Crown of Egypt) will have for its essential objectives to assure the well-being of the Sudanese, the development of their interests and their active preparation for self-government and consequently the exercise of the right to choose the future status of the Sudan. Until the High Contracting Parties can in full common agreement realize this latter objective after consultation with the Sudanese, the Agreement of 1899 will continue and Article 11 of the Treaty of 1936, together with the Annexes ... will remain in force ..."¹

The British Government placed a different interpretation on the protocol than the Egyptians did. In a speech to the Commons, Prime Minister Attlee argued that the exchange of views between Bevin and Sidqi were merely exploratory conversations on a personal level and not formal negotiations, and that they did not commit either Government. Furthermore, he affirmed that the draft treaty did not change the existing status and administration of the Sudan nor impair the right of the Sudanese people to ultimately decide their own future.

It had been mutually agreed by Bevin and Sidqi that the details of the draft treaty would not be officially

1. Muddathir ^CAbd al-Rahim, op. cit., p. 154

published until they had been approved by the negotiating governments. With the text of the protocol thus unpublished, Sudanese nationalists became not only confused but increasingly apprehensive by the circulation of conflicting interpretations. The British and Egyptian exchanges were analysed in conjunction with Bevin's assurances, in March 1946, that the Sudanese would be consulted on any change in the status of their country. Sudanese nationalists felt that Sidqi's claim about sovereignty would not have been made unless they had some foundation; that the recognition of the sovereignty of either co-dominus separately meant a change in status; and that hence Bevin's pledge of consulting the Sudanese before such a change was made had been broken.¹

However erroneous or premature these conclusions might have been, they stirred very deep feelings in political circles. The party most deeply affected were the Umma and their Mahdist supporters. Since withdrawing from the Sudan delegation in early May, the Umma had sought to achieve their objective by speeding up the pace of constitutional development in the country. They had placed a somewhat different interpretation on Huddleston's

1. Sudan Monthly Record, No. 197, October-November 1946, para 6853, CRO, PORT SUDAN 1/10/47.

statement of 17 April and they saw the objectives of the Administrative Conference as being to lay "clear plans leading to a fully independent Sudan".¹ It was because of this prospect that they had accepted to participate in the Conference. In the light of the Ṣidqi-Bevin protocol, they felt that they had been betrayed and they consequently turned violently anti-British. They whipped up anti-government feeling, mobilized all parties opposed to Egyptian sovereignty and formed the United Independent Front to defeat the protocol. Mahdist adherents converged on the capital and the political atmosphere became extremely volatile.

At this point, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Rahmān decided to appeal directly to the British Government and, in late November, he flew to London. In an interview with Bevin, however, he realized that if he persisted in pressing for immediate independence he ran the risk of confirming Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan. Bevin had argued that the protocol did not make the slightest difference to the existing status of the Sudan or to its administration, and that it did not prejudice the right of the Sudanese to ultimately achieve their complete independence.

1. ‘Abdallah Khalīl to Robertson, 9.5.1946, PRO, FO.371/53257 (J4075/24/16).

On the other hand, if the Sudan question had been referred to an international court or to the United Nations, as Egypt was contemplating, these bodies would surely "find sovereignty in Egypt and administration in British hands".¹ In the days that followed, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān became aware that a modification of his position might prove more advantageous. Accordingly, at another interview a week later, he advised the British Government that he would be prepared to accept the prolongation of Condominium rule, provided that the draft treaty included articles granting the Sudan complete self-government forthwith and independence in 10 years.²

In any event, the draft treaty did not survive. On 7 December, Huddleston declared in Khartoum that Attlee had authorised him to re-affirm the British determination that nothing in the Ṣidqi-Bevin protocol would be allowed to deflect the Sudan Government from preparing the Sudanese for self-government and for the task of choosing freely their future political status. Ṣidqi resigned in protest

-
1. Record of Interview of Sayed Abdul Rahman el Mahdi with the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street on November 28th, 1946, PRO, FO.371/53262 (J5130/24/16).
 2. Record of a Conversation between Minister of State and Sayed Abdul Rahman El Mahdi held at the Foreign on December 5th, 1946, PRO, FO.371/53262 (J5303/24/16).

and was succeeded by Nuqrāshi Pasha, who announced that the aims of his Government included the realization of a permanent unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the Egyptian crown. As opinion in both Britain and Egypt hardened, further attempts to negotiate a revised treaty broke down in January 1947 and the dispute was referred to the United Nations. There, after a prolonged debate in August, it was shelved indefinitely.

Political Repercussions.

The deadlock in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations ended the attempts of Sudanese nationalists to obtain immediate independence for the Sudan. The period that followed was inevitably accompanied by bitter mutual recrimination and accusations of betrayal of the nationalist cause. Political activity was henceforth dictated not by a common desire to liberate the Sudan from both Britain and Egypt, but by the primary concern to defeat the opposition's measures which were inevitably seen as favouring one or the other condominium partner. In such circumstances, constitutional developments in the country failed to gain the widespread popular support that would have formed a sound political foundation for the independent Sudan.

The feverish events and repetitive arguments of this period may be summarised briefly. The Administrative

Conference, held in 1946, proposed the formation of a Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council. When these constitutional proposals were submitted to the condominium partners, Britain accepted them but Egypt criticized them as not going far enough and as excluding her from participating in the new regime. Meanwhile, the Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan debated and approved a draft ordinance implementing these constitutional proposals. When it became clear that an agreement with Egypt on the points at issue would not be possible, the British Government in June 1948 unilaterally authorized the new Governor-General (Sir Robert Howe) to promulgate the ordinance. Elections to the Legislative Assembly were held in November, but they were boycotted by the unionist parties and the Khatmiyya.

The Umma party, who had been deeply shocked by the Sidqi-Bevin protocol, were determined to prevent a repetition of such a sell-out in the future. They had concluded that the best way to do so was to speed up the pace of the Sudan Government's programme of establishing effective organs of self-government, and then use these organs to declare the Sudan independent when Anglo-Egyptian negotiations were resumed. Unlike their unionist opponents, therefore, they took part in the elections for the Legislative Assembly and inevitably gained the greater

majority of seats. They subsequently tried to broaden the basis of the Assembly by including Khatmiyya representatives, but they failed again to secure Mirghanist concurrence. Early attempts to get the Assembly to assert full self-government proved unrewarding and it was not until December 1951, after Nahhās Pasha abrogated the 1936 Treaty and the 1899 Condominium Agreement, that the Umma finally succeeded in convincing the majority of members to approve such a motion.

Throughout this period, the opposition parties understandably sought to obstruct Umma efforts. The Khatmiyya had been gradually alienated from the unionist cause by Egyptian refusals to agree to ultimate self-determination for the Sudan. In August 1949, they withdrew their support from Azhari and formed a new party, Al-Jabha al-Waṭaniyya, which sought for the Sudan only a dominion status under the Egyptian crown rather than incorporation with Egypt. Despite such disagreement with their other unionist colleagues, however, the Khatmiyya continued to mistrust Mahdist predominance in the Assembly, and they refused to support the Government's programme of constitutional developments until the ordinance had been satisfactorily amended and new elections had been held. Following the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in 1953, the Khatmiyya, still suspicious that the Umma aimed at putting

Sayyid Abd al-Rahmān on a throne, rejoined forces with Azhari to defeat their opponents in the country's first parliamentary elections.

The political bickerings of the late 1940's had two very significant and far-reaching repercussions on the political development of the Sudan. As it has already been noted, the unionist parties had boycotted the Administrative Conference primarily for partisan reasons. However, with the breakdown of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and the shelving of the Sudan question in the United Nations, another element was added to unionist opposition to constitutional developments. As a result of a well-organized Ashiqqā' campaign in 1946 that the Sudan question was inseparable from the whole problem of the Nile Valley, popular opinion in the Sudan increasingly identified "self-government" with the perpetuation of Condominium (i.e. British) rule, and "unity" with "independence". Co-operation with the Sudan Government in "further associating the Sudanese more closely with the government of their country" had thus come to be regarded basically as a betrayal of the cause of independence. Ironically, therefore, the Umma party, who had adamantly advocated the complete independence of the Sudan, now found itself portrayed as collaborators of imperialism. As a consequence of this, the Umma party was increasingly

isolated from the mainstream of the nationalist movement. The unionists, communists and other independent nationalists began to share one common objective: To destroy the Umma party and eliminate the foreign rule that sustained it. Coupled with lingering sectarian fears of Mahdist domination, these alliances made it virtually impossible for the Umma to win parliamentary elections decisively or to form a viable majority government. The politics of coalition after independence eventually discredited parliamentary democracy and ushered in an era of military rule.

In another respect, the pre-occupation with sectarian rivalry distracted the political parties from the task of dealing effectively with social and economic problems in the country. As a result, political parties failed to evolve practical programmes of national development, and the independent Sudan of the 1950's was accordingly marked by a period of ideological bankruptcy. This vacuum was subsequently filled by the Communists and the Ikhwān al-Muslimīn, two radical parties with diametrically opposed ideologies that were to plunge the Sudan into political instability in the 1960's.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This study is mainly based on unpublished documents, the greater bulk of which is located at the Central Records Office in Khartoum and the Public Records Office in London. Where no specific reference is given as authority for a statement, the information is derived from a careful reading of the relevant documents on the period in question.

A list of the material immediately relevant to this study is given hereunder.

P R I M A R Y S O U R C E S.

A) MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL AT CENTRAL RECORDS OFFICE (KHARTOUM).

Civil Secretary Files (CIVSEC)

- 1/58/165 : Advancement of Sudanese in Government Service 1930-31.
- 20/28/138 : Economic Measures, 1930-31.
- 20/28/139 : Economic Measures, 1931-33.
- 32/1/7 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1934).
- 32/2/8 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1935).
- 32/2/9 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1935).
- 57/4/16 to
57/23/88 : Monthly Diaries (1937-45) for the Provinces of Khartoum, Blue Nile, White Nile, Northern, Kassala, Kordofan and Darfur. (Indispensable background material for a general understanding of the social and economic conditions of the period.)

Ministry of Interior Files (DAKHLIA)

- (I) 1/10/25 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1936-7.
 (I) 1/10/26 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1938.
 (I) 1/11/27 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1939.
 (I) 1/11/28 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1940-41.
 (I) 1/11/29 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1943.
 (I) 1/12/30 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1944-45.
 (I) 1/12/31 : Civil Secretary's Circulars, 1946.

Darfur Province Files (DARFUR)

- 1/13/70 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1934).
 1/13/71 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1935).
 1/13/72 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1936).
 1/13/73 : Northern Governors' Meeting (1938
 and 1939).

Equatoria Province Files (EQUATORIA)

- 1/5/26 : Intelligence. General Reports.
 (Contains information on the
 beginnings of Ikhwān al-Muslimīn
 activities in Sudan, 1942-47).

Halfa Province Files (HALFA)

- 36/1/3 : Military Intelligence Reports, 1939.
 (The file also includes issues
 Nos. 1-7 of the HQ Troops in Sudan
 Intelligence Summaries, which are
 relevant in connection with local
 reactions to the war.)

Kassala Province Files (KASSALA)

- (2) 2/63/308 : Sudan Monthly Record, Nos. 181-240 (1944-1950). (Important as a record of events and the evolution of government policy during this period).
- (4) 1/22/117 : Religious Orders - Mahdism. (The file contains correspondence regarding various aspects of government policy towards Mahdism in the Sudan in the 1930's).
- (4) 1/22/118 : Religious Orders - Mahdism. (The file contains correspondence regarding government policy towards Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi.)

Northern Province Files (NORTHERN)

- 1/17/108 : Intelligence Report, 1937. (The file contains a report by Public Security Department on the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 and Sudanese reactions to it.)
- 2/1/15 : The Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan, 1943-47. (The file contains the Ordinance establishing the Advisory Council; minutes of the First to the Seventh Sessions; and comments by Governors on the electoral system for the Legislative Assembly.)

Port Sudan District Files (PORT SUDAN)

- 1/10/47 : Sudan Monthly Record, 1943-48.
- 2/12/79 : Elections at the Graduates' Club, Omdurman (1933). (The file contains a report on the Filist-Shawqist feud.)
- 2/19/133 : Intelligence Reports, 1942-3. (This file contains Sudan Security Intelligence Report, Nos. 1 and 2; also, Sudan Political Intelligence Summary, Nos. 16 to 25 (March 1942-March 1943), which are not available at the Public Records Office).

B) MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL AT PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE (LONDON).

FO/141 Series

- 598 : Sudan Monthly Intelligence Summary, Nos. 27 - 33,
(March to September 1936).
- 534 : Sudan Monthly Intelligence Summary, Nos. 43 - 46,
(August to November 1937).

FO/371 Series

- 19095 : Sir Stewart Symes, "Political Memorandum on the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (1935)". (Informative on general government policy initiated by Symes after succeeding Maffey.)
(J2576/1822/16)
- 19096 : Report on Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān and Mahdist activities in the Sudan, 1927-34.
(J2293/2293/16)
- 20870 : Memorandum on the Government's policy towards Mahdism, 1937.
(J1148/12/16)
- 24633 : Sudan Monthly Intelligence Summary, Nos. 69 - 73,
(January to September 1940).
- 27382 : Sudan Political Intelligence Summary, Nos. 1 - 11,
(October 1940 to October 1941).
- 35576 : Memorandum by the Sudan Agent (Cairo) on the attitude of the Wafd Government since it came into office in February 1942.
(J1530/50/16)
- 35580 : Sudan Political Intelligence Summary, Nos. 21 - 31,
(November 1942 to October 1943).
- 41348 : Sudan Political Intelligence Summary, Nos. 32 - 43,
(November 1943 to October 1944).

- 41363 : Relations between Egyptian and
(J2121/185/16) Sudan Governments.
- 45972 : Sudan Political Intelligence
Summary, Nos. 44 - 53,
(November 1944 to October 1945).
- 45985 : Report submitted by the United
(J3035/165/16) Parties' Committee on the All-
Party Declaration.
- 53328 : Sudan Political Intelligence
Summary, Nos. 54 - 61,
(November 1945 to December 1946).

C) PRINTED MATERIAL.

Al-Nīl, 1936-1946.Al-Sūdān, 1938-1940.Al-Sūdān al-Jadīd, 1944-1946.Al-Umma, 1945-1946.Hadārat al-Sūdān, 1936-1938.Sawt al-Sudan, 1940-1946.Report on the Administration of the Sudan for the years
1939 to 1941 (inclusive), Cmd. 8097, H.M. Stationery
Office, London 1950.Report on the Administration of the Sudan for the years
1942 to 1944 (inclusive), Cmd 8098, H.M. Stationery
Office, London 1950.Proceedings of the Advisory Council for the Northern
Sudan, Khartoum 1944-1948.

S E C O N D A R Y S O U R C E S

A) ARTICLES.

‘Abd al-Rahim, Muddathir. "Early Sudanese Nationalism,"
Sudan Notes and Records, XLVII (1960).

Currie, Sir James. "The Educational Experiment in the
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1900-1913", Journal of
the African Society, XXXIV (1935).

Holt, P.M. "The Place in History of the Sudanese
Mahdia", Sudan Notes and Records, XL (1959).

Mazrui, Ali. "Religion and Democracy in the first
Republic of the Sudan", Makarere Journal,
II (1965).

Sanderson, G.N. "The Modern Sudan, 1820-1956: The
Position of Historical Studies", Journal of
African History, IV, 3 (1963).

Wallis, C.A.G. "Local Administration in the Sudan",
Journal of African Administration, XIII (1961).

B) GENERAL WORKS.

‘Abd al-Rahim, Muddathir. Imperialism and Nationalism
in the Sudan: 1899-1956, Clarendon Press,
Oxford 1969.

‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Mahdi. Jihādum fi Sabīl al-Istiqlāl,
Khartoum, n.d.

Baddour, A.F. Sudanese Egyptian Relations, The Hague
1960.

Bakheit, G.M.A. British Administration and Sudanese
Nationalism: 1919-1939, Ph.D. Thesis,
Cambridge University 1965.

Duncan, J.S.R. The Sudan - A Record of Achievement,
Blackwood, London 1952.

Henderson, K.D.D. (ed.). The Making of the Modern
Sudan, Faber and Faber Limited, London 1953.

_____. Sudan Republic, Ernest Benn Ltd.,
London 1965.

- Hill, R.L. A Biographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Oxford University Press, London 1951.
- Holt, P.M. A Modern History of the Sudan: From the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1967.
- Jackson, C.H. Behind the Modern Sudan, Macmillan and Company Limited, London 1955.
- Khayr, Ahmad. Kifāh Jīl, Cairo 1948.
- Maḥjūb, M.A. Al-Haraka al-Fikriyya Fil-Sūdān, Khartoum 1941.
- Robertson, Sir J.W. Transition in Africa: From Direct Rule to Independence, C. Hurst & Co., London 1974.
- Taha, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAlī. Al-Sūdān lil-Sudaniyyīn, Khartoum 1955.
- Trimingham, J.S. Islam in the Sudan, Frank Cass and Company Limited, London 1965.