

Sudan Cabinet Reshuffle Signals Numeiry Move Away From Carter

Sudan President Jaafar al-Numeiry fired his pro-American Foreign Minister, Mansour Khaled, Sept. 10 in a cabinet reshuffle. Numeiry took the Prime Ministry and the Finance and Economic Planning portfolios into his own hands, and replaced Khaled at the Foreign Ministry with Rashid al-Tahir Bakr, who is Vice President and was formerly the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet reshuffle follows a reconciliation with Opposition leaders Sadik al-Mahdi, also leader of the Sudan's influential, conservative Moslem Ansar sect, and the extending of amnesty to members of the Ansar Umma party and the Sudan Communist Party. The amnesty involves the release of 3,000 people from jail, including the Communist Party's Secretary General.

Numeiry's reconciliation with his long-time opposition in both movements is his latest move away from collaboration with the Carter Administration and Egypt's President Anwar al-Sadat for war in northeast Africa and the Mideast. On Sudan's agenda now is a likely rapprochement with Ethiopia, Libya and the Soviet Union, and a national unity government, backed by the pro-development faction in Saudi Arabia. A Sudanese-Libyan rapprochement would greatly increase the pressure on Rockefeller-puppet Sadat, removing Sudan from complicity in Sadat's provocations against Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi. Normalizing relations with Ethiopia would further isolate the reactionary expansionist circles now virtually running the government of Somalia, who are responsible for Somalia's invasion of southern Ethiopia.

Al-Mahdi is presently negotiating with Numeiry over the creation of a government of national unity that would include Numeiry's Sudan Socialist Union, the Communist Party and his own National Front. Among the demands reportedly posed by the opposition are the removal of Egyptian troops from the Sudan, peace with Ethiopia, and the "rebalancing" of relations with the great powers — improving recently deteriorated relations with the Soviet Union and backing off from a satrapy relationship to the U.S.

Al-Mahdi recently gave an interview to the Paris daily Le Monde, published in the Sept. 13 edition. Below are excerpts of that interview:

"The National Front, over which I preside," said al-Mahdi, "believes, essentially, like the Khartoum govern-

ment...that in a developing country the army has a national role to play, that a multiparty system is not an alternative to dictatorship, that Islam must become a force for progress, that economic development cannot be accomplished except on the socialist model, that the State must guarantee the rights and well being of the working classes."

Proposing a rapprochement with Ethiopia, al-Mahdi called for the cessation of Sudanese aid to secessionists in the Ethiopian province of Eritrea and elsewhere in that country: "We must stop supporting this aggression by proxy, and on the contrary play a peacemaking role, looking to reconcile the national interests of Ethiopia and the legitimate aspirations of the Eritrean people to autonomy. Any destabilization in the Horn of Africa will not fail to have consequences in the Sudan.

"The Sudan must abstain from taking part in the struggles for influence played at by the great powers on the black continent. Our national interest demands that we have friendly and equidistant relations with the United States and the USSR. The latter can furnish us with significant economic and military aid. Soviet arms are more usable, more abundant and less expensive than those offered by the Western countries to the developing countries. In any case, the diversification of our sources of supply is indispensable to guarantee our national sovereignty.

"To say that the United States has 99 percent of the cards (in the Middle East) is not right." Al-Mahdi continued, contradicting a favorite theme of President Sadat, "The opposite is the truth: because of its ties to Israel, America is the least well placed power to encourage the Jewish state toward realism." Al-Mahdi proposed "the restoration of the military credibility of the Arab belligerents with eventually the aid of the Soviet Union."

Speaking of the introduction of the Communist Party into the government, al-Mahdi said, "Ideological divergences aside, our respective positions are not far apart. We have chosen, ourselves, the socialist road in economic matters, and we are convinced that, in this domain, we have much to learn from the Soviet model, which has brought about undeniable progress in a relatively short span of time. Like the Communists, we believe that the role of the USSR on the international scene is indispensable to order and world equilibrium."