

Sudan moves toward peace, democracy

In last week's *EIR*, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach presented an eyewitness report from Sudan, on the second session of the National Congress which met Feb. 16-19 in Khartoum. She, Uwe Friesecke, and Lawrence Freeman interviewed many leading Sudanese political figures, including former opposition leaders from the South who have now signed the peace agreement with the Khartoum government, and are working for national reconciliation. In this section, we publish two additional interviews.

The National Congress represents constituency groups from all over the country. It meets every two years to discuss policy issues, and to pose questions and make recommendations to the government. It elects 125 people to send to the Parliament.

The new leadership of the National Congress includes President Gen. Omar al-Bashir as chairman, and two deputy chairmen: Dr. Riek Machar, a former southern rebel leader from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and Al-Sharif Zeinal-Abdin al-Hindi, secretary general of the Sudanese Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), one of the opposition parties. The fact that two former leading opponents of the government have now joined with President al-Bashir in this democratic forum, shows what an extraordinary political shift has occurred in Sudan. The British strategy for destroying Africa's largest country has received a very significant setback.

Interview: Angelo Beda

Success is a matter of political will

Mr. Beda is the Minister of Manpower in the Sudanese government. A Christian, he comes from the south. This interview was conducted on Feb. 21 by Lawrence Freeman, Uwe Friesecke, and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach. The transcript has been edited. For an earlier interview, see EIR, May 3, 1996, "Fact vs. Fiction about Slavery in Sudan."

EIR: Could you tell us your view of the importance of this National Congress for the future of Sudan?

Beda: First of all, thank you very much for coming all the way from the United States to our country, and for witnessing the running of the conference of the political system, the National Congress.

This conference is the second of its type since the searching for and establishment of a political agreement for the Sudan, which came after we had been fed up by the multiparty system, which we had twice, or three times, and then followed by military coups, and then a one-party system, which was run under Nimeiri. I think this system is aimed at gathering the Sudanese into many streams of political activities, with all their diversities. So, we have now tried this experiment for the last two years. This was the second conference in the last four years, and it was to review our experience, and to plan our future, and also to see the shortcomings of this system. So, it was a very important national review of our effort.

First, the conference is a manifestation of the Sudanese trying to get together by all means, in spite of their difficulties, all their diversities, and their racial and religious differences.

People are trying to discover how we can come together into a national forum, in which we can accommodate each other, especially since the country is so big. So this conference has succeeded in establishing this, that it is possible for Sudanese to come together, under a forum which admits everybody, without qualification, provided that you are Sudanese; regardless of religious feelings, origin, or tribal affiliation.

People have established the structure of a Federal system, and to combine centralism when it is necessary, and then dispense with centralism when we don't need it, so that the local districts, and the states, and the Federal system can react economically, politically, and socially.

The last [point to be stressed about] this conference is, the working of the system, that has attracted people outside it. In 1989, there was no confidence; 1990, no confidence; 1991, no confidence; 1992, no confidence. And then, we had international pressure on us, which was aimed at collapsing this effort of ours, and they organized our neighbors against us. But, as time goes on, and people see that we are pushing ahead, very successfully, we ended up uniting the south and the north inside the country.

And so, those outside have decided to respond. The first two groups came from the southern rebels, and they have joined to sign the agreement, called the Khartoum Agreement. The second is about to come, which was chaired by Sharif al-Hindi, who brought the initiative to the conference, and it was discussed and approved [see *EIR*, March 13, 1998].

So, we look forward to a bigger dialogue. The conference