

the SPLA now is in control of most of the southeast parts of the country and has captured 16 government garrisons in the last year alone.

NIMEIRI'S FOILED COUP ATTEMPT

Egypt not only played an essential role in the June 30th coup, but also played a role, directly or indirectly, in the foiled June 19th coup attempt. On Sunday, June 18th, 80 military persons, including 14 army officers, and 148 civilians loyal to Nimeiri were arrested after a coup plot was discovered. Gaafar Nimeiri, the former Sudanese dictator, denied claims by Mahdi's government that he had anything to do with the coup attempt, but the facts speak otherwise. Promptly after the foiled coup attempt, Nimeiri left Egypt for the first time since his deposition. He travelled to London and said from there that he would travel to an African country near Sudan, where he would plot his return. In addition, Nimeiri had given a series of interviews in Cairo in early June, stating that he would return to power within a two to four week period.

Mahdi stated that Nimeiri, the

Islamic National Front and Moslem Brotherhood leader, Hassan Al Turabi, who incidentally refused to participate in Mahdi's government, were the forces behind the coup attempt. But to delve deeper, it is apparent that Egypt, critical of Mahdi's government, had given Nimeiri the green light to return, breaking its promise to Sudan not to allow Nimeiri to be politically active in Egypt.

As for the connection to the June 30th coup, whether Nimeiri had a role in it or not, Bashir is basically following the Nimeiri line, particularly the undemocratic form of rule and foreign policy stances.

THE SOUTHERN WAR

The six-year-old civil war in the South is one of the major problems facing Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) began the war against Khartoum in 1983, after Nimeiri imposed *sharia* (Islamic law) on the whole country. From Sudan's 25 million people, the northern majority are Moslem, but the southerners, who are one-third of the population, practice animism or Christianity. John Garang and the SPLA have four con-

ditions before peace talks could progress to end the six-year-old war:

- 1) the abrogation of all military treaties,
- 2) a cease-fire (which had already been in effect for a while),
- 3) the lifting of Islamic law and any substitute laws, and
- 4) the lifting of the state of emergency which has been in effect since Nimeiri was overthrown on April 26, 1985.

In addition to these demands, the SPLA also called for more autonomy, and administrative and economic reforms in the South.

The government of Mahdi had abrogated a joint defense treaty with Egypt and proclaimed a military agreement with Libya null, fulfilling the first SPLA condition.

In February of this year, Mahdi was presented with an ultimatum from army officers that he either find a political settlement to the civil war, or give the military the means to seek a battlefield victory. Mahdi subsequently agreed to widen his government and hold peace talks with the SPLA. Talks were being carried out between Mahdi's

Bashir and Mubarak

