

Sudan

Tug-of-War



*Sudan's army -
For or against the people's movement?*

The mass struggle which overthrew Numeiri in Sudan has not yet been calmed; the popular movement continues. The main reasons for this are that: (1) The demands of the masses have not been fulfilled. (2) The remnants of the reactionary elements who were in power during Numeiri's rule have not been eliminated. (3) Internal reaction (the Moslem Brotherhood) and the external reactionary and imperialist forces, especially Mubarak's regime, are still trying to reinstate the Numeiri era.

In this context, the reactionary forces continually try to fabricate events or take advantage of every incident to undermine the achievements of the Sudanese masses. As mentioned in previous issues of *Democratic Palestine*, the government of Sudan is being subjected to two kinds of pressures: (a) the pressure of the Sudanese masses and democratic forces who strive for democratic development, unhindered by political or economic links with imperialism; (b) the pressure of reactionary elements that still exercise influence in Sudan and aim at returning the country to imperialism's orbit.

The dangerous developments that occurred the past weeks clearly indicate that reactionary forces persistently seek to undermine any possibility of solving Sudan's problems democratically. They are constantly pushing for military solutions to the crisis.

The truth about what happened

In late September, rumors of an expected coup spread rapidly in Sudan. This coincided with news about a big military offensive led by the Sudanese

People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against the cities of Bor and Nasir. This rumor stems from the time a clash took place in the beginning of July in the city of Kardod. A couple of weeks later, a group of people marched in the name of the tribes of southern Kordofan and Darfur, and were received by a member of the Military Council. This group demanded that the government arm the people of southern Kordofan to enable them to confront «the aggressors» of the SPLA, although there was no evidence that the SPLA was involved in the fighting. Aware of the imminent danger behind this escalation of tribal and sectarian antagonism, the democratic forces of Sudan intervened, demanding that a solution for the problems of the South be achieved through democratic dialogue rather than by use of force. This demand was received positively both by the government and the SPLA. General Swaredahab made a secret visit to Kenya to pave the way for negotiations with SPLA leader Dr. John Garang. The latter sent an envoy to Nasir city to deliver his acceptance of the government's overtures. Of course, these positive developments were not welcomed by the internal and external reactionary forces. The Moslem Brotherhood, led by Hassan Turabi (Numeiri's former advisor), certainly had a hand in undermining this democratic process, as did other pro-Numeiri elements. The series of events which unfolded thereafter confirms this reasoning.

The development of events

On the 19th of September, the Sudanese defense minister reported that the city of Bor, 1100 km. south of Khartoum, was about to fall to the SPLA. He also added that the army and police had aborted a conspiracy aimed at assassinating political figures in Khartoum and creating a state of chaos in the capital. On the same day, the general command of the armed forces issued a communique which stated that the SPLA had launched an attack against the city of Nasir, near the Ethiopian border. The communique claimed that the refusal of the SPLA to withdraw from around the city prevented the army from conveying Garang's message to the Sudanese government in Khartoum! On the same day, the National Alliance of trade unions and parties in Sudan demanded an explanation from the Minister of Defense regarding a «political communique» issued by the leadership of the army on the problem of the

South. The National Alliance (which includes trade unions and political parties which played a key role in overthrowing Numeiri) expressed surprise at the communique which attacked Dr. Garang and his supposed supporters in Khartoum. The head of the National Alliance, Mr. Salah Abdu Salam, said: «It is unusual for the army to issue such communiqes.» He also described the tone of the communique as being in contradiction with the thinking of the civilian cabinet.

In another communique broadcast from radio Um Durman, the Minister of Housing, Amin Madani, stated that the army had disregarded the efforts of the cabinet which had intended to involve Dr. John Garang in peaceful negotiations.

On the 21st of September, the Moslem Brotherhood, supported by fanatical religious groups and a faction that split from the Umma party, organized a march which they called «the march for the security of Sudan.» In that march they protested against the SPLA, asking the government to take revenge on Garang, «using bullets», and describing Garang as a communist agent.

On the 22nd of September, the Sudanese government prohibited all demonstrations which had so far been an effective way for the masses to voice their opinion. On the 26th of September, orders were given to two military units to go south and fight the SPLA. These units, comprised mostly of southern Sudanese, refused to carry out orders and clashed with government troops. On the 28th of the same month, Prime Minister Jazoli Dafalla declared that the government had imposed a curfew on Khartoum, after the abortion of an attempted coup; he added that military elements from inside and outside the armed forces had participated in this «attempted coup».

What is happening in Sudan clearly points to the fact that the country is still subject to attempts to reinstate the Numeiri era. Moreover, it is obvious that internal and external reactionary forces will not give up easily. A democratic solution to all of the country's internal problems is the only way to avoid further losses and suffering, and to attain results acceptable by all parties. We believe that democratic dialogue is the best way to solve the question of the South of Sudan; accusations and preconceived judgements only serve the interests of reactionary forces which want to turn Sudan back into an imperialist satellite. ●