

Sudan

Definite Elections — Indefinite Results

In April, the Military Council in Sudan held elections, as it had promised the Sudanese masses when they rose up and toppled Numeiri's reactionary dictatorship in April 1985. For the first time in over two decades, Sudanese went to the polls.

In the 30 years of 'independent' Sudan's history, the people suffered 22 years of military dictatorship, 16 of them under Numeiri. Numeiri's regime developed into one of the most reactionary ones in our time. It can only be compared to the regimes of Duvalier in Haiti, Marcos in the Philippines and Somoza in Nicaragua. The regime destroyed the country economically. Sudan, the largest country in Africa, changed from being the «breadbasket» of the world into a net importer of food and a famine-stricken country.

In terms of foreign policy, Numeiri totally subordinated Sudan to US imperialist control, offering it as a base for the Rapid Deployment Force, supporting the Camp David accords, taking anti-Soviet stands and even playing the major role in the transportation of Ethiopian Jews to the Zionist entity.

Internally, political freedom was violently suppressed. We cannot but remember the massacre against the communists in 1971, when thousands were killed and the top leaders of the Communist Party of Sudan were hung -comrades Abdul Khalil Mahjoub, Al Shafi Ahmed and Hashem Al 'Attah. The regime increased oppression against the people by introducing Islamic law in 1983. In brief, these conditions were the basic reasons for the uprising of April 1985, when the masses and liberal forces in the army toppled the reactionary regime.

THE ELECTIONS AND THE PARTIES

The elections lasted 12 days in the first half of April; 247 of the 301 members of the General Assembly were elected. The elections were postponed indefinitely in 37 of the 68 southern constituencies, because of the war being waged by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The results in 17 of the remaining 31 southern constituencies were not declared.

The election results put the two traditionalist parties in the forefront: the Umma (Nationalist) Party, headed by Sadeq Al Mahdi, won 99 seats, while the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), headed by Zien Al Abideen Al Hindi, won 63 seats. The reactionary Islamic Nationalist Front was third with 51

seats, having benefitted from its abundant finances, its having been allowed to work openly during Numeiri's rule, and the wave of Islamic fundamentalism. The Islamic Nationalist Front is led by Hassan Al Turabi and has its origin in the Muslim Brotherhood. As such, it represents one of the dangers to the newly won democracy, especially in view of its long alliance with Numeiri. Among other acts, Turabi supported Numeiri's proclaiming himself 'Imam' of Sudan.

The Communist Party of Sudan had a weak showing in the elections, gaining three seats, in contrast to its historic role in the Sudanese masses' struggle. This should be understood on the background of the 16 years the party had to function underground, and the severe blows it was dealt by Numeiri's repression. The election results fail to reflect the true extent of the Communist Party's influence, which is especially strong among Sudanese workers and intellectuals.

The other parties that gained seats in the assembly were regionally oriented, mainly from the South and the Kordofan area. In addition, five independents were elected.

THE CABINET

Sadeq Al Mahdi became prime minister and announced a cabinet of 20, including himself. The Umma Party holds nine ministries, most importantly, defense and finance. The DUP holds six ministries, most importantly, foreign and interior. The southern parties hold four ministries. An independent trade unionist was designated Minister of Unity and Peace, assigned the duty of contacting the SPLA leadership to reach a peaceful solution to the civil war. The new government is going to face a number of problems. Most, if not all, can be traced to the catastrophic legacy left by Numeiri's policies:

THE SOUTH

The South represents a historical problem in Sudan. The roots of this problem are related to issues of religion, ethnic origin, language, geography and British colonialism. Most recently, the problem of the South resurfaced when the Numeiri regime decided to redivide

Sudan into eight administrative regions, three of them in the South, after a period when the country was administrated as two regions: North and South. Although this was clearly intended to further weaken the southern population's position, opposition was initially not very clear, because the redivision also weakened the domination of the Dinka tribe, the largest in the South. (Tribal identification is strongest in southern Sudan, but is also strong in parts of the east and west of the country.)

Then, in 1983, Numeiri appointed himself as 'Imam' and enforced Islamic law, banning alcohol and cutting off hands and feet for minor offenses. These laws were enforced regardless of the religion of the person or region involved. (Most southerners are Christians or animists.) This, added to the historical exploitation of the people of the South, caused a revolt. The revolt was led by Colonel John Garang who established the Sudanese Popular Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its military wing, the SPLA. It is estimated that the SPLM/SPLA controls 2/3 of the South.

This civil war is costing the state one million Sudanese pounds daily (\$350,000). All parties in Sudan now, with the exception of the Islamic National Front, view Garang as an honest citizen and recognize the need for negotiations with the SPLA. In late April, the Umma Party sent a delegation, headed by Idris Al Banna, to Addis Ababa, to negotiate with the SPLA. Garang was ready to negotiate, but not to join the government. He wants a constitutional congress to be assembled as soon as possible. The SPLA position is that the South should have a form of self-rule within a united, democratic federation of Sudan. In addition, the SPLA sees the necessity of reconsidering relations with the Egyptian regime, and repealing the Islamic laws.

The Umma and DUP see peaceful negotiations as the solution to the problem of the South, but they tend to over-emphasize the role of regional forces, especially Ethiopia, rather than the internal causes of the SPLA's struggle. They also criticize the SPLA for escalating the war. The Islamic Nationalist Front sees Garang as a tool of Ethiopia, with limited popular support. They demand that he come to the capital, Khartoum, to negotiate - "but we shouldn't be quiet about his crimes against the innocent" (sic).

The Communist Party has the most comprehensive position concerning the South. The Communist Party views the SPLM as a serious political force and Garang as "a serious man in politics, economics and the military field. We agree with him on some issues and disagree on others. We call upon him to play a patriotic role," as Comrade Mohammed I. Naqed, General Secretary of the party, says. The communists see the importance of ending the figh-