

democratic process will proceed from the popular uprising's current victory.

## Political parties

The three main political parties in Sudan are the Umma, the Democratic/National Union and the Communist Party.

The Umma, led by Sadeq al Mahdi, represents the agricultural bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the remaining feudalists. Traditionally pro-US, this party made a tactical shift under the impact of the coup, espousing a national policy. The party is divided, but the dissident wing has not organized itself. If it unites, the Umma could become the biggest party.

The Democratic Union represents the middle bourgeoisie with national but not radical inclinations. After the power change, the party divided and the National Union was formed. If the two reunite, this might be the biggest party.

In contrast, the Communist Party is united and reorganized itself underground well prior to April 6th. A part of its cadres now work openly. Independent political observers estimate the Communist Party to be the largest in view of its country-wide membership and mass support. In Khartoum, the party's celebration of International Workers Day attracted 100,000 participants, enough to worry the US ambassador who consulted with Sadeq al Mahdi several times in the course of that single day. The Communist Party is active in working to sustain the popular mobilization needed to steer the new regime's course in a positive direction.

With new groups being announced daily after April 6th, there are now at least 40 other parties in Sudan. Among the traditionalist forces, the Muslim Brotherhood is worthy of note. The Brotherhood has been weakened by division into three wings. More important, its main wing headed by Hassan Turabi acquired the hate of the masses

due to its alliance with Numeiri until being purged a scant two weeks before the popular uprising. Turabi has thus far failed in his attempt to reunite the Brotherhood and was recently scorned at a mass meeting, where he had to be protected by the police. Turabi opposes the National Alliance, while the Republican Brotherhood has joined in the alliance.<sup>2</sup>

## The process of change

On April 8th, the general strike halted after having enforced demands for the abolition of the State Security Police, Numeiri's constitution and single party; the release of prisoners, and the Military Council's agreement to later relinquish power to a civilian government. At the same time, the National Alliance issued its charter of proposals for the new government: return to the 1964 constitution, guarantees for basic human rights, regional self-government for southern Sudan, development of Sudan's natural resources to combat the economic crisis, independence and nonalignment in the context of Sudan's Afro-Asian identity, decentralization, abolishing the institutions of the Numeiri regime and purging the parasitic class it created; a new constitution should be ratified by a democratically elected body after the transitional government.

However, there are already signs that the Military Council is balking on key points. It was agreed that for a transitional period, power would be divided between the Military Council, the civilian cabinet appointed in late April and the National Alliance, with the cabinet having decision-making authority. Yet the Military Council has entrenched itself in the palace, exercising authority unilaterally in foreign and economic affairs and concerning the South. The Military Council packed the cabinet with three Numeiri supporters as «representatives of the South». The National Alliance is working for their dismissal, leaving the seats empty until an agreement with the SPLA, to then be filled with genuine representatives of the South.

In addition to delay in putting the 1964 constitution into effect, the Military Council has in practice opposed the National Alliance's call for purging the former regime, especially the security forces where the CIA had numerous links. To the contrary, the Military Council released 40 security officers who had been imprisoned, claiming that they were only administrative personnel, whereas one was the third-ranking

officer. This step caused dissension within the council itself with one of the members declaring that he would boycott the council until these officers were reimprisoned.

In the face of these negative indications, the National Alliance has the power to mobilize the masses to enforce the policies for which they have struggled. This potential has been reinforced by elections in the General Union of Workers of Sudan which groups 4 million workers from 42 trade unions. The General Union had withheld participation in the National Alliance until these elections. Similarly it has refused to have reactionary trade union leaders replaced by administrative procedures as was suggested by the cabinet. Instead the union held general elections in early May where democrats, nationalists and communists won the vast majority of leading positions. This enables the union to join the National Alliance, adding the weight of the organized working class to the process for change.

## Challenges

The new regime in Khartoum faces a range of challenges aside from, but related to, the demands for democracy and a national policy. The following interview with Dr. John Garang outlines the challenge of the South and its implications. Moreover, drought has aggravated the rape of Sudan's agriculture enacted by Numeiri's promotion of agrobusiness for the export market. UN officials have predicted that one million Sudanese children may die from starvation in the next few months (in addition to famine refugees from other countries). Due to Numeiri's policy, Sudan is totally dependent on US grain imports to stave off starvation. This gives the Reagan Administration an added card in pressuring the Military Council to remain within pro-imperialist bounds. But the real solution is another: Democracy for the masses all over Sudan is the only way for mobilizing the national energies required to correct this situation.

<sup>1</sup> The National Alliance for Salvation includes representatives for engineers, doctors, lawyers, academics, banking and insurance employees; the president of Khartoum University Student Council; representatives for the Umma, the Democratic Union, the Communist Party, the Baathists, and the Republican Brotherhood.

<sup>2</sup> This wing was led by Mohammed Mahmoud Taha, hanged by Numeiri in January for criticising the harsh application of Islamic law as inconsistent with the spirit of Islam.

