

SUDAN AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION DEMOCRATIC

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Introduction

In most studies of political economy of Sudan (as well as other African nations) two subjects remain conspicuous by their absence: class formation, and the class structure of this postcolonial state. These are not merely ideological omissions unconsciously designed to ignore "imperialism" and the "class struggle"; they are also a clear reflection of uneven and combined development, in which, for example, the apparent "autonomy of the state" and "economic weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie" are intimately related.² Similar features apply more generally in the so-called "Sociology of development". At one extreme, the temptation is to argue that capitalism "underdevelops" Third World countries, while at the other, the argument is precisely the opposite.³ The fact is that capitalism has always developed unevenly in both time and space, especially in the form of colonialism where economic planning that is, dependent development was initially undertaken in order to satisfy the needs of the colonizers — whether in terms of the export of capital, the import of raw materials, or military strategy. The legacy of colonialism is therefore a malformed economy in which the primary export sector is often technologically advanced, alongside other sectors which remain economically and technologically backward. This penetration of economically advanced capitalism into backward and pre-capitalist modes of production inevitably poses a theoretical paradox in any attempt to postulate "stages of economic growth." This is because an obvious distinction needs to be made between the antecedents of capitalist industrialisation (the fact

that capitalism developed out of European feudalism) and its subsequent development, on a global scale, through the agencies of colonialism and imperialism. In fact, the contemporary debate on the different political implications contained in the seemingly contradictory assertions, that — crudely expressed — capitalism at once develops and underdevelops its periphery, has a parallel even in the works of Marx. Notwithstanding his analysis in *Capital*, Marx conceived in “Modernization” the possibility of “leaping stages” — a theme that was to prove politically crucial in the theory and practice of Bolshevism in contradistinction to Menshevism⁴.

Classical Marxism had been exceptionally articulate in delineating the course of European economic development — slavery being superseded by feudalism, and feudalism by capitalism — and had analysed political conflict in terms of class struggle. Thus, political opposition to feudal absolutism was conceived as a class struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy. The achievement of parliamentary democracy, based on free elections, freedom of speech, of assembly, and so forth, were all attributable to the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a progressive class. Similarly, free trade-unionism and the right to strike, were related to the rise of the industrial proletariat in its class conflict with this same bourgeoisie. This latter struggle — of wage labour against capital — forms, of course, the basis of Marx’s analysis of capitalism, and the revolutionary struggle for socialism. The bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolution are therefore each conceived in terms of a specific class hegemony, and are theoretically distinct and historically disparate. The Mensheviks had applied similar reasoning in arguing that further development of capitalism in Russia would promote a progressive bourgeoisie and a prolonged period of parliamentary democracy during which time the pre-conditions for socialism in the form of a maturing labour movement — would materially progress. The Mensheviks thereby awarded, in advance, the leadership of the ensuing revolution to the Russian bourgeoisie. Events proved to be quite different. The success of the October Revolution was based on Lenin’s theoretical premise that the unevenness of Russia’s economic development rendered the bourgeoisie quite incapable of fulfilling the political task which the Mensheviks had ordained.

Whatever the antecedents of capitalism and its subsequent extension through imperialism, economic penetration into those economically backward areas of the globe now euphemistically labelled the "Third" or even "Fourth World" (for in some, economic growth has been decidedly faster than in others) has exhibited the following general features: the gradual transformation of primitive agriculture; land seizure and consolidation; the creation of a reserve army of migrant and unemployed labour; and, initially, the erosion of, or in some cases, systematic discrimination against handicraft industries that were in competition with those of the imperialist countries. This latter feature highlights the aforementioned paradox that is, monopoly capital distorting, and by a process of unequal exchange unevenly developing indigenous capital because for many years it limited — and in many countries continues to limit — the formation of an industrial bourgeoisie; the class which in Europe had led the struggle for democracy.

Recognizing that even in Russia (about which Lenin had written his book on the development of capitalism) this "national" bourgeoisie was too weak either to compete economically against imperialism — upon which it therefore necessarily came to reply — or to genuinely lead and sustain a democratic revolution. The Bolsheviks politically opposed "class-collaboration", collapsed the "bourgeois-democratic phase" into the "dictatorship of the proletariat", and, on seizing power, proclaimed the epoch of socialist revolution.

Failure of the revolution to spread outwards through Europe and beyond, undoubtedly gave impetus to the notion of "Socialism in One Country", but this thorough revision of Marxism entailed not merely a re-evaluation of the role of the peasants — especially after the victory of the Chinese Revolution — but also of the "progressive" role of the "national" bourgeoisie in economically backward countries. This is ironic because in 1925-7, Chinese Communists had been instructed by the Communist International to join the Kuomintang under the leadership of Chaign Kai-shek, who subsequently sent thousands of them to their deaths. Despite this unpalatable truth, it has nevertheless become politically legitimate for many "Third World" Communists to seek "progressive" elements within their national bourgeoisie, and to provide theoretical justification for it in terms of "Maxism-Leninism"

—whether of the Chinese or Soviet variety. The result has been catastrophic defeat for Communists through the agencies of such “bourgeois nationalists” as Premier Sukarno in Indonesia, General Kassim in Iraq and — as Sudanese Communists need no reminding — of President Numeiri at home. It is therefore instructive to remind ourselves that a debate engaged in by Russian Marxists over sixty years ago, and in which they anticipated many of the essential arguments to be encountered, “development theory”, has precisely the same political relevance today, as it had then—is there, or is there not, a progressive bourgeoisie with whom to collaborate in the struggle for social revolution? In contemporary Sudan, this question is of more than “academic interest” to be confined to political scientists or sociologists; it is a vital theoretical issue, having immediate practical implications in the current struggle for a national democratic revolution.

An attempt has already been made by the author to answer it, and the tentative conclusion reached then (in 1978) has since been empirically verified in the extensive empirical work of Dr. Fatima Babiker Mahmoud. After assessing the class interest, and political behaviour of the Sudanese bourgeoisie, she concludes:

This study has suggested that the Sudanese capitalists are in fact a ‘comprador’ dependent bourgeoisie. Given the repressive role their parties have played throughout the political history of the modern Sudan, and the personal role that some of those studied have played in opposition to radical change (to the extent of crushing governments in collaboration with foreign capital) these capitalists can in no way be described as a ‘national bourgeoisie’.⁶

Primitive Accumulation and the Formation of Classes

The class forces engaged in the current political struggle assume all the characteristics of uneven and combined development, typical of neo-colonial regimes. This is evident even in Sudan’s dominant economic sector — cotton.

Cotton accounted for approximate 90 per cent of Sudan’s G.N.P. even as late as 1950. Other significant sectors of the agricultural cash economy were gum-arabic, camel meat and beef, millet and vegetable cultivation. Industrial production, such as it

was, consisting of a brewery, soap and match factories, and a textile mill, made up only 2.5 per cent of the G.N.P. at the time of Britain's formal withdrawal in 1956. As elsewhere on the continent, Sudan's indigenous capitalist class was thus very small, and to a larger extent, dependent on foreign capital at the time of political independence.

The main source of capital accumulation for other nascent capitalists was in agriculture, and especially in the private pump schemes along the Nile. Three categories of people were in a position to invest their existing wealth in such schemes: the larger merchants, some tribal heads and the religious leaders. The latter were especially prominent. The Mahdi family of the Ansar sect and the Mirghani family of the Khatmia were able to amass considerable wealth through the dues paid to them by their several million followers. Through a classic policy of divide and rule, British colonialism was able to encourage collaboration first with one and then with the other of these religious sects by offering various forms of economic inducement. Facilities were provided at various times for the Mahdi and Mirghani families to set up, develop and extend their farms, often on the basis of land granted to each of them by the colonial administration. To a lesser extent the same applies to tribal leaders who possessed hundreds of camels and often even larger herds of cattle. Merchants, too, were in a favourable position, and especially those tied up with increased trade in the colonial cotton scheme in the Gezira.

Thus, rich merchants, religious leaders and tribal heads were able to consolidate their economic power prior to independence, and came to express their developing class interests through their different political parties which came to dominate the political scene afterwards.

These emergent capitalists lived mostly in the riverain areas of the north, centred around the three towns of Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North, the Blue Nile Province and Gezira. They claimed Arab descent, and their kinship system of first-cousin marriage, encouraged an attitude of ethnic superiority that cut across class differences. But despite the subjective factors that militate against the formation of class consciousness, objective basis is clearly discernible, and must be theoretically and empirically spelt out.

Class Structure in Sudan

Corresponding to the emergence of the aforementioned capitalists in agriculture and industry there were increasing numbers of wage labourers on the farms, in the factories, and in transport — especially on the railways where the Sudan Communist Party (SCP) was able to establish a strong trade union base. Increasingly, workers were being drawn into capitalist property relations, either directly as permanent or seasonal labourers, or indirectly through the role of peasant farmers supplying food for subsistence. The consequent imbalance, or malformation, for the post colonial Sudanese economy was further aggravated by the introduction of modern technology. Migrant labourers from Darfur, the Nuba mountains and the far south, and the so-called 'Fellata' from the west, flooded into the cotton schemes, mechanized farms and urban areas in search of work. The outcome of this malformation, exacerbated by British colonial policy which encouraged a rigid divide between 'Arab' north, and 'negro' south and west, has been the formation of separatist movements, now a national liberation movement.

The indigenous industrial bourgeoisie, though small, flourished in partnership with foreign capital. As a class it was, and is, too weak to possess any long-term political significance on its own account. Commercial capitalists on the other hand are growing in number and political importance. Originally, many of them were Greek and Syrian traders who accompanied the British colonizers from Egypt, but most of these left Sudan during Numeiri's 'left turn'. The conversion to 'socialism' of many Sudanese merchants and state bureaucrats is now easily accounted for. Their support for nationalization, and especially the expropriation of this 'foreign' petit bourgeoisie, paved the way for their own economic ascendancy. They are increasing in number in direct proportion to the penetration of foreign investment capital. Many of them are the direct agents for western firms, and they manage insurance companies, banks and export-import businesses. The unevenness of their different locations in the economy renders their politics extremely volatile, although they are largely parasitic to neo-colonialism. Numeiri's shift to the right received their wholehearted support. Family members from this stratum are frequently to be found in the state bureaucracy, entry into

which generally comes through either membership of the armed forces or the universities. They include military and civilian officials, the secret police, higher officers in the army, civil servants and some university personnel. In the lower echelons are the less powerful salaried officials, some professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers, and below these the increasing number of clerical workers who form an expanding salariat.

The Sudanese trade unions were once among the best organized in Africa, and were led in strategic sectors such as transport and textiles by the SCP, which gave the party a substantial proletarian composition. This proletarian composition remains intact.

The defection of prominent farmers (some of them party members) from the former SCP-led Gezira Tenants Union into organizations of the SSU had served to increase the proportion of working class members in the Communist Party, while curtailing its broader political influence, although it continues to influence university and high school students, and has the support of sections of the intelligentsia. It lacks support among the much more numerous lumpen proletariat of shoeshiners, porters, beggars and the rest, the urban migrant labourers and the broad mass of the heterogenous peasantry.

The Peasantry

The overwhelming majority of Sudanese, well over 80 per cent, are farmers, farm workers or nomadic herdsmen. Most are peasants owning small plots of four or five acres, growing a limited variety of crops which keep them at subsistence level. The 'middle peasants', owning a hundred to two hundred acres, who frequently also lease land from the state, are obviously of a different order. Some of them are retired army officers, many are developing commercial interests especially through the introduction of machinery, some own shops. Their political propensities vary roughly in accordance with their uneven development, but among the more wealthy, Numeiri had established a rural base, especially in the riverain Arab communities of the north. It is here and in parts of the east that a few wealthy merchants have set up their mechanized farms. These capitalist farmers have extensive commercial interests that place them alongside the growing indigenous commercial bourgeoisie. Their power and political influence are stea-

dily increasing. In contrast are the mass of migrant labourers who work in the extensive cotton plantations, especially in the Gezira-Managil Scheme and the so-called 'tenant farmers' who ostensibly 'employ' the labourers.

— Elsewhere, I have described the Gezira Scheme as a quasi-state-capitalist enterprise, run within the general framework of commodity exchange.⁷ This requires some explanation. There are approximately 550,000 seasonal workers who receive their wages from some 100,000 "tenants". In legal terms, the migrant workers are therefore the tenants' wage labour, and the tenants small employers. In essence, however, the income of both the migrant workers and the vast majority of Gezira tenants is derived from what is more accurately described as wage labour. It is arguable that only a small percentage of tenants derive the bulk of their income from surplus value⁸.

Three possibilities present themselves here. Theoretically, the income of the tenants can be derived exclusively from appropriating the labour of others — as profit; it can be derived exclusively from the sale of his own labour power — as wages; or it can be derived from a combination of these sources; (but) . . . essential point is that the Gezira tenant works not merely for himself, nor does he "employ" the labour of others as a capitalist. He works for the (Gezira Board. In other words,) legally, he is in partnership not with other tenants, but with the . . . state, which took over the scheme from the British administration and runs it as a capitalist enterprise.⁹

In this respect, the tenant is "subordinate to capital, behaves as a non-owner in his legal relations with his partner, the state and in most cases the revenue accruing to the state appears to absorb almost all of the tenants' surplus labour."¹⁰

Tenants are told when, how and where to grow cotton, under a system of inspection that resembles an enormous factory conveyor belt. In their position of authority, officials now control the packaging and marketing of the cotton crop, hold the tenants accountable for supervision over migrant labour, and are empowered to "inflict all kinds of penalties—including the confiscation of

a tenancy, on any who fail to perform adequately this vital organisational task." Their class position — "subordinate to capital, bahaving as though propertyless in relation to their legal partner, the state, and their surplus labour being absorbed in the process of production — satisfied all the conditions which render these so called "tenants" *de facto* "wage-workers."¹¹

A class analysis of these relations therefore indicates that the underlying conflict of interests is not between tenants on the one side and migrant workers on the other, but between "all these producers of surplus-value and the small class of wealthy tenants and commercial capitalists" who utilize the state to exploit them. This appropriation "forms the class basis upon which authority relations have become structured within the scheme." These relations have their origin in the colonial period, the key in understanding their development entails an analysis of capitalists ground rent.¹²

What characterises the rate of capitalist ground rent is the demand for and supply of land incorporating any capital investments that increase its productivity. In the case of Sudan, this incorporation never occurred, not because the capitalist mode of production was too weak, but because it was too strong. British colonialism fixed the price of land at a level which was to limit severely the consolidation of a class of indigenous landowners. Existing title holders were able to stay on their land, but the price they commanded from the colonial administration was fixed at a maximum of two English shillings per feddan (1.038 acres). Any increase in value accruing to irrigation was therefore never reflected in the amount of rent paid out to these farmers.

It has been estimated that the Sudanese government continues to pay approximately S£50,000 as yearly rent to Gezira "tenants" (all farmers in the scheme are treated as being in the same category irrespective of whether they pay or receive rent). This amount may seem impressive, and would be, but for the fact that about 70 per cent of tenants own less than half a plot each, and that the S£50,000 is divided among some 30,000 of them. In other words, if the figures are correct, what is at issue is a yearly average of about S£1.6 per tenants per year, which, by no stretch of the imagination, puts them among the ranks of wealthy landowners. There are some, moderately wealthy tenants, but in many cases these derive the bulk of their personal income not di-

rectly from agriculture, but from trade and commerce. Some of these merchants are title holders who sub-let their tenancies. The income of most other tenants places them at the margin of subsistence, and they are therefore unable to accumulate any significant capital.

All costs of production within the scheme other than the wages paid out to seasonal workers are charged to a common account. official version is that seasonal workers receive their income from the profits of independent tenant farmers, but, as we have seen this is sheer mystification because from the standpoint of the Board, the bulk of the tenants' income is as much a cost to be met as any other factor of production. This amount is relatively constant being a fixed percentage of the total net income. In consequence, there is persistent pressure to reduce that element of it which is variable—the wages paid out to seasonal workers. These, an ILO report informs us “. . . have increased by only 3 per cent a year on average over the past 20 years. This does not even cover the rise in prices and thus real wages have on the whole declined.”¹³

It is of enormous ideological significance that these migrant workers are of a different ethnic origin—coming from the west and south — than their northern “Arab” tenants. It has always served to cut across and disguise their uniform class interests — as when Shaikh Amin Mohammed El Amin, of the Gezira Tenants Union, proposed that all agricultural workers should be eligible to join. His principled stand, based on a class analysis and in opposition to racialism, was apparently rejected by this rural aristocracy of labour. Their practice of first-cousin marriage, and identification of arduous agricultural work — such as cotton sowing and picking—with slavery, further encourages a strong sense of ethnic identity vis-a-vis the so-called “Fellata” whom these tenants ostensibly employ.¹⁴ Even the subject of land enclosure and consolidation has failed to provide the expected focus upon which it was hoped unity could be forged between them and the large number of migrant workers. The ideology of property rights even given a tenuous legal expression, and enduring ties of ethnicity have until now formed an effective barrier to class solidarity.

There is another factor too, that promotes rural stratification, and one which also serves to re-enforce petit bourgeois aspirations.

Vegetable plants, originally introduced by the British as food for subsistence, have increasingly become cash crops sold in the open market. The predictable result is that despite increased supervision over the growing of cotton, increasing numbers of tenants concentrate their productive efforts elsewhere. This enabled those tenants who were already involved in trading to become relatively wealthy. They are few in number, but represent a developing class interest. These capitalist farmers would, "shed the remnant of colonial exploitation — in the form of the Gezira Scheme — if it were in their economic interests to do so".¹⁵ But at this stage of their class formation it is not because they require the scheme to be more efficient, and are determined to utilize rehabilitation funds to finance capital investment, and — just as important — to discipline the vast majority of tenants and migrant workers whose class interests they oppose.

The pattern of capital accumulation typical of these farmers is not unlike that of others in the past, even though, as indicated, the main source appears to have been the private pump schemes along the Nile, and late rainfed mechanised farming. Commerce had offered similar scope too, but on a smaller scale, and so had investment in real-estate. All of these were to develop in importance, and to some extent become interrelated. The pattern for some emerging capitalists, for example, was undoubtedly accumulation in small-scale farming, leading to trade in the local markets. In some cases it led to involvement in petty commodity production, thence to investment in urban real-estate, followed by further investment — on a larger scale — in mechanised agriculture. It is a pattern that applies, in full, to a small number of exceptionally wealthy families. Other families concentrated on agriculture, as in the case of the 30,000 feddan estate on Aba Island, which was built by Said Abdel-Rahman El-Mahdi, but which was registered as the Mahdi Commercial Company.

Numeiri has established a fairly strong rural trade, among the strata of peasants owning a hundred to two hundred acres although they are in competition with the Umma, which remains entrenched. Some of these "middle peasants" have trading interests that tie them up with the rapidly developing indigenous commercial bourgeoisie, and some have invested their accumulated capital in mechanised farms.

Political and Class Struggles in Sudan

In the struggle for a national democratic revolution, the peasantry is far too heterogenous to have a leading role. The ideology of property rights, with its legal expression, backed up by various forms of racialism, forms a political barrier to any uniform class solidarity being widely expressed among them. As for the salariat and other sections of the state bureaucracy, forming the largest part of the educated elite, they will probably only commit themselves politically when they are certain of being on the winning side, and/or of hoping to maintain their privileged position afterwards — a very precarious hope indeed. There remains, of course, the possibility of individuals among them aligning themselves with other classes, but this is obviously something quite different. Much the same applies to the petit bourgeoisie in industry and commerce, but the difference here is that, as a class, in supporting a move to the left, they risk facing economic suicide. What therefore remains is the relatively small, but politically significant class of industrial workers who are far more homogenous in their composition than the peasantry and far better organized. These, in combination with an alliance of poor tenants and the great mass of labourers from the south and west, form, it would appear, the only class basis from which a successful democratic revolution can be achieved, but one which would in the course of the struggle develop far beyond the political limitations imposed by neo-colonialism.

These neo-colonial ties severely limit the political options open to whatever regime that forms the government. Another factor which is structurally related to neo-colonialism and its attendant class structure, is the weakness not merely of the indigenous capitalist class, but also of the petit bourgeoisie whose fragmentation results in frequent political vacillation, from religious fanaticism to “national” socialism. Reliance on the military to maintain the political status-quo in the absence of a more fully developed class structure and related political culture, is therefore yet another consequence of the uneven development wrought by the penetration of foreign capital.

This process of uneven (and combined) development begun by British colonialism, through which only three regions of Sudan — the Gezira Scheme, Khartoum and the Blue Nile Province —

underwent any major economic advance, was, under the Numeiri regime, extended and deepened by encouraging the penetration of foreign investment capital. The explanations for this phenomenon of uneven development is obvious. Both British colonialism, and more recent foreign capital, shared one primary objective: a high return on investment. British textile manufacturers wanted cheap cotton, and the oil rich Arab states were seeking cheap food ("Sudan as the breadbasket of the Arab world"). Most significant in this respect was the massive Kuwaiti and Saudi financing of development projects employing Western firms and technicians. The projects included large irrigation schemes like Rahad and Khashm al Girba, and the construction of the Jonglei Canal. These — and other projects such as Kenana Sugar, the one million acre commercial cattle farm being developed by AZL International (a subsidiary of the Arizona, Colorado Land and Cattle Company), the mechanized farming project in the Damazine area, the Western Savannah Development Scheme, the IDA financed New Halfa agricultural rehabilitation scheme, and many other smaller projects — will undoubtedly integrate many more peasants into capitalist property relations, extend agricultural wage-labour, and tend to even out the existing differential rates of pay within the economically advanced agricultural sectors.

The scope of planned investments is enormous. A multilateral Arab Fund, now known as Triple Aid, was inaugurated in 1977 under the auspices of the Kuwaiti-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. It envisaged a ten-year investment programme, costing over six billion dollars, to finance a large number of interrelated schemes designed to bring the annual growth of Sudan's agricultural sector to an estimated six per cent.

Financial and infrastructural difficulties (and related doubts concerning the economic viability of very big schemes) delayed the implementation of Triple Aid's investment programme. A start was made on smaller and more manageable projects in the fields of horticulture, dairy processing, glucose production and poultry farming. Companies have been formed, and equity distributed between the Sudan Government (37.5 per cent) Triple Aid (25 per cent), and the governments of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq (12.5 per cent each). Tenders have been issued and contracts awarded to Ritz Pompen of West Germany to supply water pumps for the 25 million dollar vegetable scheme, and other

European companies are earmarked for the construction of a slaughterhouse and packing plant for the 75 million dollar Arab Sudanese Poultry Company, a 37.5 million dollar starch and glucose factory, and the 88 million dollar dairy plant for the Arab Sudanese Dairy Company. Furthermore, feasibility studies by HVA of Holland (for a 92 million dollar edible oils project) and Sweco of Sweden (for a 92 million dollar feedmill Scheme) have been under consideration, and tenders have been received from companies in Britain, France, Holland and West Germany for construction contracts related to phase two of Triple Aid's schedule.

Other European firms involved in recent projects include Bonifica of Italy (to examine the feasibility of reviving Old Suakin as a Red Sea port) Rehin-Ruhs Industrie of West Germany (commissioned to study river transport) and a large number of French companies such as the Compagnie de Constructions Internationales (CCI) (Jonglei Canal and Juba airport), Rhone-Poulenc and Roussel-Uclaf (agriculture), Omnium Techniques de Pipelines (OTP), and Thomson-CSF (telecommunication — with Siemens of West Germany).

Assisting these projects, and their infrastructural support was aid from the European Economic Community (which recently increased its official aid grant under the Lome Convention to around 110 million dollars for improvements at Khartoum Airport), the Islamic Development Fund (39.3 million dollars for petroleum products from Kuwait, 12 million dollars for fertilizers, and 5 million dollars for the Damazine Agricultural Development Company), the Opec Special Fund (7.7 million dollars for the Kas-sala-Haiya road) and the Kuwait Fund (4.7 million dollars for the Sennar-Damazine road, and 5.2 million dollars for the Rahad project.

The marriage of Arab and Western finance capital is seen also in deals such as the 200 million Eurodollar loan arranged by the Saudi financier Adna Khashoggi, and the increasing investment in indigenous companies producing textiles, match, soap and glass — some of which have been taken over by the Kuwaiti owned Gulf International.

The location of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Khartoum is more than symbolic in linking Arab oil money and the exploitation of African resources. Almost all members of the Arab League contribute to it, but most investment comes from

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Without this finance, it is clear that Sudan would have few of the development projects currently in operation. The number of funding organisations in Sudan with Arab or Islamic credentials has increased considerably over the past decade, and includes the Kuwaiti based Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Fund, the Saudi Development Fund, the Opec Special Fund and the Islamic Development Bank.

The spectacular success of Saudi Prince Feisal's own Islamic Investment Company testifies to the extent to which accumulation is currently taking place. Within the first four hours of its opening, the Feisal Bank in Khartoum took ten million Sudanese pounds. At the end of its first year of operation, the bank's profits exceeded 45 million dollars — a staggering figure.

In addition, World Bank and EEC funds are supporting important rehabilitation work, and contracts have recently been awarded to, among others, British Leyland (for trucks), KSG Handels of West Germany (for pumping equipment), International Harvesters of Canada (for tractors), and Hunslet Engines of UK (for engines for the Gezira Light Railway). Most of these contracts are related to rehabilitation work currently being undertaken in the very large schemes. The aim is to boost food production, but, for export. Assistance to small, mixed farm projects, and to subsistence farmers (who make up the vast bulk of the population) is very small indeed. Even here, however, foreign influence is dominant. Shareholding in the new Sudan Rural Development Finance Corporation (SRDFC) is weighted heavily in favour of Britain (the Commonwealth Development Corporation), France (Caisse Centrale Cooperation Economique), and West Germany (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Wirtschaftliche) who between them hold a 60 per cent share of the capital, compared to the Sudan Development Corporation's 40 per cent. This ratio is clearly designed to encourage yet more external investment, particularly by Arabs and by companies in the EEC and North America; and is supported by the 1980 Investment Act which codified existing investment guarantees, and was specifically designed to remove any remaining constraints in foreign private investment.

Much of this investment finance derives from the accumulated surpluses of oil production, either directly, or re-cycled in the international money markets, through multinational companies. This is ironic because it is now clear that Sudan itself posse-

ssess considerable oil deposits.¹⁶

The establishment of oilfields, involving international companies such as Chevron, Philips Petroleum, Burmah Oil, Shell, Mobil, Atlantic Richfield and others, will undoubtedly stimulate yet more foreign investment, but the corresponding concessions on profit repatriation, and the concomitant pressure on Sudan to develop the appropriate infrastructure will tend to minimise even more the rate of rural growth, and accelerate the degree of uneven development.

Development plans for the West of Sudan, and especially for the South — when they are considered at all — are most enthusiastically supported by external funds only when they directly enhance existing investment in the North. The two most blatant examples in the recent past were the decision that petroleum extracted from the oilfield at Bentiu in the south would be refined in the north, and the Jouglei canal project, designed to by-pass the Sudd swamps, to increase the volume of water flowing north. Southerners were doubtful that the expenditure was being carried out with their interests in mind, especially in the knowledge that Egypt was footing part of the bill in return for a substantial share of the increased water supply. The full extent of southern suspicions over the Jouglai scheme was exemplified in the Juba riots (of October 1974) sparked off by a rumour that over two million Egyptian fellahin were to be settled in the area as colonists. These two projects, at different times were to become the target of rebel attacks.

Economic recession in the north — all the more abrupt due to its increasing dependence on foreign investment reduced the amount of capital expenditure on infrastructure, and the resultant decline in opportunities for speculation, increased internal conflict among the southern petit bourgeoisie. Exacerbating their difficulties, and adding to their fears, was the war in neighbouring Uganda whose refugees (many of whom were either prepared to sell or to use their arms for advantage) constituted a security problem. With the southern masses deprived and frequently armed, those who had been given key positions (and corresponding privileges) by Numeiri in the military and civilian administration, increasingly found themselves under threat.

Numeiri took advantage of internal wrangles among southern politicians, using them as an excuse to sub-divide the region

in blatant violation of the 1972 Addis Ababa accord. In the north, he similarly played off one fragment of the bourgeoisie against the other.

Prior to 1977, Numeiri had sought to strengthen his own so-called Sudan Socialist Union (SSU), and exclude the leaders of the traditional parties from the political scene. His strategy was to reform local government through institutional links with the SSU, that would increase his organisational hold over the rural areas. The legacy of British colonial rule had been to leave these rural areas in the hands of tribal leaders. These had proved to be a bulwark of support for the (bourgeois-democratic) Umma Party, backed by the Ansar religious sect, — especially in the west. Numeiri was determined to break it. In response, the Umma sought an alliance with the National Union Party, supported by the Khatmia religious sect and the Muslim Brothers, in the form of the National Front.

Allegedly supported, at various times, by Libya, Iraq and Ethiopia, the National Front made several attempts to depose Numeiri by force. Then, in 1977, Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Ansar, and great-grandson of the famous Mahdi who defeated Gordon at Khartoum had his death sentence rescinded, and responded positively to Numeiri's invitation to join the SSU. He resigned in October 1978, however, on the grounds that it was politically unrepresentative, and in protest at Numeiri's failure to condemn Sadat's foreign policy. Most spectacular in Numeiri's cat-and-mouse manoeuvres was the promotion of Abdullah Turabi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, from political prisoner in 1977 to Attorney General in 1979. Numeiri was preparing to impose Sharia Law. This appointment had resulted from a government reshuffle following street fighting over price rises.

On 8th August 1979, high school students in Khartoum staged demonstrations against rising inflation. Pressure from the IMF had induced the regime to withdraw the subsidy on wheat, and the price of bread increased by 60 per cent. Later in the month, the price of petrol rose by two-thirds, leading to higher bus and taxi fares. Taxation on tobacco and alcohol (alcohol was soon to be abolished) was also increased, and the price of sugar doubled. The effects were immediately felt in the urban areas. There were chronic food shortages throughout Khartoum. Street fighting spread to neighbouring Omderman, and several people died in

clashes with the army. When the SCP — influenced railway workers — staged a nationwide protest strike, Numeiri quickly reduced petrol prices, and prepared to crack down hard on the Left. In a broadcast to the nation he repeated his past strategy of blaming “Communists and atheists” for the riots, and called upon good Muslims to purge their neighbourhoods and workplaces of communist influence. Known communists were subsequently beaten up and imprisoned by the authorities.

Meanwhile, relations with Egypt improved considerably. Sadat’s assassination (in October 1981) — though greeted with mixed feelings in the SSU — nevertheless led to closer co-operation with Cairo, and in October 1982 a Charter of Integration was signed between the two countries. It was planned to last for at least ten years, and provided for economic and political integration, and close association in terms of foreign policy and military security. The Charter set up a 120-member Nile Valley parliament, with a joint fund to administer its activities. Predictably, Sudanese politicians in the South saw ominous signs of a further diminution of their political role, while to the emerging rebel forces, it merely confirmed what they had already anticipated. Their calculation was that the Sudanese masses, having witnessed a similar agreement in 1974 (which this one superseded many of the Southerners. In them, they recognised the prospect of a collaborative invasion by “northern forces” to “police the south”. Egyptian pilots were already assisting the Sudanese Air Force in training personnel to operate its newly-acquired F-5 fighter-bombers, and any further involvement of the Egyptians served to reinforce the aforementioned fears of fellahin occupation. This, the doubts over the Jougley canal project, and the decision finally to pipe crude oil to Port Sudan as a means of obtaining early returns to a flagging economy, implied to the Southerners a serious drain of their vital natural resources.

Never again was Numeiri to be greeted with enthusiasm in the south. On a tour in December 1982, he was confronted by demonstrations, and in Rumber he had to take cover in the local army barracks under a shower of stones. His immediate reaction was to order several arrests, and then, when two prominent southern politicians (Achuil and Ubor) were jailed in Khartoum for having addressed southern students in terms that were critical of the government, support for armed struggle increased consi-

derably. The mutiny at Bor in January 1983 was an additional symptom. For a combination of reasons, dependence on local plots of land to supplement their income, fears that they would be sent to Iraq to fight "the Arab war" against Iran, and concern over Numeiri's plans for the south; southern troops refused to be moved north, and after gaining a symbolic victory over their adversaries, joined forces with what had become known as Anyanya II. In April, Numeiri sent an eminent career soldier, a highly respected Dinka, to reason with the mutineers. That soldier, was Colonel (Dr) John Garang, who immediately joined the rebel forces, and emerged later as the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. Joseph Uduho, the veteran southern rebel, a Latuka from Equatoria, joined soon afterwards, and so did Martin Majier, a well-known lawyer and former Deputy speaker of the Southern Assembly. The new movement — the SPLM — was clearly going to be considerably more broadly-based than the old Anyanya.

By early 1980, Sudan was facing a severe economic crisis. The foreign debt amounted to nine billion dollars, and the interest payments on loans were about one million — nearly twice the country's total export earnings. The currency was repeatedly devalued; inflation climbed higher and higher. Between 1982-4 the price of dura (part of the staple diet) rose thirty times, and the overall inflation rate was around 50 per cent. Numeiri responded to the simmering discontent with even more draconian measures; and in seeking religious justification for his repression, on 8th September 1983, he imposed an extreme version of the Sharia Law, which included the amputation of limbs for law-breakers. This action was probably designed to undercut any influence that either the Muslim Brotherhood or Ansara might derive from the wave of Islamic fundamentalism currently spreading throughout the Middle East and North Africa — with Libya and Iran, in their different ways fueling the flames. It also enabled Numeiri to imprison Sadiq al-Mahdi, who opposed amputation, for failing to endorse Muslim Law. He was released the following year. More serious was the public hanging of Mahmoud Taha — the ageing leader of the Muslim Republican Brotherhood, for alleged "heresy". This particularly outraged many liberal intellectuals who regarded Mahmoud Taha as a respected, but harmless eccentric. In seeking to appear "more Muslim" than even the lea-

ders of Muslim sects, Numeiri also further alienated the south. He was quickly running out of room to manoeuvre.

Adding to the economic difficulties and ensuing discontent that had prompted Numeiri into becoming increasingly more repressive, was the draught that had already hit Ethiopia and was now engulfing Sudan. By the end of 1984, six million Sudanese faced famine — many of them in Darfur and Kordofan, in the west. There were also over a million and a half refugees seeking help. The war in the south was also a drain on resources, and was soon to cost nearly half a million dollars a day. Nor were there any immediate prospects of a military solution. Furthermore, realising the economic and symbolic significance of the Bentiu oilfield and Jouglei canal project, the SPLA forced them both to suspend operations. In a broadcast over the SPLA radio, on 24 March 1985, Carang made the following statement:

The SPLM is determined to fight for a democratic and socialist Sudan where social justice, freedom and human dignity flourish. We fight for a socialist and democratic Sudan in which the nationality question is solved. We fight for a Sudan in which the problem of uneven development is solved so that all regions, especially the most neglected regions, receive a fair share of accelerated socio-economic development, a Sudan free from racism, a Sudan in which power is vested in the masses, exercised by them and in their interests, a Sudan in which there is no monopoly of power by any ethnic, religious, or regional group.

In the same month the U.S. administration which had hitherto pressurised the IMF to be flexible in its terms of financial support suddenly sought to impose severe austerity measures as a pre-condition for releasing sixty-seven million dollars of aid money frozen under its 1983-4 package. This, as Richard Brown comments "provided the final straw", and, as he goes on to suggest, leads to one of two conclusions: either it was a big mistake, or it was a deliberate move to topple Numeiri.¹⁷

The decision to raise food prices again (bread by 75 per cent and petrol by 65 per cent) in response to IMF demands did indeed provide the initial impetus to the mass demonstrations on 26 March, which began as Numeiri was preparing to leave for Washington for a health check and aid negotiations. If senior army

officers were to be given a "green light", this was it.

Any serious moves to depose Numeiri would come from one of four sources:

i) a popular revolution organised by professional, skilled and unskilled workers, with support from Gezira tenants — of the kind that toppled Abboud in 1964, but which would require either military support to sustain it, or an armed insurrection;

ii) a coup led by pro-Libyan/anti-American officers motivated by Islamic fundamentalism;

iii) a left-wing coup organised by radical army officers in cells similar to the Free Officers Movement that brought Numeiri to power in 1969; or

iv) a pro-Western coup, with Egyptian support, led by top army officers who would seek to re-establish the status-quo as soon as possible.

There is no doubt whatsoever that, if Numeiri was to go the latter is precisely what the U. S. administration most desired to replace him.

It is also clear that when the Sudanese masses took to the streets, the army was constrained, either because the troops were unwilling to oppose the demonstrations and/or (for these possibilities are not at all mutually exclusive) they were under orders not to do so. In any event, few arrests were made, and only tear-gas was used to disperse the crowds.

The emergent People's Alliance which consisted of professional workers (university teachers, doctors, lawyers and engineers) and trade-unionists, formed the spearhead of the popular movement; but it lacked a clear political strategy for the seizure of civilian power.

On 6 April 1985 army officers announced that Numeiri had been deposed, and that a military council led by the Commander-in-Chief, General Swar el-Dahab, had seized control. Immediately there was talk in Khartoum of betrayal. Even the *New York Times* (9 April) spoke of a pre-emptive-coup to prevent more junior officers from taking over. John Garang labelled the new regime "Numeirism without Numeiri."

The position adopted by the SPLM/A will be crucial in the months ahead. In a broadcast on 26 and 27 May, John Garang made the following statements:

... despite the continuation of Numeirism in a different uni-

form, there have been positive aspects in the change of guards from Numeiri to his Minister of Defence and Chiefs of Staff. Among these positive aspects are:

You, the masses, have restored some of your rights, and as a result, there are now forty political parties and ninety trade and professional unions that are able for the first time in 16 years to hold rallies and air their views in a new breeze of freedom. You have regained your ability to fight and bring down an unpopular regime which is a necessary prelude to realising the necessity to establish your own regime to safeguard your gains. Favourable conditions have been created for the struggle, waged by the SPLA, to converge with democratic forces in other parts of the country beyond the birth place of the SPLA/M, and,

... The SPLA/M will participate directly in the shaping of a new Sudan with other democratic and patriotic forces in the country. It is not a matter of a group of fifteen generals seizing power in Khartoum, forming a Military Council and their Civilian Cabinet, and then calling on the SPLA to come in to take some reserved posts. No, we shall not take from anybody; we shall make the new Sudan together with other democratic forces in the country. Numeiri did precisely what the Junta is trying to do in offering the SPLA/M job in his Government, except that he was more generous than his Minister of Defence. Numeiri offered the SPLA/M the First Vice Presidency, re-unification of the south under the SPLA and six ministerial posts in the Central Government. We answered Numeiri that we wanted 10,000 Ministerial posts, one for every SPLA soldier, but before he could respond, Swar el-Dahab took over. The subject matter of negotiations is misplaced and the SPLA is wrongly accused of refusing negotiations. The truth is that negotiation in the context of the so-called "Southern Problem" is against the national interest and a recipe for disaster. Suppose we solve the problem of the south, we will soon have to solve the problem of the Jebels (that is, the Nuba Mountains) because the Nuba can also take up arms; after that the problem of the Beja, and so forth. It is a national, not a southern problem that we must address.

This is a far cry from the old Anyanya leadership; the expressed goal now is not autonomy for the south, but a national de-

mocratic revolution. The direction in which the contesting social classes respond to this call, will be decisive in the forthcoming struggle for power.

Limited industrialization and the market imperatives of a form of capitalist agriculture in which output is destined for export and designed to ensure a high return on foreign investment, imply that Lenin's prognosis for Russia (at the turn of the century) is even more appropriate in the case of (the contemporary) Sudan. This is because where the economic interests of the commercial bourgeoisie become increasingly tied up with foreign capital, there is far less scope for the emergence of "progressive" elements within it, to participate in the national democratic revolution.

What is therefore clear is that the Sudanese Left cannot afford to repeat the past mistake of searching among this class for "progressive fragments" with whom it can combine in the coming struggle for power. Far from such class collaboration serving the interests of workers and peasants, it would in reality dangerously expose the vanguard and, as before, pave the way for defeat in yet another blood-bath. This is particularly important to re-emphasise now because the SPLM/A has, to quote John Garang's, May 26th and 27th broadcasts, opened up ". . . channels of communication with the Trade Union Alliance and other national democratic forces, not with the aims of negotiating with Swar el-Dahab . . . but rather to create conditions for the convergence of all national democratic forces from all parts and work place of the country . . ."

The forms these "channels of communication" take could mean the difference between victory or defeat.

NOTES

1. Notable exceptions are:
Issa G. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania*, Monthly Review Press, London, 1976. Mahmoud Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, Monthly Review Press, London, 1976. Fatima Babiker Mahmoud, *The Sudanese Bourgeoisie*, Khartoum University Press and Zed Press, London, 1984.
2. See Norman O'Neill, "Imperialism and Class Struggle in Sudan", *Race and Class: Journal of the Institute of Race Relations and the Transnational Institute*. Vol. II No. 1. 1978.
3. Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1967 and Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, (edited by J. Saider). New Left Books, London, 1980.
4. Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India" in Marx, *Surveys from Exile* (political writings, Vol. 2), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973; and Karl Marx, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1971.
5. See Ernest Mandel (ed) *Fifty Years of World Revolution*, Merti Publishers, New York, 1968, pp.11-34.
6. Mahmoud, *op.cit.* p. 152.
7. Norman O'Neill, "Recent trends in foreign investment and uneven development in Sudan" *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 26, 1983, pp. 60-65.
8. "Investment and Development", *Middle East Yearbook*, Sudan, 1980; p. 223.
9. O'Neill, 1978, *op. cit.*
10. *Ibid*, p. 9.
11. This argument has been developed in an unpublished paper by B. Founou-Tchuigoua, entitled. "De Factor Wage-earners in the Gezira Scheme Sudan" (United Nations Africa Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Dakar). Much of *Ibid* owes a great deal to the ideas and information contained in it.
12. O'Neill, 1978, *op.cit.* p. 10.
13. ILO/UNDP, *Growth, Employment and Equity: a comprehensive strategy for Sudan* (ILO Report, Vol. 1, Geneva, 1975) p. 16.
14. O'Neill, 1978, *op.cit.*
15. *Ibid*, p. 11.
16. O'Neill, 1985, *op. cit.* p. 61.
17. Richard Brown, "A background note on the final round of austerity measures", *Development Studies Occasional paper*, University of Khartoum, 1985, p. 11.
18. John Garang de Mabior, "A statement on May 26 and 27 1985 to the Sudanese People on Radio SPLA on the Second Anniversary of the Bor, Pibor and Fashalla Resistance and Ayod Revolt."