

SUDAN

REPORTS FROM KHARTOUM, INTERVIEWS, ANALYSIS

Al-Tijani al-Tayyib

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Interview with al-Tijani al-Tayyib, member of the Politburo of the Sudanese Communist Party, by Amina al-Naqqash: "How Are the Sudanese Communists Thinking? The Muslim Brotherhood Was the Only Force Absent from the 26 March Uprising"; date and place not given

Text In the last two issues of AL-AHALI, we published in succession reports from colleague Amina al-Naqqash about events in Khartoum between 26 March and 9 April 1985. These reports included conversations and interviews with most of those who played influential roles in the Sudanese uprising. In this issue, we publish the latest of the reports that have reached us from Khartoum. These include two interviews: with al-Tijani al-Tayyib, a member of the Politburo of the Sudanese Communist Party, and with al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Ummah Party. Also included are analyses of the stand of the political forces in the Sudan on two issues: the South, and integration with Egypt. AL-AHALI hopes that it will in this way have given its readers an exact picture of conditions in our sister country, the Sudan, as seen through Sudanese eyes. This is what AL-AHALI did before the uprising and what it shall always do; for we believe that preservation of the deep friendship and interests that bind the Nile Valley should begin with seeing things from the Sudan's point of view.

The Sudanese Communist Party is one of the most powerful communist parties in the Arab world and Africa. It was founded in August 1946. In the period before independence, it played important parts, the most prominent being its espousal of the rallying cry, "unity of the common Egyptian-Sudanese struggle," instead of the rallying cry, "unity of Egypt and the Sudan under the crown of Faruq." The Sudanese communists were innovators in methods of political movement and action, forging a harmony between the special character of the Sudanese people and their own vision and political programs.

With its class perspective and its espousal of causes linked to popular groups, the Communist Party was the nationalist force most unflinching in the Sudan's battles against colonialism and dependency and in the Arab nation's battles against Zionism and imperialism.

Al-Tijani al-Tayyib, a member of the Politburo of the Sudanese Communist Party, received his education at the Engineering College of Cairo University. In 1948, he was imprisoned for a year in Egypt. Afterwards, he left for the Sudan, where he was subjected to imprisonment several times. The latest of these was in November 1980. He remained imprisoned until his release in the wake of the uprising of last 26 March, having spent five continuous years in prison.

Religion and the Progressive Movement

Al-Tijani al-Tayyib says: "The inclusion of shaykhs or men of religion in the membership of the Communist Party is no longer a problem. The party made a major swing in that direction after the October 1964 revolution. It came to have representatives in parliament and participated for the first time in government. It could not avoid considering the relations between Islam and social change, or defining a position on the solutions proposed by Islam for social problems; it had to sketch out a way whereby it would avoid either flattering or clashing with religion. In the progressive movement we made use of the enlightened religious heritage and of its progressive solutions generally in order to give impetus to and promote the forces of progress; and on this basis of membership they entered the party."

Question Is the Sudanese left limited to you? What is your relation to its other groups?

Answer From an early time we have called for a national democratic front to put forward a program of national salvation and to include all the forces of the left, as represented in the Nasserites, the Ba'athists, the Revolutionary Committees, some of the New Left tendencies, and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan in the south. All of these are independent forces that have adopted socialist thought from various positions other than communist. There are other forces on the left, also outside the party, but historically connected with it, and having no reservations about its program, such as the Trade Union Front among the workers, the Democratic Front among the students, the Union of Farmers and the numerous socialist leagues among physicians, teachers and lawyers. These are non-communist forces with a firm connection with the Communist Party.

'No' to Capitalistic Development

Question Is your program to solve the problems of the Sudan a socialist program, or is it a call for directed capitalism?

[Answer] We are definitively against the capitalistic path of development. We have a program with a long-term goal and another that is short-term. The former is for the realization of socialism. The latter is a national democratic program that will concern itself with economic, social and cultural development problems by creating conditions that can lead to socialism. We therefore call for the existence of the public sector, even though it is state capitalism; it is, none the less, closer to the development of particular areas in the direction of progress. Likewise, our national democratic program aims at strengthening points of progress that are headed toward socialism.

[Question] In your estimate, what are the political forces that one might say were more active than others during the uprising of 26 March?

[Answer] We cannot attribute the people's uprising on 26 March, with all its groups and individual lives, to any single political force in the Sudan. It was an uprising against poverty, misery, and oppression, and the spontaneous element played a large role in it. It came as the result of continuous and patient labor over long years, and as a result of the raising of the rallying cry, "political strike and overthrow of the regime," early on. One might say that the democratic forces in their totality were in the midst of the uprising, and that the one force that was absent from it was the Muslim Brotherhood, since their leadership was in prison and their free elements were not enthusiastic about the uprising. It is not true that what happened occurred because of foreign factors. The arousal and mobilization of the masses and their resolve to overthrow the regime cannot occur because of foreign factors. This fact, however, will not prevent continued Egyptian and American attempt to turn the course of the revolution--but with the existence of a new reality, which is that lasting rule of a single individual will not be able to return in the Sudan.

[Question] During the days of the uprising, communiques signed in the name of the Free Officers Movement were distributed. What information do you have about it?

[Answer] Historically, the Free Officers in the Sudan were known to be groups of nationalistic democratic officers close to the Communist Party and to the left in general. During the past 16 years, it would be difficult to count the groups within the army that were imprisoned or liquidated and which belonged to this group of officers, remnants of whose elements do indeed still exist within the army.

Betting on the Masses

[Question] What is your position on military coups?

[Answer] We are not in principle against coups. We evaluate a coup, after its occurrence, by the forces that participated in bringing it about, and in the framework of whether it was a reactionary or progressive

coup. However, we are against the coup mentality and tactics, and against having the Communist Party base its policies on a coup strategy that neglects mass action and demotes it to secondary rank, so that the coup operation becomes the primary goal. We will absolutely not allow a coup mentality to grow up within the party, or that there be recourse to conspiracy.

We have exerted great effort within the party to root out any thought of that kind. We concentrate on awakening, organizing, and unifying the movement of the masses, and on relying on it in political activity. Any coup that subsequently occurs will be the consummation of the movement of the masses. The coup will strengthen the masses' movement, and in the end it will accept being under its leadership. It will not seek to contain it or to gain ascendancy over it.

The coup that we might undertake would be one that, coming at the time of a popular movement and uprising and a revolutionary wave, would be obedient to it, and not its master.

Question Fourteen years after the coup of Hashim al-'Ata, what are the lessons learned from it?

Answer Basically, we were against the occurrence of the coup. We became convinced, after the consequences that resulted from it, of the damage and unrevolutionariness of the tactics and mentality of the coup. The party's line in refusing that mentality proved to be correct. What also became evident to us was the importance and necessity of intellectual clarity on the part of party members, conscious understanding about the party's program and policies, the necessity for connection with the popular movement and its progressive forces and taking its true pulse, so that we would not have any non-objective estimates of the movement of popular uprising. The mistakes of that period convinced us of the need for goal clarification according to the capability level of the popular movement, and the danger of jumping beyond these capacities.

The picture was not entirely black. Under the circumstances of the bloody persecution throughout 1971, we encountered true backing from the Sudanese people. In spite of the threat of severe punishment for anyone who helped hide a communist, ordinary people acted heroically in hiding us and giving us every assistance. With their help we were able to hide the party leadership cadres. They protected our backs from oppression. Because of such heroism, after the blow of 1971 we did not start from zero. In spite of the severe difficulties faced by the party, whether these involved long periods of imprisonment or the strain placed on its hidden cadres, it was able to preserve its position in all the regions of the Sudan and within all sectors. In spite of the emigration of some of its cadres and the detention of others during the past 14 years because of its activity, the ranks of the party have not seen any divisions or breakdowns during the period. This is what has given us confidence in the extent to which the Sudanese people appreciate our ideas and understand our rallying cries.