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 THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

August 8, 1953

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SUBJECT: Communism in the Sudan

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 By D4/BICARRA, Date 9/29/2005

Note: The following despatch summarizes additional data developed by the Liaison Office on Communist activities in the Sudan since the submission of Khartoum 111 on March 31. This data consists both of background information on Communist organization and methods and of current developments.

Summary

Additional data on Communism in the Sudan confirms the preliminary evaluation of its strength made by the Liaison Office in the reference despatch. Communism in the Sudan is well organized and active and draws its leaders from the "intellectuals, labor leaders and students. The movement is still small and draws most of its popular support by identifying itself with the cause of national self-determination. The movement now appears better organized than was reported in the reference despatch, with dissenting elements excluded from participation. By reversing their unpopular policy of opposition to the Anglo-Egyptian accord, the Communists have been able to remove much of the unpopularity which they suffered in February and March. Partly because of this reversal, the Communists have been able to remain in control of the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation and have found themselves strong enough to call another general strike.

In other "front" organizations the Communists have retained their power and show every evidence of being able to increase their strength. Significant among other front organizations is the new Communist-led Sudanese Women's Union which has become in the minds of most Sudanese the champion of the cause of women's emancipation.

The Solicitor-General is still considering the more stringent anti-Communist laws suggested by the CID. He has added to the list of prohibited organizations three additional Cominform groups (for text of Executive Council Order see Appendix 3, SECRET). There is evidence that the British Government is becoming more concerned with subversion in the Sudan; on the other hand, because of its present policy of wooing the Sudanese, the Egyptian Government has become less cooperative in rooting out Communists among Sudanese in Egypt.

Funds:

The Liaison Office previously reported that funds were believed to enter the Sudan from various outside sources. In conversation with the reporting officer,

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Abdullah Bey KHALLIL, secretary of the Umma Party and member of the Executive Council, stated that approximately two years ago he had conducted a personal investigation into Communist activities, and that his enquiries led him to the conclusion that money enters the Sudan in packing cases with matches. Matches are imported from Czechoslovakia and from the U.S.S.R. Khalil also indicated that he believed that the middlemen in the Sudan were Armenians. Together with the cash, propaganda materials also are often times enclosed with the matches. According to Khalil, the type of Arabic used in the propaganda materials indicates that these leaflets come from Syria.

The Liaison Office finds it difficult to believe that the Sudan Communists should rely upon such a hazardous means of transmitting funds. However, no additional information is available from other sources, including the CID.

Structure of Communism in the Sudan

(1) Labor Organizations

Principal development in the labor movement since March 31 has been a gradual regaining of popularity and strength by Communist elements in the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation. However, it does not seem that they have regained the support which they held prior to their unpopular denunciation of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement of February 12, 1953. Since approximately May 1 Communists in the trade unions and in the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation have been following the change in the Communist "line"; they have ceased to attack the agreement and they have made arrangements for some of their men to run for election in labor centers. (Khartoum 186, June 20, 1953.) The strength of the Communists in the labor movement is evidenced by the proposal for a general strike on August 17. The Communist-dominated executive committee of the SWTUF had sufficient support to call the strike, but they were severely limited as to time and duration by feeling among the workers (Khartoum 19, July 28, 1953). The Sudan Government refuses to deal with the Federation and is proceeding on what appears to be a valid conclusion that the strength of the SWTUF is now declining and that any dealings with it now would serve to revive its prestige. Press organs of the Umma and Khatmia have been attacking the Federation and, according to Babiker ED DEEB, Assistant Commissioner of Police, the attacks represent the views of the Umma and Khatmia and have been specifically ordered by both organizations.

Of interest in this latter connection is a recent attempt by Soliman MOUSA, chief pump mechanic on the estates of Sayed Ali MIRGHANI, to establish a workers' party called the "Socialist Labor Party." According to ed Deeb, Mousa has been acting under the instructions of SAM, and SAM's purpose is to draw the workers away from the political policies of the SWTUF toward the Khatmia and its party, the National Unionists. Mousa is a radical labor figure; he was one of the labor leaders responsible for the 1947 railway strike which was probably the ultimate cause of the present liberal labor legislation, and hence he has following among labor. However, all informed sources agree that the new "Socialist Labor Party" is not doing well, and will probably not amount to anything significant.

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The Liaison Office understands from ed Deeb that there exist "workers' committees" scattered throughout the principal towns of the Sudan. These committees have headquarters in various houses in the workers' districts, and are used by Communist labor leadership to publicize the political "line" and to obtain the workers' support for it. These committees were set up about a year ago when the Federation was criticized for transforming itself into a political organization and neglecting the economic and social interests of the workers. They seem to be an attempt by Communist leadership to transfer some of their political activities away from the Federation proper and thus to avoid labor criticism of the Federation. According to ed Deeb, these committees are the principal means of exerting Communist influence on the workers.

Opposition to the incumbent Communist labor leaders remains ineffective, according to the Labor Branch and the Sudan Police, for a number of reasons: poor leadership, with most of the potential leaders being burdened with full-time jobs, poor organization, lack of the will to pursue an issue to its conclusion, and fear of alienating the support of the workers. The meeting of the SWTUF held on April 26 which was called under pressure from the "moderates" to reconsider the political policies of the Federation amounted to nothing. The opposition group either could not, or would not (probably a combination of both), resist procedural maneuvers by Mohammed Sayed SALAM, president of the Federation, which resulted in the conference's being adjourned after only one day, and in the dismissal of the proposed re-examination of political policy as being a minor issue.

According to most informed sources there is only one really capable anti-Communist labor leader in the Sudan. This is abdulla BESHIR, brother of Fadl Beshir, Khartoum labor journalist. Beshir is employed by the Sudan Railways at Atbara. Paradoxically, Beshir was one of the most important forces behind the formation of the SWTUF and he would probably have been elected its president in 1950 had the Federation headquarters been established at Atbara as was originally intended. For financial reasons Beshir could not afford to give up his job to come to Khartoum when it had been decided to locate Federation offices in Khartoum. According to the Labor Office, it is official Sudan Government policy to keep Beshir in Atbara, for the Government believes that he can be more effective in combatting Communism in the Railway Union than he could be in the SWTUF. In any event, Beshir will soon be lost to the labor movement since he is scheduled for promotion to an administrative post in the Railways in the near future; in this position he will no longer be acceptable as a leader to the workers.

(2) Students

Principal developments among student groups have been Communist activity by secondary and university students who have returned home from Egypt for the summer holidays, and a report of two university students who have been given scholarships to study at the University of Prague.

1. According to Babiker ed Deeb, Assistant Commissioner of Police, half of the Sudanese students who study in Egyptian secondary schools and universities are now engaged in Communist activities during their summer holidays in the Sudan. The vacation period extends from May until October. According to ed Deeb, these

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students are acting in cooperation with the Sudanese Communist organization (the Movement for National Liberation) and are holding committee meetings, distributing Communist literature, and influencing workers. According to ed Deeb, the Egyptian Government, for political reasons, has been dealing very mildly with Sudanese students who are known to be Communists. (See subsequent section on Egyptian Government policy.)

2. The Liaison Office has been informed by Mansour KHALID, law student at the University College of Khartoum, and reporter for the daily newspaper, el Matan, that two students previously expelled from the University for their part in subversive activities have applied through the Czech Embassy in Cairo for admittance to the University of Prague, and that their applications have been accepted. According to Khalid, who recently met one of these students in Rome while en route to Prague, the Czech Government has granted free tuition, board, room, and travel in Czechoslovakia to these two students for the four-year period of their study. The students are Abdel Aziz ABBO and Mohammed Ibrahim NUGUD. (A list of Communists with newly-developed biographic data is attached as Appendix 2, SECRET.)

According to a press report in el Sudan el Gedid (Umma Party organ) issue of June 30, 1953, "The Gala," magazine of the World Youth Congress published in Bucharest, carried an announcement that money would be collected by Swedish youth in order to enable a Sudanese deputation to attend the July World Youth Congress. The Liaison Office has been unable to develop additional data on this matter.

Ed Deeb states that the central body for directing and coordinating Communist activities among students remains the Students' Congress. He says that although the Congress has formerly worked underground, it is now attempting to work on the surface. According to Babiker ed Deeb, the principal student organization explicitly opposed to Communism is the Ikhwan el Muslimin (Moslem Brethren), which has branches in most schools. According to ed Deeb the Brethren's principal stronghold is the University College of Khartoum where they have been organized for several years. They are now the dominant force in the University, but their influence in the secondary school system is strong only at Hantoub Secondary School in Blue Nile Province. (There are two other boys' secondary schools in the Sudan, at Khor Taqqat, Kordofan, and at Wadi Seidna, Khartoum Province.) The Brethren's present aims are 1) to fight Communism, 2) to fight colonization, and 3) to set up a Moslem League in Moslem countries. Ed Deeb estimates the Brethren's strength at about forty per cent of the total number of secondary and university students but, save in the University College of Khartoum and in Hantoub Secondary School, he considers them as generally ineffective against Communist influence. Their organization is poor and their members do more talking than acting, while the Communist students are well-organized and busy in such activities as studying the problems of the workers and making concrete suggestions for their amelioration.

(3) The Communist Press

Al-Sarahah

The pro-Communist organ al-Sarahah resumed publication on June 12 (Khartoum 188, June 23, 1953), and has been following editorial policies which indicate

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that it is definitely a Communist paper. Typical of its articles were two appearing in the July 17 issue. The first of these, written by a Mohammed Sayed MA'AROUF, exhorted the students at the University College of Khartoum to correct their present position and to resume their support of the "people's views." This is obviously a reference to the change in policy in the Student Union which resulted from the expulsion of Communist leadership in February 1953. The second article, whose author is not indicated, dealt with the dismissal of Lavrenti BERIA in the Soviet Union, and stated that the Soviets had convincing evidence of Beria's unsuitability and that the dismissal was a certain sign of internal Soviet strength.

A study of articles in al-Sarahah indicates that probably the most important contributor of editorials is Hassan el-Tahir SARROUGH, a known Communist.

Additional evidence serves to confirm the Liaison Office's statement in the reference despatch that the editor of al-Sarahah, Abdulla RAJAB, is not a Communist, but rather a Communist-sympathizer. The reporting officer's impression from a conversation with Rajab, and the unanimous opinion of all informants, agree that Rajab is probably not a Communist but rather a fellow travelling businessman who finds it profitable to operate a newspaper whose radicalism makes it one of the best sellers in the Sudan.

al-Sudani

Contrary to previous information received by the Liaison Office, it now appears that the leaders of the Titoist-type Sudan Democratic Association, Hassan Abu JEBEL and Awad Ali RAZAK, do not contribute to al-Sarahah. At the present time they are contributing to a new newspaper, al-Sudani, which commenced publication about May 20. Al-Sudani claims to be the organ of the Ashigga Party, and opposes cooperation with both Great Britain and Egypt. (Actually all except the extremists in the old Ashigga Party have now been amalgamated into the National Unionist Party.) It apparently does not follow a Communist policy. Editor of al-Sudani is Ahmed Kheir al-MUHAWMI, lawyer from the Gezira area. Muhammi is not locally considered a Communist, but his assistant editor is Abu Jebel. It appears that the somewhat radical policy of al-Sudani coincides with the toned-down Communism of Abu Jebel and Razak.

It is of interest that in Khartoum circles Razak and Abu Jebel are known as "Mensheviks" whereas the members of the Movement for National Liberation are called "Bolsheviks." Ed Deeb states that Abu Jebel, who is a building contractor by profession, is now doing very well in his business and has become much less active as a Communist.

(4) Women's Organizations

The movement for women's emancipation in the Sudan is just beginning. It is still weak and opposed by the majority of both educated and uneducated Sudanese. However, there is general agreement among Sudanese that some privileges must be given to women, and there is a slow but definite tendency to grant greater freedom in education and in social life. The women's organizations, though yet

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new and weak, probably have potential strength since they are the organized representatives of a growing movement.

The Communists are using the new women's movement in the Sudan to their purposes. At the present time there are four Sudanese women's organizations in the Sudan. The largest and most active of these, the Sudanese Women's Union, is Communist-dominated and has recently been used to support Communist policy. Founder and secretary of the Union is Dr. Khaldah Zahir Surur al SADATI, the only Sudanese woman doctor born of Sudanese parents. The CID states categorically that both she and the president of the Union, Fatma TAYYIB, are Communists. Khaldah al Sadati is married to Osman Mahjoub, teacher in the Ahlia schools and brother of Abdel Khalig MAHJOUR, believed by the CID to be the Secretary of the Communist Central Committee in the Three Towns (Khartoum 186, June 20, 1953).

The Women's Union was founded in the past year with headquarters at Omdurman and members in Khartoum, Khartoum North, and Atbara. It numbers about four hundred members, according to Babiker ed Deeb, and includes in its membership between seventy and eighty per cent of the schoolmistresses in the Three Towns and Atbara. The purpose of the organization is to raise the social standard of Sudanese women and to this end the Union conducts classes for women and girls in private homes. Khaldah al Sadati makes various public appearances and has become locally identified as the most important figure in the cause of women's emancipation. Recently the Union applied for permission to open clinics in the Three Towns to care for mothers and babies. However, permission was denied by the Sudan Medical Service. It is generally believed that if this move had been successful, the Union would have been able to extend its influence considerably.

An example of how the Union has acted as a medium for supporting Communist policy occurred recently. The schoolmistresses' union, which was never known previously to have taken forceful action, recently submitted a long list of demands to the Ministry of Education. According to Babiker ed Deeb and to Abdel Gadir YOUSIF, Acting Commissioner of Labor, these demands originated in the Union and the initiative to present them came ultimately from Khaldah al Sadati. The demands were rejected by the Ministry and the issue subsided without further incidents. No further demands have come from the schoolmistresses' union.

The other three organizations, which are non-political, are the Ladies' Nahda (Renaissance) Society, headed by Ni'amata el ZEIN, the Ladies' Benevolent Society of El Obeid, and the Red Crescent, headed by Siddiqa el MAHDI, daughter of Sayed Abdel Rahman el MAHDI. The latter is concerned principally with functions similar to the Red Cross. Of the two former, both aim to raise women's social status, but only the Nahda has any real strength, and it draws its support largely from girls, not women. It is supported by the well-organized and numerous Girls' Guides. Membership in the Nahda totals about 200 and is limited to the Three Towns. Ni'amata el-Zein is a schoolmistress in a Khartoum intermediate school and also president of the schoolmistresses union. Her cooperation in the recent schoolmistresses' episode is explained locally by citing her intense nationalism, which, as in the cases of so many others, was used for promoting the Communist goals. The Ladies' Benevolent Society of El Obeid numbers about 200 members, but according to ed Deeb, the Society is failing.

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(5) Sudan Defense Force

Communism seems to have made little progress in the Sudan Defense Force (strength: approximately 4500 men). All sources agree that the SDF officers corps has not suffered from Communist infiltration although there are dissatisfied elements among them. During the past two weeks, however, pamphlets have twice been secretly circulated among the SDF officers stating that wage levels in the SDF are unjustly lower than corresponding levels in the Police Force (strength: / 8500 men). According to ed Deeb and other informed sources, these leaflets have been distributed by the Movement for National Liberation. Wage levels are actually higher in the Police Force, and the police are performing functions which the SDF covets. Consequently, there is ill-feeling between the SDF and the Sudan Police Force based upon rivalry and jealousy, and the leaflets appear to be an attempt to exploit this ill-feeling for Communist purposes.

According to ed Deeb, there is a certain amount of potential danger from Communism among privates of the SDF (Khartoum 136 dated April 27, 1953). He makes the apparently valid comparison that the police strike of 1952 was staged by the equivalent class of "privates" in the Sudan Police Force. At this time Mohammed Sayed SALAAM and es-Shafie Ahmed ES SHEIKH, Communist president and secretary of the SWTUF respectively, were imprisoned for their part in fomenting this strike. Ed Deeb complains that the police are not allowed to enquire into SDF security since the SDF has its own independent security organization. Ed Deeb complains that the SDF security organization is ineffective, and hence there is always the danger of undetected subversion. The Liaison Office has not been able to check the accuracy of this observation (which is denied by SDF officers), but it suspects that in such statements ed Deeb may be in part reflecting the feeling of rivalry between the Police and the SDF.

(6) The Communist Movement

According to ed Deeb, the Sudan Police Force has been unable to date to penetrate the Movement for National Liberation, which is the central Communist organization in the Sudan. (There has been a recent tendency for members to refer to the MNL as the "Communist Party.") Hence no table of organization is available. However, the police believe that the leader of the Movement is presently Dr. Izzedine Ali AMIR, Medical Practitioner, who operates a clinic in Khartoum. The police have further uncovered evidence indicating that the secretary of the Central Committee is Abdel Khalig MAHJOUB. Previous leaders in the MNL, since its formation in 1946-47, have been Mohammed Amin HUSSEIN, Hassan Abu JEBEL and Hassan el Tahir SARROUGH.

Ed Deeb states that instructions reach the Sudan Communist movement ultimately from an organization in France. He states that he does not know the name of this organization, but that it is not the French Communist Party. Communications are maintained through a revolving core of Communist Sudanese students in the United Kingdom. According to ed Deeb, there are normally about two hundred Sudanese students in the United Kingdom, and that about ten per cent of this group are Communists. Communications travel from France to the United Kingdom in part by

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