The Sudanese Labor Movement:
A Study of Labor Unionism in a Developing Society

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** .................................................. vi

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ............................................. vii

**VITA AND FIELDS OF STUDY** .................................... viii

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION** .............................. ix

## Chapter

### I. INTRODUCTION .............................................. 1

- Purpose and Scope of the Study ................................ 2
  - Purpose .................................................. 2
  - Scope .................................................... 3
- Conceptual Approach .......................................... 4
  - Cultural Bias ........................................... 4
- Industrialization as the Challenge ........................... 8
- The Concept of Political Unionism ............................ 11
- The Importance of Ideology .................................. 13
- Propositions ................................................ 15

- Sources of Data ............................................. 16
  - Published Material ...................................... 16
  - Newspapers .............................................. 17
  - Government Documents ................................... 18
  - Union Sources .......................................... 19
  - Interviews and Observation ................................ 19
- Outline of the Study ........................................... 20

### II. THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT .... 22

- The Economy ................................................ 22
  - The Labor Force ......................................... 24
  - Size, Age and Sex Distribution ........................... 25
  - Industrial Distribution ................................ 26
  - Occupational Distribution ................................ 27
  - Distribution by Employer ................................ 27
- Social Structure, Values and Beliefs ....................... 29
  - Kinship .................................................. 29
  - Klite-mass Gap .......................................... 32
- Attitude Toward Work ....................................... 33
- Religious Sects ............................................. 34
Chapter | Page
--- | ---
The Political Setting | 35
Political Development | 35
Political Parties: Traditional | 39
Political Parties: Revolutionary | 42
Evolution and Strength of the SCP | 43
Ideology | 45
The Place of Unions in the Ideology | 46
Organization | 49
The Appeal of Communism to the Sudan | 51
Summary | 53

III. NATIONALISM, COMMUNISM, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT (1946-1954) | 55

Colonial Policy and the Emergence of the Labor Movement | 56
The Rise of the WAA | 61
The Influence of Nationalist Consciousness and National Parties | 66
The Labor Movement and the Anti-Colonial Struggle | 75
The Role of the Communists | 81
The Role of the SWTUF | 83

IV. THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL ROLE (1954-1964) | 89

Labor and Nationalist Governments (1954-1958) | 93
The Creation of Opposing Federations | 97
The SWTUF Political Offensive and the General Strike of October 21, 1958 | 104
The Labor Movement Under the Military Regime | 107
The Persecution of the Labor Movement | 107
The Trade Union Ordinance (Amendment) 1960 | 110
The Railways Strike of June, 1961 | 112
The Conference of August, 1963 | 114

V. THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S POLITICAL ROLE (1964-1969) | 118

The October Revolution: Labor's Role | 119
The General Political Strike of October 24-31 | 120
The Labor Movement as a Participant in Government | 122
The Comeback of the Traditional Parties | 125
Labor and Government: 1965-69 | 127
The Return to the Old Pattern | 128
The Labor Movement and Sadiq El Mahdi | 132
The SWTUF in Politics | 136
VI. THE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

1. Structural Features
   - Growth Patterns
   - Size
   - Economic and Geographic Distribution
   - Union Types
   - The Dominance of the Federation
   - Solidarity with White-Collar Workers

2. The Government of Labor Organizations:
   - The SWTUF
   - Finance
   - Leadership

3. The Government of Unions
   - The Government of the SWU
   - Structure
   - Democracy in the SWU
   - Leadership

VII. THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S ECONOMIC ROLE

1. The Structure of Collective Relations
2. The Struggle for Higher Wages
   - The Independent Committee of Inquiry
   - The Wakefield Commission
   - The Recommendations of the Wages and Terms of Employment Commission of 1968
   - Wages in the Private Sector
   - Conditions of Employment
   - Cooperatives

VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Occupations of Economically Active Adult Men 1956 Census</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Number of Unions and Union Membership for 1949-1968</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Size of Unions as of July, 1968</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Size of Registered Trade Unions at the End of 1958</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Size of Unions at the End of 1960</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Number of Unions and Union Membership by Economic Activity as of July, 1968</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Number of Unions and Union Membership by Province as of July, 1968</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Labor Unions by Type and Sector as of 1968</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Number of Sudanese Union Officials Attending Courses in Foreign Countries (1966-1968)</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>List of SRWU Leaders, 1947-1968</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Man-Days Lost Through Strikes, Between July 1, 1947 and June 30, 1968</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Cost of Living Index, 1952-1968</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Traditionally, the phenomenon of a labor movement has been generally associated with Western industrialism. However, since the emergence of new nations in Asia and Africa the labor movement has come to occupy an important place among the social institutions of these nations. An understanding of labor organizations in such societies, therefore, becomes imperative.

In the Sudan—a developing society—a labor movement was born during 1946-47. Since then it has gained much strength and maturity. The purpose of this study is the description of its structure and function and their explanation in terms of the country's socioeconomic and political environment.

The study rejects traditional approaches which regarded the labor movement as a response to the challenge of
capitalism and saw it as a collective bargaining agent for its members, the primary function of which was to advance their economic interests. Instead, it utilizes an approach that views the labor movement as a universal phenomenon emerging as a reaction to industrialization, takes into account the possibility of political unionism, and seeks explanations in socioeconomic and political variables.

Data for the study were gathered mainly from trade union reports and records, Sudan Labor Department reports and documents, local newspapers' accounts, interviews with union leaders and rank-and-file members, observations, and various published books and articles.

The study clearly shows the high degree of politicization exhibited by the Sudanese labor movement. During the nationalist struggle the labor movement aimed at "the immediate defeat of imperialism," and it engaged in industrial and political protest to achieve that aim. In the post-Independence period the movement allied itself with revolutionary elements and worked for the establishment of a socialist regime in the country. The economic and political underdevelopment of the country, the policies of the traditional ruling elite, and the influence of Communism were found to be the major factors contributing to the politicization and radicalization of the movement.

The future of the labor movement will depend largely on the nature of political developments in the country.
Under traditional rule the movement will most likely continue its role of industrial-political opposition, while under a revolutionary regime it will most likely be integrated into the new political and economic structures.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The labor movement\(^1\) has played an important role in the economic, social and political development of modern industrial society. It has provided means for the peaceful resolution of industrial conflict, it has greatly enhanced the rights and dignity of industrial workers and it has provided one of the more important bulwarks for the preservation and enhancement of the social system.

Until the second half of this century the phenomenon of a labor movement was generally associated with Western industrialism. However, since the emergence of new nations in Asia and Africa following the conclusion of World War II, organized labor has come to play a crucial part in the

\(^1\)For the purpose of this study, we will adopt the definition of the labor movement offered by Neil W. Chamberlain in his book, The Labor Sector: An Introduction to Labor in the American Economy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 104. It runs as follows: "... we shall think of it [the labor movement] as consisting of the numerous worker efforts, taking many forms to defend and advance working-class interests. It is thus rooted in a sense of identification with a particular segment of society which is defined by its function or by its social status. It also involves, as the very word 'movement' implies, a sense of continuity over time, a sense of unfolding history, a sense of direction. The union is the instrument of the labor movement."
economic and political development of these nations. This
is a consequence of the economic, political and social
characteristics which are peculiar to developing\textsuperscript{1} countries.
The significance of organized labor in such countries is
well stated by Friedland,

Because of their strategic location in the national
economy, the unions hold an effective position relative
to the modern sector. Because of their strategic
location in the centers of urban population, the unions
constitute a potential threat to the political leadership.\textsuperscript{2}

It follows that a clear understanding of the nature
of the labor movement is imperative if economic and political
developments in developing countries are to be seen in
their proper perspective.

\textbf{Purpose and Scope of the Study}

\textbf{Purpose.---}The purpose of this study is to describe and
analyze the main features of the structure, government, and
function of the labor movement in the Sudan and to explain
such features in terms of the socioeconomic and political
environment of the country.

It is hoped that the results of this study will

\textsuperscript{1}The term "developing" is used here to describe the
conditions of underdevelopment which are: a comparatively
low standard of living, dependence on subsistence agricul-
ture, a low literacy rate, a high birth rate and a low
mortality rate.

\textsuperscript{2}William H. Friedland, "Labor's Role in Emerging
African Socialist States," \textit{The Role of Labor in African
Nation-Building}, ed. by Willard A. Belling (New York:
contribute to a better understanding of the nature of the Sudanese labor movement and thus be of help to all students of the Sudanese society, to employers of industrial labor, to policy-makers in the government and finally to the labor movement itself.

It is also hoped that the findings and conclusions of the study will aid in the endeavor of by some students of industrial relations to provide generalizations and theories explaining the nature of the labor movement in industrializing societies.

Scope.--Because this study deals with the function of the labor movement (what it does), its structure (how its organs are shaped and how they are related to each other) and its government (internal management), it is necessarily broad in scope.

This writer is cognizant of the difficulties and risks a broad study could present. However, in view of the fact that the general characteristics of the Sudanese labor movement have not yet been adequately identified and explained, a broad study is imperative and the risks it presents are worth taking.

The study endeavors to cover the period beginning in the Summer of 1946, which saw the emergence of the labor movement, to the Summer of 1969 which witnessed the end of a political era and the beginning of another.

This study will deal with industrial workers both
blue- and white-collar. However, since blue-collar workers form the bulk of union membership and were the first to organize labor organizations, the emphasis will be on them.

Conceptual Approach

Cultural bias.--Students of the labor movement since Sidney and Beatrice Webb in Britain and John R. Commons and Selig Perlman in the United States have focused their efforts on the following questions about the labor movement:

1. How one is to account for the origin or emergence of labor organizations?
2. What explains the pattern of growth and development of labor organizations? What factors are responsible for the sequence and form in which organizations have emerged in various countries, industries, crafts and companies?
3. What are the ultimate goals of the labor movement? What is its relationship to the future of capitalism? What is its role in a Communist or Socialist state?
4. Why do individual workers join labor organizations? What system of social psychology accounts for the behavior of the employee?

In answering these questions, most of the students of
the labor movement, at least, until the late fifties, were
primarily concerned with the role of organized labor in
modern industrial society. Moreover, they seem to have
been in general agreement that modern industrialism is
synonymous with capitalism. Upon this premise they built
the generalization that the labor movement is a response to
the challenge of capitalism. In the words of John R. Com-
mons, "The labor movement is always a reaction and protest
against capitalism."¹

The end result of this approach has been a view of the
labor union as a collective bargaining agent for its mem-
ers, the primary if not the only function of which is to
protect and advance their economic interests. G. D. H.
Cole writes:

... nobody is commonly thought of as a Trade Union
(or regarded as one by the law) unless one of its
main purposes is the defence of the members' economic
interests. A Trade Union is essentially a body of
workers designed to do for its members by combination
things which these persons, acting in isolation, could
not achieve for themselves. It is meant especially
to help them to get collectively better terms of em-
ployment or service than they would expect to get if
each individual had to make a private bargain.²

In the realm of labor movement theory similar results

¹John R. Commons, "Labor Movement," Encyclopedia of
the Social Sciences (1933), p. 682.

²G. C. H. Cole, An Introduction to Trade Unionism
are evident. Thus, Selig Perlman viewed the labor movement as an expression of a "mentality" peculiar to manual groups everywhere. The dominant constituent of this mentality is a consciousness of scarcity of opportunity. The result of this mentality is what Perlman refers to as "mature unionism."

The distinguishing characteristics of Perlman's mature trade unionism is that it is focused upon controlling job opportunities and the basic working conditions connected therein. The "mature" trade union as Perlman describes it, accepts capitalism as a going system and conceives its own function as one of adaptation to that system and gradual amelioration of the economic conditions and relationships given in the environment. . . . The "mature" trade union renounces efforts to effect fundamental reforms of the system and reject the types of mass political agitations usually associated with such efforts.2

The view of the labor movement as a reaction to capitalism and as an institution peculiar to Western industrial society has had its inevitable impact on the study of the labor movement in developing societies. F. K. Lomas, for instance, wrote in 1958:

. . . examples of successful African trade unions are difficult to find. The reason for this is very apparent. Trade unionism is an institution that has spontaneously and gradually developed out of the peculiar economic and social conditions of highly industrialized western societies. These conditions are not yet present in Africa; in consequence attempts to foster the

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growth of trade unions among the indigenous workers frequently end in failure due to impediments and disabilities resulting from the differences between local social and economic conditions and those obtaining in the environments where trade unions flourish.¹

Another example of the influence of cultural bias is evident in the works of B. C. Roberts. In an early article he stated:

> It does not follow that different fundamental principles ought to be applied to overseas territories simply because they are at an earlier stage in their economic and social development. . . . Whatever the shortcomings of British Colonial policy might have been, there can be no possible doubt that the government of both parties have been absolutely right to foster free trade unionism and a pattern of industrial relations based in principle on ideas pioneered and tested in Britain and the Western world.²

Although the above two quotations seem to be in contradiction, yet the underlying assumption is the same. While Lomas recognizes the different nature of the African environment, he fails to see trade unionism as a general phenomenon of collective action which can be distinguished from its various specific forms. . . . What he did not recognize was that the failure of trade unionism in Africa, at that time, was the failure of an imposed western form.³

Similarly, the failure to recognize that indigenous workers' organizations could emerge in the African environment is

³Allen, op. cit., p. 295.
behind Roberts' belief that it is only a matter of time for western-type unionism to take hold in Africa.

**Industrialization as the challenge.**—As a starting point for the development of an analytical framework that would have universal applicability, Kerr and Siegel suggested that students of the labor movement should take their cue not from capitalism but from the process of industrialization whatever its form is and whoever its sponsors are. They stated:

In developing a general framework for the analysis of labor organization, perhaps more attention should be devoted to the industrialization process and the environmental variations which shape the process. . . . From industrialization springs the genus of our subject matter—an industrial labor force and its role in society; from the capitalist sire develops only particular species.¹

In a later work by Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison and Myers, this theme was expanded and developed into a full-fledged theoretical construct for the analysis of industrial relations in society. The focal point of this framework is the process of industrialization which has some characteristics common to all countries. "These 'universals' arise from the imperatives intrinsic to the process. They are the prerequisites and the concomitants of industrial evolution."²


One of the results of industrialization is the creation of an "industrial relations system." This system is composed of managements and their organizations, labor organizations, government agencies and the "web of rules" governing their relationships.

Industrial relations systems reflect both uniformities and diversities. Uniformities are to be found in the fact that "all industrial relations systems serve the function of defining power and authority relationships among management, labor organizations, and government agencies; of controlling or chanelling workers' protests; and of establishing substantive rules."1 Diversities in industrial relations systems derive "from the significantly different or unique backdrops against which they are fashioned," and from the fact that "industrializing societies are under the command of different elites with different visions, programs and tasks for their emerging industrial relations systems."1

However, in the long run the power of the forces for uniformity becomes overwhelming and all industrial societies will tend to have industrial relations systems exhibiting similar characteristics. These are the characteristics of pluralism: "Industrialism is so complex and subject to such contrary internal pressures that it never can assume a single uniform unchanging structure; but it can vary around a general central theme, and that theme is pluralism."2 The

1Ibid., pp. 192-193. 2Ibid., p. 233.
purpose of labor organizations will be relatively narrow, "mostly the improvement of the status of the occupation in terms of income, prestige, and specifications of the rights and duties that accompany it."¹

The Kerr framework was undoubtedly an important step toward the development of a conceptual approach for the study of the labor movement that would have universal application. It attempted to free itself from the ethnocentrism of traditional theory by focusing on the process of industrialization rather than on capitalism as the challenge to which the labor movement is a response. Its emphasis on a wide range of environmental factors broadens the researcher's perspective and allows an eclectic approach to the study of the labor movement. Such a treatment had not been possible under traditional frameworks.

A rather serious shortcoming of the Kerr framework is its conclusion that pluralism will be the character of all industrial relations systems in advanced industrial societies. In other words, all future industrial societies will be modeled in the image of Western industrialism in general and American industrialism in particular. It is unfortunate that an approach developed to remedy the defects created by the narrow ethnocentrism of traditional analysis falls a victim to the same ill. To some extent the Kerr analysis ended where it had begun. However, along the way

¹Ibid., p. 236.
concepts of great value to the students of the labor movement were developed.

The concept of political unionism.--An analytical framework for the study of the labor movement in developing societies which utilizes the environmental approach pioneered by the Dunlop-Kerr group, and at the same time is free of the ethnocentrism that characterizes traditional frameworks was offered by Bruce H. Millen.¹

The Millen study was based on the realization that:
(1) the cultural bias of Americans concerned with the study and development of labor unions in developing societies is an obstacle on the way to the understanding of these institutions and (2) that "political unionism" is the prevailing type of unionism in such societies and that it is the natural order of things rather than an aberration or a mere stage on the road to "mature" or economic unionism.

He elaborates:

Prior to World War II, rapport of European labor with American labor was disturbed by the tendency of the Americans to see their union pattern as the normal one--and all others as aberration or perhaps the product of sinister forces. This same viewpoint is now complicating American relationships with labor movements in the developing countries of Africa and Asia. There, as in other emerging countries, trade unions have sprung into active political participation; the significance of this to the total political development of new national entities has more often than not been overlooked or misinterpreted by the American observers.²

²Ibid., p. 3.
Millen goes on to define the concept of "political unionism" in terms of certain specific characteristics that the "political union" tend to have:

1. The amount of time and thought invested in direct political work is a primary index. The political union's leaders are directly engaged in political operations and political discussions day in and day out.

2. The goals of its leadership, are very broad, in contrast to the usually circumscribed goals of union leaders in the United States, and may include revamping of the major rules governing the society. The political union through its support of "open-end" objectives, seeks improved living standards for its members, but may temporarily be prepared to go slow in achieving them in the hope of winning political power.

3. The frequent use of direct mass action—in support of non-industrial objectives and a propensity for tailoring the performance of economic functions to serve political ends are constant factors....

4. Ideological conformity in the leadership is required, although the tolerable limits of dissent may vary.... Movements that are linked only loosely to a party or government are usually permissive, demanding only general support of the ideology.

5. There is a marked tendency toward "movementism"—i.e., the continual determination to form or participate in a broad-based political force aimed at capturing and maintaining political power....

6. In the early stages of a movement-building process, a political union often closely resembles a political party.¹

Having arrived at an analytical construct, the author proceeds to explain the predominance of political unionism in developing societies by examining the social, economic and political factors that have influenced the main direction of unionism in these countries. These factors were found to be as follows: the underdeveloped political

¹Ibid., p. 9.
systems, the low level of economic development, and social systems containing distortions and imbalances.

The value of the Millen approach lies mainly in that it accepts the notion that indigenous and novel forms of labor organization are capable of emerging in developing countries, and in that it focuses attention on an important and hitherto neglected attribute of labor movements in developing countries—their politicization.

The importance of ideology. —

An ideology expresses "man's attitude to the surrounding world and explanation of the purpose of the world as a whole," and it frequently comprises a complete system of interpretation of social and political phenomena. Ideologies not only serve as explanations of the world but inspire the attitudes and conduct of individuals and groups who seek to fashion the world in accordance with their ideological predilections. ¹

The important role political ideology has played in world history can hardly be exaggerated. One has only to look at the political map of the world to realize how pervasive and overwhelming the impact of one such ideology—Marxism—has been. Ideology might be dead in the advanced countries of the West as some writers claim,² there is, however, ample evidence to show its importance in shaping political and economic developments in developing societies.


This is particularly so in African countries where a large number of the ruling regimes and most of the political elites profess to be socialist and where an attempt has been made at developing a systematic body of thought defining and explaining their brand of socialism.¹

Clifford Geertz explains the primacy of ideology in developing societies in these terms:

... for it is in these states, Communist or not, that the initial steps away from a traditional politics of piety and proverb are just now being taken. The attainment of independence, the overthrow of established ruling class, the popularization of legitimacy, the rationalization of public administration, the rise of modern elites, the spread of literacy and mass communication ... all make for a pervasive sense of disorientation, a disorientation in whose face received images of authority, responsibility and civic purpose seem radically inadequate. The search for a new symbolic framework in terms of which to formulate, think about and react to political problems, whether in the form of nationalism, Marxism, liberalism, pluralism ... (or most commonly a confused melange of several of these) is therefore tremendously intense.²

The labor movement as has been mentioned is not merely an integral part of the socioeconomic and political system but occupies a strategic position in it, and as such is exposed to the same influences. Moreover workers' unions have always been a favorite target of proponents of political ideologies. This has been especially true of Marxists.


The central role Marxism ascribes to worker organizations in the struggle against Capitalism will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. At this juncture it suffices to say that in the Marxist scheme, not only must the workers' unions concentrate upon improving the wages and working conditions of their members but must, in the words of Karl Marx, "Learn how to act consciously as focal points for organizing the working class in the greater interests of its complete emancipation."\(^1\)

It is doubtful, then, that an adequate explanation of the nature of the labor movement in developing societies can be achieved if the influence of political ideology was ignored. Like any other variable, the impact of political ideology could best be ascertained when it is incorporated in the conceptual framework the investigator is using.

Propositions.—Guided by the conceptual framework presented above, this thesis will test the following propositions and attempt to explain the phenomena described by them:

1. The socioeconomic and political setting of the Sudan has produced a labor movement which is significantly different from its counterpart in Western countries.

2. A significant feature of the Sudanese labor

movement is its politicization.

3. Political developments and Marxist-Leninist ideology have had an important influence on the Sudanese labor movement.

Sources of Data

Published material.—Very little research has been done on the Sudanese labor movement. Only one book, by the late Saad ed din Fawzi, was published. This book gives an excellent account of the development of the labor movement between 1946, the year in which the labor movement was born, and 1955, one year before Independence. This study is particularly useful as a record of the events accompanying the emergence of the movement. Also its treatment of economic issues is first-rate. Professor Fawzi's study, however, suffers from the same conceptual limitations that are characteristic of the traditional approaches discussed above. Thus, he pays relatively little attention to the political activities of the movement and devoted most of his efforts to economic issues, missing what this writer believes to be the central feature of the Sudanese labor

1 Most of the data for this study was collected during a three-month visit to the Sudan between February and May, 1969. Almost two months were devoted to Khartoum, the capital. One week was devoted to Atbara the main railways junction and a few days to Wad Medani in the Gezira area.

movement. Nevertheless, Pawi’s study is and will undoubtedly continue to be an indispensable source of information on the Sudanese labor movement.

Since the Labour Movement in the Sudan, very little on the subject has been published. Three comparative studies on African unionism devote brief sections to labor developments in the Sudan. Their treatment, however, is necessarily short and superficial.

Occasionally articles on the Sudanese labor movement have appeared in World Trade Union Movement, the journal of World Federation of Trade Unions. Some of these articles were written by Sudanese unionists and are useful in showing their ideological inclination.

Newspapers.—Sudanese newspapers are one of the most valuable sources of data on the labor movement. The Sudanese press has devoted a great deal of attention to reporting labor developments in the country. Also government, labor unions and private employers have extensively used the newspapers to publicize their point of view on labor problems. This could be attributed to the political nature of most industrial disputes in the country and to the fact that more often than not relations between the government and the labor movement are so strained that the press becomes the

only practical medium of communication.

The Khartoum newspaper El Rai El Aam has covered labor developments since the rise of the labor movement late in 1946. El Ayam, El Saraha, El Maidan and El Sudan El Gadid also reported labor developments and published articles and commentaries by leaders of the labor movement and interested intellectuals.

It is unfortunate that complete collections of most of these newspapers are not available. The best collection is kept at the Central Archives Bureau of the Sudan Government. Even here regular collection of daily newspapers did not start until the early fifties. For example, their El Rai El Aam collection dates back only to 1953.

Needless to say, these collections are not indexed, consequently the researcher has to plough through every single issue to find relevant data—a rather tedious and time-consuming process.

Government documents.—Government documents, particularly the annual reports of labor departments have been a traditional source of data on labor in developing countries. In the Sudan they are especially valuable as a source of information on union structure and government and on strikes and labor disputes.

As in the case of newspapers, no complete collection of the annual reports is available. However, the newly established Labor Research Center of the Labor Department
has been collecting and classifying all available documents and has already published a comprehensive Annual Report: 1967-1968 and an Annual Statistical Bulletin: 1968.

Union sources.--Since 1965, the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation has published a series of booklets under the title Trade Union Studies, eight of which were published by 1968. These booklets discuss the various issues that concern the labor movement and most of them are capably written. The Federation also publishes a weekly newspaper, El Talia (The Vanguard), which has had a rough time appearing regularly. Another source of data is the reports of activities prepared by the federation and the larger and better governed unions for their annual conventions. A most important source of information on the activities of unions is the pamphlet. The federation and some of the larger unions have used pamphlets extensively as a medium of communications with local branches and sometimes with rank-and-file members.

Predictably, no complete collections of union publications, annual reports or pamphlets are available. However, a great deal could be obtained at union offices, especially current issues. To obtain back issues and old reports it takes some search in storage cabinets and old files.

Interviews and observation.--This writer had the opportunity to observe the leaders of the SWTUF and SRWU at work conducting the daily business of their organizations.
A three-day SWTUF regional branches conference was also attended at Wad Medani.

Field observation is perhaps the most reliable source of data on social behavior. This writer, however, had neither the time nor the training to make full use of this source. Nevertheless, the experience was invaluable for getting a "feel" for how a labor organization functions.

Interviews were utilized sparingly and informally and their purpose was to clarify certain points and form a general impression of the capability of the leaders and the attitudes of rank-and-file members, rather than to provide basic data.

In conclusion one could say that the data obtained is, by-and-large, adequate for the purposes of this study. Better results should be obtainable given more time and use of systematic field observation. The main obstacle, however, lies in the fact that a great deal of the secondary data are not organized, classified or indexed.

Outline of the Study

Chapter II will provide a general description of the socioeconomic and political environment. It will include the following sections: (1) the economy, (2) the labor force, (3) social structure, values and beliefs, and (4) the political setting.

Chapter III, Chapter IV, and Chapter V will be devoted to the discussion of labor's political role. Chapter IV
deal with the emergence of the labor movement and its role in the struggle for independence. Chapter IV will be devoted to the first parliamentary period (1954-1958) and the military regime (1958-1964). Chapter V will cover the period beginning with the Revolution of October, 1964 and ending in May, 1969.

In Chapter VI, the structure and government of the labor movement will be discussed and analyzed. Emphasis will be on the SWTUF and the SRWU.

Chapter VII will focus on the labor movement's economic role. The emphasis will be on the struggle for higher wages and better terms of employment.

Chapter VIII will give a summary and conclusions of the study.
CHAPTER II

THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general description of those aspects of the socioeconomic and political environment which might have influence on the function, structure and/or government of the labor movement. The chapter will contain sections on the economy, the labor force, the social structure and social values, and the political setting.

The Economy \(^1\)

The Sudan, located in the northeastern corner of Africa, is the largest country in that continent. Extending approximately one million square miles, an area nearly as large as the United States west of the Appalachians.

The economy of the Sudan, as it is the case in most developing countries, is basically agricultural and pastoral. Almost 90 percent of the country's population live in rural

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areas and over 85 percent of the labor force are engaged in primary economic activities. In 1965-66 farm products contributed about one third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), animal and forestry products contributed over 20 percent, transport and distribution accounted for about 15 percent and industrial production added only about 2.5 percent.

Another criterion for classifying economic activity is the techniques used in production—whether modern or traditional. The modern sector of the economy includes the irrigation agriculture of the Gezira and Manaqil areas, manufacturing, the modern construction industry, the import-export trade, most of the transport industry and the government machinery. The traditional sector includes the rest of agriculture, cattle-breeding, fishing, most of forestry and handicrafts, many services and traditional-type construction. Although the share of the traditional sector in the GDP has been steadily declining, it still represented almost 50 percent in 1964-65.

The public sector (government) forms the most important element in the modern sector. It controls most of modern agriculture, transport and other public utilities, and in recent years it has invested in manufacturing establishing two large sugar factories, a tannery and several fruit and vegetable processing factories. The dominant role of the public sector is indicated by the fact that the government revenue represents about 20 percent of the GDP and nearly
40 percent of that part of the GDP produced in the modern sector and that its share in fixed Gross Domestic Capital Formation has normally been well above 50 percent.

The GDP per head of the population (per capita income) in 1955-56 was estimated at LS. 27.5, in 1960-61, at LS. 30 and in 1964-65, at LS. 32. This level is low compared even with other developing countries. There has been, however, a relatively rapid growth of the public sector and the relative importance of manufacturing has more than doubled since 1956.

Government revenue is heavily dependent on the development of foreign trade. Import and export duties and excise taxes account for 50-60 percent of total revenue. Participation in agricultural undertakings, mainly cotton, growing accounts for 10-15 percent. This means that government revenue is highly sensitive to fluctuations in international trade.

The Labor Force

According to the population census of 1955-56 (and so far the only one carried in the Sudan) the population of

1LS. 1 (Sudanese pound) is equivalent to 2.87 dollars.

the country was estimated at 10.26 millions in January of 1956. The rate of growth of the population is estimated at 2.8 percent per annum. The population is expected to double itself in twenty-five years. For 1966 it was estimated at 13.7 millions and it is projected to reach 15.8 millions in 1971.

The country has a relatively low level of urbanization (defined as the proportion of population living in centers having at least 20,000 inhabitants) even when compared with most African countries. At the time of the 1956 census, less than 5 percent of the total population was in urban centers and more than half the population in such centers was concentrated in the Khartoum metropolitan area (Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman).

Size, age and sex distribution.—To suit the conditions of a developing country, like the Sudan, the traditional definition of the labor force as all persons above a certain age who are gainfully employed or actively looking for employment, should be adjusted. For one thing, the notion of "gainful employment" should be dropped in favor of the term "economically active."¹

On the basis of the 1956 census the economically active population was estimated to be 4.8 million in 1961, 5.6

¹The use of the notion of "economically active" rather than "gainfully employed" is justified by the fact that in a developing country large sections of the economically active population are not fully drawn into the money and exchange system. For details see Fawzi, "Labor Force of Sudan," p. 40.
million, and in 1966, 6.4 million, which comes to 46.7 per-
cent of the population of working age (five years and older).

Of the total economically active population 28 percent
are women, the majority of whom, however, are engaged in
agriculture.

Of the total economically active persons, 15.8 percent
are between five years and puberty. Most of the children
are employed in agriculture and shepherding.

Industrial distribution.—At the time of the 1956
census the majority of the economically active population
was distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regionally, we find most of the industrial labor force
(those engaged in secondary and tertiary production) con-
centrated in four provinces. Thus we find 64 percent of all
industrial workers employed in Khartoum Province, 28 percent

\[1\] International Labor Office, op. cit., p. 18.
in the Northern Province where Atbara, the main railway's junction is located, 16.5 percent in the Blue Nile Province and 15.6 percent in Kassala Province.

Occupational distribution.--Table 1 reflects the predominance of the traditional sector (traditional agriculture and herding) and shows how small the percentages of those engaged in industrial occupations are. Thus we find that 83.4 percent of adult males reporting main occupations are classified as either farmers, shepherds or animal owners (group A, J and B), while unskilled workers (group C, E and H) were responsible for 3.2 percent, skilled workers (group 8, 9 and D) for 5.7, semi-professionals (group 4, 5, 6 and 7) for 4.1 percent and managerial and professionals (group 0, 1, 2 and 3) for .2 percent.

The dearth of professional, managerial and industrial skills is a feature typical of all developing countries. However, in the Sudan much progress has been achieved, in the last decade, in managerial, professional and vocational training. In the area of vocational training, the Vocational Training Center, at Khartoum, alone has trained almost 3,000 workers in different industrial skills between 1959 and 1968.¹

Distribution by employer.--Out of the total number of the economically active persons, estimated at 5.6 million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Main Occupations</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Farmers, etc.</td>
<td>1,868,316</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Shepherds</td>
<td>279,214</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Animal owners</td>
<td>150,025</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Craftsmen, etc.</td>
<td>79,518</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Laborers other than farm</td>
<td>74,375</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Shop owners, etc.</td>
<td>65,765</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Skilled services</td>
<td>43,051</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Semi-professional nontechnical</td>
<td>34,148</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Farm laborers</td>
<td>37,680</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Machinery operatives</td>
<td>32,663</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Non-skilled services</td>
<td>29,981</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Junior clerical, etc.</td>
<td>20,026</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Protective services</td>
<td>16,899</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Semi-professional technical</td>
<td>6,765</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Senior clerical, etc.</td>
<td>3,669</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Professional nontechnical</td>
<td>2,621</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professional technical</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Farm owners</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All gainful occupations</td>
<td>2,751,506</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in 1961, 113,000 were employed by the Central and local governments as compared with some 40,000 employed in the private sector. The balance of the economically active population were in the traditional sector. This shows that the government is by far the largest employer in the country. Within the government sector 27,000 workers were employed by the Sudan Railways Department, forming the largest concentration of workers in any one enterprise in the Sudan.

Social Structure, Values and Beliefs

The Sudan is a land of widely diverse cultures. There is no single unitary social system that can be called Sudanese. However, since this study is dealing with the organization of industrial labor, a phenomenon largely found in the North and Northeastern parts of the country, the discussion of social factors will necessarily focus on the Arab-Moslem society which occupy these parts.

Kinship. -- The anthropologist Manning Nash wrote:

Aspects of kinship and clanship are the predominant means whereby peasant and primitive societies organize their life and conduct new generations into the social system. Hence the successful emergence of an industrial labor force depends on part on the utilization or transformation of kinship or clanship so that individuals may be motivated in those primary social settings to enter and remain at wage work.1

Since kinship is a variable affecting the worker's commitment to industrial work, it could also be a factor (positive or negative) affecting the nature of his response and relationship to labor unions.

In his study of Buurri al Lamaab, a suburban village in the Sudan, Harold Barclay describes the family system of the Northern Sudan in these terms:

Although fraternal or sororital joint families and extended joint families are present in Buurri al Lamaab, the most common type is the nuclear family, consisting of a man, his wife, and their unmarried children.¹

The nuclear family is, however, closely related to the lineage (all persons patrilineally descended from a common ancestor who may have lived from four to six generations ago). The most conspicuous aspect of the lineage group is the involvement of its members in a system of mutual aid:

A farmer, for example, occasionally obtains help from his lineage mates. A man who needs to repair his house may secure their aid or financial assistance may be provided by them. Any such aid, however, should first be solicited from one's siblings, sons and daughters, or parents; and if they are unable to provide it, or a sufficient amount of it, one may appeal to members of the lineage outside the immediate family.²

As people become more dependent on wage employment and less dependent on agriculture, the extended family and

²Ibid., p. 85.
lineage system gradually breaks down. Barclay noted that one of the factors affecting change in family structure "is the increase in reliance by mature males on a separate income through wages earned in the city" and that "men are no longer as dependent as formerly on cooperative economic pursuits." ¹

In spite of the gradual disintegration of the extended family system it still places a heavy burden on the member who acquires a job in the modern sector of the economy. Whether or not he has his own nuclear family, he is expected to send, and does send, financial contributions to his relatives in the village and to host and render assistance to them when they visit the city. Moreover, often the parents, brother, sisters and sometimes cousins and other relatives move to live permanently with him. In return the industrial worker is always welcome to go back to the village and share in the misery of rural life.

Anthropologists and sociologists disagree on the impact of the extended family on the emergence and commitment of an industrial labor force. Without participation in such controversy it could be stated that although the aid provided by the industrial worker to his relatives is a meaningful and necessary way of spreading the fruits of development and that the readiness of the extended family to support the worker when he is unemployed is of great value

¹Ibid., p. 72.
in the absence of comprehensive social security systems, the disadvantages of this relationship outweigh the advantages and thus hampers the smooth adjustment of the worker to industrial life.

**Elite-mass gap.**--The emergence of new elites in Africa, in the last two decades, which control the political and economic power of their societies, has produced a great deal of resentment among the poor masses, particularly the urban industrial worker.

Referring to West Africa, but of particular relevance to the Sudan, P. C. Lloyd observed the existence of "an incipient class conflict—a conflict between the new elites and the mass of the population, particularly in the urban areas."¹

A major cause of the development of such a gap is the fact that most members of the elite have achieved a style of life very similar to that of men and women similarly employed in the industrial nations. As their numbers have grown and their residential suburbs developed, a pattern of living has evolved which is in extravagant contrast to that of either the urban poor or villager.²

In the Sudan, even before the attainment of independence in 1956, a large number of individuals had been able to obtain professional and higher education which qualified

²Ibid., p. 308.
them to occupy middle and top posts in the civil service. The salaries they received allowed most of them to achieve the standard of living and style of life described above. Thus alienating the urban worker who lives under radically different conditions.

Attitude toward work.—Attitudes toward work are an important element affecting the response of workers to industrial life. In the Sudan social values tend to shun manual work and to assign a relatively inferior social status to manual workers.

Harold Barclay, after discussing the relative importance of occupations with some of his informants, concluded that:

> With one exception, all the occupations suggested by informants have two qualities in common: they provide their holder with authority . . .; or they are positions which, in the minds of informants, at least, do not involve manual labor. As one [a tailor] stated: "You will never find anybody here who will say that any occupation which requires one to work with his hands, except farming is any good, whether mechanic, tailor, or carpenter." ¹

Another evidence of the prevalence of such values in the Sudan is provided by Peter McLoughlin in his study of the Gezira agricultural project. He observed that:

Present day ramifications of the earlier nomadic and Moslem value system are governing to an increasing extent the economic behavior of tenants and most of the resident and seasonal labour forces. As incomes have risen and consumption expended, it has become possible financially to support those social

¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 19.
activities . . ., which the community considers intrinsic to self-esteem and social advancement. The most important ingredient in this pattern is relief from manual agricultural labour for the person and his family.¹

These values have, probably, been reinforced by an educational system designed to train the student for junior clerical jobs in the civil service. Only in the last few years has attention been paid to technical and vocational education.

Religious sects.--One of the most influential factors in Sudanese political development has been the polarization of the Islamic North into two rival tarigahs or religious sects, the Ansar (followers of the Mahdi) and the Khatmiyya.

The beginning of this rivalry could be traced to the Mahdiyya movement which emerged in 1881 as a puritanical movement for religious reform. The movement soon acquired a political and nationalistic character and succeeded in overthrowing the Turko-Egyptian regime and controlling the country until it was extinguished by Anglo-Egyptian forces in 1898.

The Mahdi's religious claims had never received unqualified acceptance from all Sudanese. Particularly intransigent were the ulama (the learned men of Islam) and the leaders of the established tarigah. The latter were divided

in their views, but tended to see in the Mahdi a threat to their own influence. From the beginning the Mahdi was opposed by the Mirghani family, who led the Khatmiyya tarighah which was widespread and influential, particularly in the Eastern Sudan.

During the early years of Anglo-Egyptian rule Mahdism was proscribed and the old tarighahs, especially the Khatmiyya enjoyed a revival. However, under the vigorous leadership of Sayyid Abdel-Rahman El Mahdi, Mahdism gained increasing recognition and influence and during the twenties and thirties the rivalry with the Khatmiyya, led by Sayyid Ali El Mirghani, reached its height.¹

The Political Setting

Political development².—Following the defeat of the Mahdists in 1898, an agreement was reached between the British and Egyptian governments (the two conquering parties) establishing an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium government which


controlled the Sudan for the following half century.

Nationalist feelings did not begin to manifest themselves until 1924 when a White Flag Society was formed to work for the unity of the Nile Valley and its liberation from British control. The nationalist movement which eventually led to national independence, started only in 1938 when a Graduates' General Congress was formed by post-intermediate school graduates. Although the aims of the Congress were ostensibly civic and social, its activities Unionist parties were patronized by Sayyid Ali El Mirghani, the leader of the Khatmiyya sect.

The nationalist movement reached its climax when the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of February, 1953 was concluded giving the Sudanese the right to self-determination. A few months later national elections were held and won by the Unionist groups now amalgamated in the National Unionist Party (NUP). Early in 1954 a transitional government was
formed and Ismail El Azhari was chosen Prime Minister.

In December, 1955, the Sudanese Parliament resolved unanimously for independence and in January 1, 1956, the country was proclaimed an independent republic.

Following independence an all-party government under NUP leadership with Azhari as Prime Minister came to power. However, an unprecedented coalition between the Umma Party and the Khatmiyya, who left the NUP and formed their own People’s Democratic Party (PDP), ousted the NUP and ruled the country until the dissolution of parliament and the holding of national elections early in 1958. The Umma-PDP coalition won the majority of seats in the new parliament and continued to rule until their government was overthrown by a military coup d’etat led by General Ibrahim Abboud in November, 1958.

The military regime was in control for almost six years. Its end came in October, 1964 when a successful popular revolution, using the general strike as its main weapon, was staged. In the six months following the October Revolution, as it is popularly referred to, two transitional governments both headed by Sirr El Khatim El Khalifa were in power. The general elections of April, 1965 ushered in a new phase of parliamentary government. Although the new parliament had eleven Communist members, the old parties, Umma and NUP (the PDP boycotted the elections), were in full control and for the first time joined forces to form a
coalition government with Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub (Umma) as its Prime Minister.

The struggle for control within the Umma Party between its patron Imam El Hadi El Mahdi, the leader of the Ansar sect and his young nephew Sadiq El Mahdi, which had ensued following the October Revolution, led to the defeat of the Umma-NUP government and the ouster of Mahgoub as Prime Minister.

Sadiq El Mahdi headed a new coalition government in July 27, 1966, composed of his wing of the now split Umma Party and the NUP. He continued as Prime Minister until his resignation in May, 1968. The succeeding government was formed, this time, by a coalition of the Imam Wing of the Umma Party, the NUP and the PDP. Mahgoub was reinstated as Prime Minister.

A year later, in May, 1968, general elections were held and won by the NUP and PDP who had merged in December of 1967 forming the Unionist Democratic Party (UDP). The pre-election coalition continued and Mahgoub was again chosen Prime Minister. This government was in control until a military coup d'etat overthrew it in May, 1969.

The account given above of Sudanese political evolution in the past seventy years reflects, among other things, the unstable and sometimes volatile nature of Sudanese politics. This was particularly true of the period following the attainment of self-government.
For the purposes of this study, the political events discussed above will be grouped into the following phases: (1) nationalism, 1938-1954; (2) parliamentary rule, 1954-1958; (3) military rule, 1958-1964; (4) October Revolution and its aftermath, 1964-1965, and (5) the return and subsequent downfall of parliamentary rule, 1965-1969.

Political parties: traditional.--Among all political institutions in the Sudan, parties played the most central role in shaping the political development of the country. Among these the Umma Party and the Unionist Democratic Party (UDP) were the most important. The Umma Party, with the exception of the last three years of its existence when it split into two opposing wings, had enjoyed more stability in structure and sources of popular support than its rival the UDP, which began as the Ashigga Party then at the height of the nationalist movement dissociated itself from the Khatmiyya sect to become the National Unionist Party (NUP). The NUP continued to function until 1967 when it was merged with the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which was representing the Khatmiyya sect, to form the UDP. All political parties in the Sudan were suspended during the military rule of 1958-1964, came to life after the October Revolution of 1964 and were again dissolved following the military take-over in May, 1969.

As we have observed earlier, both parties had their origin in the nationalist movement. Following the split
in the Graduates' General Congress in 1942, those who saw the achievement of nationalist goals lies in political unity with Egypt, formed the Ashigga Party and were patronized by the Khatmiyya sect. While those who mistrusted Egyptian intentions and believed that nationalist goals could be achieved through cooperation with the British Administration, formed the Umma Party and were supported by the Ansar sect.

The association of the two parties with the religious sects had had the most crucial impact on their future development. It often brought the criticism that "the Sudanese political parties were an unreal facade covering the old rivalries between the Mahdist [Ansar] and the Mirghanist [Khatmiyya] tarigahs." The relationship, however, as characterized by Holt, was "in origin a marriage of convenience," necessitated by the fact that the nationalists lacked the means to communicate their political aims to the mass of their countrymen to whom the phrases of Western political thought were lacking in emotional and intellectual content. Hence they were driven to ally themselves with one or the other of the Sayyids, whose popular prestige was enormous and who had a firm command over Sudanese emotions.

Moreover, it should be noted that the dependence of the parties on the religious sects decreased as time passed and

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 17.
as the idea of secular nationalism began to take hold among
the people. This was particularly true of the UDP whose
leader al Azhari achieved a degree of national prominence
only rivalled by the leaders of the sects and which for a
long stretch of its existence functioned and at times pros-
pered without sectarian support.

Another factor affecting the nature of the two parties
was the character of their leadership which was drawn from
the new elite described in an earlier section of this
chapter. Writing about the leaders of the nationalist
movement in the Sudan, Holt wrote:

The leaders, of whom the most notable was Sayyid Isma'il
al-Azhari, first Prime Minister of the Sudanese Repub-
lic, were members of the new middle class which had
grown up under the Condominium. Educated along English
lines in the Gordon Memorial College at Khartoum, they
were the first generation of Sudanese to grow to
maturity under the impact and the challenge of Western
influence.¹

The interaction of these two elements--alliance with
religious sects and modern-educated leadership--determined
to a large extent the nature of the traditional political
parties.

Both parties showed little preoccupations with ideol-
ogy and neither was aggressive in the pursuit of economic
development and modernization. Both advocated a "mixed"
type economy and a neutralist foreign policy. The Umma
Party, however, could be described as generally more

¹Ibid.
conservative, more pro-Western and less enthusiastic about forging closer ties with Egypt and the Arab world.

Organizationally both parties were weak and unstable. The Umma Party, however, relied heavily on the organization of the Ansar sect which served its purposes rather well. The UDP attempted to create a modern structure with branches in most urban areas, but it was far from efficient and was notorious for its lack of internal democracy. The total collapse of party organizations during the military regime of General Abboud was one manifestation of their weakness.

Popular support for the Umma Party was consistently and generously provided by the Ansar sect. Indeed, it was often difficult to separate party from sect. This pretty much excluded the middle classes and the urban workers who were relatively free from sectarian influence. The majority of the urban population, therefore, found a representative in the UDP.

Neither party was particularly sensitive to the aspirations and demands of industrial labor. The UDP was, however, forced to seek the support of organized labor when it lost the patronage of the Khatmiyya sect.

**Political Parties: Revolutionary**

A revolutionary party is a party which seeks a radical change in the social, economic and political structure, it has a formal ideology and its methods are organization and mass action. In the Sudan, only the Sudanese Communist
Party (SCP) qualifies as a revolutionary party. The SCP is given special attention in this study because of the important role it is to be expected that it played in the labor movement.

Evolution and strength of the SCP.--The history of the communist movement in the Sudan is yet to be recorded. It is generally known, however, that the first communist cell was organized among Sudanese students in Cairo around 1946. The movement had first been known as the Sudan Movement for National liberation and did not take the name, the Sudanese Communist Party, until the mid-fifties.¹

Since its inception and until 1964 the party operated underground. Party members were kept under close surveillance by the police and its leaders were harassed and prosecuted. Following the October Revolution of 1964, the SCP functioned openly and was the only legal communist party in Africa. This situation continued only until the end of 1965 when the SCP was banned by a constitutional amendment. Although, a year later, the Supreme Court ruled that the measure was unconstitutional, the government refused to accept the ruling and a constitutional impasse resulted. In the meantime, the SCP enjoyed a de facto existence and

¹Reference to the origin of SCP was made in Henderson, op. cit., p. 99, and Sudanese Communist Party. The People's Revolution: Six Years of Struggle Against the Reactionary Military Regime (Khartoum: Dar al Fikr al Ishtraki, n.d.), p. 320. (In Arabic.) Translation of this and following Arabic texts is done by this writer.
operated freely with little or no harassment from the authorities until it was banned with all other parties in May, 1969.

No record is available of SCP regular membership; it was, however, estimated by many observers to lie anywhere between 2,000 and 10,000. At the height of SCP popularity, during the period 1965-1969, membership level, most likely, was above 5,000.¹

Strength of SCP could more accurately be gauged by its popularity at the ballot box than by its regular membership. In the 1965 parliamentary elections, although the SCP was unable to win any of the seven constituencies in the Khartoum metropolitan area, 20,516 out of a total of 82,676 voters cast their ballots to communist candidates. In the same elections the SCP scored a remarkable victory by winning eleven out of fifteen nonterritorial constituencies set aside for graduates of secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Out of the 183,368 participating in the elections, 63,662 voted for Communist candidates. When the figures for 1965 are compared with those for 1958 when only 908 persons voted for the SCP and 1968 when 35,888 persons out of a total of 132,437 voted for the SCP we see...

how rapidly the support for the SCP was multiplying. It should be noted that the gains scored by the SCP were largely at the expense of the Unionist Democratic Party.

Certain conclusions about SCP strength can now be made: first, in spite of its small membership, the SCP enjoyed considerable popular support, second, support for SCP came mainly from educated elements, third, support came from urban areas, and finally, SCP strength had been steadily increasing, especially, during the period 1964-1969.

Ideology.---Communist parties by definition are adherent to the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Some of its basic elements are well summarized by Wilensky:

The "modes of production and exchange are the fundamental determinant of social structure which in turn breed attitudes, actions, and civilizations. Changes in the material conditions of life produces new classes and new antagonisms. The modern era has simplified class struggles. Society is splitting into two great hostile camps: the bourgoisie and the proletariat. . . . The violent overthrow of the bourgeois state by the workers and peasants will lay the foundation for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and an eventual classless society."

As a Marxist-Leninist party the SCP believes in the fundamentals of the creed, however, it insists that there are different roads to Socialism. The party explains:

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1 Election figures are obtained from The 1965 Elections: An Analysis Based on Figures (Khartoum: Dar al Fikr al Yahtrakl, 1965), pp. 14-21. (In Arabic.)

To say that there is only one way to achieve socialism is to deny the importance of the unique characteristics of different societies and to turn Marxism into a rigid and fruitless dogma and make it a superstition rather than the science it is. Marxism, the science of social revolution, can achieve its goal of building a socialist society only when it reacts with the particular national environment, relating to its revolutionary, social and cultural achievements.\(^1\)

The SCP justifies its existence by its belief that "the happiness of our people; their freedom from the misery of underdevelopment and their self-actualization will be achieved when they build the Socialist society."\(^2\) How can the Socialist society be achieved?

The discovery of the laws of the development of societies is the corner-stone in the struggle toward socialism. Our Party believes that Marxist-Leninism is the best weapon in the hands of the people for the destruction of Capitalism and the achievement of Socialism.\(^3\)

The Party, also, believes that no matter how different the routes to Socialism it has certain permanent fundamentals which work to fulfill man's need for freedom from want and his emancipation as a human being.

The first need is met by the control of the means of production by the people and the second by placing political authority in the hands of the masses under the leadership of the working class.\(^4\)

As a step toward applying Marxist-Leninism to the


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 5.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 6-7.

\(^4\)Ibid.
Sudanese environment, the country is defined as part of that area of the world in which "the movement for national liberation" has developed. This movement has certain attributes:

1. The movement for national liberation is an anti-imperialist movement and as such is part of the international Socialist movement.
2. Most of the countries in which the movement is going on, have already achieved political independence. They are, however, facing a new enemy in neo-imperialism under the leadership of the United States.
3. The strong alliance between the international Socialist system and the national liberation movements is the best way to guarantee the defeat of neo-imperialism.
4. The countries where the movement for national liberation is waged are facing two crucial questions; the problem of economic development and economic independence and the problem of cultural regeneration.¹

The SCP then turn to the problem of formulating a strategy for the achievement of its goals in the Sudanese environment. It states:

The front which represents the classes, groups and individuals who are important in this phase will remain the only organizational tool which can achieve our historic goals as long as the country continues to be in the national democratic revolution phase. As far as we [the Party] could determine, at this juncture of our theoretical development and practical experience, the forces of the front come from the workers, the peasants, the revolutionary intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie.²

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.
The place of unions in the ideology.--We have already mentioned, in the previous chapter, the central role Marxism ascribes to workers' unions in the struggle to achieve the goals of Communism. The unions, as all other mass organizations, are considered by the ideology as "transmission belt" to the masses of nonparty workers. The union, however, is the most important of the party's mass organizations in the struggle against the bourgeois state.

Lenin, who was the major author of the organizational aspects of Communism, made it clear that the workers were not expected, of themselves, to arrive at revolutionary conclusions. Workers must, therefore, be helped to reach revolutionary political conclusions by a disciplined revolutionary party. Lenin writes:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement then the only choice is: Either bourgeois or Socialist ideologies. There is no middle course. . . . Hence, to belittle Socialist ideology in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology. . . . The spontaneous labour movement is simple trade unionism . . . and trade unionism means the ideological subordination of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the labor movement, with its spontaneous trade-unionist striving, from under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy. ¹

Following the teachings of Lenin the Sudanese Communist Party places prime importance on the workers. In the Party’s program it is stated that,

The Communist Party directs its attention to the working class, because it is the class most related to the modern means of production where exploitation, in its modern forms, is most intensely practiced and where thousands of workers are concentrated in different industries. This makes it the most aware and organizable class in our society.¹

The SCP also asserts its role as the vanguard and teacher of the working class. The Party conceives itself as the party which absorbs in its ranks the vanguard of the revolutionary masses and which develops from among them, through theoretical and practical training and through continuous revolutionary activity, leaders who are capable of teaching the working class its historic role and elevate it to the rank of the vanguard and who are capable of uniting the working class and its allies into a national democratic front and leading the revolutionary movement for socialism and progress in its entirety.²

Organization.—One of the most important elements that distinguish a Communist Party from the parties of Western parliamentarism, other than its ideology, is its stress on organization. Lenin wrote:

The proletariat has no other weapon in the fight for power except organization. . . . The proletariat can become, and inevitably will become a dominant force only because its intellectual unity, created by the principles of Marxism, is fortified by the material unity of organization which weld millions of toilers into an army of the working class.³

¹ Constitution of the Sudanese Communist Party, p. 50.
² Ibid.
Taking its cue from Lenin the SCP declares that:

The Communist Party, which is responsible for organizing and leading the working masses and which is subjected to the strongest waves of counter revolution, must attain the highest levels of discipline and organization.\(^1\)

The SCP organization follows conventional Communist lines.\(^2\) The organization is based on a hierarchical structure at the base of which lies the party Branches. The Branches are organized according to either the place of work or residence of the member. Only ten members can constitute a Branch. The Branch is responsible for representing the Party in its area and for recruiting new members. The Branches are under the control of Area Committees which represent the Party in different economic or "productive" regions covering the whole country.

Area Committees are subordinated to the Central Committee of the Party which is responsible for managing the affairs of the Party in the absence of the biennial Convention—the highest authority. Daily activities and Party cadres are the responsibility of the Political Bureau which is subordinated to the Central Committee.

The Party is governed according to the principle of "democratic centralism" which means that the party is governed from one center, that the same rules apply to all

\(^1\) Constitution of the Sudanese Communist Party, p. 58.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 62-80.
members, that lower levels of the hierarchy are subordinated to higher levels and that majority decisions are binding.

The Party organizes or help to organize mass organizations of political, economic or cultural nature. Particular attention is devoted to workers' unions, student organization, women groups and peace and friendship organizations.

The SCP has had leaders of exceptional calibre. Its perennial General Secretary, Abdel Khalig Mahgoub, is a first-class intellectual who enjoys a great deal of respect both at home and abroad. Other well-known leaders are: El Shafie Ahmed El Sheik, the general secretary of the SWTUF; Iz el Din Ali Amir, a medical doctor (private practice); Ahmed Suleiman, a lawyer; and Omar Mustafa El Mekki, a full-time Party worker.

The appeal of communism to the Sudan.--It is important in concluding this section on the Sudanese Communist Party to pose the question of why the SCP has been able to entrench itself so firmly in the Sudan, to become an integral part of the political milieu of the country and to enjoy the support of the majority of the educated class.

The nucleus of the answer to this question is to be found in the nature of nationalism in developing countries which could be defined as the movement of colonized people to rid themselves from political and economic domination by the West and as a quest for rapid industrialization and
When nationalism in developing countries is so defined the appeal of the Communist model becomes clear. As John Kautsky explained:

... Communist movements, in countries other than the Western ones, are or were at one time themselves intellectual-led movements for rapid industrialization and against traditional rule and Western colonialism.  

Another reason for the success of the SCP was the default of traditional parties in the Sudan. They have failed to provide the inspiring, intelligent and honest leadership needed to accomplish the goals of the nationalist movement.

Tigani Babiker, a member of the SCP, wrote:

For the young generation of the intellectuals and the students of the time [the time of the anti-colonial struggle], these parties gave no inspiration. While the world revolutionary movement was meething with new ideas, the leaders of the petty bourgeois parties showed not the least sign of reacting to these ideas. The young generation, awakened to life at a crucial turn in history, had to do the searching themselves for something that would quench their thirst. ... It was in those days that the most promising youth discovered Marxism.

In other African countries, like Ghana, Tanzania and Algeria, an alternative to the bourgeois parties was found

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1 This definition was developed by John H. Kautsky in his book Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries: Nationalism and Communism (New York: John Wiley, 1967), pp. 30-56.


in socialist-oriented and modernizing parties like the Peoples' Congress Party in Ghana and TANU in Tanzania. The only available alternative in the Sudan was the Communist Party. The presence of the Communists in the Sudan at the time was a result of the influence of Egyptian political currents on Sudanese developments. Prior to 1952 the only radical movement in Egypt was Communism. Sudanese students studying in Cairo in the mid-forties, and shopping for radical ideologies had no choice but to espouse that particular ideology.

Summary

The main characteristics of the socioeconomic and political environment in which the Sudanese labor movement has emerged and developed could be summarized as follows:

1. An underdeveloped economy, characterized by low per capita income, predominance of traditional agriculture and a growing modern industrial sector which is largely under government control.

2. A labor force which is predominantly pastoral and agricultural with a small, but rapidly growing, industrial labor force.

3. A social structure in which extended-family relations are still important and in which a new elite, with different patterns of living, has emerged.

4. A religious situation characterized by the polarization of the society into two opposing Islamic sects.
5. Social values that look down upon manual work.

6. A political history dominated by colonialism, anti-colonial nationalism and political instability after independence.

7. Inept traditional political parties and a small but influential communist party.
CHAPTER III

NATIONALISM, COMMUNISM, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT (1946-1954)

Although labor protest of one sort or another had occurred in the Sudan during the 1930s and early forties,¹ formal organizations did not emerge until late in 1946 when the workers of Sudan Railways, at the town of Atbara, the headquarters of the Railways, formed a Workers' Affairs Association (WAA) to represent them and speak in their behalf.

Three factors worked as an impetus for the rise of workers' organizations in the Sudan. The first factor was the economic conditions of the industrial worker. Commenting on the findings of the Independent Committee of Inquiry set by the Sudan Government to investigate the level of wages among Sudan Railways Workers in 1948, Pawzi wrote:

This can leave no doubt of the distress in which a relatively large section of railway employees was living. The decline in real earnings, however, affected all sections of labor, their wages not having been altered since 1935, and the rise in prices having

been met to a small extent only by a war allowance, and a cost of living allowance granted since the end of the war. The cost-of-living indices for Sudanes with monthly incomes of under 1£2 almost doubled by 1946 as compared with the prewar level.1

The economic plight of the workers, which was no worse than the vast majority of their fellow countrymen, was, however, made intolerable and awareness of it sharpened, by a second factor—the growing nationalist consciousness following World War II. Against this background the third factor was introduced. This was the British Colonial Policy toward the formation of workers' organizations in dependent territories.

Colonial Policy and the Emergence of the Labor Movement

British Colonial labor policy had its origin in the circumstances following World War I:

On the one hand economic stresses led the Colonial Office to examine methods that increased or retarded productivity, and on the other the growing international scrutiny of labour standards [ILO Conventions] compelled all the imperial powers to review conditions in their colonies.2

The first promulgation of the policy came in 1930 in a dispatch by Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), as Secretary of State, to all colonial governors pointing out that "social and industrial progress in colonial territories was such

1Fawzi, The Labor Movement, p. 22.
2Davies, African Trade Unions, pp. 37-38.
that trade unions were a natural and legitimate development."¹

There is a danger that, without sympathetic supervision and guidance, organizations of labourers without experience of combination for any social or economic purpose may fall under the domination of disaffected persons, by whom their activities may be diverted to improper and mischievous ends."²

The import of British Colonial labor policy, then, was to encourage the establishment of workers' unions, on condition that such organizations should remain strictly economic and social in their purpose and activities. The rationale behind this policy could be seen when we realize that it was essentially a compromise between the Labour Party's intellectuals who "wished to see the development of an institution which they considered an integral part of a democratic society"³ on the one hand, and the Colonial Office and local colonial administrations who feared that without close supervision the unions might become dangerous weapons in the hands of the nationalists, on the other. The essence of the compromise was the advocacy of "a system that allowed for both the tolerance of 'liberal' institutions and for insuring that they were controlled in the interests of the administration."⁴

²Quoted, ibid.
³Davies, op. cit., p. 40.
⁴Ibid.
Colonial policy was doomed from the beginning. It was a victim of its own internal contradiction. Although the policy recognized the possibility of workers' unions becoming politically involved, it believed that such a development could be forestalled by legislative and administrative action. Davies elaborates:

The British model... failed to take account of the inevitable relationship between the growth of unions and political opposition to British rule. ... African workers were to be encouraged to participate in colonial institutions (because these were "good" for them), but on no condition were they allowed to use these institutions for their own ends. The conflict of interest was present from the beginning. It only required the rise of strong nationalist movements for the whole paternalistic structure to crumble, and for trade unions to remould their organizations and objectives on lines that owed little to the British.

\[\text{In spite of the clear exhortations of this policy, colonial administrators in the territories did not always abide by it. Some of them genuinely believed that it was far too early to introduce an advanced social institution like the trade union in the dependent territories. The trade union advisor sent from London to help establish trade unions in Kenya was told by local colonial administrators that "the time had not yet arrived for the establishment of trade unionism in Kenya; he should come back in twenty years or so."}^{2} \text{ Others, perhaps, were aware of the}\]

\[1\text{Ibid., pp. 41-42.}\]

\[2\text{Tom Mboya, Freedom and After (London: Deutsch, 1963), p. 31.}\]
inconsistency of the policy and felt that trade unions will inevitably be involved in nationalist politics. Hence, colonial administrators, in many territories, were either hostile, indifferent, or lent half-hearted support to the official policy toward labor.

In the Sudan, the Colonial Government, until the conclusion of World War II, had been in no particular hurry to implement the policy of encouraging workers' unions promulgated by the Colonial Office in London. However, the growth of nationalist consciousness, the attempts by some workers of the Sudan Railways to form a union and the beginning of Communist activities during 1945-46 impelled the Government to action. The Labour Board (an advisory body on labor affairs composed of some government departments and chaired by the Civil Secretary), which was inactive for some years, was brought to life in May, 1945 to propose the formulation of works committees (joint labor-management consultative councils) in all government departments and interested private firms. The declared intent of the government was "that the artisan and labouring classes should be encouraged to take an intelligent and constructive interest in the internal running of their business or department."

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1 The works committees scheme was adopted in detail from the British Ministry of Labour's Industrial Relations Handbook (London: HMSO, 1944).

2 Civil Secretary's Circular, August 19, 1946, quoted in Fawzi, The Labour Movement, pp. 26-27.
The government made it clear that it did not want the works committees to concern themselves with questions relating to pay or conditions of employment. Later on, however, the works committees were allowed to discuss wages and conditions of employment. The government, also, did not want the committees to "establish themselves as representative bodies for negotiating with the central government on terms of service."\(^1\)

Clearly the government was not interested in labor unions at the time. It is reasonable to assume, however, that it intended the works committees to be the first step in a slow and gradual advance toward full-fledged unionism --economic unionism that is. This was indicated in a statement on the activities of the government's Labour Office printed in the official organ the \textit{Sudan Monthly Record} for February-March, 1946. The statement went:

Consideration was also given to the steps necessary to afford increased opportunities to workers not only to voice grievances, but also to formulate constructive proposals for improving working conditions and for increasing output, and to form the basis on which trade unions could subsequently be set up on sound prepared lines.\(^2\)

The government's scheme to develop workers' organizations that concern themselves only with economic issues through slow and careful evolution was shattered to pieces.

\(^1\)Fawzi, \textit{The Labour Movement}, p. 27.

\(^2\)Quoted in \textit{ibid.}, p. 32.
by the refusal of the Railways workers to accept the works committees. The workers had correctly read the intentions of the Colonial Administration and chose to struggle for the recognition of their Workers' Affairs Association (WAA) as a full-fledged workers' union.

The rise of the WAA: The Sudan Railways Department was, and still is, the largest department of the Sudan Government and the largest industrial enterprise in the country. In 1946, the Railways employed approximately 20,000 workers, about 4,000 of whom were classified as skilled. Most of the Railway workers were concentrated in the town of Atbara, where the headquarters and the main workshops and stores of the Railway were located. Almost 90 percent of its inhabitants were Railway employees and their dependents. The environment of an industrial city, where all workers were employed by the same employer and were tribal and extended-family ties had been weakened to some extent, created a sense of solidarity and a need for some form of representative organization among the workers. Atbara, also, had the only technical school in the country which was attached to a particular industry. The result of this was that the Railway had the largest concentration of skilled and literate workers in the country. These skilled workers played a prominent role in the formation and leadership of the WAA.

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This section borrows extensively from ibid., chaps. IV and V.
Indeed, it was in the Technical School Graduates' Club, in Atbara, that the artisans of the Mechanical Department of the Sudan Railway formed the WAA early in 1946. This initial step was followed in July of the same year by writing a letter to the management of the Railway asking for the recognition of the WAA "as the mouthpiece of the workers." ¹ The letter did not refer to the WAA as a union and the declared objectives of the organization were strictly economic and social, "to link its members in an organized association; to improve their standards materially and culturally; to look after their interests and rights." ² These objectives were to be achieved "by legitimate action, within the boundaries of the law."

The timidity and moderation of the WAA founders is understandable in view of their awareness that they were acting against the Colonial government's declared policy of forming works committees. Thus, they could not afford to antagonize the management any further by calling their organization a trade union, which it really was, and was regarded as such by the management. Expressing interest in political questions, at that time, would have been totally absurd.

¹Letter by WAA requesting recognition, July 16, 1946, quoted in Ibid., p. 37.
²Constitution of the WAA, quoted, Ibid., p. 38.
As expected, the management of the Railway was unwilling to recognize the WAA as an organization speaking in behalf of the workers. Because recognition would have meant an abandonment of the government's policy of establishing works committees as an initial step toward the eventual introduction of trade unions. Another factor contributing to the management's refusal to grant recognition was its belief "that the opposition to their scheme represented no more than the intransigence of a number of self-appointed activists who wished to constitute themselves as the link between labour and management."\(^1\)

On July 22, 1946, the management of the Railway, in a letter to the President and Secretary of the WAA, refused to recognize the organization. This was justified on legal grounds. The management, however, assured the workers that the whole issue of workers' representation was under consideration and that proposals would soon be announced. In October the management came up with a proposal to establish works committees which was flatly rejected by the WAA. In a meeting between the management and representatives of the WAA, held on November 19, the workers made it clear that they would accept nothing less than recognition.

Losing hope in the Railway management, the leaders of the WAA petitioned the Governor General on March 16, 1947, asking him to interfere in their favor, but to no avail.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 48.
As Pawzi reported, "a routine answer was sent to the President . . . stating, in the dead language of officialdom, that the petition sent to His Excellency had been forwarded to the General Manager of the railway for action."¹

Faced with the adamant opposition of the management and the disregard of the government, the workers resorted to more militant action. On July 12, 1947, they marched on the Railway headquarters, in a peaceful procession, to register their protest against the management's stand and to demonstrate "that the WAA had the backing of the majority, if not all, of the railway employees in Atbara."²

The workers' peaceful demonstration was met by armed police when it approached the Railway headquarters. The British officer commanding the police demanded that the procession be dispersed and offered to allow the President of the WAA to present the marchers' petition to the management. The workers insisted on continuing the march and presenting the petition in force. The police, then, advanced to disperse the march. A violent clash, between the police armed with night sticks and rifle butts and the workers armed with bricks and other accessible objects, took place.

The next day more than fifty persons were arrested, including the leaders of the WAA. The workers of the Railway in Atbara went on strike which soon spread to other parts of the country bringing the operations of the Railway...

¹Ibid., p. 53. ²Ibid., p. 55.
to a virtual halt. Within a few days a committee composed of leading nationalist politicians and representatives of the press came to Atbara in an attempt to mediate the deadlock. Their efforts were successful; the WAA was recognized and the strike was ended on July 23, 1947.

The success of the strike must have convinced the Railway management and the Colonial government that they were dealing with a strong and popular movement and certainly not a small "number of self-appointed activists." Moreover public opinion as reflected through the press was sympathetic to the workers' cause especially after the success of the strike which demonstrated the possibility of challenging the Colonial government.

Faced with this state of affairs the government had two obvious alternatives: the first was to stand fast by its refusal to recognize the WAA. This would, undoubtedly, have led to the escalation of the crisis and to the ultimate use of brute force to suppress the workers. To take such a course would have added fuel to an already explosive national political situation. The second alternative, was to recognize the WAA as a bona fide trade union. The cost to the Government of taking this course would have been loss of "face" and the inevitable extension of the right to organize to other workers.

The Colonial government opted for the latter course thus avoiding the escalation of the problem into a
full-blown political crisis, the ramifications of which would have been difficult to predict and control.

The influence of nationalist consciousness and nationalist parties.--It is not easy to determine the importance of the role played by nationalist consciousness among the workers and their leadership in the emergence of the WAA. The available evidence, however, clearly indicates that the resentment of the workers of the British, both as employers and as ruler had a significant impact on the desire of the workers to organize and their willingness to struggle for recognition.

Most of the present and past leaders and rank-and-file who lived through the events of 1946-47 and who were interviewed by this writer expressed a strong opinion that anti-British feelings played an important role in the rise of the movement. El Tayib Hassan, the General Secretary of the founding Executive Committee of the WAA, now a successful businessman in Atbara, stated:

The labor movement was a reaction against the economic conditions of the workers and the humiliating treatment they were subjected to by the British, who were, the employers and, at the same time, the colonizers.¹

Tag el Sir Hassan Adam, one of the active unionists who participated in the struggle for recognition was of the opinion that:

¹Interview, Atbara, March 12-20, 1969.
The maltreatment received by the workers at the hands of the British supervisors was a basic element in our desire to organize. Working conditions were the basic issue which rallied the workers behind the movement, nationalist feeling, however, worked as a catalyst. As a matter of fact some of us were members in the committees established by the Graduates' Congress.

El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the present General Secretary of the SWTUF, provided some examples of the humiliating treatment the workers were subjected to:

Those were difficult circumstances. For instance, whenever the British supervisor wanted to fill a form or write something he would use the back of one of the workers as a writing desk. Also there was the problem of the rest rooms, a worker could not go there without permission and they had a clerk at the door to check on the workers. Another humiliating thing was the search of the workers at the gate at the end of their shift.

Professor Fawzi, in explaining the insistence of the workers on their demand for the recognition of the WAA and their refusal to settle for nothing less, pointed out that anti-British feelings were at the root of the problem, which stemmed from the fact that management and labour belonged to two different racial groups. This is not to suggest that the workers' opposition was racial in character, but the fact the managerial staff were non-Sudanese had no doubt resulted in a gulf between the men and their supervisors. . . . This unavoidable gulf between the two sides seems to me to have been the deepest cause of the lack of confidence in the management.

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1Ibid.
2Interview, Khartoum, April 28-30, 1969.
3Fawzi, The Labour Movement, pp. 48-49.
The role of the labor movement played in the struggle for independence will be discussed in the following section. Before that, the contribution of the nationalist parties to the rise of the WAA will be evaluated.

Compared to many African colonial countries, nationalist parties in the Sudan made a relatively belated and meager contribution to the rise of the labor movement. They began to show interest and provide help only toward the end of the struggle for the recognition of the WAA. The help provided took two main forms: financial and moral support, and the mediation of the impasse that developed between the WAA and the Railway management.

In the interview with El Tayib Hassan, he reported that Muhamed Nur el Din, one of the leaders of the Unionist group and a staunch advocate of the "unity of the Nile Valley," used to telephone the leaders of the WAA from Khartoum enquiring about the progress of the struggle and the morale of the workers. Of more importance was that Nur el Din succeeded in obtaining financial aid amounting to LS. 8,000, a substantial sum even by current standards. The money came from Egyptian sources including the Egyptian Railways Workers Union and some anonymous source thought to be King Farouk of Egypt or the Egyptian government. Another Unionist politician, Yahya El Padli, was reported to have contributed the sum of LS. 300 on behalf of the Ashigga Party. This was, however, returned after the
Egyptian contribution was received. A nominal, but symbolically significant, gift was donated by Mrs. Ismail al Azahari (she donated part of her jewelry—a necklace made of English gold coins). The latter contribution was mentioned by most workers interviewed as a moving gesture that helped to raise their morale during the difficult times they were going through.

The major and most conspicuous contribution the traditional political parties made to the rise of the labor movement was their successful mediation of the deadlock resulting from the refusal of the WAA to accept the works committee proposed by the Railway management and the refusal of the management to grant recognition to the WAA. Fawzi told the story in the following words:

Public opinion all over the country was certainly sympathetic toward the workers [following the confrontation between the police and the workers at Athbara and the strike that followed.]

Within a few days a committee composed of leading representatives of the two main political blocs in the country, the pro-independence front and pro-

Egyptian Nationalist Front, accompanied by several representatives of the local press, proceeded to Athbara to try to find a way out of the deadlock and to end the strike. A scheme worked out by them, whereby recognition would be accorded to the WAA and in which certain departmental committees would be incorporated, was accepted by both sides by 13 July.1

It is pertinent, at this point, to ask why the traditional nationalist parties contributed so meagerly and so belatedly.

1 Ibid., p. 56.
The beginning of an answer to this question is to be found in Ioan Davies' conclusion that:

Parties led by elites—chiefs, religious leaders or the more wealthy middle class—were inclined to discount the unions as a significant source of strength. The Northern People's Congress in Nigeria or the Kabaka Yekka in Uganda drew their power from the established tribal order, ... they did not need the unions to bolster their claim to legitimacy, and, given their internal organization and conservative ideology, had little room for unions even as a convenient recruiting grounds.  

Something along the same line was evident in the Sudan. It was pointed out, in our earlier discussion of the characteristics of the traditional parties, that they were patronized by the leaders of the Ansar and Khatmiyya sects. The workers as most of the other segments of the society were, and to a lesser extent, still are loyal to the religious sects. This meant that the political allegiances of the workers were largely decided by their sectarian loyalties. Hence, the traditional political parties felt no particular urge to involve themselves in the workers' struggle for organization and recognition. The importance of sectarian loyalties were later demonstrated in the 1953 parliamentary elections when the workers in Atbara gave their overwhelming support to a candidate backed by the Khatmiyya sect against one of their own union leaders.

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1Davies, op. cit., p. 97.
2Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 101. The leader was Gamim Amin, an executive of the SWU at the time.
However, during the final stages of the struggle for recognition it must have dawned upon the traditional parties that workers' organizations could become an important weapon in the political struggle against foreign domination. This point was brought home by the brilliant success of the July, 1947 strike.

Furthermore, the ideological orientation of the traditional parties, which could be described as middle-class and Western oriented, did not help to direct their attention to the importance of labor organizations as a political tool. The influence of this ideological stance was probably reinforced by social values prevalent in the society which assign an inferior status to manual work and workers. The bearer of such values, naturally, would not expect workers' organizations to have much political import.

The role played by the Sudanese Communist Party in the rise of the labor movement provides an interesting contrast to that played by the traditional parties. As was shown in the previous chapter the SCP as any other Communist party, is impelled by its ideology to seek influence among workers' organizations when they existed and to help organize them when they did not.

Although, most sources agreed on the fact that the

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1See Chapter II above, pp. 33-34.
2Ibid., pp. 48-49.
Communists were actively involved in the organization and struggle for recognition of the WAA, there was disagreement on the nature and contribution of such an involvement. On the one hand, there were those who acknowledged the active participation of the Communists but thought that its impact was less than salutary. Such a view was expressed by El Tayib Hassan, in response to a question on the role of the Communists in the rise of the WAA. He said:

Mustafa El Sayed, at the time a Sudanese student in Egypt, used to come to Atbara on his vacations, during which he was attempting to form a communist group among the workers. El Sayed was joined by some workers, important among them were, El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, Ibrahim Zakaria and Gasim Amin. During that time, Communist leaflets were distributed among the workers in Atbara. The result of such activity was to excite the situation, retard our progress and give the British the opportunity to brand our movement as Communist. The existence of open Communist activities would have damaged our movement.1

On the other hand, there were the Communists themselves who claimed a great deal of credit for establishing the labor movement in the Sudan. The most extravagant claim was made by the SCP. It was stated that "the Communist Party and only the Communist Party was the organizer of the labor movement in the Sudan."2 Abdel Khalig Mahgoup, the Abdel Khalig Mahgoup, the General Secretary of the SCP, was, however, more modest in evaluating his personal

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1Interview, Atbara, March 12-20, 1969.
2Sudanese Communist Party, The People’s Revolution, p. 44.
contribution to the emergence of the labor movement. In his defense in "the great communism case" of October, 1959 in which he was accused of establishing the SCP, Mahgoup stated:

I gained, as did my fellows [the group of Marxist Sudanese students in Cairo] a great deal of experience from our closeness to the struggle of the Egyptian people and workers. I am proud to say that I have never been reluctant to give my country the benefit of my experience. As a matter of fact I took the opportunity of the first vacation to come back to the Sudan and offer my humble knowledge and experience to my people. I remember, in pride, that the most important among the things I participated in was helping the Sudanese working class build its organizations in 1947. I was in Atbara for sometime during that year when the Railway Workers' Affairs Association, the first labor union in the Sudan, was being formed.1

In the first booklet of its Trade Union Studies series, the SWTUF evaluated the contribution the Communists made to the rise of the labor movement in the following terms.

Due to the efforts of the Communists in presenting and explaining new facts about the causes of the misery of the workers and the methods to be used in the struggle, the idea of the labor union emerged as the only organizational shape capable of uniting the ranks of the workers.2

Hashim El Saeed, a former General Secretary of the Sudan Railway Workers' Union and a member of the SCP, had the following comment:

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1Ibid., p. 327.

The Communists helped in explaining to the workers the nature and causes of their problems, they greatly helped in organizing and mobilizing the workers, they made studies about the economic conditions of the workers and they helped to direct the movement toward the struggle against colonialism.  

Finally, El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, had these thoughts on the role of the Communists:

At the beginning of the labor movement, the Communist Party supported the workers unreservedly. The Party’s role in the organization of the movement was basic and vital.  

The nature and content of this evidence does not justify conclusive statements concerning the contribution the Communists made to the rise of the labor movement in the Sudan. This must await further research which might unveil new and neutral sources of data on the problem.

The above limitation, notwithstanding, some conclusions could be tendered. First, the Communists were actively involved in the organization and the struggle for recognition of the WAA. Second, they most likely were responsible for the introduction of the concept of labor unionism among the workers. Third, the Communists usually excel in organizational skill. This was probably an invaluable asset to the inexperienced and largely illiterate workers. Finally, they most probably contributed a great deal to sustain the workers’ will and determination to

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1 Interview, Atbara, March 10-20, 1969.
2 Ibid.
struggle to the end by exposing the empty nature of the management's scheme and by exciting the nationalist feelings of the workers.

The Labor Movement and the Anti-Colonial Struggle

There were two levels or forms in which the Sudanese labor movement made its contribution to the struggle against Colonial rule. At one level there was the drive by labor unions to win recognition and obtain better wages and working conditions for their members. The way in which such activity contributes to the nationalist movement is well explained by Davies:

Initially their attempts to gain recognition through strikes were seen by colonial rulers as political, especially when the strikes were directed against the main employment agency—the government or a public corporation. It did not take much for a colonial government to jump to the conclusion that any strike of government employees was subversive.¹

The success of the Sudan Railway workers in winning recognition for their union through the strike, undoubtedly shook the Colonial administration and destroyed the facade of invincibility it had successfully maintained, thus strengthening the momentum of the nationalist drive against Colonial rule.

After the WAA had won recognition, a period of industrial unrest in the Railway ensued. Within less than a

¹Davies, op. cit., p. 95.
year, two strikes were successfully staged by the WAA. The first was a two-day strike during January 26-28, 1948. The second followed on March 16 and continued for thirty-three days. The success of these strikes further damaged the prestige of the government and gave the workers and the nationalists more confidence in their newly gained power.

Although the immediate cause of both strikes was the demand for more wages, political factors were equally important. Fawzi commenting on the events leading to the strike wrote:

It was by no means easy for the workers to distinguish between the government as the biggest single employer of industrial labour in the country and the government as the body responsible for the administration and welfare of the country. The whole situation was further complicated by another factor which was to play a leading part in the dispute from this time onwards, namely the government was foreign and predominantly British. Animated by nationalism as well as their desire for better conditions of employment, the workers were led to conclude that the government's labour policy was coloured to a large extent by its interests as colonial institution.  

Another manifestation of the workers' hostility to the Colonial government was the opposition of the WAA to the Trade Union Ordinance of 1948. The Ordinance which was designed to give legal protection to workers' unions was largely based on similar British legislation. Another aim of the Ordinance was to discourage as much as possible the politicization of workers' unions.  

1Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 70.
The Civil Secretary of the Sudan wrote in 1948 that:

Leaving the trade unions to come into being without an ordinance regulating them is tantamount to allowing political agitation to find its way to the heart of governmental operations.¹

To assure the development of "a balanced trade union movement" the law required compulsory registration of unions and attempted to put some restrictions on the freedom of association of government workers by prohibiting an employee of the government to join a union which did not cater exclusively for such employees and by making it illegal for such a union to federate with other unions whose members were not employed by the government. All the restrictions on public employees were, however, dropped under pressure from the labor movement with the exception of a prohibition on the affiliation of unions with political organizations.

The second and more important level of the labor movement's contribution to the nationalist struggle was its engagement in overt and direct political action. Such development had to await the formation of a federation of labor unions. This event came in August 21-23, 1949 when a conference held in Atbara under the sponsorship of the WAA and attended by fourteen other unions created the Workers' Congress. The Congress was reconstituted as the

Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) a year later, during November 15-21, 1950. Since that time the SWTUF has come to play a dominant role in the Sudanese labor movement. Indeed, the name SWTUF has become a synonym of the labor movement.

Following its reconstitution as the SWTUF the Federation came under Communist influence. This and the fact that the nationalist movement in the Sudan was split into two bitterly opposed groups each backed by a religious sect, were the two most important factors determining the nature of the SWTUF's involvement in the nationalist movement.

The election of El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, then the General Secretary of SWUW and a leading figure in the Sudanese Communist movement, to the same position in the SWTUF during 1950-51, is a clear indication of the presence of Communist influence in the labor movement. It is significant that El Shafie has continued to occupy the post of General Secretary, the highest and most influential in the SWTUF since that time. Furthermore, the official view at the time was positive in its affirmation of the presence of Communist influence in SWTUF. The 1952-53 Annual Report of the Labor Department described the leaders of the SWTUF as "self-avowed communists."

K. D. D. Henderson, a former

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1 For details on the emergence of the federation see Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 103.
2 quoted, ibid., p. 118.
British administrator in the Sudan, went further and asserted that "the Federation was, at the end of 1951, completely dominated by communists."¹

¹Henderson, op. cit., p. 99.

The SWTU also had close relations with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).² In the Annual Report presented to the Second Convention of the SWTU held on December 16, 1951, El Shafie, the General Secretary of the Federation, urged the delegates to lead the Sudanese Labor movement out of its isolation to join the international labor movement. He stated:

The struggle of workers’ unions could proceed side by side with the struggle of the workers of the world to influence international affairs in the favor of peace and against war. What we are driving at is that isolating the Sudanese labor movement from the international labor movement means, in effect, isolating it from its own rank-and-file. Because isolationism will result in the inability of the movement to attain its own goals. Why should the Sudanese workers be denied the support of 80 million workers who are the

²The WFTU is one of two major international trade union organizations. It represents labor organizations in Communist countries and Communist-influenced federations in other countries. Most prominent among the latter group are the French CGT and the Italian CGIL. The WFTU is opposed by the ILO which represents the labor movements of Western countries and has been dominated by the American AFL-CIO and the British TUC. For the last two decades the two organizations have been competing for influence among the labor movements in developing countries. For more information see, John P. Windmuller, "International Organizations: Structure, Functions, Limitations," in Solomon Barkin et al., International Labor (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 81-105.
members of the world Federation of Trade Unions? And why shouldn't our struggle contribute to their struggle for achieving the same purpose.  

The convention adopted the advice of the General Secretary and authorized the Executive Committee to strengthen the link between the Sudanese labor movement and the WFTU.  

The sympathies of SWTUF had for the WFTU were often reciprocated. For instance, Louis Sailliant, the General Secretary of the WFTU, upon having "received information on the new wave of repression let loose against the Sudan Workers' Federation," sent the following telegram to the SWTUF, on May 2, 1952:

In the name of 80 million organized workers throughout the world, the World Federation of Trade Unions protests against the mass arrests of trade union leaders in the Sudan, the arbitrary seizure of the headquarters of your Federation, and the banning of the May Day demonstration. These arbitrary measures reveal once more the kind of democracy which the imperialists are bringing to the subjugated peoples. We greet the heroic Sudanese workers, fighting for their legitimate rights, for the liberation of the Sudanese people from the yoke of British imperialism, for peace and freedom.

We are certain that the struggle of the Sudanese workers and the international solidarity of the working class will succeed in freeing Brothers Salam and Shafei [President and Secretary of SWTUF] and the other militant workers from the hands of the imperialists.

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2El Sarah, December 21, 1951.

It should be mentioned that an ICFTU delegation visited the Sudan in October, 1951 and went back without gaining a foothold in the Sudanese labor movement.

The role of the Communists. — The role of the Communists and hence that of the SWTUF in the anti-colonial struggle was determined by the particular nature of the Sudanese nationalist movement and by the strategy of the international communist movement with regard to the national liberation of colonial peoples.

On the local front, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the nationalist movement was split into two bitterly opposing groups. On the one hand, there were the Unionists and their Khatamiyya supporters calling for unity with Egypt as the best way to rid the country of colonial domination. On the other hand, there was the Umma Party backed by the Ansar sect, suspecting Egyptian intentions and participating in the colonial constitutional institutions (the Governor General's Advisory Council and the Legislative Assembly) sponsored by the British Administration and designed to prepare the country for self-rule.

The bitter rivalry of the two groups and the association of each with one of the parties to the Condominium worked to confuse the aims of the nationalist struggle, thus alienating the rising generation of educated and urbanized Sudanese who were interested in ridding the country of colonial rule but were not too keen about the "unity of the Nile Valley"
and were weary of the Umma Party's close association with the Colonial administration.

Only in this context could the role of the Communists in crystallizing the goals of the nationalist movement be appreciated. Abdel Khaliq Mahgoup, the General Secretary of the SCP wrote in 1959:

The call for the right of self-determination and independence for the Sudanese made by Marxist fighters had a crucial impact on Sudanese political development, particularly, on the winning of independence. For the first time a progressive movement for attaining independence which was uncompromising in its struggle against the British was launched by elements whose integrity and faithfulness was never questioned. Under the circumstances the Sudanese people started to think about independence and a big change was evident in the nationalist front, particularly during 1954. The majority of the people felt that it was possible to liberate the country from colonial domination and to build an independent Sudan protected by its own people.¹

Now that clarity of objective had been achieved, the Communists went on to mobilize the nationalist movement in that direction. In this they were influenced by the strategy recommended by the international communist movement. The official promulgation of the strategy came at an international trade union conference sponsored by the WFTU and held in Peking during November 16-December 1, 1949. The conference resolved that taking into account "local conditions and national characteristics," in the struggle by colonial people to achieve "genuine national

valuable lessons may be drawn from the experience of the Chinese people, who under the leadership of their working class, have created a united national front, and who, with the support of all strata of the population, in the first place with the support of the peasantry, have waged a great struggle for national liberation, finally routing the combined forces of domestic reaction and international imperialism.  

The basic tenets of this strategy were to be followed by the Communists in the Sudan. In a statement read on behalf of the Sudan Movement for National liberation (the Sudanese communist organization) in the "Second Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Countries within the sphere of British Imperialism," held in London during April, 1954, the Sudanese Communists declared:

Circumstances in the Sudan are maturing for a big advance of the national movement. The alliance in action of the peasant movement and the workers under the leadership of the Sudan working class, a united front comprising the national bourgeoisie, the anti-imperialist elements, is the way for national liberation, peace and democracy. This is the lesson we have learnt from the glorious Chinese Communist Party, which is confirmed by experience in our country.  

The role of the SWTUP.--The founding meeting of the SWTUP, in December of 1950, saw the beginning of its involvement in militant political action. The meeting authorized the Executive Committee of the Federation to launch a three-day strike to protest the wholesale dismissal  

1 World Trade Union Movement, No. 8 (December, 1949), p. 40.

of more than 100 government secondary school students who were involved in a student strike, to be followed by another general strike protesting a proposed amendment to the Defense of Sudan Ordinance giving powers to the government to declare a state of emergency in case of strikes and other crises. The threat of striking was, however, withdrawn under pressure from the government. Although the strikes failed to materialize, the Federation, at least, succeeded in registering its protest on the two issues.

Later, in June of 1951, when the police force of the Khartoum metropolitan area went on a strike protesting disciplinary action against some policemen, the Federation actively supported them. The President and Secretary of the SWTUF, among others, were accused of instigating the police strike and were sent to prison for one and two years respectively. In August of the same year, the Federation organized another strike. This time, however, the issue was a 75 percent wage increase for government workers. The strike was a complete success.¹

The militancy of the Federation brought continuous harassment by the Colonial government. Its functions were interfered with and its leaders prosecuted. In response the Federation staged an open-end strike in April, 1952 (generally known as "the freedoms" strike) demanding the

¹These events are described in Pawzi, The Labour Movement, pp. 113-117.
immediate release of its officers and the discontinuation of harassment by the government. The strike, however, faltered due to the lack of support from some key unions including the SEWU led by its General Secretary Abdulla Beshir, an ardent anti-communist. The political activities of the Federation, also, led the government to deny it registration on the grounds that the Trade Union Ordinance did not provide for registration of federations and that it could not possibly register the Federation as a trade union. The lack of legal status in no way hampered the political involvement of the Federation.¹

The formal entry of the SWTUF into nationalist politics did not come until its First Convention, held in December of 1951, amended the Federation's constitution adding the following political objectives:

1. The immediate defeat of colonialism in the Sudan, in all its forms; economic, political, administrative and military.
2. To win for the Sudan the right of self-determination in an atmosphere free from foreign influences.
   The means:
3. Absolute non-cooperation with the colonial regime.
4. Uniting the Sudanese people in a United Front comprising political and other groups whose political aims approaches the Federation's.²

The adoption of these political objectives was later justified on the grounds that

¹For a full discussion of the registration issue, see ibid., pp. 104-107.
²El Saraha, December 21, 1951, p. 5.
The struggle of our labor movement have demonstrated that the demand for better economic and social conditions and the hope for a prosperous and peaceful life always come against one major block, which is the imperialist regime in power. Therefore, in the final analysis, our objectives cannot be achieved until the imperialists are thrown out of the country.¹

Following the declaration of December, 1951, a United Front for Sudan Liberation was formed. It comprised the SWTUF, the Communists, the Unionist parties, student unions, tenant farmers organizations and other groups.²

The SWTUF, also, worked to organize "workers' nationalist committees"³ to mobilize the workers at the local level, a few of which were set up. The United Front "worked on a definite anti-imperialist programme" designed to raise the level of confrontation with the colonial regime. During 1952 the Front was active organizing political rallies and demonstrations and generally agitating against the government.

Had it not been for the Egyptian Revolution of July, 1952, which radically changed Egyptian policy toward the Sudan, making possible the conclusion of an Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in February of 1953 resolving "the Sudan question," the United Front would have, most likely, played a

³See series of articles by Gasim Amin, on the subject in El Saraha, July 11, 1952, p. 3 and July 15, 1952, p. 3.
more decisive role in the nationalist movement. The 1953 Agreement which provided for "a transitional period lasting not more than three years" during which "the Condominium Administration was to be liquidated and upon its conclusion self-determination was to take place."¹

The traditional political parties and the two religious sects backed the Agreement and hailed it as a major victory for the nationalist movement. The Communists and the SWTUF stood alone in their opposition to the Agreement. The Federation in an attempt to mobilize the unions against it, asked them to call a three-day general strike in protest. Most of the unions joined the national consensus in favor of the Agreement and refused to participate in the strike which failed as a consequence. The Federation, under pressure from member unions, later on announced that every worker was entitled to his own political views.² The SWTUF opposition to the 1953 Agreement did considerable damage to its popularity and its influence among member unions and rank-and-file and set it on a collision course against the traditional political parties.

The Communists'-SWTUF stand against the 1953 Agreement was a logical consequence dictated by a political strategy calling for the mobilization of "all national and democratic

²Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 118.
forces" in a United Front to fight the imperialists to the bitter end. The promises given in the Agreement practically killed the Front and the whole strategy became irrelevant. The following statement by the Communists lends support to this explanation:

The situation changed when General Neguib [the Egyptian President] established the military dictatorship in Egypt in July, 1952, greatly welcomed by the American imperialists. The Sudan Agreement was drawn in February 1953, granting the Sudan the so-called status of self-government. Exploiting the deep respect our people have for the Egyptian people, and through the compromising section of the national bourgeoisie, Neguib and the imperialists succeeded in splitting the united front, still in its early growth.¹

The parliamentary election called for by the 1953 Agreement took place during November and December of 1953 and was won by the National Unionist Party under the leadership of El Azhari. On January 5, 1954, the Sudanese Parliament elected El Azhari as Prime Minister of the transitional government, thus ending a phase and ushering in a new one in Sudanese political history and in the life of the labor movement.

CHAPTER IV

THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL ROLE (1954-1964)

Following the attainment of self-government, perhaps the most important and urgent problem facing the ruling elites of the new nations of Africa was the achievement of political legitimacy and security for their regimes. The rulers of the new regimes were fully aware as veterans of the nationalist struggle of the actual or potential power of the labor unions. The involvement of such organizations in the struggle against colonial rule was a constant reminder of their political importance. It was not surprising, therefore, when African governments moved to curb the powers of labor unions after independence.

According to Ieuan Davies two tendencies of government-union relations in independent Africa were discernible: First, "there is the attempt to assimilate unions into a centralized political structure" with the labor movement acting as "the industrial wing of the ruling party." Second, the labor movement is "independent of the ruling elite" and

\[1\text{Davies, op. cit., p. 138.}\]
is in opposition to it. Such elites normally "represent elements of traditional rule, the growing bourgeoisie and the regime was finally toppled by a popular uprising.

In the midst of this political chaos, however, a common thread tying political events is discernible. This was the continuous struggle for power between traditional and progressive forces. The traditional elements were represented by their parties—Omma, NUP (later UDP), and PDP—and their religious sects. The progressive elements were represented by an amorphous coalition composed of the SCP, the SWATIF, professional associations, white-collar unions, tenant farmers' unions, student unions and other groups."

1 See Chapter II above, pp. 35-38.
The basic cause of the traditional-progressive rift in Sudanese politics could be attributed to the failure of traditional political parties even to approach a solution to the country's economic and social problems. Commenting on the first two years of independence, Mohammed Omar Beshir wrote:

As politicians criss-crossed the floor, more and more Sudanese began to recognize that the system of government under which we are trying to operate was not entirely suitable to our needs, and that some reforms in the structure inherited from the colonial period would have to come. New governments were coming into power in the Middle East and Africa with new ideas, philosophies, and patterns. Various ways out... were being discussed freely by many Sudanese by 1959.¹

To achieve what the traditional parties and later the Abboud military regime were unable to, the progressive forces were offering an economic and political program emphasizing independence of the country from neo-colonial economic domination, rapid industrialisation, economic and social security for the workers, democratization of the government machinery and economic enterprises, agricultural reform, a greater role for the public sector in the economy and an independent and progressive (anti-Western) foreign policy. The coming to power of a government capable of putting such a program into effect was to be worked for through the unity of all elements and groups in the society which could

support such a program.\footnote{The People's Revolution, pp. 7-12.}

As part of the progressive forces' offensive against the traditional parties and the government, the Sudanese labor movement always participated and often led the progressive's offensive against the traditional parties and the governments they formed. Consequently the brunt of the traditional forces' counter-offensive fell on the labor movement. This brings us to the important question of why the labor movement went to the progressive side in the first place?

The reasons for the tendency of the Sudanese labor movement to remain outside the government and join the progressive opposition forces are well summarized in the following statement by (Ican Davies):

"In the Sudan and Nigeria, the leaders of the militant unions were industrial and manual workers and their difference with political leaders were essentially those of a developing proletariat."\footnote{Davies, op. cit., p. 93.}

As we have noted in earlier chapters the Sudanese traditional parties were a product of the marriage between the influential religious sects and modern-educated and Western-oriented elements. \footnote{Following Independence a vigorous and aggressive business class emerged in the country. The traditional parties became heavily dependent on this new class for financial contribution. Noting the influence of the business class, the Sudanese economist Mohammed Hashim Awad wrote:}
This is the nature of the forces that rule the Sudanese people and control their resources and their potential: a group of businessmen and financiers who on the one hand have dominated the industrial, agricultural, and commercial sectors of our economy. On the other hand they have been able to wield great influence in the Government, local councils, the press, political parties and other popular organizations, as these organizations came to depend on them for financial contributions.

The traditional parties, naturally, devoted their efforts to serve the interests of the groups from which they drew their popular and financial support. There was, obviously little or no room for the labor movement in the political formula according to which these parties functioned. The interest shown by the NUP (UDP) in the affairs of the labor movement was negative in nature. It was motivated by the desire to neutralize the influence of the SWTUF. No attempt to provide labor representation in Government machinery or party organization was undertaken by any of the traditional parties.

It was, however, in the economic sphere that the industrial workers suffered most from the insensitivity and neglect of the traditional parties. Wages were practically frozen for almost two decades in the face of rapidly rising prices. The government continued to ignore labor demand for minimum wage legislations, thus allowing a large number of firms in the private sector to pay substandard wages.

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1Mohammed Hashim Awad, Exploitation and Political Corruption in the Sudan, p. 136. (In Arabic.)
Social security measures were among the least adequate in Africa, only recently did the government move to introduce a comprehensive social security scheme in the country. The situation was further aggravated by the development of the "elite-mass gap" discussed in an earlier chapter. The gap was between the high living standards and modern style of life of the rising national bourgeois class and the poverty and misery of rural and urban masses.

Faced with the neglect and sometimes the hostility of the traditional parties, the labor movement was drawn irresistibly to radical political action in search of radical solutions for the workers' problems. The hope for such solutions was offered by the progressive elements. The hope lay in the workers' participation in the government and in the management of industry, and in a socialist and independent economy.

In sum, government-labor relations in the Sudan were characterized by a continuous tug of war between the two parties. On one side the SWTUF, as a part of a broad coalition of progressive forces, working against the government, and on the other the government attempting to undermine the power and influence of the SWTUF in the labor movement. This in turn engaged the SWTUF in a continuous effort to maintain its dominant place in the labor movement.
Labor and Nationalist Governments
(1954-1958)

The confrontation between the SWTUF and the first nationalist government which was formed by the NUP in January of 1954, had its origin in the SWTUF's opposition to the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of 1953. The general strike against the Federation had planned to stage to dramatize its opposition to the Agreement led the traditional parties, especially the NUP, to undertake a vigorous campaign among the large and influential unions to persuade them to stay away from the general strike. The campaign was successful and the SRWU, the largest and most influential union, failed to participate in the general strike, which collapsed as a consequence. From this confrontation with SWTUF the traditional parties learnt the very important lesson that to deny the Federation the support and cooperation of the SRWU was to seriously impair its political effectiveness. From that time on this rule became the corner-stone of government strategy to weaken the SWTUF. This strategy was put into effect even before the NUP came to power. The occasion was the SRWU's General Council and Executive Committee elections during November, 1953. The NUP actively and openly worked for the victory of its supporters within the union. The NUP efforts resulted in the election of an anti-SWTUF Executive Committee.¹

¹El Rai El Aam, October 27, November 5 and 9, 1953.
As early as August, 1953 some indications of SWTUF's attitude toward the nationalist government scheduled to assume the reigns of power the following January was evident. Gasim Amin wrote that all signs indicated that the new Parliament had been designed to safeguard the interest of capitalist and feudal elements and to perpetuate rather than alleviate the present economic crisis. Therefore, he concluded, the working class, the peasants, the shopkeepers, and government employees should expect more and not less sufferings, unless they broadened and deepened their struggle.¹

The first official declaration of SWTUF policy did not come until December, when, in a release to the press the Federation stated that

The solid unity of the workers is the only weapon for the accomplishment of workers' demands under any type of political structure or regime including the new nationalist government. It is also the only weapon through which the workers alongside other sections of the society could defend Parliament against Anglo-American plots and change it to serve the interests of the toilers of our country.²

Later in February, 1954, the Federation, in a reconciliatory gesture, organized a celebration honoring the new Parliament and government. But even as it was doing so, the Federation took the opportunity to remind the MP's and the Ministers that it had no intention of forgoing the

¹El Saraha, August 14, 1953.
²Ibid., December 18, 1953.
pressing of workers' demands. They were, however, assured of the Federation's support as long as they were "on the side of the people."\(^1\)

The nationalist government on its part was not persuaded by the overtures of the SWTUF and went on to declare a policy of "tahrir la ta'mir," literally meaning liberation and not construction. What the Government wanted to convey in this slogan was that its paramount duty, as a transitional government, was to liquidate colonial rule and not to launch a program of economic and social development. Therefore, workers should not bother it with their demands.\(^2\) This policy was strongly rejected by the SWTUF arguing that liberation did not mean very much without development and that it was inadmissible that the very elements which struggled for the liberation of the country should be denied its fruits.\(^3\)

Putting this policy into effect, Yahya El Fadli, the Minister of Social Affairs, refused the Federation's demands that government representatives sit down to negotiate with it. Moreover, El Fadli in a famous statement to the press, a few days before the SWTUF's Annual Convention was scheduled to meet during December of 1954, expressed doubts

\(^1\) El Miedan, November 16, 1954.
\(^2\) Pawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 152.
\(^3\) Ibid.
about the legality of the Federation and its sincerity in representing the workers. At the same time, the Executive Committee of the SRWU which was enjoying the sympathy of the Minister moved to unconstitutionally dismiss Casim Amin, a Communist and a staunch supporter of the SWTUF, from his post as an executive of the union. Police harassment against SWTUF leaders and pro-SWTUF unions became commonplace. The General Secretary of the SWTUF was stopped and searched by police in the middle of the street and the offices of the Nurses Union were searched and their records confiscated by the secret police.

Early in 1955, the Government, under continuous pressure from the SWTUF, member unions, and sympathetic newspapers, agreed to negotiate with the SWTUF on workers' demands. The negotiations continued until the second half of the year when they were interrupted by the mutiny of Army troops in the southern part of the country.

The creation of opposing federations. The two years following the declaration of independence on January 1, 1956, witnessed an intensification of the confrontation.

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1 El Midan, December 16, 1954.
2 Ibid., December 2, 1954.
3 SWTUF, A Preparatory Call for the Achievement of Workers' Immediate Demands, January, 1955, p. 22.
between the SWTUF and the government. During most of this period the country was ruled by a conservative Umma-PDP coalition headed by Abdulla Khalil, the General Secretary of the Umma Party, who pursued a policy of close relations with the West and vigorous anti-Communism. Police harassment against the SWTUF was markedly stepped-up and anti-Federation elements in the labor movement found a congenial environment to grow and develop. The SWTUF's policy under the new circumstances was to (1) win the most urgent demands of the workers, (2) to strengthen workers' unity and eliminate trade union division, and (3) to complete and extend the national independence of the country. The essence of this policy, which continued to guide SWTUF's activities since that time, was an assertion of the Federation's political role which was to be carried on simultaneously with its economic role and alongside a determined effort to defeat attempts to weaken the Federation influence in the labor movement.

On April 27, 1956, the SWTUF staged a general strike protesting the government's hostile attitude and harassing tactics against it. The SRWU and a number of other government workers unions which had already left the Federation early in the year refused to support the strike. In response the government announced that it was ready to

negotiate with individual government workers' unions. The government's move was obviously calculated to by-pass the Federation. To the disappointment of the government, the Federation instructed the fourteen government workers' unions still remaining within its fold to accept the government's invitation, which they did. The government faced with two opposing labor delegations found it extremely difficult to negotiate, and the negotiations broke down.¹

In the meantime anti-SWTUF elements led by the SRWU and its President Hussein El Sayid, had been talking about the formation of three labor federations; one for government workers, the second for workers in the private sector and the third for independent craft and other workers. These federations they suggested could then join a confederation of trade union federations.² In practical terms this meant the dissolution of the SWTUF and the formation of a powerless and politically inept organization. Later in August these elements started to campaign and prepare for a trade union congress to establish a Sudan Government Workers' Trade Unions Federation. The congress was convened on September 15 and its first session was attended by eight of the twenty government workers' unions. The

¹ These events were discussed in ibid., p. 16.

² This idea was originally suggested by Mr. Newman the colonial government's trade union advisor in 1950, see J. S. R. Duncan, The Sudan (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1952), pp. 253-254.
remaining twelve unions which were loyal to the SWTUF attended the second session and promised to apply for membership in the new federation, which they never did. The SGWTUF, anyway, was unable to maintain itself as a viable organization. It established no offices and had no visible activities.¹

Realizing that to stamp out the opposition movement, the SRWU had to be won back, the pro-SWTUF within the SRWU worked hard to win the General Council and Executive Committee elections of their union which were held during December, 1956. Although the pro-SWTUF elements did not win a majority in that election, they were able to improve their position substantially and to elect a less hostile Executive Committee.² Another factor helping to bridge the schism between the SRWU and the Federation was the government's threat to decrease the cost of living allowance as of January, 1957 which resulted in the announcement of a general strike by all unions scheduled for February 12. Confronted with a united labor movement the government withdrew its threat. Following this victory, Mohammed El


Sayid Salam, the President of the SRWU, met with other government workers' unions leaders and issued the following statement:

After honest negotiations in which we took part together with [other government workers' unions leaders], and in accordance with the desires of the workers we state deliberately that the split in our movement was enormously harmful to the workers' interests and aspirations. We are therefore determined to put an end to the existing state of division.¹

Soon after this declaration was announced, steps were taken to convene a constituent congress of a new government workers' unions federation, this time, within the SWTUF. The congress was held on June 25, 1957 and, as Ballal reported, "its outcome was a complete victory for the leaders of the Sudan Workers Federation [SWTUF]. They got their proposed contribution adopted and held all the key positions in the leadership of the new Government Workers Federation."²

Thus, with admirable skill, the SWTUF was able to deliver a crippling blow to the opposition movement.

Meanwhile, the government, late in June passed a law amending the Trade Union Ordinance of 1948 so as to allow the formation and registration of trade union federations and confederations according to the Newman formula.³ The new amendment was part of the movement to destroy the SWTUF

¹Ibid., p. 18.
²Ballal, op. cit., p. 51.
³Ibid., pp. 52-53.
by declaring it an illegal body and conferring legal status on the new defunct SGWTUF. However, the early death of the SGWTUF and its rebirth under the auspices of the SWTUF obstructed the government's designs. But, the government, not to be outmanoeuvered by the SWTUF, helped to create another federation of government workers' unions, this time called the Sudan Central Government Workers' Trade Union Federation (SCGWTUF).\footnote{This and the following events were reported in El Rai El Aam, April 24, May 9 and 11, 1958.} The new organization was hurriedly registered under the new Amendment as a representative of all government workers, in spite of the fact that it was composed of four or five small unions. Furthermore, the government declared that the SWTUF, an illegal organization and refused to register the SGWTUF on the pretext that its registration application did not meet all legal requirements. In spite of this relentless attack by the government and the wavering position of the SRWU, the SWTUF was able to hold its 5th Convention late in April of 1958 which was attended by the representative of forty unions and boycotted by SCGWTUF members. Only a few days after the end of the Convention the government engaged the SWTUF in a new front by choosing one of the leaders of the SCGWTUF as the workers' representative in the Sudan delegation to the 41st Convention of the International Labor Organization held in Geneva during June of 1958. Finally, the government decided
to prosecute the leaders of the SWTUF for failure to register their organization under the Trade Union Ordinance (1957 Amendment). The court which tried them, however, thought that the leaders of the SWTUF had made genuine efforts to comply with law and dismissed the case against them.¹ On its part the SWTUF threw its full weight with other elements demanding the replacement of the Khalil government.

The SWTUF political offensive and the general strike of October 21, 1958.--By October, 1958, the political and economic situation in the country was rapidly deteriorating. The failure of the government to dispose of the 1956-57 cotton crop due to its faulty marketing policy and the low yield of the 1957-58 crop resulted in a severe economic crisis.² On the political front the ruling Umma-PDP coalition led by Abdullah Khalil was shaking under the stress of PDP and popular opposition to Khalil's conservative foreign policy and the American Aid Agreement ratified by Parliament, in the face of strong opposition, a few months earlier.³

Since its 5th Convention held in April, 1958 the SWTUF had been busy mobilizing the workers against the government's

¹Ibid., October 21, 1958.


³Details of the 1958 political crisis are reported in Henderson, op. cit., pp. 108-111.
economic and political line. Demonstrations and rallies protesting the American Aid Program and the austerity measures (increased excise taxes and compulsory savings for the workers) announced by the government to deal with the economic crisis, were organized by the SWTUF in major cities. A general strike to protest the compulsory savings scheme was planned for October 4, but since the government withdrew its scheme the plans for the strike were dropped.\(^1\)

The SWTUF's offensive against the government reached its climax in the general strike of October 21, 1958. The strike which enjoyed the unanimous support of workers' unions and the sympathy of many organized groups and opposition parties, was in protest of the government's economic and political policies and its attitude toward the SWTUF. On the day of the strike a huge demonstration of workers in the Khartoum area marched to the Council of Ministers and presented a memorandum containing the workers' demands. Along the way the workers were repeating slogans denouncing the government and the American Aid Agreement and demanding the improvement of their economic lot.\(^2\)

\(^{1}\)Zakaria, op. cit., p. 13.

\(^{2}\)SWTUF, Lessons from the History of the Labor Movement, pp. 20-21. An interesting and potentially dangerous situation developed during the workers' demonstration when the American ambassador's automobile occupied by the Ambassador himself, drove through the angry demonstration. The demonstration leaders kept their cool and were able to escort the Ambassador to safety. The SWTUF leaders, in a strong
The strike of October 21 served as a rallying point for opposition to the Khalil government. Following the strike a National Front, composed of the SWTUF, tenant unions, student unions, the SCP, the NUP (the Opposition party) and some elements in the PDP (the junior partner in the government), including its President, Ali Abdel-Rahman, came into existence. The declared purpose of the Front was to replace the Khalil government with one capable of carrying out a program centered around the rejection of American aid, the development of economic ties with socialist countries, the improvement of relations and settlement of outstanding problems with Egypt, the recognition of Communist China, and the respect of democratic and trade union liberties.

The Front's plan to displace the Khalil government was simply to win a majority of the M.P.'s to its side and force the government to resign in a vote of confidence. November 17, the day Parliament was scheduled to return from its summer recess, was fixed as the date for executing the plan. As November 17 approached there were clear indications that the government would not survive a vote of confidence. Thus victory for the Front seemed certain. Khalil, however, letter of protest to the Minister of Interior, regarded the incident as a deliberate and arrogant attempt by the American ambassador to insult the workers. See El Rai El Aam, October 30, 1958.

had other plans, and rather than see the opposition in power he literally "invited the military to take over,"\(^1\) which they did in the early morning of November 17, 1958, under the leadership of General Ibrahim Abboud.\(^2\) Thus ended the first period of parliamentary rule in the Sudan and began a new and tempestuous phase in the life of the labor movement.

The Labor Movement Under the Military Regime

The persecution of the labor movement.--Aware of the political potency of the labor movement and the potential threat it presented, the military regime moved early and decisively to suppress all labor organizations in the country. On December 3, 1958, two weeks after the coup and the suspension of political parties and newspapers, the Council of Ministers issued a decree dissolving all labor unions and federations so that the government might be able "to fulfill its responsibility regarding security and the public interest under the declared state of emergency," and until the government could "review the present Trade Union Ordinance and amend it in a manner that would further justice and serve the public interest.\(^2\)\[^2\] A few days later the SWTUF petitioned General Abboud, the Chairman of the Supreme

\(^1\)Beshir, op. cit., p. 4.
\(^2\)El Rai El Aam, December 4, 1958.
Council of the Armed Forces (the new ruling body) and Prime Minister, asking that labor organizations be allowed to resume their function, that the SWTUF as the representative of the vast majority of Sudanese workers be invited to participate in the revision of the Trade Union Ordinance, and that such rights and privileges as provided by the Ordinance be preserved.¹

The government’s response was to arrest some of the leaders of the SWTUF including El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the General Secretary of the Federation.² They were hurriedly tried by a secret military court in which the most elementary rules of due process were ignored. The charge was that the defendants held an unlawful meeting in the premises of El Talia (the SWTUF's newspaper), and that they had connections with the WFTU. The labor leaders received prison terms running up to five years. The imprisonment of El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, who had been elected a Vice President of the WFTU since 1957, brought strong protests from that organization. On February 6, 1959 the Secretariat of the WFTU invited workers and trade unions all over the world:

- To condemn most energetically the persecution of the trade union movement in the Sudan;
- To call on the Government of the Sudan to release Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh and his comrades and restore

¹Ibid., December 9, 1958.
²See The People’s Revolution, pp. 71-76.
trade union rights and democratic freedom;
- to express fraternal solidarity with their imprisoned brothers.\(^1\)

The WFTU in conjunction with the International Confeder-
eration of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) filed a complaint with
the International Labor Organization (ILO) accusing the
Sudan Government of denying the Sudanese workers their
freedom of association and due process under the law.\(^2\)

In spite of the persecution they were subjected to,
the workers were not to be intimidated. On November 1,
1959, a number of union leaders from Khartoum, Atbara, Wad
Medani, and Kosti, most of whom were Communists, petitioned
the government demanding the return of labor unions on the
basis of the 1948 Ordinance and the release of their fellow
unionists. The government refused to receive the petition
and petitioning workers were arrested. The following day,
the workers of the Sudan Railways at Khartoum went out on
a strike to support the arrested workers and their demands.
The strike, which was ruthlessly crushed by the government,
had immediate political repercussions. The students of the
University of Khartoum and the Khartoum Technical Institute
staged sympathy strikes and the SCP issued a statement de-
scribing it as "a fervent call to all Sudanese workers to
rise against the military gang," and urging the workers to

\(^1\) World Trade Union Movement, No. 3 (March, 1959), p. 18.

\(^2\) The People's Revolution, p. 80.
"join in a general strike to defend themselves and their dignity." Other sections of the society were also exhorted by the SCP to "support the workers in this decisive battle to end the rule of the reactionary stooges of imperialism."  

Another event, probably triggered by the strike was the attempt by young progressive officers to overthrow the Abboud regime. The attempt was unsuccessful and its organizers were brought to trial and hanged. Thus, in many ways, the strike of November 2 was the beginning of the movement to overthrow the military regime. In the meantime, the military regime was attempting to create a subservient and nonpolitical labor movement. A new labor law was passed for this purpose.  

The Trade Union Ordinance (Amendment) 1960. The new amendment, which became law on February 9, 1960, placed heavy restrictions on the freedom of association of workers and on the activities of their unions. First, the Ordinance restricted the definition of "employee" to mean "manual workers" only (Sec. 3), thus excluding white-collar workers who had previously enjoyed the right to organize. Another

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1Ibid., p. 91. For details of the strike and its consequences, see pp. 83-92.

2See The Laws of the Sudan, Vol. 8, Title XXII, Sub-Title 6 (Khartoum: The Government Printing Press). Note: The recommendations of the Labor Laws Commission headed by High Court Judge Osman El Tayib, submitted in November, 1959 were substantially changed, to make the law more restrictive, by a ministerial committee.
serious limitation was the raising of the minimum number of persons eligible to form a labor union from ten to fifty (Sec. 8[1]). The Ordinance also provided that no worker shall join any trade union other than that formed by the workers of the Government Department or the private establishment in which he was engaged (Sec. 26[3]). Moreover, the formation of federations was prohibited (Sec. 26[4]) and heavy penalties were specified for union officials who did not comply with provisions of the law (Sec. 7[2], Sec. 19 [3], Sec. 21 [5], Sec. 31, Sec. 32, and Sec. 33). Finally, Section 16 of the Trade Dispute Act, 1960, enacted simultaneously with the Trade Union Ordinance, forbade the workers to strike during the period of currency of any agreement or decision arrived at by negotiations or conciliation or arbitration, or when the dispute was not a trade dispute.

Although the workers resented the new restrictions and expressed their opinion in "a torrent of petitions" to the government, they finally went on to register their unions under the new law realizing that restricted unions were better than no unions at all. The new labor movement was substantially smaller and weaker than it had been prior to the military take-over. Under the new Ordinance only seventy-one unions representing 61,959 workers were able to

\[1\] Khogali, op. cit., p. 149. It is important to mention here that some union leaders, led by Mohammed El Sayid Sal- lam, the former President of the SWTUF, went to the government side and joined its campaign to get the workers' co-operation.
register compared to 135 unions representing 86,355 workers in 1958. \(^1\) Besides, there were no federations or other central bodies. Nonetheless, the new labor movement proved to be as militant as it had always been.

\[\text{The railways strike of June, 1961}^2.\] On May 6, 1961, the SRWU approached the Sudan Railways management and submitted demands including a 50 percent wage increase together with cost-of-living and prices statistics to back it. The Director General of the Railways asked to be given time to verify the union figures. Ten days later the union leaders requested a meeting with the Director who saw no point in negotiating with the union until the information he was expecting from Khartoum had arrived. On the eighteenth, the union notified the Director that it could wait no longer and that it would hold him responsible for the consequences.

The situation in Athara became tense and rumors of an impending strike were rife. On the thirty-first, the Director asked the Commissioner of Labor to interfere in the dispute as provided for by the Trades Disputes Act. The following day the union notified the Railways management that the workers would go on a strike fifteen days later. The Commissioner declared the strike illegal and the Minister of

\(^1\) Sudan Republic, Labour Department, Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1968 (Khartoum: Labour Research Center), p. 32.

Transport issued several statements condemning the strike and warning the workers not to take part in it. The union insisted that the strike was legal and proceeded with its plans to stage it. By now it was clear that the SRWU was defying the authority of the military regime and the whole country turned to watch the outcome of the confrontation.

Three days before the strike, the government dissolved the SRWU. The strike, however, was carried out by the workers as scheduled on June 17 and continued for seven days halting all rail transport in the country and causing considerable damage to the credibility and prestige of the government, giving the movement against the military regime a substantial boost. It was no coincidence that following the strike, the leaders of the dissolved political parties sent a memorandum to General Abboud asking for the return of democratic institutions. This was the first time the leaders of the traditional political parties showed opposition to the military regime. They were immediately arrested and detained in a remote part of the country. As for the Railways workers, the punishment was equally severe. The General Secretary of the SRWU was sentenced by a military court to six months in prison. The rest of the Executive Committee was dismissed from their jobs in the Railways and all workers who took part in the strike faced disciplinary

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1This was El Haj Abdel-Rahman, a member of the SCP, deputy for Atbara constituency in the last Assembly and now Assistant Secretary of the SWUP.
The conference of August, 1963—Following the Railways strike of June, 1962, the government launched a vigorous campaign to win the labor movement to its side. The policy was to purge from labor unions anti-government elements and to involve the Labor Office as much as possible in the settlement of industrial disputes. The man responsible for the execution of this policy was Colonel Muhammed Abdel-Halim, the Commissioner of Labor. Under him the Labor Office was propagating a philosophy of "stability and industrial peace" commending the virtues of "economic" unionism, and was increasingly involved in mediating industrial disputes, especially in the private sector.

By August, 1963, Colonel Abdel-Halim was apparently so convinced of the success of his policy that he decided to hold a labor conference on August 16 to demonstrate the workers' support for the government and to take the necessary measures to create a new federation of labor unions and to discuss other matters of interest. After only a one-week notice the conference opened at the Khartoum Workers' Club on August 16, as scheduled. It was attended by more than 350 delegates representing forty-four unions.

To the surprise of many people, most of all must have been Colonel Abdel-Halim, the conference developed into an

anti-Government forum. At the end of its first session, the conference passed resolutions demanding the repeal of the 1960 Ordinance, the return of the SNWU, the formation of a federation and the lifting of the state of emergency under which the country had been ruled since the military take-over in November of 1958.

Stunned and humiliated by this unexpected turn of events which took place in front of representatives of the press and other observers, Colonel Abdel-Halim selected about forty trusted delegates, hurried them to the Khartoum North Workers' Club across the Blue Nile, following the end of the conference on August 17 and held a meeting to reconsider the resolutions. The Khartoum North meeting amended the conference's resolutions withdrawing the demand for lifting the state of emergency and adding a call to all labor unions to purge Communists from their midst. These decisions were announced in a press conference attended by the same reporters who were present at the first session of the Khartoum conference.1

The conference of August, 1963 not only showed that the labor movement did not support the military regime but also that it had the courage to defy and humiliate it. Moreover, the crude forgery of the conference's resolutions was regarded by many people as a clear testimony to the

1The anti-government resolutions were published by most newspapers the morning of August 17. See El Sudan El Gadid, August 17, 1963.
moral bankruptcy of the regime. The government, however, did not lose hope in the labor movement and in apparent reconciliatory gesture, two months after the August convention, decided to allow the SRWU to reregister and the constituent body, which emerged out of the August conference to work toward the formation of a federation, to go ahead with its mission.

On May 7, 1964, the constituent assembly of the proposed federation met to discuss the constitution of the federation. The meeting successfully resisted attempts by the government to impose a restrictive constitution and called for a labor conference to be held the following August to decide on the matter. As the time for holding the conference approached it became clear that it would be a replay of last year's conference. This, the government was in no mood to tolerate and only three days before the opening of the conference, the Minister of Information and Labor issued a decree cancelling it, dissolving the constituent assembly of the proposed federation, and authorizing the Commissioner of Labor to constitute an executive committee for the proposed federation from representatives of the ten largest unions to work toward its formation.\(^1\)

This again demonstrated the strength of anti-government forces.

\(^1\)El Sudan El Gadid, August 15, 1964. Note: A delegation from the All Africa Trade Union Federation had already arrived in Khartoum to attend the conference.
elements in the labor movement, who, although angered and
disappointed by the cancellation of the conference, started
to mobilize for the next round in their struggle against
the military regime. The next round turned to be a popular
uprising that put an end to the military dictatorship. The
role of the labor movement in the events of the October
Revolution of 1964, which overthrew the military regime,
and its aftermath will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S POLITICAL ROLE
(1964-1969)

The period of 1964-69 began with a unique political event, unmatched in the modern history of either Africa or the Middle East. To my knowledge, nowhere in these parts of the world, had a military regime been overthrown by a popular revolt utilizing a general political strike as was the case of the Sudanese revolution of October 21, 1964. The October Revolution brought to power two successive governments, the first of which was composed largely of revolutionary elements. The general elections of April, 1965, however, brought back the rule of the traditional parties and a pattern of government resembling that of the 1954-58 period developed. After four years of political instability and chaos this second period of parliamentary rule came to an end at the hands of a group of young and progressive Army officers who staged a successful coup d'etat the morning of May 25, 1969.

The following is a discussion of labor's political role in this milieu.
The October Revolution: Labor's Role

On October 21, 1964, the students of the University of Khartoum, who had consistently and openly opposed the military regime since its coming to power in 1958, defied a ban on further discussions of government policy in the southern part of the country and held a meeting on the campus of the University to discuss the issue. The police in an attempt to disperse the meeting opened fire on the students injuring eight and killing one. The incident triggered massive and violent demonstrations in Khartoum. On the twenty-fourth a hastily organized National Front of Associations composed of the Judiciary, the Bar Association, the Medical Association, the Sudanese staff of the University of Khartoum, student unions, tenant farmers unions and labor unions, invited all government employees to cease working until the government was overthrown. The strike was a total success halting all government operations in the country. On the twenty-sixth a group of Army officers joined the revolt and General Abboud was forced to dissolve the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces. On the thirty-first a civilian government headed by a nonpolitical civil servant, Sirr El Khatim El Khalifa, was sworn in. Its major mission was to prepare for general elections to be held no later than March, 1965.

Although the new government included representatives of the traditional political parties (Umma, MUP, PDP, and the Islamic Charter Front), it was dominated by progressive elements. Important among these elements were Ahmed Suliman, representing the SCP; El Amin Mohammed El Amin, representing tenant farmers; and El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, representing the labor movement.

The general political strike of October 24-31.—The October Revolution, spontaneous and unorganized as it might have looked, was the culmination of the relentless struggle by progressive elements, championed by the labor movement, the students and the SCP, against the military regime.

The idea of using a general strike to overthrow the military regime had been introduced by the SCP as early as 1961. Two months after the Railways strike of June, 1961, the SCP issued a call for the mobilization of all revolutionary forces (the labor movement, tenant farmers, students, intellectuals, and the national bourgeoisie) in a general political strike to end military rule in the country. It went as follows:

The Party believes that by vigorous and continuous work among these forces, they could be mobilized into a general political strike which would completely paralyze the present regime. ¹

No date was set for the strike. This had to await the establishment of organizations capable of mobilizing for, and

¹ The People’s Revolution, p. 425.
leading the strike. And even then, "only the level of political and organizational mobilization will determine what is to be done at the right time." The SCP, then, explained the meaning and nature of the general political strike. It defined it as

the stoppage of work by revolutionary forces which takes place when these forces could no longer live under the ruling regime. It, therefore, represents a qualitative change in the position and thinking of the revolutionary forces. The strike does not come in one blow; it comes as the climax of a process designed to deepen revolutionary tendencies among the masses, as the result of experience gained from daily battles, and as the result of establishing a national democratic front as a powerful political force."

Thus, following the promulgation of the idea of the general strike by the SCP, it engaged in "vigorous work" among the revolutionary forces, particularly the labor movement, to prepare them for the right moment. We have seen that among the labor unions, since the Railways strike of 1961, the level of their confrontation with the military regime had been steadily rising, reaching a high point when the government cancelled the conference of August, 1964. The labor movement had been busy mobilizing the workers to force the government to allow them to hold the labor conference and to organize a federation independent from government influence, when the events of October 21 occurred. It was not surprising, therefore, when the labor movement joined other

\[1\] ibid., p. 435.

\[2\] Lessons from the History of the Labor Movement, p. 36.
groups to form the National Front of Associations and to issue the call for the general strike. The loose organization of antigovernment elements in the labor movement was ready when the call for the strike came. In one day, all rail, river and air transport, and telecommunications were halted all over the country. Professional and white-collar organizations joined to make the strike a total success. The entire modern sector of the economy was paralyzed and the military regime was forced to abdicate. It seems reasonable to conclude that the success of the strike, and therefore that of the October Revolution, would not have been possible without the active support of the labor movement.

The Labor Movement as a Participant in Government

The success of the October Revolution, not surprisingly, had radical consequences for the labor movement. First, the 1960 Ordinance was suspended and the movement was allowed to function under the 1948 Ordinance, resulting in the overnight emergence of a large number of unions of white-collar workers and of manual workers in small private sector firms, without awaiting the completion of registration procedures. Secondly, the SWTUP was reestablished with El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, its former General Secretary, holding the same post. Finally, and most important, the workers, as such, were represented in the government in the person of El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, who was appointed Minister of State.
The October government, as it came to be known, was in many ways the kind of revolutionary government, progressive elements had always aspired to have. This was possible because the progressive elements were able, through representatives of the workers, the tenants, the professional associations, and the SCP, to muster a comfortable majority in the Cabinet. The revolutionary character of the October government was manifested, most clearly, in its foreign policy and its purge of the civil service and the police of those elements which had collaborated with the military regime or were suspected of corrupt practices.

This radical turn in the labor movement's political fortunes, resulted in its adoption of an equally radical stance toward the government. Gone were the days when the labor movement regarded the government as an antagonist and spent a great deal of effort opposing it. The role of labor under the new circumstances was to help the government solve the economic crises it inherited from the military regime. To fulfill its new mission, the labor movement as represented by the SWTUF offered to:

1. postpone all workers' demands that involved financial appropriations;
2. to donate one day's pay of each of its members to the Government Treasury;
3. to resolve peacefully, all disputes between employees and their employers.

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1 Henderson, op. cit., pp. 208-209.
2 El Rai El Aam, November 24, 1964.
In essence the SWTUF was proposing that labor unions play the "productionist" role they usually play in Socialist countries. The sense of national unity that followed the Revolution helped the SWTUF in winning support for its new policy, especially among government workers' unions. However, it encountered great difficulty in convincing the small and recently organized unions in the private sector to postpone their demands or forego their right to strike. The position of these unions is understandable when we realize that, they had been denied the right to organize under the 1960 Ordinance, and their members were living under substandard working conditions and low wages. Furthermore, because of their recent introduction to unionism they did not possess the experience or the know-how needed for the peaceful resolution of industrial conflict. These factors should explain the rash of strikes occurring in the small firms of the private sector during November, 1964. The leaders of SWTUF were incensed by these strikes and they accused opposing elements in the labor movement of deliberately instigating the ferment in the private sector to embarrass and weaken the October government. The SWTUF, also, took the unprecedented step of actively participating in settling industrial disputes involving its member unions.

1 I bid., December 2, 1964.
2 I bid., November 29, 1964.
The comeback of the traditional parties. Although the October government enjoyed the full support of most elements in the society, particularly during its early days, the progressive forces controlling it knew that the general elections scheduled for the following March would certainly give control to the traditional parties and liquidate the gains of the October Revolution. In an attempt to forestall this eventuality, the progressive forces took steps designed to develop the National Front of Associations into a full-fledged and permanent political organization. Along the same line, the SWTUF and the Gezira Tenants Association formed a Socialist Democratic Coalition, the aims of which were to "support and enhance the October Revolution until its aims are realized" and "to work for the development of the Sudan along socialist-democratic lines."

The coalition also demanded that constituencies be set aside for the workers and the tenants in the coming Constituent Assembly. Finally, the government announced that the elections could not be held before April 21 and that if further postponement was necessary it would seek a "renewal of mandate." The postponement of the elections, the government talk about renewing its mandate and the move to institutionalize the National Front of Associations, convinced the traditional

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2 Henderson, op. cit., p. 215.
parties that the October government was planning to stay in power indefinitely. They, therefore, decided to move against the October government. A United National Front was formed to coordinate the offensive against the government. The Front immediately demanded that the representation of the traditional parties be increased at the expense of that of the Associations. Members of the Ansar sect who support the Umma Party demonstrated in Khartoum demanding the resignation of the October government. On February 18, under increasing pressure from the traditional parties the government resigned. Six days later a new government controlled by the parties and excluding representatives of the Associations was formed.[1] Thus the first phase of the liquidation of the influence of progressive elements was successfully completed, bringing to an end the brief experience of the labor movement as a participant in government.

In retaliation the SWTUF staged a general strike on February 21. The strike was less than successful and did more to damage the unity of the labor movement than to change political events. The failure of the strike was due mainly to lack of support from the SAWU and other key unions who resented the fact that the Federation called the strike without prior consultation. Other unions under pressure from the parties or because of a genuine desire declared that

they did not like to participate in a political strike.¹

By May, 1965 a Constituent Assembly with fifteen Communist delegates² but controlled by the traditional parties was elected. An Umma-NUP coalition led by Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub formed a new government, thus completing the liquidation of the October Revolution and ending the rise to power of progressive elements.

Labor and Government: 1965-69

The return of parliamentary rule and consequently that of traditional control, meant the renewal of the pattern of labor-government relations that prevailed during 1954-58. This time, however, the confrontation was more intense and the antagonists more determined. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the progressive forces, of which the labor movement was a vital part, emerged from the experience of October, 1964 with impressive credentials to prove their political influence. After all, had not they been able to mobilize the working force of the entire modern sector of the economy into a general strike forcing a military regime to abdicate? Such credentials the traditional parties could ignore to their own peril, and they, certainly, did not.

¹See El Rai El Aam, February 21, 1965.

²They were representing nonterritorial constituencies in which only persons with at least secondary education were allowed to vote.
The return to the old pattern.--As mentioned above, the Constituent Assembly which was elected in April, 1965, had fifteen Communists among its members. The majority of the Communist Deputies were university graduates--a definite advantage in a body heavily populated with traditional elements. The presence of these Deputies in the Assembly gave the SCP an excellent forum from which to attack government policies and to disseminate its ideology. This coupled with the legal status and the popularity the SCP had enjoyed since the October Revolution provided a congenial environment for it to grow and prosper. Under such a state of affairs, it was inevitable that the traditional parties would move to curb the influence of the SCP. An opportunity came when a student at the Higher Teacher's Training Institute, addressing a political meeting, made uncomplimentary remarks about the Prophet Mohammed. The public was infuriated by the incident and supporters of the Islamic Charter Front and the ruling parties took to the streets demanding the banning of the SCP, of which the offending student was allegedly a member. Although the SCP denounced and dissociated itself from the incident, the Assembly, "bowing to public pressure," voted on December 8, 1965, to amend the Transitional Constitution, outlawing the SCP and depriving its Deputies of their seats.\footnote{Ibid., December 9, 1965.}
The banning of the SCP was followed by a campaign to weaken Communist influenced organizations. The SWTUF, naturally, received most of the attention and several measures were taken by the government to weaken it and undermine its influence in the labor movement.

First, the government ignored the SWTUF numerous requests for negotiations on workers' demands. Secondly, a large number of pro-Federation union leaders in the public sector were transferred to other places by the government during their term of office in the unions. Thirdly, the Trade Union Ordinance (Amendment) Bill, 1966, was passed to provide for, among other things, the formation and registration of federations and confederations. The Amendment, however, stipulated that unions could federate only if they related to the same industry or were comprised of the employees of the same employer, and that only federations, thusly formed, could join together to form a confederation of federations. This law obviously jeopardized the position of the SWTUF which was neither a federation nor a confederation under it. Expectedly, the government refused to register the SWTUF and two federations, the Public Sector Trade Unions Federation and the Private Sector Trade Unions Federation were formed by anti-SWTUF elements in the labor movement and were encouraged by the government to

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1Section 30.
register. Finally, the Regulation of Trade Dispute Act, 1966, prohibited the workers from striking, before applying for negotiations, when an application was submitted to the Labor Commissioner for mediation, when mediation or arbitration procedures were taking place or when the dispute was not a trade dispute.\(^1\) This law also stipulated that:

The legislative authority may refer a dispute, without the consent of the disputing parties, to an Arbitration Tribunal for settlement, if that dispute may jeopardize public tranquility, or the distribution of supplies or public utilities and essential services for the community.\(^2\)

The decisions of such an arbitration tribunal would have the force of a decree and were not subject to appeal.\(^3\) These provisions were viewed by the SWTUF as an attempt by the government to deprive the workers of the right to strike, a right they had enjoyed even during colonial times.

To protest the government's hostile attitude and actions toward the labor movement, the SWTUF, this time in close cooperation with the newly organized Federation of Government (salaried) Employees, successfully organized a huge march of workers and employees to the Council of Ministers on March 21, 1966, and presented a petition demanding immediate negotiations and calling on the government to cancel the transfer of union leaders, to withdraw the Trade

\(^1\)Section 27.
\(^2\)Section 18.
\(^3\)Section 23.
Disputes Act and to give the workers representation in the Wages Commission. ¹

The government responded by stating that the two federations organizing the march had no legal status and until they were duly registered the government did not feel any obligation to negotiate with them. ² The SWTUF's next move was to announce a one-day general strike to take place on June 15. The government immediately denounced the strike as an illegal and political act, arguing that there was no direct "trade dispute" between the government and the SWTUF, and the federation had no legal status anyway. ³ Furthermore, the Prime Minister, in a radio address to the nation, stated that the government had an obligation to better the living conditions of all the people and not only a small group of organized citizens. He also declared that the strike planned by the SWTUF would seriously damage the economy and hamper the Army's effort to quell the rebellion in the south. ⁴

¹ El Rai El Aam, March 22, 1966. Note: The Wages Commission was formed by the Minister of Finance on August, 1965, to review the structure of wages in the government and to recommend the necessary changes.


⁴ Ibid., June 10, 1966.
At the same time, however, the government made a reconciliatory gesture to the Federation. This came in the form of a press statement by the General Secretary of the NUP, one of the ruling parties, declaring that his Party had always sympathized with the labor movement and that he saw no reason why the government should not negotiate with the workers as long as the country's economic situation was taken into consideration by both parties.\textsuperscript{1} The fatal blow to the success of the strike came when the SRWU announced that it had no intentions of participation in the strike and the Minister of Transport, Nasr El Din El Sayid, personally dismissed forty-three pro-Federation workers and salaried employees of the Sudan Railways, accusing them of Communist allegiances and of lowering production standards.\textsuperscript{2} Faced with this concerted attack the SWTUF had no choice but to withdraw its threat to strike.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{The labor movement and Sadig El Mahdi.}--The end of July, 1966, saw the access to power by Sadig El Mahdi, the young President of the Umma Party.\textsuperscript{4} As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter,\textsuperscript{4} the defeat of the Umma-NUP coalition

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., June 8, 1966.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., June 11, 1966.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3}SWTUF, The General Strike: Facts and Figures, Trade Union Studies Series, Seventh Book (Khartoum, 1968), p. 12.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{4}See Chapter II above, p. 38.}
government and the election of Sadiq El Mahdi as Prime Minister was the result of the Umma Party splitting into two opposing factions; one headed by Imam El Hadi El Mahdi, the patron of the Ansar sect, and the other led by his Oxford educated nephew, Sadiq El Mahdi. The cause of the split was Sadiq's attempt to separate party from sect, to recruit new and younger leadership, propose meaningful programs for the country's development, and generally give the Party a modern and progressive image. In essence Sadiq's movement was a reformist endeavor growing from the realization that the traditional parties as they were, were incapable of solving the country's economic and social problems, and that unless something was done to reform the traditional parties, the rising progressive elements would, inevitably, inherit political power in the country. Only in this context does Sadiq's labor policy, which constituted a radical though temporary departure from the anti-SWTUF line pursued by traditional parties since the advent of self-rule in 1954, become comprehensible.

A few weeks following his election as Prime Minister, Sadiq invited the SWTUF leaders to the government guest house where he told them of his desire to recognize their organization and to establish friendly relations with it. On October 6, the SWTUF and eighty-eight member trade unions gave a tea party in honor of the Prime Minister and to show appreciation of his new policy. The Prime Minister took
that opportunity to reiterate the new policy which he termed "sectional coexistence"—the coexistence of different sections of the society. He explained that "the will of the nation must be united and sectional and political differences resolved if the country was to move forward."¹

A week later, on October 15, the SWTUF, for the first time in its history, was registered as a legal workers' unions federation.²

The rift between traditional and progressive elements in the Sudan was too wide and the issues separating them too basic for a policy of coexistence between the two antagonists to reap anything more than a temporary success. Therefore, it was only a matter of time for the honeymoon between Sadig's government and the SWTUF to come to an end. This fact was increasingly evident in the early months of Sadig's rule as the SWTUF had no success in bringing the government to the negotiating table. Serious trouble, however, did not arise until December 22, when the Khartoum High Court handed its anxiously awaited decision on the constitutional case lodged by the SCP after it had been outlawed a year earlier. The Court decided that the Amendment banning the SCP was "unconstitutional and therefore void with all consequential legislation passed on the force of

¹El Rai El Aam, October 7, 1966.

²SWTUF, Annual Report, December, 1965-October, 1966, p. 11. (Mimeoographed.)
The traditional parties, in and outside the government, condemned the Court's decision and the Prime Minister declared that his government would not be bound by the Court's decision. A full-blown political crisis developed, and the supporters of the traditional parties clashed in the streets of Khartoum with the supporters of the Court's decision. The latter mainly workers mobilized by the SWTUF, students, and other groups sympathetic with the SCP. Obviously, the resumption of active conflict between progressive and traditional elements was apt to leave no room for amicable relations to endure between the SWTUF and the government. Only one week following the Court's decision, the Prime Minister announced over the radio that an attempted coup d'état was discovered and crushed and that his government had full knowledge of the details of the conspiracy. The next morning several members of the SCP including Abdel Khalig Mahgoub, its General Secretary, and El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the General Secretary of the SWTUF were arrested in connection with the coup. They were, however, released a few days later for lack of evidence. This incident was the coup de grace that brought to a conclusion the only period of friendly relations between a

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1 Tigani T. Babiker, op. cit., p. 32. Political developments arising from the Court's decision are also reported in this article.

2 Ibid., pp. 34-5.
government under traditional control and the SWTUF.

A few months later, in May, 1967, Sadig himself lost his job as Prime Minister and a coalition between the conservative wing of the Umma Party, the NUP, and the PDP formed a new government with Mohammed Ahmed Mahoub as its Prime Minister. This meant a resumption of the old pattern of conflict between the government and the SWTUF.

The SWTUF in politics.--The independent Khartoum newspaper El Rai El Aam summarized the political situation in the Sudan toward the end of 1967 in the following terms:

Maneuvers are overshadowing everything else. ... The present skirmishes do not appear to us to be based on ideological considerations or clear aims, maneuver itself has come to overshadow important issues concerning the national interest. ... The different political groups are worried and suspicious of each other and the citizens are wondering what will happen next.¹

This state of affairs had been typical of Sudanese parliamentary politics since the attainment of self-rule in 1954. The indulgence of the traditional political parties in this kind of fruitless political conflict, to the detriment of the country's development and stability, had been a consequence of their preoccupation with holding political power for obtaining personal gain rather than for seriously attempting to solve the country's chronic problems.²

¹Quoted in Africa Report, 13, No. 1 (January, 1968), 33.

²For a discussion of the nature of the traditional parties and their failure to cope with the country's problems, see chap. II, pp. 39-42, above, and Beshir, op. cit., p. 3.
Fundamental issues, however, had always been at the root of the traditional parties' confrontation with the progressive elements. One such fundamental issue was the nature of the country's Constitution which at the time was being drafted by the Constituent Assembly.

During January and February, 1968, a concerted attack was launched against the Draft of the country's proposed Constitution by the SWTUF, the Federation of Government Employees, the Federation of Teachers' Unions (now joined in a Coordinative Council of Federations of Workers and Employees), the Bar Association, and the SCP. On February 9, the SWTUF in a statement to "the Sudanese people and all workers,"\(^1\) described the continuous political crisis in the country as "a natural consequence of the rejection of the tenets of the October Revolution by reactionary forces in our country." The statement asserted that the most important political problem facing the country was that of the infringement upon democratic rights by the Draft of the Constitution being debated by the Assembly.\(^2\) The SWTUF called upon all people to reject the Draft because "it does not meet the aspirations of our people for a meaningful democratic life," and because "it was sponsored

\(^1\) El Ayam, February 9, 1968.

\(^2\) The Draft included a ban on the activities of the SCP and all other organizations disseminating "atheistic beliefs," and a proposal for an American-type presidential system.
and supported not only by local reactionary circles but also by the forces of imperialism." The only way to rescue the country from the vicious circle it was caught in, the SWTUF declared, "was through the participation of producing forces [workers, employees, and professionals] in the government of the country, so that they might be able to fulfill their responsibility and take their natural place in the legislative and executive organs of government."

The SWTUF finally called upon the organizations of "producing forces" to rise to the occasion and "defend the country's interests, in their usual determination and tenacity."

As a result of the vigorous campaign by the SWTUF and allied groups, and differences among the traditional parties themselves, the Assembly was unable to adopt the Draft. Instead, a new Commission was formed to revise the Draft. This commission was busy revising and the SWTUF was continuing its campaign for a more liberal constitution when the coup d'état of May, 1969 occurred rendering the whole issue irrelevant.

The SWTUF also took a decisive step to implement its concept of workers' participation in the government of the country. Two labor candidates were entered in the general elections of April-May, 1968; El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the General Secretary of the SWTUF, running in Khartoum-

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1In an interview with an editor of Akhbar El Isbu, El Shafie vowed that the workers will continue their fight for a democratic constitution, May 2, 1969.
South, and El Haj Abdel-Rahman, the Assistant General Secretary, running in Atbara. The labor candidates, together with candidates representing tenant farmers' organizations and the SCP, were running behind the banner of the ad hoc Socialist Front with a platform advocating a socialist economic policy at home and an anti-Western foreign policy. Both candidates faced stiff competition from prominent NUP leaders, and of the two candidates only Abdel-Rahman was successful. Although El Shafie was not elected, he found satisfaction in the fact that he was opposed by the NUP Vice President and that he lost by the slim margin of a few hundred votes.

The general strike of August, 1968.--The registration of the SWTUF in October, 1966 deprived the government of its main argument for refusing to negotiate with the Federation. By the end of 1967, the government could no longer resist increasing pressure by the SWTUF and the press and agreed to sit down and negotiate. A committee of three Ministers headed by the Minister of Finance handled the negotiations with the SWTUF on behalf of the government. On January 29, 1968, an agreement was reached and broadcast to the nation. The agreement covered more than twenty items ranging from wages and working conditions to issues concerning the security and freedom of union executives. On

1"The Labor Movement in the Vanguard of the People," campaign pamphlet issued by SWTUF.
the wage issue, the most important, the government promised to hasten the submission of the Wages Commission report and to give the Federation the opportunity to study it before deciding on its recommendations.¹

Four months later little was done by the government to implement the agreement of last January. The Wages Commission Report, however, came out in May recommending, among other things, wage increases for government workers and revision of the whole wage structure.² The government accepted the Commission's recommendation and informed the SWTUF that it intended to adopt them. The SWTUF, on its part, had serious reservation about the new wage structure. First, it resented the fact the government decided on the Commission's recommendations without bothering to wait for the Federation's opinion as it had promised. Second, the Report excluded workers in the private sector and did not make it clear whether workers of government corporations were included or not. Third, the Federation criticized the criteria by which the minimum wage was determined as unjust and unrealistic. Finally, the job evaluation and classification scheme used by the Commission was rejected as


Late in July the Federation announced a general strike, to take place on August 20, to protest the drawbacks of the new wage structure and the government's feet-dragging in implementing the agreement of January, 1968. Following this announcement, the SWTUF embarked on a vigorous campaign to mobilize the workers for the strike. Several regional conferences, factory meetings and rallies were organized by the Federation for that purpose. Everything was going well for the SWTUF until the SRWU decided not to participate in the strike. Its president, Mohammed El Hassan Abdulla, a known UDP adherent, argued that the SWTUP had announced the strike before explaining the drawbacks of the new wage structure to member unions and that, in his opinion, the Commission's recommendations met the aspirations of the workers. Pro-SWTUF elements inside the SRWU, led by its General Secretary, Hashim El Saeed, were quick to denounce the decision not to support the strike, and vowed to work for its success in spite of the official position of their union.

1. Workers' Demands and the General Strike, p. 34.
4. Ibid., August 9, 1968.
In spite of the opposition by the SRWU and attempts by the government to undermine it, the strike was successfully staged as scheduled on August 20.  

The significance of the August, 1968 general strike arises from the fact that it was the only general strike in the history of the labor movement to succeed without the support of the SRWU. This was a reflection of certain structural changes in the labor movement. By 1968, although the SRWU was still the largest union in the country (more than 25,000 members), there were two unions with membership of more than 6,000 members. Thus, the undisputed position of supremacy, the SRWU had enjoyed since the emergence of the labor movement, was now seriously challenged.

The strike also showed that, armed with its legal status, the SWTUF could devote more time and energy in preparing for general strikes and other collective actions, thereby enhancing their chance of success. All in all, the SWTUF emerged from the strike of August, 1968 as a strong and confident organization, which had the support of the vast majority of workers and legal protection from government harassment.

During the early months of 1969, the SWTUF was still pressing the government for the implementation of the

1 Ibid., August 22, 1968.
January, 1968 agreement and for extending the benefits of the Wages Commission's recommendations to the private sector.\textsuperscript{1} On the political front the campaign against the Draft of the Constitution was picking momentum as the traditional parties were approaching agreement on having a presidential system of government. Even before the Constitution was adopted the major political issue in the country at the time was the expected Presidential elections and it was generally known that there were going to be three candidates for President: Azhari, representing the UDP, El Hadi El Mahdi, the Umma Party, and Babiker Awadalla, the Socialist Front. Under such circumstances, it was no wonder that political questions were looming large in the minds of the leaders of the SWTUF. This was clearly evident in the march and rally, organized by the SWTUF to celebrate May Day, 1969, where anti-government slogans were repeated and a feeling of resentment against the government was prevalent.

Had it not been for the military coup d'etat which overthrew the parliamentary government of Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub, on May 25, 1969, the charged political situation would have most likely engaged the SWTUF and the government in active and bitter political conflict.

The coup of May, 1969 brings to an end the period under investigation in this study.

\textsuperscript{1}SWTUF General Secretary’s Address to the Regional Branches Conference at Wad Medani, March 10, 1969. (Mimeographed.)
CHAPTER VI

THE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

This chapter will be devoted to the description and analysis of the structure and government of the Sudanese labor movement. As has been the case throughout this study the focus will be on the influence of environmental factors.

By structure we are referring to the manner in which the organizations composing the labor movement are constructed and how they relate to each other. Thus we will be looking at the size, type, pattern of growth, and regional and economic distribution of labor unions. By government we mean the manner in which the internal affairs of labor organizations are managed and their business conducted. In this regard we will concern ourselves with issues such as leadership, democracy, finance and internal management of unions.

Structural Features

Data on the structure of the labor movement was obtained mostly from the records of the Labor Department and the Registrar of Trade Unions. The accuracy and coverage of these records leaves much to be desired.

144
Therefore, the account given below is, at best, approximate.

Growth patterns.--Since the promulgation of the Trade Union Ordinance in 1948, which allowed the establishment of labor organizations, unions have experienced a steady growth. This pattern was, however, seriously interrupted during the military regime of 1958-1964.

Table 2 shows that labor unions grew from five in 1949, the year the Trade Union Ordinance became effective, to 134 in 1958, just prior to the military coup d'etat in November of that year. Under military rule labor unions were first suspended, but were later allowed to function under a new law—the Trade Union (Amendment) Act of 1960. This law imposed various restrictions on the freedom to form labor unions; by raising the minimum number of workers who could form a union, excluding white-collar and independent craft workers. Consequently the maximum number of unions registered during the military regime dropped to 74.

The return of parliamentary government, following the

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1 The Trade Union Ordinance follows closely the British Trade Union Act. The Ordinance defines a trade union as, "a combination of the principal purpose of which is the regulation of relations between workmen and employers, or between employers and employers." The Ordinance provides trade unions with certain immunities from legal prosecution. It stipulates that "a trade union shall not be liable to criminal prosecution for conspiracy." In a fundamental departure from the British Act the Ordinance requires compulsory registration of trade unions. Any ten or more members may apply for registration on behalf of the union. For more details see Fawzi, The Labour Movement, pp. 83-86.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Unions</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Political Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-- a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>Colonial period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>86,255</td>
<td>First parlia-mentary period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>61,959</td>
<td>Military regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86,163</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>124,842</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>154,023</td>
<td>Second parlia-mentary period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>162,284</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Dashes stand for: figures unavailable.

Source: Adapted from Sudan Republic, Labour Department, Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1968, p. 37, with the exception of figures for 1951 and 1952 which were taken from Pawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 95.
October Revolution of 1964 changed the political picture radically, and by 1966 the number of union was registered at 260, reaching a high of 357 in 1968. Many factors were responsible for the surge in labor union organization following the October Revolution. First of all, was the repeal of the 1960 Act with its restrictions on the freedom of association; second, the rapid growth in the number of industrial firms particularly in the private sector; and finally, the Revolution itself. Following the success of the Revolution, in which organized labor played a vital role, and the participation of labor and professional organizations in the October Government, it became clear that unionization was not only a way to better wages and working conditions but also to political power. Thus, another incentive for unionism was added, which most probably was responsible for some of the large increase in the number of unions following the October Revolution.

The growth of the total number of organized workers has followed a similar pattern. There were 37,793 union members in 1951 (figures for 1949 are unavailable), rising to a total of 86,355 by 1958. When unions were allowed to return in 1960, union membership stood at 61,355. This, however, rapidly increased reaching 124,842 by 1964. This shows that the restrictions imposed by the 1960 Act were more than offset by the emergence of relatively large industries at the time. Following the October Revolution
union membership continued to increase, reaching 154,827 in 1966 and 162,284 in 1968.

Due to the inadequacy of statistics on the labor force we will not be able to show changes over time in the number of organized workers as a percentage of the industrial labor force. The only year for which figures on employment in both the public and private sectors are available is 1961, with a total of about 153,000 employed persons. Unfortunately, no figures on union membership are available for that year. However, since employment could not have changed much within one year, adequate results should be obtained by using union membership figures for 1962, which were 84,163. Dividing 84,163 by 153,000, we obtain a percentage of about 56, which should give us some idea about the rate of organization in the Sudanese labor movement. It should be noted that during 1960-1964 unionization was restricted to blue collar workers and to establishments with 50 or more workers. Therefore the present rate of unionization must be much higher than indicated, particularly when we know that almost all government workers are unionized.

Size.--Looking at Table 3, we readily see that unions of small size predominate. Almost 80 percent of the unions in 1968 had less than 200 members, and 88 percent had less than 400 members. Medium-sized unions (401-2,000 members) accounted for 7.6 percent, and large unions (above 2,000) made 4.2 percent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Union</th>
<th>Number of Unions</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>30-200</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>20,636</td>
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<tr>
<td>201-400</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8,494</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>801-1,200</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,201-1,400</td>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>1,636</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,401-1,600</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,601-2,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>3,370</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,001-6,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>26,587</td>
<td>16.5</td>
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<td>6,001-14,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>16,063</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>14,001-25,000</td>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>40,815</td>
<td>25.4</td>
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<td>above 25,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>160,745</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin, p. 29.
It should be noted that although small unions predominate, the vast majority of workers were organized in a small number of large unions. For instance only 18.3 percent of the total membership belonged to the 88 percent of unions accounted for by the small unions (less than 400) while, almost 70 percent of the organized workers belonged to 14 large unions, comprising only 4.2 percent of the total number of unions. Moreover, we find 42.8 percent of the total membership organized in three unions, with the SRWU alone having 28,000 workers (17.4 percent). The concentration of the vast majority of organized workers in a few large unions, especially, the SRWU, helps to explain the important position these unions occupied in the labor movement.

Examining changes in union size over time (Tables 3, 4, and 5), we see that, in general, the same pattern persisted through the years. For example, the high percentage of small unions was evident in both 1958 and 1960 with 83 and 76 percent, respectively. The relatively low percentage of small unions in 1960 reflects the 50 members minimum imposed by the 1960 Act. Similarly, the pattern of the concentration of most workers in a few large unions was maintained over time. Thus, the large unions had 66 percent of organized workers in 1958, rising to 68 percent in 1960, to reach 70 percent in 1968.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Number of Unions</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total No.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Mem-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bership of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>48.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and under 100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>18.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 and under 300</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>10.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 and under 500</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 and under 1,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 and under 1,500</td>
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<td>6,500</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500 and under 2,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 and under 5,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 and under 8,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000 and under 10,000</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 and under 20,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 and under 30,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26,500</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>86,355</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Registrar of Trade Unions, Khartoum.
## Size of Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Number of Unions</th>
<th>Members of Unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and under 100</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 and under 300</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 and under 500</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 and under 1,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 and under 1,500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500 and under 2,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 and under 5,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 and under 8,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000 and under 10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 and under 20,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 and under 30,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Registrar of Trade Unions
One significant change is the rise in the number of large unions and the consequent erosion in the relative position of the SRWU. For example, in 1958 the SRWU, as the largest union, had 26,500 members, while, the second largest union had only 8,000 members. In 1968 there were two unions in the 6,001-14,000 category, another two in the 14,001-25,000 category, with the SRWU, still the largest with 28,000 members.

As shown in the previous chapter, this structural development had important consequences, in that it enabled the SWU to stage successful general strikes without the participation of the SRWU which, hitherto, had been vital to the success of general strikes in the country.¹

**Economic and geographic distribution.**--Table 6 shows the distribution of unions and union membership among the different areas of economic activity. Examining the table, we find that out of 160,745 organized workers in 1968, only 12,707 were in manufacturing. The largest concentration of workers (45,262) was in transport; followed by services, with 41,032; agriculture, with 32,426; banking and commerce, with 14,706; manufacturing, with 12,707; and finally, construction, and power, with 11,045 and 3,407 respectively.

Regionally, Table 7, shows that in 1968, the vast majority of unions and union membership were concentrated

¹See Chapter V, above, p. 142.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mining</th>
<th>Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry</th>
<th>Manufacturing Industry</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Electricity and power</th>
<th>Banking and Commerce</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>32,426</td>
<td>12,707</td>
<td>11,045</td>
<td>3,406</td>
<td>14,706</td>
<td>45,272</td>
<td>41,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total:  
Number of Unions — 332  
Membership — 160,745

**TABLE 7**

**NUMBER OF UNIONS AND UNION MEMBERSHIP BY PROVINCE AS OF JULY 1968**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of Unions</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khartoum</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>90,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassala</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Nile</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kordufan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar Fur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Nile</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatoria</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahr El Ghazal</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>332</strong></td>
<td><strong>160,745</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in the Northern and Northeastern provinces. The Khartoum, Northern, Kassala, and Blue Nile provinces, had among them 320 out of the total of 332 unions, and 157,499 out of the total of 160,745 union members. The largest concentration of unions and union membership in any one province was found in Khartoum, with 227 unions and 90,527 union members.

This distribution, to a large degree, reflects the uneven economic development of different regions in the country. The picture is, however, somewhat distorted by the fact that Table 7 classifies unions according to where their headquarters are located rather than where their members work. Thus, the SRWU, a national union with members all over the country, was classified as a Northern Province union. Therefore, a classification of unions based on the place of work of the membership should reveal a more even regional distribution of organized workers.

Union types.—Traditionally labor unions have been classified according to the category of workers whom they organize.1 Thus, there are craft unions which seek to organize all employees in a single or several related occupations regardless of the industry in which they are employed. The second classification is the industrial union, which organizes all the employees in a particular

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industry or service whatever their occupation. The third category, are the general unions which open their doors to all workers without distinction. A fourth type of union is the white-collar union. This organizes nonmanual workers in the same occupation or profession.

Using this system of differentiation to trade unions in Great Britain, Flanders observed that it "is too arbitrary to provide more than an over-simplified picture."

The different patterns of industrial evolution and workers' unions development in developing countries, renders the application of such a system of classification even less rewarding. The utility of this typology in developing countries could be improved, however, if a fifth union type is added. This is what came to be known as the "house" or "enterprise" union. The house union organizes all the workers in a particular firm or enterprise regardless of their occupation or skill. In many ways the house union resembles the branch of the large industrial unions in industrialized countries except that it has no connection with similar "branches." In other words it is an industrial union at the plant or enterprise level.

Table 8 shows that the largest group of blue collar unions in the Sudan as of 1968, were of the enterprise type, accounting for 142 out of the total of 305 unions. Three main factors were responsible for the emergence and

1 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Enterprise</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Craft</th>
<th>White-collar and Professional</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from the Registrar of Trade Unions, "List of Registered Trade Unions." (Mimeographed.)
predominance of this form of labor union organization. First, was the rudimentary stage of industrial development of the country. The dearth of large scale industries and the difficulty of communication made the enterprise or the plant the logical and most convenient level at which workers could be organized into labor unions. Secondly, the lack of experience on the part of union leaders and the illiteracy of the vast majority of the rank-and-file tipped the scale in favor of the small and hence more manageable enterprise type. Thirdly, was the attitude of most employers who naturally favor dealing with a union formed and led by their own employees rather than by outsiders.

Enterprise union were found in both public and private sectors, the majority (88), however, were in the private sector. This was due to the fact that the public sector had larger and fewer units than the private sector. The Nile Textile Company Workers' Trade Union with 57 members, and the Khartoum North Municipality Workers Trade Union with 160 members are examples of this type of union in the Sudan.

The essence of industrial unionism, wrote G. D. H. Cole, "lies in its revolutionary basis. Its exponents argue that separate Trade Unions divide the workers into contending groups, instead of uniting them for the struggle to overthrow the capitalist class."¹ In the Sudan where

¹Cole, op. cit., p. 83.
of these industries had been centralized in an Industrial Development Corporation reduced the effectiveness of unions at the plant level and made amalgamation a necessity.

Table 8 shows that craft unionism, "the first stable manifestation of trade unionism in the older developed nations of the west," was not common. Only 23 out of the total of 305 unions could be classified in this category. This phenomenon could be largely explained in terms of the nature of the industrial development of a developing country like the Sudan. As Walter Galenson explained:

The conditions which led to the growth of craft unions in nineteenth-century industrialization—the emergence of the workshop as the antecedent of the factory, pre-industrial organization of labor under the guild system, the relative numerical importance of the skilled craftsmen in the industrial labor force, among others—are usually not reproduced in the twentieth-century economic development.¹

An interesting structural feature of the Sudanese labor movement revealed by Table 8, is the large number (118) of white-collar and professional unions, amounting to almost 40 percent of all unions. No figures on the over-all rate of white-collar organizations are available. However, since almost all white-collar and professional workers in the government were organized, and that government was by far the largest employer of this type of labor, they must be enjoying a very high rate of organization.

The large number of white-collar unions, also, indicate the same thing.

In industrialized countries, white-collar and professional workers have not been an easy group to organize. In the United States, for example, where white-collar workers outnumber blue collar workers, unionization among the latter made only limited progress.\(^1\) This has, generally, been attributed to the attitudes and social values of white-collar workers, and the better working conditions they usually enjoy—at least until recently.\(^2\) The question why white-collar and professional workers are more susceptible to unionization in the Sudan, a developing country, than in the United States, a highly industrialized country, arises.

Four major factors seem to be responsible for the high rate of white-collar organization in the Sudan. First was the fact that, at the time of the emergence of the labor movement and until Independence, most, if not all, the employers of white-collar and professional labor were foreigners. This factor helped to spur unionization among white-collar and professional workers in two ways. First, was the natural resentment of foreign domination. The emergence of the labor movement at a time when the nationalist

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 355-356.
movement was gaining momentum, gave this factor a special importance. Secondly, was the fact that white-collar employees were paid low wages in comparison to the foreign expatriates, and since the top post were occupied by these expatriates, there were no prospects for advancement. In unionism, white-collar workers found a vent for their grievances.

The second factor in the high rate of white-collar and professional organization, is to be found in the influence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. As have been mentioned earlier, the influence of this ideology was most pronounced among the educated class.\(^1\) We have also seen that the ideology places great emphasis on the organization of all "working people." It is no coincidence, therefore, that a large number of the white-collar unions, particularly among teachers, were highly politicized and generally, follow the political line of the progressive elements.

The third factor is the fact that the vast majority of white-collar and professional workers in the Sudan were employees of the government. It has been the experience in many countries, that public white-collar employees are more prone to unionization than their counterpart in the private sector. The main reason behind this phenomenon as explained by Sturmfhal is that,

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\(^{1}\) See Chapter II, above, section on SCP.
civil service employment is based in principle upon a set of rules ultimately determined by the employer. Wages and working conditions are set down by regulations and decrees. The individual sees himself confronted by an overwhelming power. The protection of the union seems indispensable to him, if he is to influence his fate at all.\footnote{Adolf Stromthal, "White-Collar Unions: A Comparative Essay," in Stromthal, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 380.}

Another reason is that public employers are generally more responsive to the idea of unionism than private employers.

The fourth and final factor which explains the high rate of white-collar unionization in the Sudan was the increasingly slow pace of advance for white-collar and professional employees in the government. This was a result of the fact that following the departure of the British young Sudanese moved to occupy the top posts in the civil service. This, coupled with the lack of economic expansion was apt to reduce promotional chances for the civil servants. The consequent frustration was aggravated by the high expectation levels of most educated Sudanese who expect that a university degree or even a secondary school certificate is a guarantee of high office and a comfortable life. This was certainly true during the early years of independence but was no longer so five or ten years later.\footnote{For an illuminating discussion of the "relative deprivation" of government employees in independent African countries, see, A. Zolberg, "Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa," \textit{American Political Science Review}, LXII, No. 1 (March, 1968), 74.} Under such circumstances, unionism became an attractive alternative.
Finally, Table 8 reveals the absence of general unions in the Sudan. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the emergence of enterprise unions in which all workers, regardless of skill are organized, was apt to discourage general unionism, which also cater for all workers regardless of skill. It could be argued, however, that in a politicized labor movement, general unions because of the ease in which they could be mobilized for political action, must have great utility. This is, generally, true. However, if a strong federation of unions could be created and maintained, and the "proper" ideological and political orientation successfully propagated, even the small enterprise unions could be effectively mobilized for political action as was the case in the Sudan. This brings us to our next point.

The dominance of the federation.—One of the important structural features of the Sudanese labor movement which puts it in contrast to the labor movements of many industrialized countries is the dominance of central organizations. In the Sudan the SWTUF has always been able to maintain a dominant position in the labor movement. As we have seen in the last three chapters, the SWTUF, in spite of determined and persistent efforts by succeeding governments to weaken its influence or destroy it, has remained the strong voice of the labor movement and has enjoyed the allegiance of the majority of unions.
Several factors have contributed to the importance of the federation in the Sudanese labor movement. First, is the indispensibility of a strong central organization for a politically oriented labor movement. Only such an organization could hope to effectively mobilize the workers for political action. No wonder, then, that the concept of "the unity of the labor movement under one center" has been one of the most recurrent themes in the literature of the federation and the speeches of its leaders. Similarly, the fight against dissident elements in the labor movement—labeled "opportunists" has received top priority among the issues occupying the minds of SWTUF leaders. Writing late in 1957, El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh stated that one of the most important of the "basic principles" of workers unionism which had been established through the long struggle of the workers, "is the necessity of having one and strong center to lead the labor movement. This kind of center we have today in the SWTUF." The justification for this, he argued, was not to be found in personal interests, but in the logic of the objective circumstances in which the labor movement had evolved:

The labor movement with all its different groups and organizations represents a single movement—a movement of a particular class, linked by common objectives and a common destiny, dictated by its place in the social structure. As such the labor movement would gain no profit from division and disunity. Moreover, there is nothing inherent
in the labor movement that would lead to disunity. When such a thing occurs it comes as an abnormality and as the result of the work of elements who are foreign to the workers and to their interests.¹

Earlier that year the SWTUF issued a "Unity Document" in which the absolute necessity for the unity of the labor movement was asserted:

The position of the SWTUF has always been that the labor movement should be united. This is a matter of principle, arising from our deep and honest belief that unity is, and has been, now, and at all times, the only weapon by which the workers could face the employers and the ruling exploiters.

The Document then elaborates on the nature of this unity:

The unity we are calling for is the unity of all Sudanese workers around their one and only center, the SWTUF, and around their particular unions. The SWTUF opens its doors to all elements in the labor movement with no conditions except unity itself.²

The second factor in the importance of the Federation is the fact that the vast majority of organized workers are employed by the government. The centralization of decision-making on issues concerning labor, particularly wages, at the highest levels of the government, demands the presence of a strong central labor organization, capable of dealing with the central government on behalf of all workers.

A third factor is the smallness and weakness of the

²SWTUF, "Unity Document," Khartoum, April, 1967 (Mimeographed.)
majority of unions. These unions could not function effectively without the support of a strong and relatively resourceful central organization. Furthermore, even if these unions wanted to remain independent of the Federation's influence they are too weak to resist the pressure the Federation could bring to bear on them.

A final factor, is that the SWTUF, since its creation has had capable and resilient leadership. It is doubtful that without such leadership, the Federation would have been able to survive the attacks of successive governments to maintain its dominant place in the labor movement.

Solidarity with white-collar workers.—A final structural feature of the Sudanese labor movement, which has emerged during the last four or five years is the development of organizations, at all levels, joining both blue and white-collar workers. At the union level we find that many unions of blue and white-collar workers have merged together. This is particularly true at the enterprise level. An example of such a union is the Sudanese Textile Factory Workers and Employees Trade Union. At a higher level, we find that in many large industries all the unions have joined in one federation of unions. The most notable examples here, are the Federation of Petroleum Workers and Employees, the Federation of Workers and Employees in Government Manufacturing Industries, and the Federation of Post and Telegram Workers and Employees.
This trend was carried further when in 1968, a Council of Federations of Workers and Employees was formed, bringing in one organization, the SWTUF, the Federation of Government Salaried Employees and the Teachers Federation. The purpose of the council was to coordinate action on common problems.

The emergence of organization joining blue and white-collar workers in the Sudan has been the result of ideological, political, and economic influences.

Ideologically there was the concept of the labor movement as a mass movement, joining the widest range and the largest number of workers, which is propagated by the Marxist-Leninists. The utility of a mass labor movement in the Marxist scheme of things is obvious. Naturally the wider and the more comprehensive the labor movement is, the more politically potent it becomes.

A more direct political impetus for the emergence of these organizations is the October Revolution. The general political strike of October 1964 which toppled the Abboud Government proved, beyond doubt, the political effectiveness of cooperation between the two groups. These two ideological and political influences were clearly in the minds of the leaders of the labor movement as they argued for solidarity between blue and white-collar workers. The "Solidarity Charter" authored by the SWTUF and the white-collar federations stated:
The Victorious revolution of October 1964, has clearly shown the depth of the forces necessitating the solidarity of workers in the factories with those in the offices. The Revolution also showed the revolutionary capabilities inherent in these two groups. Furthermore, the short past period during which blue and white-collar workers have joined hands, proved that eminence benefits could be reaped from such cooperation. An important manifestation of this has been the great progress achieved by the mass movement in our country.¹

Economic influences have also been important in facilitating the development of labor organizations combining blue and white-collar workers. This is the fact that the majority of workers in both groups are employed by the Government. It is obvious that the more cooperation there is between blue and white-collar workers the more pressure they are able to bring to bear on the Government--their employer.

The Government of Labor Organizations: The SWTUF²

The organizational structure of the SWTUF (Figure 1), generally, follows conventional lines. At the top of the organization is the Annual Convention—the highest policy-making body. It elects the Secretariat, receives the Report of the Executive Committee, and adopts constitutional amendments. The turbulent life the Federation had had prior to its registration in 1966, did not allow the Annual

¹Coordinative Committee of Workers' and Employees Federations, "Solidarity Charter," Khartoum, undated. (Mimeographed.)
²SWTUF, Federation's Constitution, Khartoum, undated.
Figure 1.—Organizational Structure of the SNTUF
convention to meet as regularly as it should. However in the last few years it has been functioning more regularly as has been the entire government of the Federation. This is due to the fact that, armed with registration, the federation is no longer fighting battles of survival, hence, it has been able to devote more time and effort to organizational problems.

During the absence of the Annual Convention, the General Assembly which is supposed to hold monthly meetings, is responsible for seeing to it that the policy drawn by the Annual Convention is being executed. Expectedly, the General Assembly has not operated successfully. The difficulty of transportation in the country, the absence of full-time union officers were responsible for the failure of the General Assembly to function successfully. To fill the resulting gap, a rather unconventional body was created. This is the Council of Unions' Executive Committees, composed of the Executive Committees of all unions in the Khartoum and surrounding areas. This body which meets every three months has roughly the same duties as the General Assembly. Since the membership of this body resides in Khartoum, they could hold meetings more easily and at a short notice. A second advantage of this body is that all unions irrespective of size, are equally represented. This makes it less able to resist the desires of the federation leaders. For these reasons, the Council has come to
play an increasingly important role in the Government of the Federation, mainly at the expense of the General Assembly.

The authority to execute the Federation's policy and to manage and direct its activities is in the hands of the Executive Committee. This in turn delegates its authority to the Secretariat, composed of the President, the Vice President, the General Secretary and three Assistant Secretaries. Under the Secretariat lie five specialized committees; one for union organization, a second for publicity and publications, a third for foreign relation, a fourth for labor relations, and the fifth for finance. The Secretariat has evolved to become the most important body in the organization of the Federation. The inability of the higher bodies to function effectively has led to the concentration of power in the Secretariat and particularly in the General Secretary, who is the effective leader of the organization. The centralization of decision-making in a few hands reflects not only the ineffectiveness of bodies at the top of the hierarchy of the organization but also the demand of the ideology and the political purposes of the federation for a strong and dominant central organization.

Regionally, the Federation is represented through branches in several large towns throughout the country. Although these branches have not yet taken a solid
organizational form, and their relationship to the Federation and to member unions have not yet been well defined, they are doing a great deal to bridge the gap between the Federation and its members in the provinces. The last few years have seen more participation by unions outside Khartoum in the affairs of the labor movement.

Finance.—The Federation levies ten piasters (about 30¢) per member per annum on member unions. According to the Secretary General of the Federation, less than half of the expected funds are usually paid. These funds have been barely enough for the finance of the daily activities of the Federation. Therefore, the Federation was often forced to seek direct contributions from the membership, to finance special projects or to meet unforeseen financial obligations. The success of this method of obtaining contributions from the membership could be attributed to their willingness to pay when the contribution is directly associated with a particular project which needs immediate financial backing. Helping a friend in need is a basic tenet in Sudanese social values.

The Federation is still a poor organization. Lack of funds has been responsible for the inability of the Federation to publish its newspaper El Talia in a regular fashion. Also, the Federation has failed to raise enough funds to start building a permanent office building of its own.
Sometimes the Federation receives donations—in kind—from abroad. The two automobiles owned by the Federation came as a present from the workers' federation in the Soviet Union. A printing press is reported to be on its way from the same source.

Leadership.—The Federation enjoys a capable and articulate leadership which compares favorable with that of most similar organizations in the country. The strength, effectiveness and prestige the Federation possesses in spite of the difficult and turbulent life it has had is testimony to the competence of the Federation's leadership.

Undoubtedly, the most outstanding figure in the Sudanese labor movement and the one person who has influenced it most, is El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the Secretary General of the SWTUF. At the time of the emergence of the labor movement El Shafie was an artisan in the workshops of the Sudan Railways at Athara. He and his fellow graduates of the Railways Technical School made most of the leadership of the movement to organize the WAA during 1946-1947. He became a member of the SRWU Executive Committee for the 1948 and 1949 sessions. In 1950 he became General Secretary of the union, and when the SWTUF was created late that year El Shafie was elected General Secretary, a post he continued to hold ever since.

International recognition for El Shafie's importance came in October 1957 when he was elected Vice President of
the WFTU at the Fourth World Trade Union Congress. Earlier that year El Shafie was elected as an Executive Committee member of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions. He still holds both offices.

El Shafie is, inevitably, a political leader. He has been a leading figure in the Communist movement in the Sudan. His early contacts with communism took place in Atbara during 1946. He continued to rise in the ranks of the movement until he reached the Central Committee of the SCP of which he is now a member. In 1964 El Shafie was appointed Minister of State in the first October Government as a representative of the workers. In 1968 he was a candidate for parliament on behalf of the Khartoum-South constituency. He failed to get elected by a slim margin. Since 1967 he has been Chairman of the National Committee for the Defence of the Arab Nation. The purpose of the Committee has been the mobilization of public support for the Arab nations in their war against Israel.

El Shafie is the author of many articles on the Sudanese labor movement. Of special importance among these is a series of articles titled, "The Sudanese Labor Movement; Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," published in the Khartoum newspaper El Ayam during December 1967 and January

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1 World Trade Union Movement, No. 3, March 1959, p. 17.
2 See Chapter III, above, p. 72.
1968. These articles reflect the depth of El Shafie's knowledge on the subject of workers' unionism, his superior intellectual ability, and his command of the Arabic language.

It is easy to exaggerate the influence of one leader on the character of a movement, nevertheless, it seems reasonable to state that without the leadership of El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh the SWTUF, most probably, would not have been able to remain as a viable organization in the face of all the attacks it was subjected to. Without the SWTUF the Sudanese labor movement would have been a radically different proposition.

The Government of Unions

The literature on the labor movements of developing countries abounds with generalizations asserting the organizational and structural weakness of these movements. Friedland wrote, in 1963, that "unions in the underdeveloped areas operate under a handicap in that most have not had the experience with organizational activities or developed the administrative skill requisite for effective operation of unions." Writing in the same year, Millen concluded that the "physical" picture of unions in developing countries

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1William H. Friedland, Unions and Industrial Relations in Underdeveloped Countries, Bulletin 47, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, p. 32.
is a far cry from the strongly entrenched, system-
ativized union structure familiar to westerners. . . .
They are often amorphous and fragmented; a common
structure is hard to discern; membership ties are
uncertain and fragile; . . . and the leadership is,
by and large, a patchwork of puzzling influences.¹

This state of affairs, these writers argue, is a function
of the facts that unionism was only recently introduced to
the developing countries and that the industrial labor
force in these countries is largely made of illiterate,
unskilled, and uncommitted workers.

To the extent these generalizations hold true in the
Sudan, they describe conditions only among the small and
newly established, rather than the large and old unions.
The latter group enjoy effective and stable organizations,
and even among the former group, there is a discernible
trend toward more efficient organization. This is not
surprising in view of the fact that the factors responsible
for the organizational weakness of unions have been gradually
abated. Labor unionism is no longer a novel institution in
the country; more than twenty years have passed since the
first labor union was organized. Also the rapid growth of
vocational training, technical and primary education, have
produced a more literate, skilled and committed labor force,
than twenty or ten years ago. Equally significant in the
trend toward stronger union government have been the
influences of the Registrar of Trade Unions and of the SWTUF.

¹Milen, op. cit., p. 17.
The Trade Union Ordinance Amendment (1966), requires all registered labor unions to have constitutions containing a body of rules defining the manner in which the organization is to be governed as specified by the ordinance (Section 18). A "model trade union constitution" is available to help unions draft their constitutions. Unions are also required by the ordinance to have a permanent office (Section 25); to furnish annual statements of accounts to the membership and to the Registrar (Section 21); and to keep an up-to-date register of members. The Ordinance also authorizes the Registrar to set regulations for the supervision of union elections (Section 32). Since 1967, the Registrar has formed independent elections committees one for each province. The committees which are responsible for supervising union elections, are composed of three members each, one representing the Labor Department, one representing Local Government, and the third member who is also the chairman must be a judge.

There is ample evidence to show that the Registrar has done a great deal to put these regulations into effect. For example in 1968 the Registrar reported that his office launched a campaign to make sure that the registered trade unions and other associations have convened their annual conventions and general assemblies to elect new officers and examine the reports of out-going ones.¹

He also reported that four unions were dissolved for failure to comply with the Trade Union Ordinance and nineteen unions were warned of the same fate unless certain malpractices were corrected.

The influence of the SWTUF on the government of member unions have come mainly through the activities of its Union Organization Committee, which is charged with the responsibility of “helping unions vitalize their organizations and improve their performance with regard to office procedure, drafting of labor demands and conducting negotiations with employers.”\(^1\) The Committee acts mainly, as an organizational consultant for member unions. For example, following the resurgence of a large number of unions in the aftermath of the October Revolution, the Committee initiated contacts and organized meetings with the unions to discuss and explain the principles of union organization and to make sure that all unions are organized and conduct their business according to the requirements of the Trade Union Ordinance.\(^2\)

Another important facet of the activities of the Union Organization Committee has been the leadership training program.\(^3\) In 1966 a leadership training school offering one-year courses was established, it, however, soon faltered for lack of funds and interest by union leaders. A more

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\(^1\) SWTUF, "Internal Memorandum," November 23, 1966.
\(^2\) Ibid.
practical and successful program was introduced in 1968. This was a series of 40-day seminars open to the top three officers of member unions. The short duration of the course, its ad hoc and informal character and the nature of the subjects covered have been responsible for its success. The following are some of the topics discussed in those seminars:

1. The model labor union constitution.
2. Planning union work.
3. Membership relations and problems.
4. Full time officers and their role in improving the performance of the union.
5. New methods in labor union work.

A supplementary source of training, which has benefited an increasing number of union leaders in the last few years is the training opportunities made available by foreign organizations. In this case opportunities have been provided exclusively by the WFTU and labor federations in socialist countries. During 1966-1968 a total of forty-three union leaders was attending courses ranging in length from two years to forty-five days in four different socialist countries (see Table 9).

In spite of the efforts of the Registrar of Trade Unions and the SWTUF and the general trend toward better union government, a large number of the small unions particularly those which came into existence following the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Duration of Course</th>
<th>Number of Union Officials Attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>15 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (FDR)</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


October Revolution still exhibit the "classic" organizational characteristics of unions in underdeveloped countries—weak organization, poor finance, unstable membership, and lack of experienced leadership.

The Government of the SRWU

The generalization that unions in developing countries are, organizationally, weak and ineffective, does not describe the situation in the large and well established Sudanese unions like the SRWU. Most of these unions enjoy relatively capable and experienced leadership, effective
government, adequate finance and a stable and active membership.

Most, if not all of these unions, came into existence, during the late forties and early fifties. Therefore, lack of experience is no longer a handicap. Also their relatively large size and stable membership provided a more secure base for successful union organization. These are attributes of government employment where the entire membership of the large unions is found.

The best example of a well established and effectively governed union in the Sudan is the SRWU, to which the remainder of this chapter will be devoted.

Structure.--Organized in 1947, the SRWU is the oldest labor union in the Sudan. With 28,000 members in 1968 it is the largest union in the country. For these two reasons and because of the strategic importance of the railways, the SRWU has been the most influential labor union in the country. Only the last few years have seen the emergence of unions comparable in size and strength to the SRWU.

The organization of the SRWU is a complex one. At the top of the organization there are the conventional Annual Convention, General Assembly, and Executive Committee. Under the Executive Committee there are seven Department Committees, one for each of the seven departments composing the organization of the Railways. Four of the Department

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Committees are located in Atbara. The remaining three are located in Port Sudan (Harbor Department), Khartoum (Catering Department), and Khartoum North (Steamers Department). Each Department has 17-21 Branches or Constituencies spread throughout the country with a large number in Atbara. Due to the rapid expansion of the Railways and the emergence of new centers of large concentrations of Railway workers, in the last five years, a new structural form was added. A Union of Branches with a direct line of communication to the Executive Committee, was established in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kosti, Kassala, and Babanuaa.

The Department Committees are the backbone of the government of the union. Each of the 17-20 Branches of the Department Committee elects a representative to the General Assembly of the Union. Out of these representatives 3-6 form the Department Committee office and represent it in the Executive Committee of the union. The five Unions of Branches are represented in the Executive Committee by two members each. The Executive Committee has a total membership of thirty-one.

Each Department Committee has a separate office located in the particular Department in the Railways. The office is run by a President, a General Secretary and a Secretary Treasurer. The responsibility of the Department Committee is to handle grievances, to collect dues, and generally represent the union at the Department level. In
many ways its function resembles that of the local union in the United States except that it is less independent of the parent union.

The effectiveness of the SRWU government is mainly due to the success of the Department Committees in executing their responsibilities. The prosperity of the union, its efficient communication system and its high level of democracy would have been highly unlikely had it not been for the effectiveness of the Department Committees.

**Democracy in the SRWU.**—Democracy in labor unions generally refers to "the control by the union membership of its own affairs, and thus stands opposed to centralization of authority and domination of the membership by an entrenched officialdom."¹ Measured by both leadership turnover and rank-and-file participation, the SRWU enjoys a high degree of democracy.

Table 10 shows that in the span of twenty years, nine Presidents and ten General Secretaries served in the government of the SRWU. Of these only four Presidents and four Secretaries served for more than one term, and only two Presidents and one Secretary were elected to four terms. This is certainly a high rate of turnover by any standard and particularly when compared to the long incumbency of labor union officials in Western countries. Therefore, to the extent that leadership turnover reflects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>General Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Suliman Muna</td>
<td>El Tayib Hassan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Mohammed Ali Mahadi</td>
<td>Dahab Abdel-Aziz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Ahmed Mohammed Da'ud</td>
<td>Abdulla Beshir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Abdel-Gadir Ali Hamid</td>
<td>El Shafie Ahmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td>El Sheikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdulla Beshir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Khabir Suliman</td>
<td>Abdulla Beshir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Mussa Ahmed Metta</td>
<td>Ali Mohammed Beshir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Hussein El Sayyid</td>
<td>Ahmed El Faki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Mussa Ahmed Metta</td>
<td>Mahgoub Osman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Mussa Ahmed Metta</td>
<td>Mahgoub Osman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Ali Mohammed Beshir</td>
<td>Mahgoub Osman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Mussa Ahmed Metta</td>
<td>El Haj Abdel-Rahman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohammed Osman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Mohammed El Hassan Abdulla</td>
<td>El Mudir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Mohammed El Hassan Abdulla</td>
<td>Hashim El Saeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Mohammed El Hassan Abdulla</td>
<td>Hashim El Saeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Mohammed El Hassan Abdulla</td>
<td>Mohammed Osman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El Mudir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** SRWU files.
democracy in a labor organization, we can conclude that the SRWU is a democratic organization.

A basic requisite for democracy in any institution is the presence of a representative system of government in that institutions. We have seen that the SRWU does have such a system; all members of all governing bodies are elected at the grass-roots level. Even the President of the union has to win elections in his Department Branch, then he has to win elections to represent his Department Committee in the Executive Committee of the union, and finally he has to win elections inside the Executive Committee to become the President of the union. It is obvious that an "entrenched officialdom" will find this an un hospitable environment in which it could develop.

A representative system of government is no guarantee for democracy. All private organizations have been known to become victims of the famous "iron law of oligarchy" which means that no matter how democratic the constitution of a voluntary organization is, power in that organization will eventually be concentrated in a small group of entrenched leaders. The SRWU, at least at the time being, seems to have escaped the logic of the iron law of oligarchy. Not only does the SRWU have a high rate of leadership turnover, but it also has the most hotly contested and bitterly

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1This theory was introduced by the German sociologist Robert Michels, see his book, Political Parties (Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1949).
fought election in any voluntary organization in the country. This, in the absence of figures on rank-and-file participation, is a sufficient indication of a high rate of membership participation and interest in the union elections.

What are the reasons for the high degree of democracy in the SRWU? The answer is to be found mostly in the influence of ideology and politics. As we have seen in previous chapters, the political nature of the labor movement, as a whole, and the importance and strategic position of the SRWU has, inevitably, made it an attractive target for the contending political elements in the country. We have also seen that since 1953 the traditional parties, particularly, the NUP has attempted to capture the SRWU and deny the SWTUF, and, hence, the progressive political elements its vital support. This in turn has forced the SWTUF to work hard to maintain its influence within the SRWU. It is not surprising, then, that the SRWU elections has become a political event fought to a large degree on political grounds and generating a great deal of interest among politically minded citizens throughout the country.

The impact of ideology and politics in the SRWU resulted in the emergence of two strong political "parties" within the union; the Communists or "Democrats" on one side and the supporters of the traditional parties on the other. Although the non-Communists were in the majority most of the time, the Communists have always been able to put a
strong show winning a large number of seats in the General Assembly and the Executive Committee and sometimes capturing the leadership of the union. Of the ten General Secretaries of the union elected during the last twenty years at least four were Communists. Thus, the opposition in the SRWU has in no way been a token one. It has been an effective and strong opposition that always has planned, expected to, and did, govern the union. It seems reasonable to conclude from the above that the presence of a two-party system within the SRWU has been a strong factor in sustaining democracy in that organization.

Theoretical support for the above assertion is found in the theory of political pluralism which seeks to explain the conditions favoring democracy in a society. The essence of this theory is that in a large complex society, if the body of the citizenry does not belong to politically relevant groups, if it is not "atomized," the controllers of the central power apparatus will completely dominate the society.¹

The relevance of this argument to the internal politics of labor union is the suggestion that democracy is most likely to become institutionalized in organizations whose members form organized or structured subgroups, that while maintaining a basic loyalty to the larger organization, constitute relatively independent and autonomous centers of power within the organization.²

²Ibid.
In the case of the SRWU the loyalty of the workers to political parties has provided the type of organized sub-groups described above.\(^1\)

**Leadership.**—The most important characteristic of the SRWU leadership and that of the entire Sudanese labor movement is that it is drawn from the rank-and-file. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in most developing countries where the leadership is "almost always middle class in origin, either professional, intellectual, or clerical workers."\(^2\)

An important factor in the emergence of this kind of leadership in the Sudanese labor movement is the tradition set by the first labor union in the country, the WAA. As we noted in an earlier occasion,\(^3\) the leadership of the WAA came entirely from the manual workers of the Sudan Railways, particularly its Mechanical Department. These men were literate and highly skilled, most of them were graduates of the Railways Technical School of Athara. Moreover, these workers had the pride and self-confidence so characteristic

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\(^1\)This theory was applied by Lipset, Trow, and Coleman to explain the prevalence of the democracy in the International Typographical Union, in the United States. The presence of "A vast network of voluntary organizations" within that union was found to be the cause of this phenomenon. For a complete account of the study see the authors', Union Democracy (Glenco, Ill., Free Press, 1956).


\(^3\)See Chapter III, above p. 61.
of Sudanese workers. Armed with these attributes they were eminently qualified to lead their own organization.

The main reason for the presence of "outside" leadership in other developing countries was the early and active involvement of political parties in organizing labor unions. As we have seen earlier in this study, the traditional parties in the Sudan made a belated and meagre contribution to the rise of the labor movement.¹

In contrast, the SCP was actively involved in the campaign to organize the WAA from the start. The literacy and awareness of the workers in Atbara, provided the SCP with the necessary raw material for the development of a Communist cadre in the labor movement. Thus the SCP was spared the necessity of resorting to outside elements to influence the labor movement. Thus reinforcing the natural tendency in the labor movement to have its own "inside" leadership.

¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.
CHAPTER VII

THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S ECONOMIC ROLE

The labor movement in the Sudan, like labor movements everywhere, seeks to improve the economic conditions and terms of employment of its members. Thus when the Secretary of the SWTUF was asked, what was the role of the labor movement? he answered unhesitatingly:

The first and basic duty of the labor movement is the improvement of the conditions of the workers—raising their wages, obtaining better working conditions and social security.\(^1\)

Indication of the importance the SWTUF attaches to satisfying the immediate economic demands of its members could also be found in the statement of purpose embodied in its constitution. Eight of the fifteen sections defining the aims of the Federation were devoted to the improvement of the economic conditions of the workers.\(^2\) The first of these—Article III, Section 1—stated the following aims:

(a) The promotion of the workers economic, cultural, and social interests through

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\(^1\) Interview with SWTUF Secretary.

\(^2\) SWTUF, Constitution, p. 7-9.
obtaining higher wages and shorter working hours, and by endeavoring to remove any denial of the workers' rights.

(b) The improvements of health standards among the workers.

(c) Opposing the unjust dismissal of workers.

(d) Improving the terms of employment of workers and securing their right to have annual and sick leaves.

The remainder of the economic aims deal with, social security, unemployment, cooperatives alleviation of illiteracy and the right of all workers to have jobs.

It has always been maintained by the SWTUF that the basic causes behind the low standard of living and working conditions of the Sudanese workers lie in the faulty economic policy of successive Governments. And that these Governments are inherently incapable of correcting the situation. It follows that no real and meaningful gains will be obtained by the workers until a Government capable of bringing about the desired economic changes is installed in power. Therefore, it becomes the duty of the labor movement to work for such a happening. Thus the tenth aim of the SWTUF--Article III, Section 10—is to bring to power a national democratic Government which would work to:

(a) Liquidate all neocolonial influences in our economy, particularly the activities of foreign banks, trading
and insurance companies which control our economy, and to direct the economy along socialist lines.

(b) establish a national economic planning council, composed of representatives of the workers, the tenant farmers, other producing forces, and nationalist capital, alongside the experts. The responsibility of the council is to draw a plan for the economic development of the country.

To fulfill this aim, the SWTUF, as we have seen in the previous chapters, devoted so much time and effort to political activities. This, however, did not stop its leaders from seeking to satisfy the immediate demands of the workers. They knew that with enough pressure they could always win concessions from their employers. Moreover, most of the workers do not visualize the causal relationship between their conditions and the character of the political economy of the country. Their main interest is winning immediate gains. A labor movement could ignore this reality only at the risk of losing the allegiance of its rank-and-file.

Apparently in deference to this fact, the SCP (at that time still known as the Sudan Movement for National Liberation) reminded its followers in the labor movement that:

a trade union is an organization for raising the living standards of all its members, irrespective of their political, religious or cultural beliefs. This
fundamental fact has not always been fully understood by some of our comrades. Consequently our method of co-operation with non-communist workers are very defective, and we tend to concentrate on cooperating with communist workers, because the latter course is easier and more pleasant. But the mass of the working class is not communist, and its members subscribe to different beliefs. And unless we respect these beliefs and evolve policies that reflect their different aspirations we would run the risk of weakening the trade union movement. ¹ (Underlining added.)

The point we are trying to assert is that, no matter how politicized a labor movement, it cannot afford to neglect the immediate and narrow demands of its rank-and-file. Moreover, there appears to be no inherent contradiction between the pursuit of broad political aims and that of narrow and immediate ones. As a matter of fact, in an environment like that of the Sudan the two pursuits often coincide. Nevertheless, there is always the possibility that political purposes might be overemphasized at the expense of immediate economic aims.

As we hope to show in the following pages, the politicization of the labor movement in the Sudan has not led to the neglect of the workers' immediate

concern—higher wages and better working conditions.

The Structure of Collective Relations

There are two levels at which industrial conflict in the Sudan is resolved. At the top there is the SWTUF dealing with the central government on issues concerning all government employees and sometimes all industrial workers in the country. At the bottom there are the multitude of individual unions dealing with department heads or Ministers in the case of the government and with private employers otherwise.

Since the government is by far the largest employer of industrial labor in the country, and since decision-making on wages and other important issues in the government is highly centralized, collective relations at the Government-SWTUF level has come to assume a special importance. Individual unions in the public sector deal mainly with local matters relating to work conditions, work organization, and grievances. Some of the large and influential unions like the SMU, however, negotiate directly with the central government on wage issues.

It should also be useful to distinguish between collective relations in the public and private sectors. In the private sector all industrial disputes are settled at the firm level. There is no "association bargaining." Some of the large and modern-managed firms are joined
in an Employers' Consultative Association. The role of the Association is to advise its members and speak on their behalf on matters dealing with industrial relations. In a few of these large firms labor relations are modeled after Western practice and "collective bargaining," with its orderly procedures and contracts, could be said to exist. In the majority of firms, although unions and managements do sit down to negotiate and they do sign agreements, the process does not have the regularity and order of collective bargaining.

The Struggle for Higher Wages

In the Sudan like many underdeveloped countries "the conditions for an efficient free labor market simply do not exist. On the employing side there is the much greater importance of public agencies, and of monopoly. On the workers' side there is immobility and ignorance of opportunity." Moreover there is the lack of commitment to wage employment and industrial life in general. For this reason wages in the Sudan have largely been determined through administrative action. The procedures have been to set up a commission to inquire into the prevailing level of wages and to

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make the necessary recommendations. Since 1947, when the first labor union was organized in the country, three such wages commissions came into existence; the Independent Committee of Inquiry into railway wages (1948), the "Unclassified" Staff Wages Commission better known as the Wakefield Commission (1951), and finally the Wages and Terms of Employment Commission (1968).

The independent committee of inquiry\(^2\)--Immediately following its recognition in 1947, the WAA demanded a general wage increase for all railways workers, ranging from 40 percent for the lowest-paid general workers (LS 1,200–LS 4,200) to 25 percent for the highest-paid skilled artisans (LS 11,000 and above). These demands were not unreasonable.

According to Pawzi, as far as wages were concerned:

The workers had genuine grievances, for awhile the cost of living was rising and the real earnings of the urban worker declining, the existing wage structure exposed the relatively large body of unskilled workers who formed the lowest-paid group to severe hardships

\(^1\)Employees of the Government who are not included in the first, second or third division of the civil service (professional, technical, and clerical) i.e. manual workers are known in official jargon as unclassified.

and did not compensate the upper grades for the sharp decline in their standard of living compared with before the war.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 68-69.}

The colonial government, however, dismissed the WAA demands as unrealistic, arguing that to grant them would entail a general tax increase. The WAA was unimpressed by this argument declaring that it failed to understand how either the railway management or the government could make business gains at the expense of lowering the living standards of human beings to such depth, when it was realized that the greater part of those profits went to the central government to be expended largely on the unduly high salaries earned by British officials who led luxurious lives, and out of which were built magnificent mansions, the construction and maintenance of which, required hundreds of thousands of pounds.\footnote{Reply of WAA to the Financial Secretary, November 18, 1947, quoted in ibid., p. 72.}

The WAA continued to press its demands forcing the Government to offer a concession by raising the minimum wage to L5 1.80 and announcing the formation of an Independent Committee of Inquiry to look into the whole issue of wages in the Railways Department. The WAA rejected the wage offer and staged a two-day strike on January 26, 1948 dramatizing its position. It also announced that further action would be taken
if their demands were not met by the end of February. When February passed and the Committee of Inquiry had not reported, the WAA on March 16, launched what came to be the longest strike in the history of the Sudanese labor movement. The strike was called off on April 18 only after the Committee had reported on March 27 and the government had announced its decision on the report on April 10, granting the wage increase demanded by the WAA. Thus the first attempt by the first labor union in the country to win more wages for its members was a resounding success. The "lessons" learned from this attempt were destined to influence greatly the behavior of the emerging labor movement. The fact that wage demands were won after a long and bitter strike was the most important such "lesson."

The Wakefield Commission--By 1950, one year after the 1948 Trade Union Ordinance was promulgated, sixty-two labor unions, organizing most government workers, were registered. The new unions almost immediately presented wage demands to the government and, following the example of the Sudan Railways workers, waged strikes to back their demands. This was reflected in the high level of man-days lost during 1950 and 1951 (see Table 11 below).

Another source of pressure for higher wages was the Workers Congress, which was organized in September 1949. During that year the Congress organized the first general
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>General Strikes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1-June 30</td>
<td>840,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>840,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>33,000</td>
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<td>1950-51</td>
<td>198,405</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>318,405</td>
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<td>1951-52</td>
<td>260,105</td>
<td>19,114</td>
<td>302,430</td>
<td>581,649</td>
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<td>1952-53</td>
<td>261,925</td>
<td>6,486</td>
<td>200,220</td>
<td>468,632</td>
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<td>1953-54</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>126,865</td>
<td>9,047</td>
<td>10,115</td>
<td>146,027</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>112,644</td>
<td>2,951</td>
<td>78,359</td>
<td>194,964</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>45,527</td>
<td>2,536</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>48,954</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>23,250</td>
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<td>1958-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>6,000</td>
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<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1,350</td>
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<td>1,350</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>551</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>85,494</td>
<td>105,438</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>190,932</td>
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<td>1965-66</td>
<td>248,527</td>
<td>8,245</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>256,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>18,728</td>
<td>4,214</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>22,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>53,566</td>
<td>19,949</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>73,515</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 2,531,177 182,132 802,025 3,515,334

The Table does not record the general strikes of 1958 and 1964. It should be noted that both strikes were politically motivated.

**Source:** Adapted from, Labour Department, *Annual Statistical Bulletin*, 1968, p. 28.
strike in the country to back its demands for a general wage increase. In response the government granted an increase in January 1950. In December of the same year the Congress was reconstituted as the SMTUF. One of the first acts of the new organization was to send a letter to the Civil Secretary describing the "miserable" and "subhuman" standard of living of Sudanese workers and demanding a 75 percent general wage increase and measures to stabilize prices.\(^1\) Agitation by the labor movement for higher wages and the consequent industrial unrest, coupled with the confusion and irrationality of the existing wage structure\(^2\) led to the formation by the government of the Unclassified Staff Wages Commission (the Wakefield Commission) on December 18, 1950, to look into the structure and level of wages and to suggest the necessary change.

The Wakefield Commission which reported in September, 1951, recommended a new wage structure based on a "group

\(^1\)SMTUF, Wages and the Standard of Living, Khartoum, 1964, p. 19.

\(^2\)Fawzi described the pre-Wakefield wage structure in the following terms: "[It was] one of a multiplicity of scales and ranges of rates of pay, characterized by length and overlapping between adjacent scales. It was not tied to standards which were sufficiently known or coordinated, and a confusion of category names reigned in the various Government departments. See the author's The Labour Movement in the Sudan, p. 133.
The group system established seven groups covering the variations of skill and responsibility in all jobs. The groups extended from Group I covering general unskilled workers to Group VII covering the highly skilled artisans. Compared to the previous system, ranges of pay within the new groups were short and no overlapping was allowed. It should be noted that the Commission did not use job evaluation to determine the place of a particular job in these groups, rather it depended on the experience and long tradition of the Railways in this regard.

To fix rates of pay the Commission used the requirement of a man, his wife and two children at a conventional level of subsistence to determine the minimum rate for the lowest-paid workers of Group I. This meant an increase of more than 100 percent. For Group V, VI and VII, the Commission decided that the prevailing rates were adequate and therefore no change was recommended. For Group II, III and IV, the Commission devised a system whereby they received rates ranging from 2.85 to 3 times as much as Group I. The Commission, moreover, recommended a cost-of-living index for Group I and most of Group II workers, and gradually decreasing to 51 percent compensation for Group VII workers. Finally,

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the Commission recommended that regional differentials should be maintained but only for the lower groups.

The Wakefield Commission's recommendations which were adopted by the government almost in their entirety, brought substantial benefits to the workers who hailed them as a victory for the workers' struggle. Nevertheless, they had certain reservations. First, the wage increase was considered too small "to meet the needs of the worker in 1952" or to "compensate him for the wealth he produces." It was pointed out that while the average worker was paid about LS 8.00 per month, the real salaries of the top British and Sudanese civil servants was between LS 100.00 and LS 150.00. The smallness of the increase recommended by Wakefield was attributed to the fact the family budget on which the wage structure was based did not include many essential requirements. Secondly, the workers complained that the majority of them were classified in Group I and II and that promotion to higher groups took many years and that no clear criteria for promotion was available. Finally, they saw no justification for the regional and sex differentials and demanded "equal pay for equal work."

Unions and wages: 1951-1968.--The wage structure and level that evolved following the adoption of Wakefield's

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SWTUF, Wages and the Standard of Living, pp. 33-35.
recommendations continued to prevail until its revision in 1968. Meanwhile the labor movement continued its pressure for higher wages, a minimum wage law, and equal pay for equal work. Political developments in the country during this period, however, seriously hampered the efforts of the labor movement in this regard.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, between 1954 and 1958, successive governments were launching determined efforts to weaken and destroy the SWTUF. Thus a great deal of the Federation's energy was invested in a struggle for survival. Nevertheless the SWTUF continued to present to the government the workers' demands for wage increases. In 1955 the government agreed to negotiate with the Federation on bread and butter issues. The negotiations, however, dragged on until they were suspended due to the mutiny of Army troops in the South. During 1956, in a maneuver calculated to undermine the influence of the SWTUF, the government invited individual unions in the public sector to negotiate on their demands. Faced with two labor delegations one representing anti-SWTUF unions and the other pro-SWTUF unions the Government was unable to handle the situation and the negotiations broke down. 1957 saw the coming to power of the conservative Khalil Government. The Khalil Government was in no mood to negotiate with labor unions on wage demands or anything else. It fought the SWTUF more vigorously

205
than its predecessors and, faced with an economic crisis, increased duties on consumer goods and froze the cost-of-living allowance. Under the situation the labor movement, led by the SWTUF, turned increasingly to political activity. This activity culminated in the general strike of August 21, 1958, which played an important role in rallying political opposition to the Khalil Government. The resulting political crisis eventually led to a military take-over of the Government on November 17, 1958.

The military regime immediately moved to dissolve all labor organizations and to prosecute the leaders of the SWTUF. Not until 1960 were labor unions allowed to exist. The Law of 1960, under which the unions were now functioning, placed severe restrictions on their freedom and on their right to strike. Under the circumstances, the unions were in no position to mount pressure for more wages. The military regime showed no hesitation in dissolving the SRWU in 1961 when it staged a strike to back its demands for more wages and better working conditions. Again the labor movement turned to political activity, becoming one of the most determined centers of opposition to the military regime. The struggle against the Abboud Government by labor and other groups ultimately led to the Revolution of October 21, 1964, which ended the six years of military domination.

The return of democratic government changed the situation quite radically. The 1960 Ordinance was abolished
and labor organization were allowed to register and operate under the 1948 Trade Union Ordinance. The result was the emergence of a strong and militant labor movement. The fact that wages were frozen for more than a decade and that prices were continuously rising (see Table 12 below), gave wages the highest priority in the list of labor demands following the October Revolution. However, due to the representation of the labor movement in the first October Government the unions, at least those in the public sector, voluntarily froze their wage demands, but not for long. The first October Government soon fell under the onslaught of the traditional parties. This was the signal for the unions to launch their campaign for redressing the huge backlog of grievances that had accumulated during military rule. The determination and militancy of this drive was manifested in the high number of man-days lost through strikes during 1964-1965 and 1965-1966 (Table 11).

Faced with such pressure the government formed a commission to look into the structure and level of wages and other terms of employment of unclassified staff.\(^1\) The government justified the formation of the Wages Commission in the following terms:

A dissatisfied civil service hampers economic growth and leads to the disintegration of the Government machinery, to disturbances, strikes, and decreased productivity. Moreover, since Independence, the cost

\(^{1}\) Wages Commission Report, pp. 1-2.
TABLE 12
COST OF LIVING INDEX, 1952-1968
(JANUARY, 1952 =100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Average)</th>
<th>Low-paid Sudanese</th>
<th>High-paid Sudanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>128.4</td>
<td>125.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>125.4</td>
<td>123.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>135.0</td>
<td>130.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>138.3</td>
<td>131.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>133.2</td>
<td>128.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>121.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>145.5</td>
<td>138.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>144.6</td>
<td>137.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>144.7</td>
<td>144.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>157.4</td>
<td>157.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>160.0</td>
<td>159.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>167.5</td>
<td>163.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>174.0</td>
<td>168.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>166.8</td>
<td>165.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>172.7</td>
<td>167.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>191.7</td>
<td>179.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>172.5</td>
<td>170.6</td>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.585</td>
<td>14.210</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>20.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.35</td>
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<td>6.60</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.745</td>
<td>16.480</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>24.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.210</td>
<td>21.100</td>
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<td>20.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.405</td>
<td>27.700</td>
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<td>24.00</td>
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<td>46.25</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
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<td>23.50</td>
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<td>25.825</td>
<td>46.815</td>
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<td>39.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.825</td>
<td>56.700</td>
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<td>45.90</td>
<td>64.80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>20.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>72.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Following the recommendations of the Independent Committee of Inquiry.

*These figures were obtained from unofficial sources, therefore their accuracy is doubtful. Following Wakefield Commission Recommendations.

*C Prior to Wages Commission Recommendations.

*Following Wages Commission Recommendations.

of living has risen in a fearful manner (see Table 12), making the life of workers in the public sector an unbearable hell. The Government, motivated by its duty both as a ruler and as an employer, decided to take a positive step to remedy the situation.¹

The situation was, however, too explosive for the government to wait for the Commission's report. Therefore, a substantial wage increase was granted to all government workers in December 1965. The increase, which came to be known as the Minister's increase—after the Minister of Finance—ranged from 20 percent for the lowest paid workers to 5 percent for the highest paid² (see Table 13).

The Wages Commission, in spite of continuous pressure by the labor movement (the march of March 21, 1966, the attempted general strike of June 1966, and the agreement of January 1968), was not able to report until May of 1968, and it took the government three months to announce its decision accepting the Commission's recommendations.

The Recommendations of the Wages and Terms of Employment Commission of 1968

The Wages Commission made the following recommendations concerning the wage level and structure:³


²Labour Department, Recommendations of the Committee for the Study of the Possibility of Extending the Wage Increase to Workers in the Private Sector (Khartoum, 1969), p. 10.

1. The level of wages in the public sector should be based on the ability of the Treasury to pay.

2. The ability of the Treasury to pay is determined by the level of the production and investment components of the national income. The national income should be distributed justly among the population, so as to guarantee a suitable subsistence income for each individual. Thus if a family of five is taken for the purpose of fixing the subsistence requirements, the minimum wage should not be less than five times the share of one person of the national income.

3. A family of a husband, wife, and three children should be the basis for determining the subsistence budget. And the method of studying the family budget should be utilized to determine the subsistence requirements.

4. The wage structure should be built on the minimum wage as determined in the manner described above. Rates for higher wage groups should be determined by adding a fixed percentage to each successive group. The fixed percentage will serve as a means to narrow the present differentials between the different groups.

5. The wage structure and level should prevail for a period of ten to fifteen years during which measures to maintain the real value of wages should be taken—increases to maintain the purchasing power of wages could
be granted.

6. The rate for different jobs should be fixed through an objective evaluation of each job and that the "point system" of job evaluation should be used.

It took the Wages Commission almost three years to conduct a sample survey of the subsistence requirement for a family of five and evaluate the jobs of all "unclassified" workers in the public sector.¹ Based on the results of its studies the Commission made the following recommendations:

7. The minimum wage should be fixed at LS 12,500 and the rates for higher groups determined by maintaining a 20 percent differential between adjacent groups.

8. Wages should rise by 50 percent during the following nine years.

9. Present rates should be assimilated in the new wage structure after first granting a wage increase of 50 percent for the first four groups and 5 percent for the remaining three. Each worker is then to be placed one step ahead of the range he is entitled for within the suitable group in the new wage structure.

10. The same rate should be paid to women doing the same job.

¹For a detailed description of the family survey and job evaluation conducted see, ibid., pp. 35-39 and pp. 55-66.
11. The same rate should be paid for the same job throughout the country.

The government accepted the recommendations of the Commission except for a few changes; the minimum wage was raised to Ls 13.900 and the differentials between lower and higher groups were widened. The new result of the Commission’s recommendation was a substantial wage increase for government workers. Table 14 below shows the magnitude of the increase.

Although the SWTUF hailed the new wage structure as a victory for the workers, yet it had certain reservations about it. In fact at the time the new wage structure was being implemented the SWTUF was waging a general strike against the government (the general strike of August 20, 1968). The strike was precipitated mainly due to the "credibility gap" that existed between the government and the Federation and suspicion on the part of the Federation that the Government had no intentions of implementing the Wages Commission’s recommendations.\(^1\) Moreover, the SWTUF was protesting the government’s lack of action on the more than twenty items included in the agreement of January 1968. Finally, there was what the Federations considered the shortcomings of the new wage

\(^1\)For details of the circumstances surrounding the August 1968 strike, see Chapter V, above, pp. 139-142.
### TABLE 14

INCREASE IN MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM WAGE RATES FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS GRANTED IN AUGUST, 1968

(PERCENTAGES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Increase in minimum rate</th>
<th>Increase in maximum rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>40.7</td>
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<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


structure. These were as follows: First, the SWTUF was critical of the criteria used by the Commission to determine the minimum wage. The Federation argued that the Commission should have followed the international convention of relying mainly on a reasonable subsistence

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STMUTP, Labor Demands and the General Strike, pp. 21-33.
budget for the average family and that relating the minimum wage to the national income only helped to confuse the issue. Secondly, the Federation complained that the Commission did not come up with specific recommendations about how the "real value" of wages could be maintained. Finally the Federation demanded that the benefits of the new wage structure should be extended to the private sector.

Thus in spite of the wage increase of 1968, the struggle for higher wages and better conditions continued. In 1969 the SWTUF was promising a new round of action to correct the drawbacks of the 1968 wage structure particularly its neglect of workers in the private sector.¹

Wages in the private sector.--A systematic survey of wages in the private sector is yet to be made. It is generally known, however, that wages in the private sector are greatly influenced by those in the public sector. Fawzi wrote,

as the government is the largest employer and gives the lead in wage policy, evidence about government employed workers may shed some light on the problem as it affects the whole country.²

Abdel-Wahab Musa, a Sudanese industrial relations con-

¹ See, General Secretary's address to the SWTUF's Regional Branches Conference held in Wad Medani, March 1969 (Mimeographed.)

² Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 130.
sultant, commenting on the relation between wages in
the private and public sectors, stated:

The influence of these Government conditions
of service [wages and allowances] on those
of the private firms was so noticeable that
it may not be an exaggeration to say that
the latter were a mere reflection of the
former. This is only natural in view of
the fact that the Government was not only
the largest employer but also the first
to offer regular employment to a large
number of workers.¹

Thus the structure and level of wages in the Government
provide the guidelines for firms in the private sector.
These firms determine the level of their wages in re-
lations to those of the government according to their
ability to pay, the competence and philosophy of their
managements, and the strength of their labor unions.

Most of the large and established firms pay wages
comparable to those paid by the Government. A few firms,
mostly the branches of large international companies like
Shell and Mobil Oil, offer higher rates than the Govern-
ment. Explaining the comparatively high wages paid by
Mobil Oil, Musa wrote:

Like many others, Mobil Oil had to compete with
other established employers—including the Govern-
ment—and had to offer rather exaggerated wage
rates to get the necessary skilled labour it
needed. In the case of the Govt's skilled work-
ers the rates offered [by Mobil] had to be very
high to attract the requisite skills. This was

¹Abdel-Wahab Musa, "Community Survey," The Advisory
Office for Business Management, Khartoum. (Mimeographed.)
because security of employment with Govt. is a very strong factor in keeping workers where they are.\(^1\)

Other factors are also important in persuading some firms to pay relatively high wages. It is perhaps not a coincidence that most of the high paying firms, both Sudanese and foreign, have strong and stable unions, enlightened and competent managements, and are economically successful.

A large number of firms, however, still pay wages below the government level. According to the SWTUF some firms pay as low as LS 4.500 a month which is about one-third of the minimum paid by the government.\(^2\) The owners of these firms, which are mostly newly established small industries, argue that their firms are still young and struggling and simply cannot afford to pay wages as high as the government and the well-established firms. The SWTUF thinks that the situation is not as desperate as the employers claim and cites the tax and custom duties concessions and financial help given by the government to these "struggling" firms, and accuses the employers of trying to make fast profit at the expense of the workers. No statistics are available on the financial position.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)SWTUF, General Secretary's Address to the Regional Branches Conference, p. 9.
of industrial firms in the country but it is no secret that some owners were able to get back their investment after two or three years of operation. Therefore, there is reason to believe that economic conditions alone do not justify the substandard wages in the private sector. More plausible explanations could be found in the unstable political atmosphere which encourages employers to seek quick profit, in the anti-labor philosophies of the tradition-oriented employers, and in the fact that most of these firms use semi-skilled workers who are easy to replace.

Under these circumstances, unions in the small firms of the private sector have become increasingly militant. In the period 1964-1965, for example, out of 190,982 man-days lost through strikes, 105,982 were contributed by workers in the private sector. Since that time, however, the situation seemed to have improved. Strikes in the private sector were substantially lower for the period 1966-1968. This could be attributed to the influence of the Trades Dispute Act (1966) which compels employers to negotiate with labor unions (Sec. 12), authorizes the Commissioner of Labor to act as a mediator in labor disputes when asked to do so by one of the parties (Sec. 13), and to refer the dispute for arbitration when mediation fails and the parties give their consent (Sec. 16). The influence of this law is
indicated by the increasing number of collective bargaining contracts signed by unions and employers in the small firms of the private sector with the help of the Labor Office. During 1965-1966 alone 42 collective agreements were signed under the guidance of the Labor Department.\(^1\)

The SWTUF, through its Labor Relations Department has also been providing badly needed help to the small unions in the private sector, in preparing their demands, conducting the negotiations, providing background studies and explaining the provisions of the Trades Disputes Ordinance. During 1965-1966 the SWTUF helped twenty-seven of its member unions to reach agreement with their employers.\(^2\) It is difficult to determine how much improvement unions in the small firms of the private sector have been able to achieve, but the lessening of industrial conflict and the increase in the number of collective agreements signed in those firms should indicate some progress.

It should be noted that the government has not been entirely passive. At least one law, the Wages Tribunal Ordinance of 1952\(^3\) is designed to regulate wages and

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\(^3\) The Laws of the Sudan, vol. 8, pp. 107-117. The Wage Tribunal Ordinance was patterned after the British Wages Councils Act of 1945.
working conditions in the private sector. The law empowers the Commissioner of Labor, either on his own initiative or at the request of any body representative of the workers and employers concerned to establish a wage tribunal in any case in which he is of the opinion that no adequate machinery exists for the effective regulation of wages and conditions of employment of the concerned workers (Sec. 3). The law stipulates that the tribunal shall consist of representatives of employers and workers and three neutral persons, all to be appointed by the Commissioner (Sec. 4).

Since the promulgation of this law the following wage tribunal orders regulating wages and conditions of employment for special categories of workers have been issued:

1. The domestic servants (private employment) wages tribunal order (1952).
2. The domestic servants (Hotels and Catering) wages tribunal order (1952).
3. The shop assistants' wages tribunal order (1953).
4. The Arabic clerical workers (Commercial houses) wages tribunal order (1953).
5. The hotels and restaurants workers wages tribunal order (1954).
7. Port Sudan loading and unloading workers' wages tribunal order (1967).

The Wages Tribunal Ordinance has served a valuable purpose by fixing minimum wages and conditions of employment for workers who are employed singly or in very small groups and thus are ineffectively organized and have no way of pressuring their employers.

Conditions of Employment

Minimum conditions of employment for both the public and private sectors are specified in the Employers and Employed Persons Ordinance (1949)\(^1\) and the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance of the same year.\(^2\) The former law contains rules on contract of service, hours of work, methods of payment of wages and overtime, holidays and sick leaves, and gratuities on termination of service. The Ordinance for example stipulates that the normal working day for any employed person working in an industrial undertaking and engaged on the basis of a daily wage shall be eight and a half hours (Sec. 13 [1]).

The Workmen's Compensation Ordinance makes employers liable to pay compensations for workers injured in accidents out of and in the course of the employment (Sec. 6).

\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 122-139.

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 23-49.
The law provides for payment of compensation in the case of death, permanent total disability, permanent partial disability, and temporary disability. For example in the case of permanent total disability the amount of compensation is set at a sum equal to forty-two months' earnings or seven hundred and fifty pounds Sudanese whichever is less (Sec. 8).

It should be remembered that these laws provide only for minimum conditions. The role of labor unions, therefore, has been to improve upon these minimum conditions and to compel the employer to abide by them when they do not, like in some firms in the private sector. Next to the question of wages, the issue of improving terms of employment has engaged the interest of labor unions the most. The very first list of demands presented by a labor union in the Sudan (the WAA) contained demands for shorter working hours, higher rates for overtime work, workers' right to annual leaves and improved workman's compensation. Since that time the SRWU has been able to obtain many improvements in the working conditions of its members and has not hesitated to use the strike weapon to get its demands. For example during 1966-67 the SRWU presented sixteen demands concerning wages and terms of employment to the Railways management. The union entered

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1 Fawzi, The Labour Movement, p. 69.
into negotiations with the General Manager of the Railways but was dissatisfied with the results and a strike was staged. During the strike the Minister of Transport interfered and the negotiations were reconvened in his presence and the following items were agreed upon:

1. The payment of the equivalent of two-months' pay as a "bonus".
2. Raising the Government contribution in the provident fund from 5 to 15 percent.
3. Extending participation in the provident fund to workers in group III.
4. The formation of a legal committee headed by a judge to receive appeals from workers aggrieved by the decisions of departmental disciplinary councils.
5. Giving workers in the harbor and the steamers an hour for breakfast.
7. The presence of a medical doctor in the workshops.¹

In the private sector, an increasing number of unions have concluded collective agreements providing for better terms of employment. For example, an agreement involving the African Holloway Company, a Sudanese-owned industrial firm of small size, provided:

1. The workers post service gratuity shall be better than the legal entitlements and that the improvement shall be proportionate with length of service.

2. The Company shall introduce a workers' group life insurance scheme.

3. The Company shall introduce a system for the supervision of attendance, discipline and incentives.

A far more comprehensive collective agreement is that between Mobil Oil and its labor union concluded in 1966. The agreement, among other things dealt with, employment, hours of work, rates of pay, work on holiday, extra working hours and meal allowances, travel allowance, transfer, holidays, sick leaves, medical care and hospitalization, company and housing loans, retirement and death benefits. These terms of employment are a substantial improvement even upon those provided by the Government. Such agreements it should be remembered are expectations. A unique feature of this agreement is the detailed four-step grievance procedure it contains. It is doubtful if any other firm in the private sector has such a procedure. The prevailing procedure is one-step, in other words the worker takes his grievance to the union executive committee which takes up the issue with the management of the firm. This is under-
standable in view of the fact that most firms are small and have very few managerial levels. In the public sector only the Railways have a multi-step grievance procedure with the union department committees acting as grievance committees at the department level.

The SWTUF, on its part, has not neglected the issue of improving working conditions. It has always coupled its demands for more wages with demands for amending the Employers and Employed Persons Ordinance to provide for higher minimum conditions of employment. The Federation through its history has given special attention to the introduction of a comprehensive social security scheme in the country. It was the first organization in the country to point the inadequacy of the prevailing laws dealing with social security and to demand the introduction of a national system covering all industrial workers in the country. It is a tribute to the efforts of the SWTUF that a social security scheme covering workers in both public and private establishments in the Khartoum and Northern provinces (to be extended to the rest of the country) was being introduced by the Government early in 1969.

From the above evidence it seems reasonable to

1 See, SWTUF, Social Security, Khartoum.
conclude that the Sudanese labor movement has played an important role in improving the conditions of employment of its workers.

**Cooperatives**

A final area of the labor movement's economic role is its involvement in the cooperative movement.

It is interesting that in the early years of the labor movement, the SWTUF opposed the engagement of unions in establishing cooperatives. The President of the Federation at the time, Mohammed El Sayyid Sallam, argued that under the circumstances the major aim of the labor movement was to rid the country of colonial domination, hence, involvement by unions in cooperative effort would only help to divert their energies from the main goal. In the post-independence era, however, the Federation changed its mind to encourage cooperatives as an important part of the workers' arsenal of weapons for achieving higher standards of living.

Again the most important example is that of the SRWU. The SRWU since its early days has organized consumer cooperatives mainly in Athara. Recently—in March, 1968—a giant step was taken to centralize the cooperative effort in the Railways. All cooperatives in which

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1 El Saraha, April 18, 1952.
Railways workers were a majority were merged in a Union of Sudan Railways Workers and Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperatives. The declared purpose of the union was to act as a central supplier of goods for its member cooperatives, to establish retail outlets, pharmacies, bakeries, and flour mills. The Union was to be financed through its member cooperatives and through a LS 25,000 loan from its sponsor, the Sudan Railways Social Services Scheme. This, it should be pointed out is managed jointly by the Railways, the SRWU and other unions in the Railways and is financed through workers contributions (LS.10 per month).

A pioneering experience in this field has been that of the Port Sudan Dockworkers Union. In 1965 the union established the Port Sudan Dockworkers Cooperative Society to replace the labor contractors who had been supplying labor for loading and unloading outside the ships. As of 1969 the Society became the sole supplier of such labor. Moreover the Society provided a group insurance scheme for its members and established a medical clinic for the treatment of its members at nominal cost.

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2 Address by the Port Sudan Dockworkers Cooperative Society President to the Fourth Cooperatives Convention, Khartoum, March 9, 1969. (Mimeographed.)
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Sudanese labor movement was born in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first labor union in the country, the Workers Affairs Association (WAA), was organized by the workers of the Sudan Railways during 1946-1947. Recognition for the WAA as a bona fide union came in July 1947 after a determined struggle against the colonial authorities. Both economic and political factors were responsible for the emergence of the labor movement. Industrial workers were hard hit by the rise in prices during and after the war. The meager war and cost-of-living allowances granted by the government did very little to alleviate the distress of the workers. The economic plight of the workers was made intolerable and awareness of it sharpened by the growing nationalist consciousness in the country. Colonial labor policy failed to take account of the inevitable relationship between the growth of unions and political opposition to colonial rule. Consequently the colonial government's attempt to establish non-political unionism in the
country was doomed from the start. The emerging labor movement was apt to influence and be influenced by the nationalist movement which was in full swing at the time.

The traditional political parties which were leading the nationalist struggle offered meager and belated assistance to the emerging labor organizations. The bourgeois orientation of the traditional parties and their reliance on the sectarian loyalties of the population militated against their active involvement in organizing labor unions. In contrast the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) --at the time known as the Sudan Movement for National Liberation--was involved from the start in the struggle to organize and win recognition for the WAA. The Communists, most likely were responsible for introducing the concept of unionism among the workers and for sustaining their will and determination to defeat the designs of the colonial government to impose a system of "works committees" as a substitute for unionism.

The success of the Railways workers in winning recognition for their union after a unanimous strike that brought rail transport in the country to a virtual halt, undoubtedly shook the colonial government and destroyed the facade of invincibility that surrounded it. Direct involvement by the labor movement in nationalist politics
did not come until the creation of the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) in November 1950. From its inception the SWTUF came under Communist influence. Not surprisingly, the policy of the SWTUF toward the nationalist movement closely followed that of the Communists. One year after its formation the SWTUF amended its constitution to add "the immediate defeat of imperialism in the Sudan" to its objectives. This goal was to be achieved through "uniting the Sudanese people in a United Front comprising groups whose political aims approaches those of the Federation."

Similarly, the Communists advocated the formation of a united front composed of the peasants, the workers, the national bourgeoisie, and other anti-imperialist elements. The United Front actually came into existence and during 1952 was actively agitating against colonial rule. The policy of the front was to fight the imperialists to the bitter end and never to compromise with them.

The character and tempo of the Sudanese nationalist movement allowed very little room for radical political action. The mainstream of nationalist politics was dominated by the traditional parties. The Unionist Parties saw the solution in the cooperation of the nationalist movements in Egypt and the Sudan and the ultimate unity of the Nile Valley, while the Umma Party believed that
independence could be attained through constitutional evolution as programmed by the British. In February 1953, the traditional parties were able to conclude with the Condominium powers the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement which promised self-determination within three years and provided for the election of a transitional nationalist government. The Communists and the SWTUF stood alone in their opposition to the 1952 Agreement which they regarded as an attempt by the colonial powers to split the United Front and to retard the nationalist struggle. These suspicions proved to be unfounded and the country was proclaimed an independent republic on January 1, 1956.

The Communist-SWTUF position is understandable in view of their acceptance of the idea that national liberation was to be attained by an alliance of progressive elements in the society waging an uncompromising struggle against the imperialists. The turn of events following the 1953 Agreement should not detract from the contribution made by the SWTUF in shaking the colonial regime through industrial and political opposition and the role of the United Front in crystallizing the idea of national independence which hitherto had been confused by the Unionists' call for unity with Egypt and the Umma's close association with the colonial administration.
A fundamental characteristic of political development in the post-independence Sudan was the polarization of political elements in the country into two opposing groups: the traditional elements represented by their parties (Umma, NUP, and PDP) and their religious sects, and the progressive elements joined in a fluid coalition composed of the SCP, the SWTUF, white-collar and professional organizations, tenant farmers unions, student unions, and other progressive groups.

The Sudanese labor movement aggrieved by the neglect and insensitivity of the traditional parties and resentful of the gap in living standards and styles of life of the ruling elite and those of the mass of the people, found an attractive alternative in the revolutionary politics of the progressive elements. The solid alliance between the labor movement and other progressive elements particularly the SCP was decisive in determining the nature of government-labor relations in the post-independence period.

Thus, we saw that during the period 1954-1958, nationalist governments under traditional hegemony were continuously attempting to destroy the SWTUF or undermine its influence in the labor movement. To attain their purpose the traditional parties, particularly the NUP and PDP, worked for the election of anti-SWTUF
elements within the Sudan Railways Workers Union (SRWU), the largest and most influential union in the country. They denied the SWTUF legal status, attempted to create pro-government federations, and continuously harassed the SWTUF and its leaders. The confrontation between the labor movement and the government during this period reached its climax in the general strike of October 21, 1958, staged to protest the economic and political policies of the conservative government of Prime Minister Abdulla Khalil, the General Secretary of the Umma Party. The strike came at a time when the progressive forces were rallying opposition against the Khalil government in an attempt to defeat it in Parliament. The success of the strike solidified the opposition and the defeat of the Khalil government seemed certain. The resulting political crisis led to the military coup d'état of November 17, 1958.

The military regime of General Abboud immediately moved to dissolve all labor organizations in the country and prosecute the leaders of the SWTUF. Early in 1960, however, the Trade Union Ordinance of 1960 was promulgated allowing the formation of labor unions. The new law placed various restrictions on the freedom of association of workers. Its immediate impact was to reduce both the membership and effectiveness of the
labor movement. The new labor movement far from becoming the subservient movement the military regime was hoping for, turned into one of the most determined centers of political opposition to the government.

The strike by the Khartoum Railways workers in November of 1959, in protest of the arrest of labor leaders who petitioned the government demanding the return of labor organizations was the beginning of that opposition. Two years later, in June 1961, the workers of the Sudan Railways defied government orders and struck in support of demands for higher wages and better conditions of work. The SRWU was dissolved as a result. In August 1963 a government sponsored labor conference convened to demonstrate workers' loyalty to the military regime turned into an anti-government forum.

The struggle against the military regime led by the labor movement, the students, the SCP and other progressive elements and supported by popular sentiment, ultimately led to the Revolution of October 21, 1964. The Revolution which toppled the Abboud government was unique in its utilization of the general political strike as its main weapon against the government. The idea of the general strike as the most effective way to end military rule was proposed by the SCP as early
as 1961. The call for the strike was issued by a hastily formed Front of Professional Associations composed largely of progressive elements including the SWTUF.

Following the success of the Revolution a government composed largely of revolutionary elements came to power. For the first time in the history of the country the labor movement won representation in the government. El Shafie Ahmed El Sheikh, the General Secretary of the SWTUF, was given the post of Minister of State. The new revolutionary government suspended the restrictive Trade Union Ordinance of 1960 and allowed labor organizations to function under the 1948 law. In no time white-collar workers and workers of small firms who had lost their right to organize under the 1960 law joined newly formed unions and began to press for higher wages.

The labor movement that emerged after the October Revolution was a strong and militant one. The exhilarating experience of the Revolution, the increase in union membership, and labor representation in the government all contributed to the strength of the labor movement. The response of the SWTUF to this radical turn in its political fortunes was to take the unprecedented step of suspending all labor demands that
vigorously involved in mobilizing public opinion against the Draft of the country's new constitution, and organized demonstrations and strikes against the economic policy of the government. When the Army took over the reigns of government in May of 1969 the labor movement was a potent political force on the side of the progressive elements.

Structurally, the Sudanese labor movement has experienced a steady growth, interrupted only during the military regime of 1958-1964. Labor unions grew from five in 1949 to 357 in 1968. Union membership showed similar growth; growing from 37,793 members in 1951 to 162,284 in 1968. Most of the labor unions are of small size, however, the vast majority of the membership belong to a few large unions. All of these large unions are in the public sector.

The most prevalent type of unions is the enterprise or house union organizing all the workers in a particular firm regardless of occupation or level of skill. There is, however, a discernible trend toward industrial unionism.

White-collar workers are highly organized, mostly in separate unions. But there are instances where both blue-and white-collar workers in one firm join the same union. In general organizations of blue-and
white-collar workers cooperate closely with each other. This has been particularly evident at the federation level where in the last few years federations of white-collar employees joined with the SWTUF in a Council of Federations to coordinate common political and economic action.

An important structural feature of the labor movement is the dominance of the SWTUF. The smallness and weakness of the majority of unions, the utility of a strong central organization in a politically oriented labor movement, and the centralization of decision-making on matters affecting the workers at the highest levels of government contributes to the supremacy of the federation.

Organizationally most of the small unions are weak and unstable. This is a factor of inexperienced leadership, inadequate finance, and unstable and illiterate membership. Helped by the Registrar of Trade Unions and the Union Organization Committee of the SWTUF, these unions are reflecting some signs of more effective government. The situation in the large and established unions like the SRWU is rather different. Most of these unions enjoy relatively capable leadership, efficient government, adequate finance, and a stable and active membership.
An interesting aspect of union government in the Sudan is the origin of the leadership. Unlike most underdeveloped countries the leadership of Sudanese labor organizations is drawn entirely from their own rank-and-file. This is largely attributable to the presence of a cadre of skilled and literate workers and the lack of interest in union organization shown by the traditional parties during the emergence of the labor movement.

The SWTUF has always maintained that the basic cause of the workers' problems lies in the faulty economic and political structure of the country and that no meaningful gains could be obtained by the workers until this structure is transformed. Therefore the SWTUF devoted much time and effort in the political arena working toward that end. This, however, has not led to the neglect of the workers' immediate economic demands. To do so would have meant the loss of the allegiance and support of rank-and-file members.

Although collective bargaining as known in the West is practiced only in a few large private sector firms, unions in both private and public sectors do negotiate and sometimes sign agreements with their employers. Union pressure both at the federation and
lower levels resulted in the formation of two wages commissions—the Wakefield Commission of 1951 and the Wages Commission of 1968—by the Government to review the wage structure and level in the country. The recommendations of both commissions brought about substantial wage increase to the workers. Wages in the private sector generally follow those in the government with a few large firms paying above the government rate and some small firms paying below it.

At the start of this study we had certain expectations about the character of the Sudanese labor movement and the environmental factors at work. It was proposed that the Sudanese labor movement is significantly different from its counterpart in Western countries, that the difference lies in the politicization of the labor movement in the Sudan, and that political developments in the country and Marxist-Leninist ideology are important among the factors shaping the character of the labor movement.

The findings of our study have clearly shown the high degree of politicization exhibited by the Sudanese labor movement. We have seen that during the struggle for Independence the labor movement aimed at "the immediate defeat of imperialism in the Sudan" and that it was engaged in industrial and overt political protest
to achieve that aim. In the post-Independence era, the labor movement solidly allied itself with progressive political elements endeavoring to bring to power a government capable of establishing a socialist economy and pursuing a progressive foreign policy. As we have observed, the labor movement actively participated in opposition to the conservative Khalil government during 1957-1958, the labor movement carried the brunt of the opposition against the Abboud regime, and was a critical factor in the success of the October Revolution of 1964.

Many factors have been responsible for the politicization of the Sudanese labor movement. Most important among these has been the stage of political development in the country and the influence of Communism. As Everett Kassalow put it, "Colonialism has barely come to an end, and the new societies are faced with the double tasks of structuring new forms of political government even as they also strive for accelerated economic development. This places a strain on all groups in society."¹ The labor movement being

of the few organized groups in the society and enjoying a strategic position in the modern economy and in the urban centers inevitably and necessarily becomes involved in the search for a viable political and economic structure.

The role of the Communists has been to reinforce and sustain the tendency of the labor movement to become politically involved and to channel that involvement into revolutionary avenues. As we showed, the Communists were active in the struggle to organize the first labor union in the country during 1946-1947 and helped to defeat the designs of the colonial authorities to institute economic or non-political unionism in the country. During the life of the labor movement the Communists, through their influence in the SWTUF and some individual unions, saw to it that the labor movement remained a potent political force and on the side of progressive elements.

The level of economic development and the economic structure of the country have also contributed to the politicization of the labor movement. The fact that the government is not only the largest employer of industrial labor but exercises a great deal of significance in the direction and control of the economy means that even if the unions are interested
solely in bread-and-butter issues, they will most likely find themselves in direct conflict with the government. Thus purely economic issues are converted into political ones.

The poverty of the country (per capita income around $100) has a similar influence. Frederick Harbison, writing on industrial relations in the United States, concluded that "the dominance of collectively bargaining as a method for resolving conflict is logically if not exclusively, associated with a society which is capable of sustaining economic prosperity and maintaining quite high levels of employment."¹ In other words, an underdeveloped economy like that of the Sudan hampers the development of economic unionism, thus contributing to the politicization of the labor movement.

The labor movement in the Sudan emerged as a response to the advent of industrialization and a modern economy during the first half of the twentieth century. Industrialization requires the growth of wage employment and an industrial labor force. It imposes on the

new industrial worker a new way of life and a new
discipline. It robs him of the economic and psychological
security he enjoyed in his traditional culture. In an
attempt to ameliorate his position in this new milieu
and to remedy the grievances it brings about the worker
seeks support among his fellow workers. Thus emerges
labor unionism.

Political factors, namely anti-colonial nationalism,
the impact of revolutionary ideologies and colonial
policy, worked to hasten the emergence of the labor
movement. That is to say in the absence of these in-
fluences industrialization might not have provided the
necessary impetus for the development of a viable labor
movement at the time.

Once the labor movement came into existence economic,
political, and social factors combined to determine
its course of development. The low level of economic
development, the dominant role of government in the
economy, a labor force lacking in skill and commitment,
the search for a viable political system, the influence
of Communism, the emergence of social cleavages, led to
the politicization of the labor movement and its
attraction to revolutionary politics.

The future course of development of the Sudanese
labor movement will depend on the nature of the change in the environmental factors listed above. That there will be change is certain; the direction or nature of such change is not certain possibilities, however, could be envisaged.

There is the obvious possibility that political developments in the country will continue their unstable course with the traditional forces controlling the affairs of society but facing a strong challenge from the revolutionary forces. Under such circumstances the labor movement will most likely continue its role of political opposition to traditional rule.

Another possibility is that the revolutionary elements will gain control of the reins of government and succeed in establishing a stable and viable political and economic order. As an integral part of the revolutionary forces the labor movement will gain representation in the political and economic institutions of the society and strong pressures will be brought to bear on the labor movement to turn into an arm of the revolutionary regime serving its political and economic purposes.

The behavior of the labor movement during the brief revolutionary regime after the October Revolution of 1964 indicates that it will go a long way to cooperate
with the revolutionary order. There is no guarantee, however, that labor-government relations under such set up will be free of strain and frictions. The tradition of independence which has characterized the Sudanese labor movement through its life and the limited willingness of the rank-and-file to endure the economic sacrifices which most likely will be demanded from them will militate against the smooth absorption of the labor movement into the political regime. It will require creative and skillful statesmanship to strike a workable balance between the needs of the political regime and those of the labor movement.

The picture of the Sudanese labor movement that emerges from this study is that of a movement which emphasizes political activity, aspires to transform the political and economic order, and which suffers from structural and organizational weaknesses. How does such movement compare to those of the industrialized countries of the West?

We know that most labor movements in Western countries emphasize bread-and-butter issues and utilize the method of collective bargaining as the main weapon for obtaining their demands. We also know that most of these movements accept the social systems in which they exist and have no desire to effect fundamental
changes in them. To a large extent these movements have been integrated in the mainstream of their societies. Moreover, most of these movements enjoy strong structures and governments.

There are, however, Western labor movements which do not only diverge from this pattern but, surprisingly, show striking resemblance to the Sudanese labor movement. These are the labor movements of France and Italy.

In the words of Walter Galison

French and Italian trade unionism has more resemblance to labor organization in underdeveloped countries than in advanced industrial nations. There is lack of organization at the local level; membership is relatively small and not inured to the payment of dues; control is from the top, with little membership participation; and the method of political action is favored over collective bargaining.²

The persistence of political unionism in France and Italy has been attributed to the impact of a sluggish economic development, a rigid social and economic structure, the heritage of anarcho-syndicalism, and Communist ideology. The influence of these factors has delayed the integration of the labor movement into

the main stream of society resulting in the evolution of a pattern different from that experienced by most Western countries.

Divergencies and similarities are also evident when the labor movement in the Sudan is compared to its sister movements in other African countries. The similarities lie in the politicization and structural weakness of African labor movements. The same general environmental factors that produced political unionism and weak Union structure in the Sudan were present in other African countries.

The main difference between the Sudanese labor movement and other African labor movements is to be found in the fact that most African labor movements have either been fully integrated into the political and administrative structures of their societies (e.g., Kenya and Senegal). As we have seen the Sudanese labor movement not only has enjoyed a large measure of autonomy throughout most of its life but has constituted a strong element in the opposition to the ruling traditional elite.

The emergence of labor movements in African countries which act as arms of the government has been associated with the presence of a socialist oriented ruling elite, determined to develop their nations as
rapidly as possible. Due to the importance of labor unions in the process of economic development, control over them "has come to be viewed as a major imperative of almost any sort of state administered economic development."\(^1\) Another reason for the desire of these elites to control the labor movement, is the need "to consolidate and stabilize political authority."\(^2\) Such need is understandably urgent in the context of the one-party system of government developed in these countries.

In the Sudan the above factors were largely absent. The traditional bourgeois oriented ruling elite bore little, if any, resemblance to the modernizing and progressive elites of the African one-party states. Rapid economic development was not their prime interest, therefore there was no economic imperative for controlling the labor movement. Politically, although their "need to stabilize political authority" was not less than in the case of the progressive African


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 8.
regime, the fact that they were operating within a plural political system and the fact that the labor movement was radically oriented, prevented the possibility of the labor movement being absorbed in the political and administrative structures of the country.

In conclusion it seems that the divergences in the form and behavior of the labor movements in different societies do not reflect fundamental differences in the nature of the labor movement. They are merely reflections of the working of different environmental factors. A labor movement is a universal phenomenon which emerges as a response to the challenge of another universal phenomenon--industrialization. The particular environment in which the labor movement emerges shapes its particular form and its pattern of behavior.
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