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Opinion ▶

Clarifying our path

Towards socialist answers from & for Sudan

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The goal of socialism is to abolish all forms of exploitation and oppression, a goal so noble yet so vague when not grounded in detailed visions of the much sought after post-exploitation reality and the path to reach it.

For the socialists of Sudan and with the dire realities of war, the task of clarifying the socialist path does not only face the challenges of clarifying and detailing the goals of freedom and justice (by abolishing exploitation and oppression) but they face it in a reality of extreme oppression, violence and mass murder of the people.

In this reality of war where socialism is most needed, where the lack of freedom and justice are deeply felt by the people, it remains a fact that along with murder, war has flamed reactionary propaganda and narratives, further increasing the challenges of advancing the progressive socialist vision, of convincing the masses of its validity, and of the socialist answer and path as not only being realistic but the only path out of a reality shaped by murders to a reality shaped for life.

Not long ago was the Sudanese public chanting for freedom, peace, justice, free health care and education, and power to the people. These demands confirm that the Sudanese revolution was indeed a people's revolution, calling for their needs and supporting their interests. However, and although these goals coincide with

socialist goals, that does not make it a socialist revolution, and this must be clear to us for the sake of a sound analysis of our success and failures. The desire to abolish injustices is a logical conclusion of the lived experience of the oppressed and exploited.

What socialism brings to these desires is the strong and scientific argument that they cannot be achieved without the control of the oppressed over the technological and social tools of production and power.

What socialism brings to these desires is the strong and scientific argument that they cannot be achieved without the control of the oppressed over the technological and social tools of production and power, that the chants of freedom and justice can and will only be realized via the power of the people and by removing the current ruling class. Yet these chants of freedom and justice are now a thing of the past in Sudan, if we are to honestly observe and document our present reality.

In the first weeks following the breakout of hostilities between the army and the Janjaweed, a general sense of temporariness prevailed among the public, including political bodies, with the expectation that the war is to end soon, within days, weeks or a couple of months.

And as more and more of the people of Sudan are waking up to the realisation of it being a long war, they are pushed by the human need to find solutions towards further considering the visions presented. This quest is unfortunately taking place in a pool of reactionary visions that either advocate for more murder or for the rule of the murderers, while the socialist vision for a solution shaped for life is missing.

Although the demands of the Sudanese people's revolution had a strong chance of evolving into a socialist project of people power, these chances were significantly diminished. A strong factor leading to this is found in the actions of those who choose to shelve the demands of the people and prioritise support for one of the warring parties. This action was taken by the general public and many politically active bodies and individuals alike. It is an action with no logical justification based on reality. The ruling class, the army and the Janjaweed included, have not shelved their actions to protect their interests, they have not responded to the catastrophe of war experienced by the people of Sudan with prioritising the lives of the people, increasing public spending on health care or feeding the hungry or housing those rendered homeless by the war. The ruling class, including the army and the Janjaweed, did not dispose of their control on wealth, land and assets to provide for the victims of war and famine they claim to fight for.

On the contrary, the same war that increased the suffering of the people of Sudan is being used to justify deprioritising their needs and, sometimes, even their lives if a nearby enemy location is to be attacked and the loss lives is to be accepted as necessary collateral damage. Hence, as the older war of the oppressed and the oppressors remains active despite the war among the factions of the oligarchy, and as the interests of the exploiters remain the priority of the exploiters, there are no logical reasons for the exploited to shelve and deprioritise their interests.

It is the task of revolutionary democratic socialists to guard and scream these interests, but the task has been deserted by many of the comrades who once shared this vision. In a review of opinions presented by the prodigal comrades, we face perversions of several kinds. We find among our comrades of the near past those who imagine a world where the war has no impact on the conditions of the struggle, that we only need to survive the war by any means possible after which we shall return to pre-war conditions and continue the paused struggle. To these comrades, we ask them to utilise their critical thinking in weighing the additional power accumulated by the ruling class directly via their weapons and violence, and indirectly via the prevalence of their narratives in public debate with the absence of alternative progressive narratives. There are others of the comrades of the past who surrendered to the calls of

reactionary brutality and fascistic patriotism or ethnicism, and in them we see, just like we see in many of the general public who choose a similar path, victims of our failure to present the alternative, valid and superior socialist vision and project. And there are, among our comrades of the past, those who still hold to a progressive understanding of the suffering of the exploited and the injustices inflicted on them by the exploitative ruling class in war and in peace. However, they are crippled by a lack of socialist understanding and commitment to people power. Those prodigal comrades of ours who still seem to hold on to the dreams of justice, and who do not see the power of the people, find no outlet for their dreams other than seeking an elitist power to achieve the desired future.

From this central point, their paths differ according to the elitist power of their choice as some seek justice and protection for the oppressed via the armed bodies utilised by the oppressors. Some seek it via the technocratic structures of the ruling class and others seek justice and protection for the people via the imperialist interventions of international systems. Surface level differences with shared contradictions between the desired goal and reactionary methods as well as a shared root perversion in the form of neglecting the power of the people.

With regards to the issue of armed protection of the people, there are indeed

valid socialist arguments, studies and debates to be conducted. It will be foolish to imagine that abolishing exploitation can take place without violent confrontations with those benefiting from the exploitation, and therefore armed resistance is not rejected in principle. However, the armed resistance of the oppressed cannot and shall not be shaped in the form of the armed oppression of the ruling class.

Envisioning the armed resistance of the oppressed must stand on a foundation of envisioning democratic organising of the oppressed, and it must also take into consideration preventing a set up that centralises violence, for this will only recreate the rule of a new armed minority. This study and envisioning can produce many answers worthy of debate in the reality of Sudan and within socialist principles. However, none of them is an answer that advocates for militarism and the contradictory argument of a path to justice that is shared or in collaboration with the armed bodies utilised by the oppressors. And the task of clarifying this answer is indeed a crucial part of clarifying the socialist path and is also a task to which we call upon our prodigal comrades to direct their most needed energy instead of abusing their intellect in the attempt to justify militarism and temporary alliance with the exploiting ruling class.

The calls for *utilising* the tools of the exploiters, be that armed or bureaucratic ones, share a general perversion in un-

derstanding the relationship between the oppressed and the tools of the oppressor, a relationship that must be defined first before engaging in envisioning the army of the people or the state of the people.

As socialists we understand that, in their path towards abolishing exploitation, the exploited will have to take control of the tools of oppression and use it with the aim of enabling revolutionary transit to a world where no exploitation is permitted and no such tools are needed, the state included.

However, we also understand that the state of the people is one that will have to utilise some of the bricks and parts of the state of the oppressors. It, however, shares no resemblance in design, strategy or goals with the latter. This definition leads us to the importance of understanding the bricks, procedures and systems of the existing state only to criticise their pro-oppression design, and to theorise, debate and engage in how they can be utilised under the control of the people and for their interests along with the question of how to realise their control.

In carrying out this task, we must make sure that our words and actions cannot be used as ammunition for the propaganda of the oppressors to advertise for their failed and exploitive state. Our words as socialists with regards to the state must utilise the crises

of the existing system to critically understand it, awaken the people to its oppressive nature and hasten its overthrow by theorising and engaging in the necessary forms of organising for actualising the control of the oppressed over the tools of oppression and the abolishment of exploitation.

Many of the actions of the prodigal comrades will not survive the aforementioned test of whether their words are sufficiently fortified by radical socialist criticism preventing its use for the propaganda of the oppressors and their structures. These actions are pushing the borders of socialist intellectual activism to those of socialist-worded protection of exploitation. However, that is but one of the flaws of our current debates and theorisation among Sudanese socialists as well as Sudanese *progressives* in general.

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Another of our primary flaws and derelictions is apparent in the vagueness of our words, words that are yet to be grounded in detailed visions and understanding for and of the Sudanese realities. Isn't it a shame, dear comrades, that we

still refer to the groups that our political project seeks to advance their interests by the use of ambiguous and fuzzy words of “the people”, “the Sudanese public”, and “the oppressed”? Shameful indeed is our failure to scientifically study our current and historical structures of power and wealth creation and distribution and clarify to ourselves and the *public* its methods of exploitation, those benefiting from it and those suffering under it. The general terms of “the people” either befog the understanding of the division of oppressor and oppressed or can be used by fascists to justify a division based on nationality and a union among the oppressors and the oppressed based on them all being the people of the land, which contradicts the revolutionary unity of the oppressed across borders against all their oppressors. However, it is also a shame that we are still using the general term “oppressed” without a breakdown of what it means in the Sudanese reality, not to deny the rare and valuable studies of, at the top of which is the pamphlet by Yousif Abdelmageed (The rural waged labor – أجراء الريف) where he conducted this study on the waged agricultural labor in terms of value creation and distribution. This is a study we must conduct for all major work and wealth creation activities of the people of Sudan if we are to scientifically understand which groups of the people of Sudan are oppressed? Which

among them are the groups with the revolutionary capability to lead the struggle and overthrow of the system of oppression as revolutionary subject? Which groups are most enabled by material conditions to lead the task of organising and in what forms? Which groups are allies of the struggle and which are inherently opponents of the socialist project? All these are basic questions of a revolutionary socialist project, and again a part of the task of clarification we must seriously work on.

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This seriousness also requires that we do not take the easy and tempting path of using established terminologies that do not reflect our reality. An example of this will be to assign the task of leading the mission of organising the oppressed solely upon the “Sudanese working class” without due critical study of the mostly extractive wealth creation patterns in the country, without adequately and scientifically understanding the layered levels of exploitation on different groups of workers -formal and informal- by different groups some of which can also be

defined as waged labourers, and without making use of the organizational forms generated in residential units for the provision of services for the oppressed and by them.

It is frequently repeated that the socialist project towards abolishing exploitation and oppression is a mission that requires the organisation of the oppressed (in unions, communes, or other forms) as well as a revolutionary organisation (the revolutionary party being one example of it), that remains universally true within known history. The revolutionary socialist organisation is necessary for imbuing revolutionary consciousness among the oppressed, and the organisation of the oppressed for this struggle to be truly democratic.

However, looking at the reality of our primitive Sudanese socialist movement -despite of its long history- as evident by all the basic issues it is yet to clarify, the task of building the necessary revolutionary organisation requires, at the moment, answering those basic issues and questions. It seems we are not yet at the point of addressing the issue of “what is to be done” or “where to begin” but of “what is the path”.

We call upon socialist comrades to take on the task of clarifying the path, understanding the forms of exploitation taking place in Sudan, understanding the potentials and exploring the challenges of

communal organising taking place in the country and by its people, the possibilities of increasing the productive forces of the country and achieving justice in the distribution of produced wealth, among other basic questions many of which were mentioned in this text.

This clarification will provide the public with the alternative socialist solutions, and here it is useful to mention that a justification used by some factions of the prodigal comrades in their support of the reactionary and elitist tools of the rul-

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ing class -armed or bureaucratic- who repeat that the elitist tool of their choice is the choice of the people and is therefore the actual representation of socialist people-centered path. To this, it must be said that the role of the revolutionary socialists was never to support the most reactionary approaches among the oppressed but to advance the critical progressive socialist analysis and seek to convince the oppressed while maintaining an updated critical thinking towards the reactions of the oppressed and the changes in material

condition. This is a very different way of adopting reactionary approaches, retreating from the fight against the narrative of the ruling class befogging their minds, and laying the burden of this choice upon the oppressed themselves.

The clarification of the basics of the socialist project in Sudan must also be carried as part of the mission of building the socialist revolutionary organisation. It is via this clarification that we will locate and engage with our future comrades in the organisation, some of which will be from the comrades of the past as well.

The task of clarification and revolutionary theorizing is indeed being currently carried out by some rare and appreciated respectable comrades, however it is far from being the primary focus of a good percentage of those capable let alone the primary focus of public debate as it should be.

These clarifications should be done with due seriousness, preferably including both internal discussions of groups

and cells of comrades who aspire to take on these challenges as well as public publishing of socialist positions and texts and mutual reviews and criticism. Such steps will strengthen us with the necessary theoretical seriousness, organisational commitment and accountability towards the public. All of which are characteristics necessary for the desired construction of the revolutionary organization, to support the organisation of the oppressed and to clarify our path towards socialist solutions from and for the oppressed people of Sudan.

Reading List: Foundations of the Article

Rosa Luxemburg: *The Junius Pamphlet* (1915)

V. I. Lenin: *Where to Begin?* (1901)

V. I. Lenin: *What is to be Done?* (1902)

Rosa Luxemburg: *The Militia and Militarism* (1899)

V. I. Lenin: *The State and Revolution* (1917)





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