

MUNICH, 3 March 1971 (CAA/X).

The Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) has come under fire from Libya for its attitude to the proposed four-power Arab federation. A leading article in the Libyan daily newspaper, al-Thawra (January 18), accused the SCP of being hostile to the federation of the UAR, Libya, Sudan and Syria, because it wanted "to gain influence from inside before the setting up of the union". The party, it said, was "raising Utopian slogans and staining Khartoum's atmosphere with an annoying red tint".

Al-Thawra added: "Relations between us and the Soviet Union are not built on our recognition of Communism in the Arab world, but on the mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in the internal affairs of each side". The newspaper's attitude to the Soviet Union and the SCP is characteristic of that of the "progressive" countries in the Arab world, which see no incompatibility between the development of good relations with the Soviet Union and hostility to local Communist Parties. They refuse, according to al-Thawra, "to allow the Sudanese Communist Party to speak for the Soviet Union". Moreover, Soviet policies during the last ten years have given some support to the Libyan view that the Soviet Union has come to "realise that the Communist Parties in the Arab world do not benefit her at all".

Difficulties in coming to terms with the "progressive" States in the region which are given extensive material support by the Soviet Union has led to deep splits and sudden changes of policy in the Arab Communist movement. Unlike the SCP, the majority of Arab Communist Parties appear to feel that they cannot afford to oppose the federation, and to clear up misunderstandings, a joint statement of the Iraqi, Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese parties was issued and published in al-Nida (Beirut) on January 24, calling both for support for the proposed federation and for coordinated action by the "progressive forces of the Arab revolutionary movement" and the Palestinian resistance movement.

From September 11 to 15, 1965, the clandestine Voice of the Iraqi People which was broadcasting propaganda for the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) gave a series of talks by an unnamed Iraqi intellectual on "Problems of Arab unity". This, relayed by the ICP radio, must be taken as the official ICP view at that time. It is much closer to the view expressed by the SCP in its statement in December, 1970, opposing the federation proposal, than to that in the Arab Communist Parties' statement. The Iraqi writer emphasised that Arab unity "is not a concept that can be monopolised by any one party, nor can it be stripped of its class content". Unless Arab unity were primarily a unity of Arab workers, he added, "the hope of achieving a democratic political unity will remain a mere dream ... The differences in the levels of economic development make the better-positioned propertied bourgeoisie propose unity plans aimed at economic and political take-over, and subsequently this class engages in a struggle to impose improper conditions not only on the toiling masses but also on the bourgeoisie of

the less developed country". In short, the Iraqi intellectual was supporting the traditional Communist view that the class struggle takes precedence, and he rejected as irrelevant "emotional terms" such as references to the "common destiny" or "common future" of the Arabs.

The Voice of the Iraqi People broadcast would be of no interest now, except that it illustrates an attitude that must be general among a number of Arab Communists, though only the SCP has voiced it officially. At the same time, the Iraqi writer's dismissal of the Arab nationalists' feeling of a common Arab destiny does much to explain hostility in the Arab world to the Communists and Communist Parties. "Can we say", al-Thawra asked, "that the Sudanese Communist Party is a national movement loyal to Sudan and to pan-Arabism, or is it an agent to a foreign State?" It added: "We wish to follow our own ideologies to suit our needs and will not adopt or import ideas from outside".

Few of the Arab Communist Parties have managed to survive without internal dissension the tensions resulting from the conflicting demands of Soviet foreign policy, with its support for anti-Communist Arab régimes, and Communist ideology; most Arab Communist Parties are evidently uncertain as to their rôles within the State. Since 1967 in particular, the rise of the Palestinian guerrilla movements, some of them preaching extreme left-wing ideologies, has faced the Arab Communists with sometimes insoluble problems. The latest victim is the Jordanian Communist Party. The Beirut newspaper, al-Hayat, reported on January 7 that the JCP is split into two factions over the formation of the Communist commando group, al-Ansar, and on the question of relations with the Palestinian guerrillas and the Jordanian Government in general.

The leader of the breakaway faction is Rushdi Shahin, who accuses JCP General Secretary, Fuad Nassar, of not defining the party stand on the September, 1970, conflict between the Palestinian commandos and the Jordanian Government; he also charges Nassar with mismanagement of the JCP's financial affairs.

Although the split probably dates back to the second half of last year, it did not emerge until December, and the orthodox leadership of the party did not comment on Shahin's defection until January 9, when the Lebanese Communist newspaper, al-Nida, carried the text of two statements, one issued by the Politburo and the other by the Central Committee of the JCP. The Politburo accused Shahin's group of "ignoring the resolutions of the April, 1970, Congress in which they participated and voted in support of the congress resolutions without reservations". According to the Politburo statement, the dissidents have begun to describe themselves as "the Leninist cadre" of the JCP and have established a "Provisional Central Committee".

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The Central Committee statement, published at the same time as the Politburo statement, though dated two days later, condemned the dissidents for attempting to split the party at "a time when all the united resources of the national, progressive and commando forces are needed to combat the conspiracies of imperialism and reaction against our people and to resist the aggression and occupation of our land by Zionists". No doubt from similar tactical considerations, the Syrian Communist Party announced in mid-January that it was supporting the orthodox JCP Central Committee against the dissidents.

Basically, the JCP's troubles stem from its relations with the Jordanian Government and its attitude to the problem of increasing its power in the country. A similar problem, though in rather different terms, faces the Iraqi Communist Party. After the Ba'athist coup of July, 1968, which brought the present Iraqi régime to power, the Ba'ath Party and government announced that they wished to work towards a united front with other Iraqi political groups, including the Communists. The ICP was and remains split into a number of conflicting factions, but the opportunity for closer relations between the Ba'ath and the orthodox Central Committee of the ICP seemed to follow the March 11 declaration which brought a cease-fire in the war between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdish minority in North Iraq. But although the Ba'ath developed close relations after March 11 with the Kurdish Democratic Party, and continues to treat the KDP as a partner in the government of the Kurdish areas of the country, it has recently moved against the Communists. Hopes for a "national front" government including representatives of the ICP now seem faint, and the ICP has accused the Ba'ath and the government of a campaign of arrests against Iraqi Communists and "democratic elements". According to a statement published in al-Nida in mid-January, the Iraqi authorities are using "various methods of psychological and physical torture which contravene human and legal principles".

On January 26 a statement by the ICP Central Committee alleged that two leading Iraqi Communists, Aziz Hamid and Kazem Al-Jassim, had been tortured to death. The Iraqi Minister of Justice, Aziz Sharif, a leading left-winger, was thought to have close relations with the ICP, and his appointment a year ago was described by some commentators as implying Communist participation in the government. However, the ICP January 26 statement accused him of offering compensation to the families of the two Communists whom it claimed had died in prison, and this suggestion that Sharif had to bear some responsibility for their death was reinforced by a report in the British Communist newspaper, Morning Star (January 27) inviting readers to protest to the Iraqi Minister of Justice, as well as to the President, the Revolution Command Council, and the Iraqi Embassy in Britain. On February 5 the Morning Star reported that John Gollan, leader of the British Communist Party, had expressed "extreme outrage" in a message to President Bakr, and had said that "all progressive people in Britain will protest against this barbarous treatment of political prisoners

which is dragging the name of the Iraqi Government in the mud". On January 24, the Communist weekly, al-Akhbar (Beirut), had published a joint statement by the Communist Parties of Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, deploring measures of persecution against Iraqi Communists.

The Soviet Union was slow to react, but on February 11 the newspaper, Sovetskaya Rossiya, carried an article on the deaths of Kazem al-Jassim and Aziz Hamid. Its reaction was mild: the deaths of the two Communists and arrests of ICP members "carried out from time to time", it said, "arouse the legitimate concern of the progressive public in Iraq and other countries". It ascribed responsibility for "criminal acts of this kind" to "reactionary forces" which were seeking to prevent moves to overcome difficulties in relations between "anti-imperialist forces" in Iraq. Clearly, the commentator was anxious not to damage relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union or to make conditions even less favourable for the creation of a "united front", including the Communists. In fact, the inability of the Soviet Union to help the Iraqi Communist Party in its present disarray is further evidence of the dilemmas posed by Soviet foreign policy, which is anxious to maintain good relations with the "progressive" countries of the Arab world, even if this means the virtual abandonment of local Arab Communist Parties.

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