



Editorial Notes:

Imperialism, Israel and the Arabs

IN THE EARLY MORNING of June 5th, the government of Israel, instigated and armed by imperialism, launched an aggressive blitzkrieg against the United Arab Republic and other border countries. All reports, including those from Western sources, agree that the Israelis began the fighting. Their own first communiqué said that Egyptian forces were moving 'towards the Negev desert' and that their forces 'went into action to check them'. The whole operation, including the synchronised bombing of Arab airfields and advance into Arab territories, had obviously been planned well ahead.

A decade ago, Britain, France and Israel jointly launched a military attack on Egypt, following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. The aims were obvious: to recapture the Canal for the millionaire investors in the West; to overthrow the anti-imperialist Nasser government; to enlarge Israel's territory as the jackal's share in the spoils. This criminal conspiracy was vigorously denied at the time; only now are all the facts being revealed in the memoirs and confessions of the conspirators themselves. Today, once again the detailed picture of immediate events is obscured by the thick screen of propaganda disseminated by the vast imperialist press and newsagency monopolies which dominate not only the West but a large part of Africa as well. A deluge of propaganda presented Israel as adopting a purely defensive posture against the

threat of the numerically stronger Arab world. But this picture is given the lie, not only by the blatant fact of Israeli aggression, but also by the obvious aims of imperialism and its ally in the Arab world, by the background and events which led up to the renewal of fighting.

As in 1956, it was the challenge of the Arab liberation movement to the vested interests of the imperialists which aroused their anger and desire for vengeance—in this case the militant actions of the progressive government of Syria to restore the oil treasures of the area to the people. The aims of imperialism were again evident—to preserve the interests of the American, British and French oil millionaires; to overthrow progressive governments, particularly those of Syria and the U.A.R.; to secure the territorial aggrandisement of Israel and the return to colonialism—or ruthless expropriation—of Arab populations.

These were the underlying aims which led to the criminal act of aggression at the beginning of June. No doubt by striking thus the Israelis gained a military advantage. They disabled the Arab air forces and were able to overrun a good deal of territory—with appalling consequences for the inhabitants who were subjected to terror raids employing napalm, and driven from their homes along lines which parallel the American techniques learnt by Dayan on his visit to Vietnam. But these ‘advantages’ must be weighed against the universal condemnation of a flagrant breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, by virtue of whose authority Israel owes its very existence.

The first duty of Africans in every part of our continent must be to add their voices of protest and condemnation to those of the rest of the ‘three continents’, the socialist world and the revolutionary working-class movement of West Europe and North America. We do so not only because of our deep feelings of solidarity with our brothers of the Arab countries, and our fellow-Africans of Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria and Tunis who are directly involved. We cannot overlook the fact that—knowing that their action might precipitate a conflict of the major powers—the government of Israel recklessly ignited the fuse to an explosion which might have well unleashed an international nuclear holocaust.

Swift Soviet initiative at the U.N. Security Council—taken, no doubt with the agreement and co-operation of the U.A.R. and other victims of aggression—succeeded in imposing a cease-fire. The European socialist countries, in a joint top-level declaration, joined in expressing their ‘full and complete solidarity’ with the Arab peoples in their just struggle, and undertaking to render them aid ‘in the cause of repelling aggression and defending their national independence and territorial integrity’. They have followed this up with the breaking off

of diplomatic relations with Israel, following the continuation of aggression after the U.N. ceasefire order.

Such determined evidence of resistance, coupled with the still unbroken unity of the Arab countries, have helped to curb the aggressive imperialist drive in the North of our continent. But the situation remains unstable, unresolved and extremely dangerous to peace and the cause of Africa.

So long as the Israeli ruling circles, who have aligned themselves completely with imperialism, remain in possession of Arab territories they have seized by aggression, so long as they refuse to permit the Palestinian Arabs, unjustly expelled from their motherland, to return, and so long as they maintain their violent resistance to the cause of Arab liberation, no lasting settlement is possible up North.

The latest events have evidenced certain unfortunate weaknesses within the Arab countries. The deeply moving demonstrations of the Egyptian workers and peasants, which irresistably brought about the return to office of President Nasser after his resignation, was a decisive and unprecedented intervention of the people, a rebuff and a warning to reactionary elements in the country. But there can be little doubt that feudalism and reaction will still have to be fought hard and decisively, under the leadership of a dedicated and convinced socialist vanguard. Only history will tell to what extent treason and lack of patriotic and socialist conviction played their part in the early reverses on the battlefield. But the arrest of hundreds of leading members of the officer corps may well indicate an influential element in the U.A.R. which is more interested in the defeat of the progressive socialist policies of the Nasser leadership than in the patriotic cause of the motherland.

We must draw attention, too, to the serious weaknesses of policy which allowed certain elements in the Arab front to becloud the just cause of the Arab peoples by wild declamations regarding the 'destruction' of Israel and 'driving them [the Israelis] into the sea'. Whatever the provocation, we in South Africa know all too well the dangers of confounding hatred of oppressors with racialism. Such ill-advised and unprincipled statements merely strengthened the propaganda of the Israel ruling circles, and made far more difficult the task of such genuinely anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist elements as the Israeli Communist M.P.s, Comrades Vilner and Toubi, whose heroism in standing out against the aggression, in the face of unbridled chauvinism and war-hysteria, was beyond all praise.

These weaknesses must and no doubt will be corrected. But first and foremost, for any sort of peaceful and lasting settlement to be reached in the Arab lands, imperialism must be repelled. The Israeli forces must be compelled to go back to the frontiers beyond which they have

encroached. The Arab refugees must be readmitted to their homeland. The imperialists must stop their intervention and aggression, aimed at recolonising the Arab lands.

Only along these lines can there be a future for the State of Israel, which cannot coexist with the Arab countries without abandoning its alignment with imperialism, the bitterest foe of the Middle East peoples, of peace and freedom throughout the world.

The Nigerian Tragedy

TO A VERY LARGE extent the troubles of Nigeria, now exploded into armed conflict between the troops of the military government and those of the breakaway Eastern state renamed Biafra, are the legacy of colonialism. For a long time the British imperialists cultivated inter-regional and inter-tribal animosities in this country as in very many other colonies, with the aim of pursuing the classical policy 'Divide and rule'. They also favoured all kinds of privileged elements—tribal and feudal overlords and capitalists—confident that they would prove agencies of indirect government and control, and that they would join with colonialism in resisting what it fears most: the growth of radical mass movements, imbued with the scientific socialist and communist ideology.

The constitution for independent Nigeria, imposed by Britain as the price for withdrawal of direct colonial rule, was specifically designed to perpetuate all the features which had been cultivated as a result of these policies, and therefore to leave Nigeria, though the most populous African state, with a weak, pro-imperialist government, well-entrenched privileged classes, and profoundly divided internally. When, after years of corruption, capitalist policies and misrule, the government established under this constitution collapsed in the face of an army coup, the people of Nigeria rejoiced, believing that nothing could be worse than the sort of regime under which they had been suffering. But, in truth, the army takeover solved nothing; having overthrown the old order the army men had nothing positive to put in its place. To command an army is not the same thing as to lead a nation. One coup followed another, with rival groups of military men at their head. At no time were the masses of the people democratically consulted about the future of the country and drawn into the tasks of administration and national regeneration. Tribal and regional hostilities were not eliminated and merged into a greater patriotism. Political parties were outlawed, not only the discredited bourgeois groupings, whose corrup-