



Editorial Notes:

The U.S. War on Vietnam

ON FEBRUARY 7, 1965, on the orders of President Johnson, jet planes took off from aircraft carriers of the U.S. Seventh Fleet anchored in the South China Sea. They bombed a number of areas in North Vietnam, including the hospital of Dong Hoi. And since then, up to the time these lines are being written, the attacks have continued. There has been no formal declaration of war—but in fact and in law the United States is waging war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It is a particularly cowardly and ruthless type of war, waged by aerial bombing and indiscriminate killing of the civilian population, men, women and children.

Nobody, not even the Americans, believes the lie that these savage and lawless attacks are a 'retaliation' for the heavy defeat which the South Vietnam puppet troops and their United States backers suffered on February 7, when 234 Americans were killed and 31 aircraft destroyed. This defeat took place at Pleiku, far south of Saigon; it was inflicted by South Vietnam guerillas fighting with American arms captured from the enemy. The Americans have been preparing for, and even talking about, attacking North Vietnam for a long time. They have been intervening openly in Vietnam for many years, especially since the French collapse at Dien Bien Phu.

Until now there has been the pretence that the United States was merely providing 'aid' to the 'Government' of South Vietnam; that their troops were only 'advisers.' The pretence wore thinner as the rival cliques of traitor politicians and generals in Saigon, entirely lacking mass support, vied among themselves for the chance of selling their country and collecting the rewards. Every other week there was a new 'coup', a new 'government' claiming to be best able to carry out the will of the U.S. Embassy. The pretence that anyone really governed in Saigon except the Americans became so transparent that it would have been ludicrous, were it not so tragic in its consequences and so wounding to the national dignity of the Vietnamese and all oppressed peoples. With every week that passed the Americans and the Vietnamese mercenaries they employed to fight for them became more demoralised; the spirit and skill of the revolutionary guerillas in the national liberation army rose higher and higher, gaining victory after victory. It seemed clear that the end of the long agony was in sight, the beginning of a united, independent peaceful and neutral Vietnam, as envisaged at the international Geneva conference of 1954.

It was at this stage that the government of the United States threw overboard the whole pretence of 'aid' to the alleged 'Saigon government' behind which they had been conducting a colonial war of conquest. The role of advisers is forgotten, and U.S. regular troops and airforce units have openly taken over the conduct of the war. They are making one attack after another on the people and territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a socialist country. These acts of brazen aggression face the world with a war crisis the like of which it has not seen since Hitler let loose the second world war. United States imperialism and its west European partners have been engaged almost continuously in colonial wars for the past twenty years, but we shall fail to assess

the crisis now precipitated by the U.S.A. at its full significance if we do not recognise that the February attack on Vietnam marks a different and terribly dangerous phase. It is an inescapable challenge to international law, to the United Nations and to all that has at least, thus far, maintained the world in a precarious balance this side of nuclear annihilation.

Hitherto (except in the case of the U.S.-Belgian intervention in the Congo last November, which was a warning and a foreshadowing of Vietnam) the imperialist states have attempted to cover up their innumerable acts of aggression with at least some appearance of respect for legality and the United Nations. Even in the case of the aggression against North Korea, use was made of a rigged majority at the United Nations and advantage was taken of the temporary absence of the Soviet Union from the Security Council. It was a hypocritical show of 'respect' for international law on the part of the imperialists, whose only law has always been their own profit and advantage. But this very hypocrisy was the tribute that vice pays to virtue; it was at least a recognition that there are laws of international conduct which apply to all; that there are procedures which are binding on all countries for the negotiation and settlement of disputes. With the aggression against North Vietnam, the United States has torn up all these rules and procedures which she herself helped to frame and swore to uphold in the founding of the United Nations; rules of civilised conduct which, though they were disregarded many times by the imperialists, at least opened the prospect of a world in which small nations, as well as big ones, have some rights; rules under which violations of human rights, such as apartheid, can be exposed and checked; rules under which mankind has at least some hope of avoiding a new global conflict in which, with the help of the physicists, chemists and biologists, the dead would be counted not, as last time, in their tens of millions but in their hundreds of millions.

With the opening of aggression against Vietnam, the United States has scrapped all these rules and safeguards and opened the flood-gates of war. She has served notice on the world that henceforth the only rule is 'might is right'. The Geneva Agreements on Vietnam were ignored. The United Nations was ignored. The mass protests all over the world were ignored. The attempted counsels of moderation from U Thant and even from America's NATO allies are rudely brushed aside. With an arrogant contempt for international law and international opinion the like of which has not been experienced since the days of Hitler and Mussolini, President Johnson

and his Wall Street masters are telling the world: to hell with your law and your United Nations; we shall do as we please because we are rich and strong and ruthless enough to get away with it.

Gangster Philosophy

This gangster philosophy fully reflects the present position of the ruling forces in the United States of America. The giant monopolies which control this most advanced and powerful of imperialist countries have grown in power, arrogance and desperation until they consider themselves completely beyond the law and the government of their own or any other country.

The Negro people and their White supporters, claiming the elementary citizenship rights to which the Constitution entitles them, are murdered, gassed and savagely clubbed before the television lenses and the eyes of the world.

The assassin's bullet has become the commonplace of American politics; and none is safe from it, be he a President Kennedy or the militant spokesman of the oppressed Americans of African descent, Malcolm X.

Symbolic of gangster law in the United States is the Central Intelligence Agency, monstrously subsidised by the American state, yet subject to no public scrutiny or control, utterly unscrupulous, reckless, a law unto itself. The C.I.A. does not restrict its operations to the United States of America. Its tentacles reach out into the whole of the Americas and the Caribbean. It organised the invasion of Guatemala and the overthrow of the legitimate government. It organised the 'Bay of Pigs' adventure—an attempted invasion of socialist Cuba which was ignominiously crushed by the people's government.

All over the world, far from the shores of the United States, the C.I.A. and other U.S. or U.S.-sponsored organisations are working feverishly in defence of imperialism and reaction everywhere; against the forces of national liberation and socialism. Their weapons are intrigue, bribery and corruption, and plain political murder. They infiltrate through the International Confederation of 'Free' Trade Unions and the Peace Corps, through American diplomatic and commercial missions, through local politicians and gangsters on their payroll. They succeeded in strangling the newborn African democracy in the Congo (Leopoldville.) Though the hands that struck down Lumumba in the Congo and in Burundi and now the patriot Pio Pinto in Nairobi may have been African

hands, the dollars that paid for these crimes and the methods of political gangsterism which they expressed were made in the U.S.A.

The Imperialist Counter-Offensive In Africa

It is high time for all African statesmen and patriots to pay far more serious attention to the imperialist counter-offensive which has already begun in Africa.

Its most blatant and open expression, at the moment, has been the Congo aggression, jointly planned by United States, Belgian and British imperialism last November. But that was far from being the only, or even the most dangerous, expression of imperialist intervention on our continent.

President Nyerere did a public service to Africa last year when he drew public attention to the American plot against Tanzania. It was denied by U.S. diplomats; but knowing of the duplicity and secrecy of the operations of the C.I.A. it is impossible to believe that the diplomats would have admitted the truth of the charges, and doubtful even whether they knew whether they were true or not.

The Tanzania authorities came across but one corner of the web of conspiracy, penetration, economic and political, assassination and aggression that imperialism is spinning in Africa. The more one examines the pattern of events in our continent in the recent months the more it becomes clear that one is no longer dealing with the familiar pattern of the past decade in which the various imperialist powers intervened separately—sometimes at cross purposes—in different parts of our continent, with the general object of holding up the advancing tide of national liberation as best they could.

One is dealing today with a co-ordinated conspiracy of all the main imperialist powers, against Africa as a whole: a conspiracy in which the ringleader is increasingly clearly emerging as United States monopoly capitalism.

The main centre of colonialist and neo-colonialist intrigue in Africa remains where it always was: the white-dominated slave state in the South, with its capital at Pretoria and its links extending to the NATO armed and NATO backed regimes in Salisbury, Angola, Mozambique and Lisbon.

But the new springboard for imperialist penetration lies in the heart of the Continent: the puppet Tshombe regime at Leopoldville. It was in the Congo operation, sailing under the false colours of the United Nations, that the new technique of collective imperialism,

in which the mutually-hostile capitalist powers of West Europe and North America, first joined hands to bring about the bloody suppression of the Lumumba Government. It was in the Congo last November that the United States, Belgium and Britain, under the false pretence of a humanitarian mission, helped Tshombe's murdering looting gangs of white mercenaries to capture Stanleyville from the patriots. It is from the Congo today that new aggressions and intrigues are planned and executed, ranging from the bombing of Uganda villages to the staging of a Rightist comeback in Khartoum.

All the main imperialist countries are playing their part in this new counter-offensive.

From Paris and from London powerful pressures have been exerted to split the Organisation of African Unity, to create a new factional line-up of some former French colonies and Nigeria which are prepared to betray Africa by recognising and embracing the Tshombe puppet regime.

In one way or another, the various imperialist powers arm, assist and protect the odious apartheid regime against the world-wide movement for an arms embargo, for sanctions and boycotts. The West German Bonn regime collaborates with Pretoria in illegal nuclear and chemical weapons development. In defiance of the spirit and intention of the Security Council arms embargo, British, United States, French, Belgian and other firms set up or license armaments plants designed to make Verwoerd's Republic self-sufficient in the manufacture of weapons to kill and suppress Africans.

It would be possible to prolong this list of fresh imperialist adventures and intrigues to great length. But enough has been said already to show the main central point: these are not isolated incidents. They form part of a centrally-planned and designed counter-offensive of international imperialism, against Africa and against Asia.

Their immediate objective is to halt the tide of national liberation, to preserve for the imperialists their vast sources of profits in the 'underdeveloped' areas—areas undeveloped precisely because colonialism has stunted and retarded their development.

Their ultimate objective is no less than recolonisation: to destroy the new-won independence and opportunities of rapid advancement which the African and Asian peoples have won after generations of suffering and untold sacrifices.

In the end they are out to achieve what Hitler tried before them:

to establish world domination, even at the cost of a nuclear holocaust.

They Must Be Stopped!

The imperialists cannot hope to succeed in this mad objective. They are confronted by the opposition of the overwhelming majority of the world's inhabitants, to whose interests and whose will the imperialist aims are diametrically opposed. They are confronted by the opposition of the socialist countries—grown since Hitler's day from two to thirteen, and whose inhabitants comprise a third of mankind. They are confronted by the liberated countries of Asia and Africa, whose hundreds of millions of people cannot and will not be turned back from the path of independence and social revolution, and by the insurgent peoples of South and Central America.

Even within the imperialist countries themselves, the majority of the public have decisively rejected the adventurous and warmongering policies which their governments are implementing. In the United States, but a few months ago, the electorate was asked to express its opinion of the fascist proposals of Senator Goldwater, who demanded an aggressive line of action including the stepping up of aggression in Vietnam and the launching of war against the northern Republic. They answered by inflicting the biggest defeat ever on Goldwater and the Republican Party. But President Johnson today is carrying out precisely the policy advocated by Goldwater in the election.

At the same time an election was being held in Britain. The British public was invited to choose between the well-known Tory policy of colonial adventures and subordination of British policy to that of United States imperialism, on the one hand, and on the other the policy of the Labour Party. In opposition, the Labour Party had sharply criticised Tory policy. Many members were publicly identified with the mass movements for peace, against apartheid and other forms of colonialism, and for a progressive anti-monopoly policy at home and abroad. Labour Party and Trade Union Congress conferences voted for such policies. The Labour Party won the majority. But Prime Minister Wilson and the British Labour Party are carrying out precisely the policy of Home, the Man of Munich. Side by side with the dirty war the Americans are conducting in Vietnam, the British are conducting their own dirty war in Malaya. The Wilson government went out of its way to support the American aggression against Vietnam;

it condones West German militarist dreams of territorial aggrandisement in East Europe ; it is continuing neo-colonialist adventures in Africa and 'East of Suez.'

There are two aspects to these remarkable phenomena. They show, as we Communists have always affirmed, that bourgeois democracy is a swindle. No matter what the electorate want, or whom they put into the White House or Downing Street, international finance-capital is the real master, treating the wishes of the public with contempt. But they also show that even in their own strongholds the imperialists cannot command the support of the masses for the aggressive criminal adventures which threaten the peace and the very survival of humanity. And once they move into united action, despite the vast economic and state powers the monopolists have concentrated in their hands, the people can assert their will. The united freedom marchers of Selma and elsewhere in the United States have forced the government of that country into unwilling steps to protect Negro rights. Purposeful unity of the people everywhere can force the aggressors out of Vietnam and save world peace.

The converse is also true. Unity in action is our weapon ; disunity and passivity help no one but the enemy. It is because the Organisation of African Unity has not thus far continued sufficiently firmly in the Spirit of Addis Ababa that the imperialists have been able to make a comeback in the Congo and elsewhere. It is because the Afro-Asian countries have strayed from the Spirit of Bandung that the imperialists have been able to take advantage of our disunity.

The results have been that the United Nations has been sabotaged, diverted from its purposes into an instrument of imperialist policies, and now reduced to impotence in the face of the severest crisis since its foundation.

The events in Vietnam must serve as a stern warning to all of us that we must close our ranks—the ranks of the great majority of the people everywhere who want peace, national liberation, and advance to socialism. Only in unity can we find the strength to curb international gangsterism and aggression. And if we fail to stop them now, in Vietnam, we shall pay a bitter price in the future in Africa and in every part of the world.