

## EDITORIAL

# THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

**I**n wartime, the first casualty is truth. Newspapers and radio are "mobilised" as a part of the military machine; everything is subordinated to the purposes of propaganda. Thus it is no easy task to pick one's way through the welter of confused, tendentious and often conflicting news reports of the past week or so and arrive at the facts of the present stormy international scene.

Nevertheless, certain realities stand out clearly.

British, French and Israeli troops have invaded Egypt and occupied Egyptian territory by force of arms; a wanton, premeditated act of aggression taken in defiance of solemn undertakings under the United Nations Charter.

History can afford few flimsier justifications than those offered by Sir Anthony Eden for this blatant aggression. If it really was a "police" action following the Israeli invasion, why attack Egypt? It is as if a policeman, seeing an attack on a private citizen by a gangster, were to come up behind the citizen while he was defending himself and bash him over the head. If you saw a policeman behaving like that, you would immediately conclude that his object was not to preserve law and order, but to join with the gangster in robbing him and sharing the loot. And that in fact is exactly what the English and French imperialists are out for — loot. They want to grab the Suez Canal. The Israeli attack was just a feeble excuse (no doubt it was fixed up in advance with the Israeli Government) — an excuse that deceived nobody, for doing exactly what they had been itching to do and threatening to do and preparing to do ever since Colonel Nasser announced the nationalisation of the canal in July; namely, to make war on Egypt.

Even more obviously dishonest was the Anglo-French claim that they wanted to keep the canal free for navigation. The canal has been kept open for navigation ever since Egypt took it over, more than three months ago, despite the sabotaging action of the Anglo-French company in withdrawing pilots. The first and immediate effect of the imperialist military adventure has of course been to block the canal to all shipping for several months.

It must have been quite obvious to the aggressors that this would happen, or at least that it was most likely to happen. The truth is that, despite their hypocritical professions that they are solely interested in keeping this important international waterway open, the British and French ruling classes are not and never have been concerned only or mainly with that question. It is the Egyptian Government that has been striving to keep the waterway open. Britain and France have been playing for much higher stakes.

By hook or by crook, even though illegally, by threats and aggression, in defiance of the United Nations, and at the risk of touching off all the horrors of World War III, the imperialists aim:

**to seize the canal,**

**to overthrow the Nasser Government and re-occupy Egypt as a colony,**

**to teach the peoples of the colonies and former colonies of Africa, Asia and the Middle East "a lesson".**

That lesson is brutally plain. The British and French ruling classes are serving notice that the territories and resources which they seized by force, they intend to hold by force. The peoples of the French colonies of North Africa, urgently demanding their rights to freedom and independence; the Arab States of the Middle East insistently claiming the profits of their rich oilfields, profits which, like the oil itself, are nearly all piped off to Britain, America and France; the awakening millions of Britain's African empire — all of us, indeed, who seek freedom from imperialism and the return of our stolen national resources are intended to "learn" that if we challenge the Europeans' ill-gotten gains, the penalty is invasion, death and destruction.

Such is the basic reasoning behind this desperate military adventure. It is reasoning that is fundamentally false and unrealistic. The English Tory Government and the French so-called "Socialist" Government are living in the past. Instead of frightening the colonial world, they have raised against themselves a storm of mass solidarity, indignation and determination that can only hasten the doom of imperialism and colonialism throughout the world. Already the miserable plan has misfired. Even the United States, in the throes of a Presidential election, was forced to make token gestures of disapproval. In the whole of the United Nations only the Dominion Governments of Australia and New Zealand could be found to approve of the dastardly aggression. The British working class movement showed a militancy and determination against its ruling class that has not been seen for the past thirty years. The plot to conquer Egypt has failed; the "lesson" has turned out to be the greatest fiasco in modern history. As we write, the aggressors' armies are still in Egypt, but we cannot doubt that the massive reaction of the peace-loving people of the whole world will compel them to withdraw unconditionally, and to compensate the innocent Egyptian people for the damage and suffering that they have caused.

## **THE ROLE OF ISRAEL**

A sorry role in these sorry proceedings has been played by the Government of the young state of Israel. The thousands of Jewish people who sought refuge in Palestine at the end of the last war, beguiled by Zionist propaganda, sought nothing but the peace and security which they hoped to find in their new homeland. Their sole hope of finding such security lay in a policy of brotherly peace and friendship with the kindred Arab people who lived in Israel and in all the states and lands surrounding it. Instead of pursuing such a policy the Zionist leaders, inflamed with nationalistic ardour and dreams of martial glory, have done everything in their power to aggravate and inflame Jewish-Arab relations. They cruelly dis-

possessed, persecuted and exiled the Israeli Arabs, and they have acted throughout as open agents for Western imperialism, the mortal foe of Arab independence and aspirations.

No doubt, their Anglo-French patrons have offered them some Egyptian territory as a reward for their jackal's part in the invasion. Such reward is a poor compensation for the hatred and contempt which their action has aroused in the neighbouring countries. Only a radical change of policy and Government in Israel itself can now enable the Israeli people to start anew, and to win a measure of security and peace in the Middle Eastern comity of nations.

## THE NEWSPAPER WAR

As we pointed out above, when war comes, the total propaganda resources are mobilised and the wireless and the newspaper become weapons in the military machine, for hurling verbal bombshells against the enemy. But in this respect, the war that began at the end of October has displayed some deeply significant differences to any wars of the past. Officially, Britain was attacking Egypt. Officially, America was protesting against the attack.

**But in fact the entire propaganda resources of both countries, together with those of the entire capitalist world, were harnessed to an incredibly virulent hate campaign of fantastic dimensions, directed against — the Soviet Union.**

Ostensibly the pretext for this campaign has been the happenings in Hungary.

It is almost impossible, from the welter of confused and conflicting news reports over the past fortnight, to gain anything like an accurate and cohesive picture of what has been going on in that country. The reports are manifestly unreliable. We have not known such reckless and hysterical propaganda since the closing down of Goebbels' Zeesen radio. On November 4 the Sunday papers told us that the "iron curtain had clanged down" and no reliable news could be expected from Hungary. Every day since then Vienna has been pouring out atrocity stories in full grisly detail to the avid newspapers of the world. In the same breath Reuter tells us that the Red Army is "well-behaved" and then that Soviet troops are looting and preventing the removal of wounded from the streets of Budapest. Reporting the U.N. debate on Hungary, the newspapers published extensive extracts from the speeches of Western delegates indicting the Soviet Union — but not a word of the statement of the Soviet representative.

The newspaper and radio treatment of Hungarian events is in glaring contrast with its treatment of fighting elsewhere. For example, on November 7 The Star printed, over three columns on its front page, a picture of a weeping old lady. The caption stated that she was a Hungarian refugee in Vienna, whose husband was killed in the fighting and whose sons were "among those who preferred to stay and die rather than flee from the oppressor." (Note the extravagant language.)

Now, violence is an ugly and pathetic thing, which brings human tragedy and suffering in its wake wherever it may occur. But the whole approach and behaviour of the capitalist newspapers during this critical period exposes their alleged concern for the sufferings of the Hungarians as nothing but cynical hypocrisy. Where was their sympathy for bereaved wives and mothers, when British troops opened fire on unarmed crowds in Singapore the week before? What about the widows of Port Said and Port Fuad and Sinai? What, for that matter, about those who lost husbands and sons when the police opened fire at Vlakfontein and Lichtenburg? The newspapers have no sympathy for these victims of brutal violence; no order has gone forth from the Vatican to mourn these dead throughout the world. These are crocodile tears. Their object is not to awaken sympathy for the Hungarians, but hatred for Soviet Russia.

They publish in flaunting headlines fantastic rubbish about Soviet troops shelling a children's hospital, about "plague spread by Mongol soldiers". And they bury in an insignificant corner the statement by the Italian diplomat in Port Said that 150,000 people are destitute and 50,000 homeless in that city as a result of Anglo-French bombing. They keep repeating the silly lie that "Red China" supports the Hungarian counter-revolution, and deliberately suppress such statements as that of the Peking newspaper Jenminjihpao that "the standpoint of the Soviet Union with regard to events in Hungary is the absolutely correct standpoint of proletarian internationalism." They have suppressed the important Soviet Government declaration of November 4, declaring readiness to discuss steps to eliminate "any possible violations of the principle of national sovereignty" in relations with the socialist countries, including the withdrawal of Soviet advisors and forces.

It is not difficult to discern the purpose of this reckless propaganda. It is to distract attention from the criminal onslaught on Egypt — like the thief who shouts "Stop, thief!" It is to create confusion in the anti-imperialist camp — "Look", they cry, "the Russians are also imperialists." It is to try and rally the crumbling "Western" alliance of the so-called "free world", strained to breaking point over conflicts, economic rivalries and policy differences in the Middle East and elsewhere.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT HUNGARY

Obviously no reliance can be placed upon such sinister and biased reports, if we wish to make a true assessment of the Hungarian events. And in conditions of South Africa's iron curtain, with its prohibited index of hundreds of banned newspapers and periodicals, it is difficult enough to obtain reliable information upon which to base such an assessment. Yet it is plain that serious disturbances have taken place. Soviet troops (unlike those of Britain and France which have been in continuous action) have been engaged in serious combat for the first time since the war. It is necessary to make some analysis of these happenings, however incomplete and tentative it must necessarily be, if we are to preserve a rational and balanced view of world events.

We may begin by recalling some well-known facts about Hungary which the anti-Soviet propagandists seem only too anxious for us to forget.

In the first place we should not forget that the Soviet Union has not suddenly "invaded" Hungary, as the British and French have invaded Egypt. Soviet troops have been in Hungary ever since the end of the second world war, and as a result of that war. For the former fascist Horthy Government of Hungary was a partner with Hitler in aggression against the Soviet Union, and helped to inflict untold bloodshed, damage and suffering on the U.S.S.R. In accomplishing the defeat of the Fascist Axis, the Red Army entered Hungary, liberated the people from the Nazi yoke, smashed the Fascist State machine, and generously helped the people to restore the war-shattered country and build up a new democratic way of life.

Thus, the Soviet troops are in Hungary not as invaders, but in accordance with international law and recognised treaties — at present in terms of the Warsaw Treaty. Britain, America and France, we may point out also retain occupation armies in ex-enemy Western Germany. The difference being that (see Marshal Bulganin's Note to Pandit Nehru) the Soviet Union has expressed its intention of withdrawing its occupation troops: the Western Powers have not.

Secondly, we may remind our readers that the Soviet troops only intervened in Hungary when called upon by the former Hungarian Government — the very Government of Imre Nagy who is now so much praised by the capitalist newspapers — to restore order. Moreover, when the same Nagy Government requested the Soviet troops to withdraw from Budapest, they did so. In the meantime Nagy announced his resignation from the Hungarian Working People's Party which had placed him in office, and the formation of a new Government composed of reactionary figures from the old regime, in circumstances that spoke clearly of a counter-revolutionary *coup d'etat*. But it was only when he unilaterally denounced the Warsaw Treaty and openly called for military aid from the West that Soviet troops again moved into action, in support of a new, revolutionary workers' and peasants' government set up to depose the illegal Nagy regime and safeguard the fruits of twelve years socialist construction. It seems almost certain that had the Red Army not intervened, and had Nagy's appeal for "aid" succeeded, the result would have been a serious war, with unhappy Hungary as a battlefield, and incalculable consequences for humanity.

These actions cannot properly be described as "aggression"; much though it is to be regretted that affairs in Hungary had reached a stage where the Government found it necessary to call for outside aid in maintaining order.

## HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

In seeking for answer to the question of what had happened in Hungary that led to widespread disturbances and eventually to rampant counter-revolution, we shall find that many factors are involved: heavily-financed campaigns of subversion directed from the U.S.A., special circumstances of Hungarian history, Vatican intrigues, grievous errors of policy and administration committed by the Hungarian workers' leaders, incorrect policies arising from the Stalin cult on the part of the U.S.S.R.

It is notorious that both Government and private sources in the United States have spent and are spending millions of dollars on financing propaganda, espionage, sabotage, terrorism, disaffection and rebellion in the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe. In addition to the official Gov-

ernment "Voice of America" radio, American capitalists have contributed liberally to "Radio Free Europe", which maintains thirteen transmitters in Munich, Frankfurt and Mannheim in West Germany and Lisbon in Portugal, and employs over a thousand people — mainly Whiteguard emigrés from Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. This sinister organisation, sponsored by Eisenhower, General Clay, former U.S. military commander in Germany, Henry Ford, Spyros Skouras (who now owns most of the South African cinemas) and other leading Americans, aims openly at the overthrow of the Governments of these East European countries. Associated with it is the American National Committee for a Free Europe, which collected over 11 million dollars in one year. It is also sponsored by Eisenhower, together with a number of bankers and industrialists. Its *first organiser was the same General Clay, who said publicly:*

**"The way to bring peace is to produce revolutions in the countries behind the iron curtain. The United States is the only country that can provide the necessary leadership"**

(New York Times, June 29, 1952).

An equally sinister though less spectacular role has been played by the intrigues of the Roman church in Eastern Europe. Is it an accident that it is precisely in Catholic Hungary and Poland that peaceful demonstrations turn, somehow, into wild riots; that democratic reforms, initiated by working class leaders, are guided by invisible hands into anti-socialist and anti-Soviet channels?

## **REAL DISCONTENT**

Nevertheless, propaganda, subversion and intrigues directed from abroad would have been powerless to bring about mass disturbances on the scale evident in Hungary (and no matter how exaggerated the newspaper reports it is evident that the scale has been wide indeed), were it not for the existence of widespread discontent and grievances among the masses.

No doubt, the former landlords, capitalists and middle classes of Hungary have not all fled to the West. Thousands of them remain, irreconcilably hostile to the socialist regime, and desperately anxious to seize upon any wild gamble that might seem to offer them the prospect of regaining their former possessions and privileges. Moreover, under the former Horthy regime, and particularly under the influence of the alliance with Hitler, the Hungarian people were from 1919 (after the overthrow, though Western intervention, of the short-lived Soviet Government headed by Bela Kun) to 1944, subjected to the most intense indoctrination of Fascist, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic ideologies, and it would be idle to suppose that the years since liberation had sufficed to eliminate these ugly survivals of the past.

But this has been no mere revolt of bourgeois, landlord and fascist elements. Though no doubt spearheaded by them, it must, actively or passively, have enjoyed the support of wide strata of the urban and rural population to have assumed the dimensions it did. These deductions point to the existence of the most serious blunders and shortcomings in the leading Hungarian Working People's Party.

These errors were recognised by the Party itself in a process of searching self-criticism that culminated in the resignation of its veteran secretary, Matyas Rakosi, on July 18, followed by the appointment to the Party lea-

dership of members who had been unjustly expelled and and imprisoned under the influence of the Stalin cult. (They included Janos Kadar, the present Prime Minister.) These internal criticisms and changes were accompanied by sweeping policy changes; unpopular State loans were abolished, far-reaching administrative reforms were announced to eliminate bureaucracy, the functions of Parliament were extended, Party sectarianism overcome. It seems clear that, in its overkeenness to hasten the advance of socialism, the Party had made too heavy demands on the workers, run ahead of the people and called on them for efforts which they were not ready to make. The result was widespread bureaucracy, "commandism" and isolation from the masses.

## WHAT WENT WRONG?

The new changes were welcomed by the workers of Hungary with great enthusiasm. It seemed that a new era had begun in Hungary's progress, along her own road, to socialism. What went wrong between July and October?

We must wait for history to provide the answers to that question, at a time when the Hungarians themselves are able to digest and formulate the lessons of these November events. Had, in its enthusiasm for the new line, the Party swung to the Right, towards a confusion between socialist and bourgeois democracy? Had its vigilance towards fascist and counter-revolutionary elements become lulled, in its indignation at the unjust frame-up of Laszlo Rajk and other sincere leaders? Certainly, in the light of what has now happened, the figure of Imre Nagy appears in a most suspicious and sinister light. Suddenly elevated to Party and Government leadership, he appeals to Soviet troops for aid in quelling disturbances. But his own Government does nothing to use its own forces against the rioters — so that, in the public eye, the events are seen merely as a clash between Hungarians and foreign occupation troops. Far from discouraging the uprising, Nagy's State radio and newspaper are reported as "welcoming" the uprising — against itself! Surely history cannot record another eyample of a Government "welcoming" the acts of those who seek to overthrow it! He appeals for the withdrawal of Soviet forces, leaving the country in uproar and turmoil. Finally, he announced his renegacy from his Party, the formation of a new "Government" of counter-revolutionaries, denunciation of the Warsaw Pact, appeal for imperialist aid. Some may see in these strange convolutions the working out of a deliberately contrived plot, with Nagy as the agent of a far-reaching conspiracy, gradually revealing his hand. Others will perhaps think of him merely as an unprincipled opportunist, dominated only by the lust for office and revenge. But whatever the theorising — and time will answer these questions — the ill-fated and short-lived period of Nagy's Premiership has been disastrous for Hungary, and delighted the imperialists and enemies of socialism throughout the world.

## THE SOVIET ROLE

Can the Soviet leaders be exonerated of blame for what has happened in Hungary? Are they guilty of intervention and 'colonialism' in Hungary? Should they now, as it is reported has been suggested by the Yugoslav representative at U.N., withdraw their forces and allow the Hungarians to settle their own problems?

We cannot answer these questions fully until we have been allowed to do what our newspapers and radio iron curtain prevents us from doing — namely to study what the Soviet and Hungarian leaders themselves have to say at U.N. and elsewhere.

But it is clear that, whatever actions may, for military and security reasons, in the revived atmosphere of acute international tension promoted by imperialist aggression in the Middle East, and now the United States alerting of all her armed forces — whatever actions may be taken by the Soviet Union, her policy towards Hungary and other independent States of the socialist camp differs from those of imperialist countries towards their colonies as night differs from day. The Soviet Union has never suggested that the Hungarian or any other people are “backward races” unfit for self-government. There are no Soviet capitalists, holding investments and resources either in the U.S.S.R. or in any foreign country. Far from trying to maintain economically under-developed countries in a state of backwardness, an easy prey to foreign domination the Soviet Union has given and is giving every possible aid — not only in China and Eastern Europe, but also in India and elsewhere — to enable these countries to attain that rapid economic development which alone can guarantee their true, not merely formal, independence.

The very hullabaloo which the capitalist press is making over Hungary is itself an unconscious tribute to this sharply different nature of Soviet policy. After all, Britain in Malaya, Guiana, Burma, Kenya, Cyprus, France in Indo-China, Algeria, Morocco, Tunis; Holland in Indonesia; America in the Phillipines, China, Korea, Guatemala, have been doing precisely what they now accuse the U.S.S.R. of doing in Hungary: namely, intervening by force and violence in the affairs of other countries. Why no protests over all that? Why no Red Cross solidarity funds, offers to refugees, withdrawals from the Olympic Games lest Swiss, Belgian or Spanish (Spanish!) athletes might contaminate themselves by contact with those from these countries which use force and intervene? The fact is that with ill-concealed delight, the imperialists have seized upon this action of Soviet troops (the first since the fall of the Axis) precisely because in their hearts they know that the Soviet Union is basically and from its nature opposed to any form of imperialism and colonialism, and that its very existence is the most powerful threat to the whole structure of colonialism throughout the world.

What a fortunate chance it was for Sir Anthony Eden to reply to the sharp Soviet Note over Egypt, that he could not accept the Moscow reprimand because of the Soviet action in Hungary! As if two wrongs make a right, or a crude old-fashioned imperialist ultimatum, followed by the bombing of Cairo, could in any way be compared with police action in an occupied, ex-enemy country!

But whatever Sir Anthony may say, the fact is that the Soviet note did more to bring his Government to its senses, than all the U.N. General Assembly resolutions, Labour Party protests and gentle chidings by President Eisenhower. The Anglo-French imperialists ignored the United Nations appeal for a cease-fire for three days; they have even now at the time of writing failed to withdraw their forces from Egypt. It was only after the Soviet note that they hurriedly agreed to stop fighting. The London “Daily Mail” let the cat out of the bag on Wednesday, November 7, when it reported that:

**“Britain and France originally intended to occupy the whole length of the Suez Canal to a depth of 10 miles on either side before ending hostilities. This change of plan is stated to have been due to the increase in East-West tension caused by Russia’s threats.”**

— The Star, 7.11.56.

## **THE ESSENCE OF THE QUESTION**

It is here that we come to the essence of the question, and that all the pieces of the complicated international situation begin to take logical shape. In all their desperate efforts to reinforce and restore their disintegrating colonial system, the Western imperialists come up against one hard and immovable factor, a factor which has transformed the heroic but ineffective liberation struggles of colonial peoples in the past into a vast and invincible movement which has swept the banner of freedom from one former colony to another, and abolished colonialism for more than 1,200 million people over the past decade.

That factor is the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a great power openly and irrevocably hostile to imperialism, a power with an industrial-technological-military potential second to none. It is this factor which has enabled the former colonies triumphantly to proclaim and consolidate their independence, as they did at the Afro-Asian conference last year at Bandung, and that, at the last minute saved Egypt from passing again beneath the yoke.

And, in their hearts, this truth is recognised both by the imperialists and by all colonial people, Communist and non-Communist, irrespective of ideology, Right, Left and Centre. That is why we have this intensive hate campaign unleashed against the U.S.S.R. That is why the far-from-Leftist Parliament of Jordan unanimously passed a vote of thanks to the Soviet Union for its stand on Middle East problems against aggression.

We stand on the brink of the final collapse of the imperialist colonial system, with all its wonderful and glowing prospects of liberation for the people of South Africa and all the world. But these bright prospects are overshadowed by the terrible danger that in their desperation the imperialists may seek to plunge humanity into the unimaginable horrors of a third, atomic, war.

We in South Africa must not imagine that we are in any way detached or separate from these great and momentous decisions of our times. We must join the world-wide demand for aid to Egypt, the unconditional withdrawal of the aggressors, the restoration of Suez to its rightful owners, compensation and reparations to the victims. We must stand vigilant for peace, against the renewed building up of East-West tension and the threats of war. We must advance the tempo of our own bitter struggle for human dignity and freedom for all in our country, and for the advancement of the millions of our great continent of Africa to their rightful place as equals and partners in the fashioning of a new and better world.