

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

April 1968

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Resolution of the C.C. of the LSSP(R) on the Middle East Conflict of June 1967	1
A Critique of the United Secretariat Resolution on the Arab Israel Con- flict, by Comrade Edmund	1
First Balance Sheet of the Middle East Conflict, by Comrade Kula- tilake	3
The Middle East Conflict (an ap- preciation) from the UNITED SECRETARIAT	4

(Published as a fraternal
courtesy to the United Sec-
retariat of the Fourth In-
ternational)

15 cents

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

RESOLUTION OF THE C.C. OF THE LSSP(R)
ADOPTED ON 16th NOVEMBER 1967

"The resolution adopted on June 28 by the U.S. on the Middle East conflict of June 1967 is not acceptable to the C.C. of the LSSP (R) for the following reasons:

1. The character of the conflict has not been correctly evaluated insofar as the military conflict between the State of Israel, on the one hand, and the Arab States, on the other, has been confused with the question of the struggle of the Arab masses against Imperialist domination in the Middle East.

2. The specific military conflict that took place has been made to appear as a clash between Imperialist forces and the Arab States, which is not correct, since though the State of Israel is an ally of Imperialism in the Middle East, it cannot be treated as an Imperialist force or as having acted as an instrument of Imperialist forces when it launched a military attack on the Arab States, in the context in which it did so.

3. The role of the Arab States in confusing and disorienting the anti-capitalist struggle and the anti-feudal struggle of the Arab masses has not been dealt with, and by reference to Anti-Imperialist measures in these States and description of Egypt and Syria as "progressive", the U.S. has only added to the confusion in this respect in an un-Marxist manner."

A CRITIQUE OF THE U.S. RESOLUTION ON THE ARAB-ISRAEL
CONFLICT, Proposed by Com. Edmund

(1) It is correct to support the Arab states (U.A.R., Syria and Jordan) against the state of Israel for the following reasons:

(a) The state of Israel was a creation of Imperialism and this state has functioned since as an outpost of Imperialism.

(b) The three-day war (June 1967) between the U.A.R.-led Arab states and Israel was not just a war between two bourgeois states as for instance the war between Pakistan and India.

The Arab-Israel conflict is not different in character to the 1956 war between U.K.-French Imperialism supported by Israel against U.A.R. The state of Israel has been financially and militarily strengthened by U.S.-U.K. Imperialism and also by French and West German bourgeois states for confrontation with the U.A.R.-led Arab States in furtherance of Imperialist domination in the Middle East. In this context Israel's aggression against the Arab states in June 1967 was Imperialist aggression. The resistance of the Arab states was resistance to Imperialist aggression. It is correct for revolutionary Marxists to be in the opposition to the existing state of Israel.

(2) The resolution has brought out the weakness of the resistance movement as led by the so-called national-bourgeoisie (Nasser and Co.). But the resolution has failed to point out that the so-called national-bourgeoisie are incapable of carrying on consistent and effective struggle against Imperialism; that the full mobilization of the workers and toilers in these countries of feudo-capitalist oppression is not possible as long as such conditions exist.

(3) The characterization of the U.A.R. and Syria as "progressive" governments is wrong. While any resistance by the national bourgeoisie-led governments or semi-feudal governments (Jordan) to imperialism must be supported as progressive actions it cannot follow that these governments can be characterized as "progressive". The characterization of a government as "progressive" is justifiable only if such a government is anti-capitalist. The Marxist movement has named such governments as "Workers and Peasant Governments."

(4) None of the Arab states involved in the Arab-Israel conflict (June 1967) have anti-capitalist governments although sweeping nationalizations have taken place in two of these states (U.A.R. and Syria).

The characterization of the governments of the U.A.R. and Syria as "progressive" will imply that our attitude to these governments is one of critical support which would be wrong. Such an attitude to these governments (U.A.R. & Syria) will not be different from the Pabloist and Stalinist positions of general support to these governments because they are "progressive."

(5) The resolution is critical of the part played by the Soviet bureaucracy in relation to this conflict. It has however failed to expose and denounce the Kremlin bureaucrats for their treacherous conduct in using the Arab anti-imperialist movement for bargaining with U.S. imperialism for "peaceful co-existence" even as this bureaucracy have used the Vietnamese Liberation struggle all these years.

It is imperative for revolutionary Marxists to state categorically, that while the Arab people's struggle to get back their territory, wrested from them by military aggression by Israel, must be supported, that we do not deny the right of the Jewish people to self determination.

RESOLUTION OF KULATILAKE ON THE
FIRST BALANCE SHEET OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

This assessment and the immediate or short-range proposals made accordingly by the U.S. are harmful to the international proletariat class struggle movement as they are arrived with an incorrect Trotskyist political survey.

It is not proper to categorize Egypt and Syria as progressive countries. By doing so U.S. again falls to the Pabloist line which would support and strengthen the petty bourgeois tendencies existing in various sections of the F.I.

By demanding the withdrawal of the Israel armies to their bases of departure and the re-establishment of the lines of the armistice of 1949 U.S. is calling for a war between Israel Government and Arab governments on which war F.I. is to take the side of the Arab governments. The immediate result of this act would be strengthening the anti-proletariat governments of Arab countries. This is wrong. This will not help the proletariat class struggle on either side.

F.I. should and must condemn the invasion of Arab countries by the Israel State and must explain to the Arab masses that the victory of the Israel State is due to the backwardness and pro-imperialistic nature of their governments and that they should organize themselves and lead their struggle against the Israel invaders as well as against the reactionary Arab regimes with an aim to form their own government.

Owing to the economic and political backwardness of existing Arab regimes it must be clear that they will not be able to lead another war successfully against the Israel State and a failure of such an attempt would make the liberation struggle of the proletariat masses of either side still worse. What F.I. should offer to Arab Masses in this instance is necessary help to build up their revolutionary party.

THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT
(an appreciation) from the UNITED SECRETARIAT

The LSSP (R) resolution and the accompanying minority statements of the Ceylonese comrades raise the following objections against the stand taken by the United Secretariat on the Arab Israel war: 1) the characterization of the conflict was not correct, i.e. it was evaluated as a struggle of the Arab masses against imperialism whereas it was in fact a conflict between states; 2) the role of the Arab states which confused the masses in their revolutionary struggle was not dealt with -- worse, in terming Syria and the U.A.R. "progressive" the US actually aggravated the confusion since this appreciation implies critical support of their leaderships (this view is shared by the 2nd minority resolution).

The state of Israel is the result of the Zionist colonization of Palestine. Though the specific nature of the Zionist ideology which aimed at setting up a purely Jewish society in Palestine has several unique features -- in contradistinction to the classical colonial pattern Zionism did not call for the exploitation of the natives but for their replacement by a Jewish proletariat -- the colonial characteristics of this ideology are obvious. Insofar as the Zionist leaders aimed at turning Palestine into a Jewish state through large-scale immigration and settlement of land bought from the feudal gentry after the Arab fellahs had been forcibly removed, it could hardly have attained its aims without the backing of Imperialism. The open support they gave the British during the Arab Revolt (1936-39) is a case in point.

It is true that the Jewish settlers eventually turned against their British protectors when the interests of the two sides clashed after World War II, but this does not effect the colonial content of the Zionist enterprise. However the specific characteristics of Zionism do explain the emergence of the Jewish proletariat in Palestine which is exploited by the Zionist bourgeoisie and does not derive any benefit from the colonial context (aside from being able to settle in Palestine), a fact that underscores the differences between the typical colonial settlers (Algeria, South Africa, etc.) and the Jewish community in Palestine. The fundamental fact in this matter is that the Zionist ideology and movement is a typical imperialist enterprise and is responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees and the partition of Palestine in 1948.

The segregationist pattern survived in the Zionist state of Israel. The conflict between Israel and the neighboring countries is thus no ordinary strife between bourgeois states but the current form arising from the colonialist content of the Zionist enterprise. The Zionist structure of the Israeli state expresses itself in the dramatic fate of the refugees which the uniracial Israeli state does not allow to return to

their homes. Furthermore, the segregationist Zionist practices continue to flourish in regard to the Arab minority (the prospects for improvement are of course worse than ever since the June 1967 war). It is precisely this segregationist power structure of Israel which precludes any normalization of the relations between Israel and the Arab states. Clearly, normal relationships can only be restored when the Zionist power structure with its organic segregationism is smashed and when the Palestinian people obtain justice, namely the return and/or compensation of the refugees and the implementation of their right to self-determination, this possibly implying the setting up of a Palestinian entity on the territory of former Palestine, which was divided in 1948-49 between Israel, Jordan and Egypt.

The political, economic and diplomatic boycott of Israel by the Arab states and the continuing tension on the border, initially due to the refugees who wished to return to their homes, has literally thrown the Israeli bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism. Since every step forward of the Arab revolution strengthens the Arab cause and as the anti-imperialist forces are still less inclined to accept the status quo than are the feudal countries (which are under Western pressure to do so), Israel has become the "best" ally of Imperialism in the Middle East, with a vested interest in preventing the development of the Arab revolution, since it aims at the consolidation and recognition of the status quo. Thus Israel was a willing party to and the initiator of the Suez affair and has not ceased supporting Imperialist aims in the region, even when the matter at hand has no direct bearing on the Palestinian conflict (The Israeli stand on Algeria bears this out).

On the other hand, the Jewish masses in Israel, which in the course of time gave birth to a new Hebrew-Jewish nation with its own specific characteristics are the victims of this situation. Obviously, the interests of the Israeli working class lie in a common struggle of all the peoples of the Arab East against their oppressors, the Arab and Israeli bourgeoisie. The Zionist power structure is clearly contrary to their interests. It maintains itself because of the low level of class consciousness of the Israeli proletariat swamped for years with a steady flow of nationalistic and jingoistic propaganda from their leaders. In calling for the destruction of Israel -- which in Israel is taken to mean at best the suppression of the national rights of the Israeli nation--if not for the actual murder or expulsion of the Israeli people (this is the theme of the ratio propaganda on "throwing the Jews into the sea"), the Arab leaders have only succeeded in strengthening the influence of the Zionist leadership on the masses. In fact, the acute social and ethnic tensions in Israel (where the Oriental Jews form the lower layers of the proletariat and are discriminated against in a manner which is not unlike the situation of the Afro-Americans in the USA) have actually been hastily patched up last year thanks to the hysterical and racist Arab propaganda.

In this context, it is obvious that a clash between Israel and the Arab states, even the most reactionary states, has clear cut colonial undertones. Even the feudal leaders of the Arab world are the embodiment of the desire of the Arab peoples to resist colonialist expansion -- naturally in a distorted way -- when they struggle against the Zionist state of Israel, which is financially, economically, politically, militarily and diplomatically dependent upon the Western powers. In such a struggle Marxists cannot stand aside under the pretense of not taking sides since none of the states are workers states or have a revolutionary leadership. From the point of view of the permanent revolution, such struggles weaken the imperialist system as a whole and are objectively progressive since they oppose an oppressed nation and an imperialist power.

Thus Engels supported the struggle of the Chinese insurgents against the European imperialism of the 19th century. The Communist International rightly supported the Moroccan nationalists in the Rif in the 1920's although their leaders were clearly feudal. Thus Trotsky supported the slave owner Haile Selasse against Italian imperialism. Another case in point is the clash of interests between the reactionary leadership of Congo(K) and Belgium over the issue of the Belgian concessions in Congo. Obviously we cannot stand aloof from this struggle because Mobutu is an agent of American imperialism. He certainly is that, but insofar as he embodies the national rights of the oppressed Congolese nation we revolutionaries must support the right even of the rascal Mobutu to chuck out the European capitalist concerns. This is the meaning of our support of the colonial revolution.

Obviously, such support would be conditional (upon the Congo Government carrying on the struggle against imperialist interests) and critical (we only support Mobutu as long as he fights against imperialism). But any other attitude would boil down to precluding us from giving support to any movement which is not 100% revolutionary Marxist. The very meaning of critical support is precisely that we reserve our support to the matters in which a non-revolutionary leadership adopts an objectively correct stand.

However, in the case of the June 1967 war, the opponent of Israel was not the feudal Arab class (it participated only nominally in the military operations) but the most advanced sectors of the Arab national movement in the Middle East, namely Egypt and Syria. The war cannot be abstracted from the worldwide imperialist attempt to reverse the balance of forces in its favor. The Israeli leadership clearly speculated on the American tacit support of an offensive which was meant to overthrow the Syrian and Egyptian leaderships. The Israeli chief of staff General Rabin repeatedly stated that the Syrian regime was the enemy and the Israeli radio took up the same tune.

The continuation of the Israeli offensive after Nasser's resignation (which was called off after the Cairo masses demonstrated their support) against Syria undoubtedly was aimed toward a similar denouement.¹ At the very moment Britain is about to evacuate the petroleum sheikdoms, Israel is a "stabilizing" factor in the Middle East, a precious asset for Imperialism.

Though we obviously cannot lend unconditional support to the Egyptian state bureaucracy or the petty bourgeois Baath leadership, it would be a sectarian error to deny that these governments' interests clash with Imperialism. However unprincipled their stand may be -- this especially applies to Nasser -- they represent the national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeois layers whose interests conflict with Imperialism. As opposed to the compradore bourgeoisie and their feudal allies which Washington is desperately trying to organize in the "Islamic Pact" they are historically, progressive forces, as they were correctly defined by the United Secretariat in its resolution, without being Workers and Peasants' governments.

It is correct to say that the bourgeois national or petty bourgeois nationalist governments in semi-colonial countries cannot achieve the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and therefore are unable to achieve complete political and economic emancipation from imperialist power over these countries. But from this basic tenet of the theory of permanent revolution it does not follow at all that these governments cannot take a single progressive action against imperialism, i.e. that they are unable to start anti-imperialist struggle, however hesitant, contradictory or vacillating this struggle may be.

Such a conclusion flies in the face of the whole historical experience of the 20th century in the semi-colonial countries. The nationalization of the British oil interests in Mexico by

1. The Israeli business circles aptly summed up what was at stake in the coming war in the following excerpts from the Israel Economist of December 1966: "The tensions now besetting the Middle East emanate from Cairo and Damascus. There the plots are being hatched and from there the agents planning and executing subversion in other states receive their orders. The showdown facing the region today is not one between the Arabs and Israel. It is one between the Egyptian-Syrian-Shukairy axis and the pro-Western Arab states. The Yemen has been a theatre of this showdown for a long time. Now another theatre may be opened up -- Jordan. And the Western powers whose interests are being threatened are apparently unready to intervene with decisiveness and adequate force to protect their friends."

the bourgeois nationalist government of that country in the 30's was a progressive act, wholeheartedly supported by Trotsky, as he supported the war of resistance of the bourgeois butcher Chiang Kai-chek against Japanese imperialism.

It is impossible to criticize the inadequacies, hesitations and vacillations of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois leaders of the colonial freedom movement, if one does not at the same time support each of their anti-imperialist actions. Criticism without support is not only sectarian; it puts the sectarian in the position of objectively supporting imperialism, by remaining "neutral" in a struggle in which historically progressive forces clearly oppose historically reactionary ones.

When we speak of the "progressive" nature of the Nasser and the Baa'th regime, this should not be interpreted in any sense as meaning that we have any illusions about the capacity of these regimes to achieve the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, i.e., to push the process of permanent revolution to its victorious end. We have no such illusions and clearly emphasize that only a party based upon the proletariat and the poor peasantry can achieve such a victory. Their "progressive" nature stems from the fact that they have gone farther than all other Arab regimes in opposing imperialism and the native propertied classes, not only in words but in deeds. This cannot be denied when one takes the actual facts into consideration. And no one will be able to intervene successfully in the process of clarification now under way among Arab revolutionists, if he starts by denying the obvious facts.

United Secretariat of the
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL