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THE WEST ASIAN IMBROGLIO-II

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I think it is correct to say that never in the last twenty years has the policy of the Indian Government been so th at variance with the mind of the people. Never has the chasm between official pronouncements and the feelings of the people been so wide. This is so whether we think of West Asia or whether we think of Peking or of Tibet.

The policies that our present Government are carrying out are the policies which were evolved twenty years ago by Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru in entirely different circumstances. During the past twenty years, the world has undergone transformation. Twenty years ago, there was the Soviet block on one side facing the Western Democracies on the other. There was an active cold war in the context of which the policy of non-alignment, such as it is, was evolved. Whether one agreed with that policy or not, and we did not, at least it made some sense in that particular context but in today's circumstances it makes no sense at all because the whole situation has undergone a change.

Turning to West Asia, it is my firm belief that we should be friends of both the Arabs and Israel and that we should

maintain a posture of impartiality and objectivity in the dispute that goes on unfortunately between the Arab countries and Israel. It was in pursuance of that policy that we, along with non-communist parties in the Parliament jointly signed a letter to the Prime Minister on the 5th June, as soon as hostilities broke out in West Asia. In that letter, we said :

"Whatever may so far have been said and done, we are of the view that from now on the best thing that can be done is for the Indian Government to adopt an objective attitude in this dispute and to abstain from taking sides or apportioning blame at this stage. We feel that, if this attitude is adopted by the Government, it will have the support of the country as a whole. Such an attitude would be conducive to India's playing an honourable part in restoring peace in West Asia."

We asked for nothing more than neutrality, nothing more than impartiality in the company of Muslim countries like Malayasia, Iran and Turkey, all three of whom maintained impartiality and objectivity throughout the West Asian war, just as Japan did, and as other countries did.

I am very sorry to say that the Prime Minister, the following morning when she made a statement in Parliament, brushed aside public opinion as expressed by the two socialist parties, the Jan Sangh, Swatantra and the DMK, and took the path of blatant partisanship and unfairness.

What is the Indian stand on West Asia? There are two basic things: before the war and after the war. Before the war or when the war started, we said that Israel was the aggressor, and after the war finished, we said that Israel should withdraw from the territory, which they acquired, unconditionally.

The Indian Government's position was that Israel was the aggressor and, therefore, it should vacate its territory. Both these attitudes are thoroughly unrealistic and wrong. They are lacking in the most elementary sense of justice or reality.

Who was the aggressor? Let us look at the record.

At the Press Conference in Cairo on the 28th May, President Nasser said:

"The very existence of Israel is an aggression. When the time is ripe, it will be we who will decide the time and place."

At a Press Conference on the following day, on the 29th May, in Cairo, President Nasser said:

"We do not accept any kind of co-existence with Israel."

In his interview with Christopher Mayhew, a British M. P., in B. B. C.

Television, he was seen and heard to say that the Arabs and Israel had been in a 'state of war' since 1948 and in war it was natural to seek to exterminate the other. This was in so-called peacetime before the fighting.

Ahmed Shukairy, Palestinian Front Leader said this. Asked what would happen to Israelis if the Arab war were to be successful, he said, "We will help to facilitate their shipment to their native states". As for Israelis born in Israel, he said, and I quote:

"Everybody who is still surviving will stay in Palestine. It is my estimation that none of them will survive."

After that, President Nasser demanded the removal of the Emergency Force, so that he could attack.

Again, on the 24th May, he committed an act of war. The blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba was an act of war, an act of aggression.

Even after these acts of aggression, for 12 days, Israel maintained peace to see what the Great Powers would do, what the United Nations would do, what world opinion would do and what diplomacy could do. It was after 12 days of these acts of war that they struck back in their own defence. They struck back in their own defence because I am saying that an act of war was perpetrated by the UAR. And we know what happened in the six-day war. On the fourth day, the war for "the total annihilation of Israel" ended with a cease-fire.

ought to tell him that this is advertising loudest a poor sense of economy. All that fuel that burns to create so much smoke costs money. Whose? Bah!

THE FRIENDS WE LOOSE !

Very recently TROPIX lost two friends by death.

Shri. V. Krishnan Nair of the Indian Police working with the Central Intelligence Bureau died suddenly of a heart attack in Bangalore. A man of active habits, his death by heart failure is incredible. Krishnan Nair (Kittettan to a large circle of friends) did a great deal to popularise Tropix wherever he went.

Death also came to Shri D. Sandilya at the Southern Railway Hospital in Perambur, Madras, a hospital staffed and equipped well, after but a brief illness. Shri Sandilya belonged to the Indian Railway Audit Service. He had held many important jobs under various ministries of the Government of India and was, at the time of his death, Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer of the Integral Coach Factory at Perambur. Sandilya was the son-in-law of the last President, Dr. Radhakrishnan.

To the bereaved families Tropix offers heartfelt condolence.



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The Soviet Union has not had a very honourable role to play in this context. It was their armaments that made this war possible. Mr. Randolph Churchill who is writing a book on the war starts his book by saying :

"It started with a lie - a Russian lie".

And that lie was evidently this - that they sent alarming reports to the UAR that Israel was massing its troops to attack Syria, which was not true, and Mr. Nasser acted on the strength of these reports. later on to be let down by those who had instigated him.

We have been handicapped by the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel. For years, some of us have been asking that we should maintain relations with both sides. If we had done that, we would not have been so completely in the dark and made such a mess of our position, because we backed the wrong side on a wrong hypothesis.

All these years, 87 countries, including the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc till the other day, have maintained diplomatic relations with both Israel and the Arab countries without forfeiting Arab friendship.

These countries include all our neighbours, our own kind of people like Ceylon, Nepal, Burma and several African States like the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanganyika, If 87 countries could maintain friend-

ship with the Arabs and yet have a representative in Tel Aviv, why have we been selected for this humiliation that we can only have friendship on the Arab terms and not on self-respecting terms.

Why do we make a laughing-stock of our country by giving diplomatic recognition to a bogus thing called the Arab League which is no state at all and treating its representative as an Ambassador, and by being the only country in the world to recognise a State that does not exist? And yet we do not recognise a state that does exist, and very much so. So we have thrown non-alignment out of the window. We have been partisan in a flagrant fashion.

We have voted for every wrong move in the United Nations. On the 25th May, the United States had brought forward a resolution for an immediate cease-fire. But we voted against that resolution for an immediate cease-fire along with the Soviet Union. If we had voted for it then, and that cease-fire had been carried out, we could have avoided the defeat of the Arab. We thought that we were backing the winning side whereby we made a complete misjudgement of our position. Later on, we had to climb down and support a cease-fire.

Similarly, we backed the Soviet resolution declaring Israel an aggressor. But who voted for it? There were only 10 non Arab, non-communist countries in the whole world that voted for it,

and we had the distinction of being one of those ten countries.

In this way, before and after the fighting, we seem to be persisting in completely going out of the way in refusing to see any point of view except our own.

The General debate in the Assembly of the UN has certain lessons to teach us. One is that the Soviet effort to condemn Israel failed miserably. The second is that the non-aligned nations' effort to make Israel withdraw unconditionally has also failed, because the world conscience does not see why they should withdraw until they are guaranteed security.

What was our own position when we were in a similar situation in 1965? In 1965, when we were asked to withdraw from territories which we had occupied in Pakistan, what did we say? We said that we would not withdraw until our security was guaranteed against another attack. Is Israel not to have the same assurance of security from another attack or another preparation for war from its enemies? Is it one way for us, another for the other?

This, very briefly is why I say that in West Asia, far from playing a constructive role, we have joined one party to this dispute in an extreme incendiary position which makes any settlement impossible.

Now, what would be a fair basis for a solution? I commend the Outline of a Just Peace by Prof. Arnold Toynbee, the great historian who is a known pro-Arab. Prof. Toynbee has been a noted friend of the Arab countries all these years. What is his proposal for a settlement? There are four salient points in his proposals.

He says, first of all, that there must be Arab recognition of the existence and sovereignty of Israel. There can be no withdrawal unless both parties are prepared to sit round the table and talk to each other as equals.

The second is that Israel is to do justice to the Palestine refugees.

The third is the reciprocal grant of rights of way—Israel to have free passage through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, and Jordan to have access to the ports of Jaffa and Haifa.

His last suggestion is that the Holy City of Jerusalem should be made a free city under international trusteeship as suggested by His Holiness the Pope.

This seems to be an admirable basis for negotiations, and I would still commend to our Government to resile from their wrong path, to get in line with Indian public opinion and to follow Prof. Arnold Toynbee even if they do not follow anyone else.

The Guardian carrying the headline, "India May Sterilize Fathers Of Three," got the retort from a columnist of the Financial Times, "If they don't they'll be terrors by the time they're four."

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the position was much better than in 1957. Syria, Iraq, Algeria did not in 1956 have popular regimes. The last was in fact under French occupation and could make no contribution whatsoever to the Arab cause. But by 1967 the Arab world was certainly in a much better position and even countries like Jordan and Kuwait which are under feudal regimes stood by the other Arab countries. If despite these favourable factors the Arab world suffered such a major setback it is due to some of the following factors.

The first is that unlike the last occasion when the United States was strictly neutral and in fact expressed disapproval of Anglo-French intervention this time there are good reasons to believe that Israeli strategy was masterminded by the United States. The point is not whether during the actual conflict direct participation of the US air and naval forces took place as is alleged by the UAR. Even if we accept the US claims of neutrality during the conflict at their face value there is little reason to doubt that US help to Israel tilted the scales. It is not only that the entire military equipment of Israel has come from the Western powers. It is believed that the United States supplied Israel with intelligence reports which included detailed maps obtained through U-2 reconnaissance flights of UAR airfields, radar installations etc. It is also obvious that considerable

military equipment was handed over to Israel shortly before the conflict began. The detailed and accurate intelligence reports enabled the Israeli air force to deal a crushing blow in the very first hour of the start of hostilities.

Despite the greater political unity of the Arab countries their military preparedness was clearly at a lower level. The subsequent purges in the UAR military command show that corruption, bungling and inefficiency were rampant at the upper levels of the command even if allegations of actual sabotage and CIA infiltration are discounted as exaggerations.

An even more important factor in the political situation was the situation in the Communist camp. In sharp contrast to the position in 1956 when the Communist world stood united and seemed poised for a mighty thrust, the picture presented by the Communist camp in 1967 was one of disunity, confusion and indecision. From the very beginning when Soviet warships began steaming into the Mediterranean Chinese leaders accused them of preparing for a joint offensive with U. Imperialists against Arab countries. The prolonged conflict in Viet Nam where Communist intervention was confined to sending supplies to the Viet Cong had convinced the Western powers that they had nothing more to fear than a continuation of economic and military aid to the Arab countries. In the circumstances the entire strategy of the Western world was based on a