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U.S. Is Picking Up the Pieces in Middle East

By GORDON BASKELL

The U.S. government, having walked right up to the prospect of a break with its two major imperialist allies, turned right around and slid back in the old groove.

This was heralded on Nov. 27 when Eisenhower came out with a statement denying any “weakening or disruption of the great bonds” that hold together the NATO countries, and was made official in the ensuing week with the shipment of oil to Britain and France.

When the question of whether the United States has moved decisively to wield its power as sovereign of the capitalist world for the purpose of liquidating the immediate crisis in Egypt, by applying economic sanctions to France and Britain in the form of an oil boycott, Washington forced the governments in Paris and London to agree to an immediate deal that would not help the Egyptians, but strengthened Egypt’s links from Egyptian territory. Since these governments had already demonstrated their inability, in the face of powerful domestic and world hostility, to carry through the crude economic weapon of Egypt which they had started, the final push given them by the United States oil boycott came as close to being an act of political mercy as one of outright hostility.

The desperate gamble of the British-French imperialists has virtually eliminated those countries from their traditional sphere of influence in the Middle East. It is inevitable that the United States will now seek to take over, under different conditions, the role of arbiter and policeman in the area.

THEY LEARNED NOTHING

For the moment, it appears that the American government hopes to ameliorate and control the clashing interests and rivalries in the area by dangling large bundles of economic aid before its rulers. But as it demonstrated in its oil boycott of its foremost world allies: where the carrot fails, the stick is not far behind.

While seeking to carry out the basic functions of political sanitation with regard to the imperialist metis the British-French adventure has left behind it in the Middle East, the United States makes it amply clear that it has no intention of breaking with its allies in Europe. Quite the contrary.

John Foster Dulles himself is being sent to attend the NATO council meeting which will seek to pick up the frayed strands of the alliance and yew them together as firmly as possible in the circumstances. All kinds of talk once more issues from high places on the desirability of binding the NATO countries even closer together to prevent the threat of “misunderstanding and low-level actions” that were involved in the Egyptian affair.

Thus, anybody’s hope that the United States government might have learned something from the fiasco in the Middle East, or that the utter collapse of its previous policy there might have led it to adopt a “milder” tone for its foreign affairs for the future—any such hope dies even faster than it was born.

In the Middle East, the American overlords sternly warns the weaker countries that any further fighting there will be viewed with the “greatest concern” by the United States, which is as close as one gets to a threat within the polite forms of diplomacy. And in Europe, the United States government has already made it clear that it is possible, to those very allies who have just reconvened the rest of the world that they are just as imperialist as they ever were, and that the only limitation on their imperialist actions is the poor prospects of success.

These are the same governments, further, whose Egyptian adventure served to provide for the Russians a political cover for their brutal attack on the Hungarian people, and for the wobbling and tottering Communist Parties of the world an old-hand priceless, though temporary, political cement.

VO BRIGHT FUTURE FOR IMPERIALISM

This attempt to get back as close as possible to the status quo before Egypt, and to proceed from there beyond it, does not have too rosy prospects.

First of all, the British government might well fail to survive this experience. The Tories’ only chance of continuing in power as a result of an early election will be to blame their Egyptian failure on the United States. A victory won on the basis of such a campaign would not promise the optimum for harmonious relations afterward. If the Labor Party were to win such an election, a brand-new turn in European political perspectives might well lie ahead.

In the Middle East, too, the future of an American era does not look bright. As is inevitable, the United States would seek to manipulate the countries of the area via their ruling classes, rather than by appeal to the democratic aspirations of their masses.

Though for a country as rich and powerful as the United States such a game might give early appearances of success, its long-term prospects run against the mainstream of world history.

SPARKS FLY AS SHACHTMAN TILTS WITH D.W. EDITOR

New York, Dec. 4

About 700, filling Community Church, were on hand last night as sparks flew in the unusual symposium on “Hungary and the Middle East” starring Max Shachtman, Independent Socialist chair- man; John Gaten, Daily Worker editor; Paul Sweezy, Monthly Review editor; and pacifist, John Sweeney of F.B.I., and Dave Dellinger of Liberation; under the chairmanship of A. J. Muste.

It marked the first time in decades that a CP leader has been willing to meet Shachtman on the platform in political confrontation. The meeting was sponsored by the magazine Liberation.

A.L.A. gave two 10-minute presentations, followed by a period of roundtable discussion among the panelists; then they answered questions sent up from the floor, and ended with five-minute summaries.

First speaker was Paul Sweezy, who limited himself to the question European side of the topic. For “historical perspective” he described the distortion of “socialism” in Russia to “the problem of building a socialist society in a very backward country,” specifically in its first two decades. . . . The results were very grave results, some perhaps not worth paying for the results achieved.”

One result was that “an enormous bureaucratization of the party apparatus was built and became entrenched . . . because in effect the ruling power in the country”.

In contradiction with this “bureaucratization police state” was the development of education, creation of a large working class, etc. This contradiction had to be resolved somehow. After Stalin’s death, the CPSU leaders “had an inkling” and began to move slowly, but the Krushchev revolutions precipitated an “avalanche,” for example Pannonia.

Sweezy then contrasted the development in Poland to the Hungarian case.

In Poland, he said, there has been a “genuine revolution . . . beautifully controlled . . . . It was not clear; whether, even in his opinion, a revolution had to be “satisfactorily controlled” in order to receive his O.K. In any case, he went on to lament that the Hungarian development got “completely out of hand.”

Referring to the Russian suppression, he said meaningfully: “I think, myself, that it would have been vastly preferable if it had been allowed to go to any end it was headed for; it probably would have been a rather unnecessary end, probably fascist. But if that’s what the Hungarian people wanted for years of the Stalinist Communist rule, then they should be allowed to have it.”

He thus combined acceptance of the “fascist” columnar against the revolution with opposition to the suppression. But he went on to praise “the Polish example” again, and to call for “independent friendly criticism of things in Eastern Europe.”

John Sweeney, Fellow of Reconciliation national secretary, declared first of all that he was speaking for “Christianity and pacifism.” He fired away particularly at “the futility of military alliances,” and the Middle East to the Baghdad Pact, and stressed “the consideration of power” that was taking place on both sides of the cold war.

Drawing his pacifist lessons from the Hungarian Revolution, he asserted that “women’s freedom, if the people had chosen the non-violent form of resistance,” and argued that “they chose, if to non-violence when they found they couldn’t beat Russian tanks.”

He aimed a salvo at “the Third Camp idea,” which he identified entirely with the neutralist Nehru who has nothing in common with the Third Camp idea; took a shot at “the dogmas of extreme Marxism,” singling out the slinger “Workers of the world, unite” as “obsolene”; and in conclusion urged that the U.S. disarm completely.

Shachtman’s presentation remained carefully within the bounds of the discipline and “legality” of the CP, where he is an

(Continued on page 3)
Notes: What They Say About Hungary

MESSALI'S STAND

Among the political movements that have vigorously and forthrightly denounced both the imperialist attack on Korea and the mass suppression of the Hungarian people, we are glad to note the recent sharp and principled anti-colonialist stand taken by Messel, the MNA.

Its resolution, which first four points concern the one on the former and the other three, continues with a fervent salut to the defense of the Vietnamese national sovereignty against foreign assault and a firm rebuttal of the withdrawal of the foreign troops from both countries.

Messel's resolution demands a Communist bloc decision to liberalize and thereby liberate the two, together.

Chairman Muste then turned the floor back to me. I spoke on the subject of democracy and Stalinism: You have an answer for Spain (referring to the political situation there), and you have an answer for Egypt, for every other country under dictatorship, where we have a part in the revolutionary rising.

Gates replied, in part: "That is a conjecture. Schachtman knows as much about that as I do, I believe." Gates then gave two references to let alone any attack on Trotsky or Trotskyism.

Chairman Muste then turned the floor back to me. I spoke on the subject of democracy and Stalinism: You have an answer for Spain (referring to the political situation there), and you have an answer for Egypt, for every other country under dictatorship, where we have a part in the revolutionary rising. (a) An amnesty for those who have taken part in the revolutionary rising. (b) Every effort to effect the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, (c) An assurance to the Hungarian national movement that it is as laid down in the Peace Treaty, (d) Restitution to the Hungarian people of their freedom laid down in the Charter. (e) Restoration of the right of the Hungarian people to work and trade unions to function and, subsequently, free and unfettered elections.

CLASS STRUGGLE

A news item from Los Angeles: The Congress of Local 887 of the Auto Workers, picketed installations of North American aviation today at a labor-management dispute.

The workmen were picketing for concessions to the AFL-CIO fund to assist embattled workers of Hungarian origin in their fight against the Katolikus, the Fascist paper. The workers were supported to work, but they have been ordered to work only for the benefit of the workers' allies.

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