

## Editorial

# ONCE MORE UNTO THE BRINK

**A**S we write British and American troops are back in the Arab Middle East; North Africa, West Asia, indeed the world and all its peoples are poised on the brink of an atomic holocaust. The top leaders seem unable to cut the tangle of red tape and get together to solve the differences, halt the drift to war, and get foreign troops out of the Arab countries. Endless letters flow between Washington, London, Paris and Moscow about details of when and where; meanwhile British and American troops (and now — August 4 — tanks) pour into Jordan and Lebanon.

What's it all about?

*Seldom has the ordinary man in the street (by which, we suppose, we mean the probably mythical person who believes everything he reads in the daily newspapers) been so utterly confused and uninformed in the midst of a major international crisis. The leaders of the Nationalist Party have told the country and the world that, come what may, they will "stand by the West." By which they mean that they will do what before and during the recent world war they so vigorously condemned the Smuts government for doing: follow Britain blindly into any war she might get into. And that, in turn, means that any day South Africans might be called upon to fight and die — or, more likely, to die without ever fighting, for that seems to be the pattern for any future war.*

To fight or to die — for what? We South Africans, of all races, have shown many times in our history, that given a cause — even a mistaken one — in which we can believe, we know how to fight and, if need be, to die like men. But to be hit by a bomb fired thousands of miles away, in a quarrel that does not concern us and which we do not understand: that is to die not like a man but like a dog in a ditch, hit perhaps by a speeding car, not knowing what hit him or why.

## UNRAVELLING THE TANGLE

For this, if for no other reason, we must try to understand what is happening in the great world about us, suddenly become so small, to unravel the tangle of contradictions and half-truths and sheer propaganda that has been presented to us in the news. We are creatures endowed with reason. When danger threatens us, we must know: from where? and why?

For, knowing these things we can take rational action to stop it, so that we and human beings like us, all over the world, can choose peace, not war; life, not death. And if we fail to seek these answers, even to try to save ourselves, shall we deserve to live?

What are British and American soldiers doing in the Middle East?

Eighteen months ago, when Egypt was invaded after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, we wrote in this magazine: "History can afford few flimsier justifications than those offered by Sir Anthony Eden for this blatant aggression." But this time the excuses are even feebler

## 1. The Lebanon.

Let us take, to begin with, the case of the Lebanon. It is well known that civil war has been raging in that small country for the past three months. The cause of the fighting was the determination of the bitterly unpopular President Chamoun to hang on to his office, while the great majority of the Lebanese people wanted an end to him and his hated policy, which was making the country a virtual colony and agency of the United States.

When the fighting began, the U.S. moved a powerful naval force towards Beirut, with the obvious intention of intervening in favour of Chamoun. Their excuse was that the revolutionaries were being supplied with arms and men from the United Arab Republic, across the Lebanese border. Urgent action in the United Nations, at that time prevented this American action. A group of U.N. observers, headed by secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld was sent to the country to find out if there was, in fact, any outside intervention from the U.A.R.

The report of the U.N. observer team and of the general secretary was clear and definite. There was no evidence of any outside intervention in the Lebanon.

Yet, after that report had been presented at the U.N., and after U.N. officers had been stationed to see that there was no future intervention, the American Sixth Fleet suddenly returned to Beirut and began pouring a steady stream of troops and military equipment into the country. Nothing had changed in the Lebanon. The only change that had taken place was in Iraq — but of that, more below.

In the meantime, under the noses of the American occupation forces, the Lebanese Parliament assembled to elect a new President. It elected, with an overwhelming majority, a political opponent of Chamoun.

Two months before, in Cairo, President Nasser of the United Arab Republic had discussed the Lebanese situation with the American ambassador. Nasser told the American that only one thing could bring an end to the trouble in the Lebanon: the withdrawal of Chamoun in favour of a President acceptable to the Opposition in that country. Such a man, he said, would be General Fuad Shehab.

Mr. Dulles did not like this solution. He preferred to land ten thousand armed men to back Chamoun. The Lebanese gave him their answer — they elected Shehab!

Where is Dulles's case now? His troops are there, he says, called in by Chamoun to protect the latter against "outside intervention." In the presence of this overwhelming military force, with not a vestige of Egyptian or Syrian influence to be seen, as witness the U.N. mission, the elected representatives of the Lebanese people decisively reject the Chamoun clique. But Dulles does not — as Anthony Eden properly did when subjected to a similar proof of his ineptitude and folly — resign. He does not even withdraw the obviously unwanted American intruders. Instead, more and more troops and equipment are poured into the country.

In that lies danger.

## 2. Jordan.

Two years ago the people of Jordan won a great victory. Under the stimulus of the wave of Arab liberationism sweeping the Middle East, the people of what was then virtually a British colony operated through the "indirect rule" of King Hussein, arose in a great wave of patriotic wrath and unity. The King was not deposed (an omission that was later to be regretted), but he was compelled to take a back seat as a constitutional monarch under a Parliamentary regime; the British occupation troops under General Glubb (who masqueraded as an Arab) were given their marching orders.

Then came the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine, under which American influence was to become dominant in the Middle East. Dollars flowed; strings were pulled. King Hussein, under the advice of his new American backers pulled off a spectacular coup d'etat. Parliament was suspended; most of its members were either arrested or forced to flee from their country. Martial law and a state of emergency was proclaimed, and all freedom of speech and the press prohibited — a state of affairs which exists to this day.

Today, Jordan is ruled by a vicious police regime, detested by the great majority of its people, whose puppet King dare not leave his palace, and which would collapse tomorrow but for the support of American dollars and now of British bayonets. The British say they were invited to send their paratroops in by King Hussein to protect him against an alleged uprising sponsored by President Nasser. There was no evidence whatever of any such uprising — and besides everybody knows that Hussein would never have issued such an "invitation" without orders from his British and American bosses. In fact by bringing back the highly unpopular British to Jordan, Hussein has forfeited his last hopes of ever gaining any support whatever among the people of Jordan.

These are not idle or irresponsible allegations. Nor are they based on information derived from listening in to Cairo Radio, Moscow or Peking. Each of these facts has been attested to by newspapers and journalists

who, the week before were hailing Britain's "bold action" in coming to the rescue of Jordan. Once they landed in Jordan and actually had a look around, their enthusiasm for saving King Hussein vanished with remarkable rapidity. Here are a few of the things they had to say:

The Special Correspondent of the Johannesburg "Star" can hardly be suspected of over-friendliness to Nasser or Krushchov. Here is his view of the set-up in Jordan:

"Both American and British troops look like becoming long term fixtures in default of any way of preserving King Hussein's regime . . . So far nobody has dared to oppose the return of the British or to complain at Jordan's final humiliation at being allowed to exist only by courtesy of Israel . . . But there is no doubt about the depth of subterranean feeling against the Government.

"Among local people there is widespread dislike of the British presence . . . That this has not been translated into any serious action anywhere is certainly due to the existence of martial law and the harsh repression of any sign of opposition to the regime."

(The Star: July 25, 1958.)

Mr. Ward-Jackson is not progressive. He even admires the "courageous" King Hussein. But he writes sorrowfully that the King:

"rules his country by force and ingenuity and has no popular support except from the Bedouins . . . (a small minority group—Ed.)

"Honourable abdication seems the only future for this courageous young man whom no one in the West can now keep on his throne by force of arms."

(Sunday Times: July 27, 1958.)

Finally, we may cite the Jordan correspondent of the London "Times", the semi-official organ of the British Government:—

British troops and massive American aid are the regime's only means of survival. Take away the props and the structure must collapse."

(The Star: July 25, 1958.)

So much for the "democracy" which British paratroops have been sent to "preserve for the free world."

Men like Chamoun and Hussein belong to the yesterdays of the Arab and colonial world generally. They are agents and symbols of a type of colonial imperialism which is vanishing fast, never to return, in Africa, Asia and South America, in this era of emancipation. Western imperialist troops may serve to keep them in office a few days, weeks, or months longer: but they make even more certain the coming of their sudden and final exit from the picture.

It was not only to preserve the Chamoun and Hussein dictatorships that the Anglo-American partners-in-intervention sent their armies in such panicky haste to Western Asia. Nothing in particular had happened in the Lebanon or Jordan just at that time to account for the wildly buzzing telephone lines between Whitehall and Washington, the massively planned and co-ordinated simultaneous invasion.

3. Iraq.

Something had happened elsewhere — in Baghdad, headquarters of the infamous "Baghdad pact" and of the West's giant Oil Empire. On July 14 the corrupt Iraqi regime (a byword even in the Middle East for the insolent ostentation of the ruling clique, with their palaces and Cadillacs and their utter contempt for the poverty-stricken, illiterate masses) sank without leaving a trace, in one of the most sudden and dramatic uprisings in history. A new Iriqa Republic was proclaimed which was immediately recognised by the United Arab Republic, the Soviet Union, China and other countries outside the Western Bloc.

It was this event which led to the utter panic within the Western bloc, which set the transatlantic telephones humming, and culminated in the desperately adventurous landings in Beirut and Amman. The landings were partly intended to guard against the new wave of resurgent Arab nationalism and unity from spreading and sweeping away Hussein and Chamoun as it had swept away King Feisal of Iraq. But they had an even more mischievous purpose. That purpose was a joint invasion of Iraq, to overthrow the new Republican regime headed by Brigadier Cassim, to occupy the country, and to re-install the remnants of the Feisal regime.

In preparation for this plan, newspaper readers were asked to weep over the sad fate of the executed Feisal and his Dictator, Nuri es Said. We were told that "loyalist forces" were advancing on Baghdad in preparation for civil war against the new Republic. To satisfy those who might require some more substantial reasons for war, there were dark mutterings about the "threat to the free world" and in particular, to "the West's vital oil supplies." Everything pointed to a joint Anglo-American military operation: a "pincers movement" against Iraq begun simultaneously from Jordan and the Lebanon, with Israel (at that stage) as a willing bridgehead, base and partner.

But several things happened to avert this desperate and perilous adventure, and to force the hot-headed Mr. Dulles to have second thoughts.

Firstly, there were no "remnants" of the Feisal regime, which collapsed like a pack of cards, amidst universal rejoicing. There were no "loyalist forces" advancing on Baghdad or anywhere else in Iraq. There was no fighting anywhere in the country; visitors arrived to find the people dancing in the streets, and great crowds flocking to view the fabulous palaces of Feisal and Nuri, flaunting their luxury amidst nakedness and starvation.

Secondly, and even more tellingly, Iraq's neighbours showed no signs of remaining passive in the face of a Western invasion of Iraq. President Nasser flew to Moscow for discussions with Premier Krushchov. The latter said bluntly that the Soviet Union was vitally interested in these events on her borders. Joint Soviet-Bulgarian military exercises were commenced immediately on the Southern frontier. Krushchov called for immediate summit talks to resolve the crisis. Peking denounced the aggression and offered aid — including volunteers — if needed.

Thirdly, Krushchov's call met with an immediate and surprisingly favourable response from wide circles normally well-disposed towards "the West." The non-colony-owning members of NATO showed immediately

that they were not at all anxious to get involved in an atomic war in order to protect the profits of Standard Oil and other private American and British oil interests. The British Labour Party, after its customary period of dithering, came out firmly against the crazy adventure. And France's de Gaulle let it be known that he had enough trouble on his hands at home and in Algeria without new and dangerous commitments.

## **SPECTACULAR DEBACLE**

Thus the invasion of Iraq has been put into cold storage. The propaganda drive against the Iraqi Republic has been called off. With astounding speed the Republic has been recognised by Britain, the United States (which after more than ten years still does not recognise the People's Republic of China!) and their various satellite and client governments. Attempts are even being made to bully or buy Brigadier Cassim into joining the "Baghdad" Pact.

In effect the "Eisenhower Doctrine" proclaimed with so great a fanfare six months ago, and culminating in the invasion of Jordan and the Lebanon, has turned out to be the most spectacular debacle since Suez.

**Dulles has lost Feisal and Iraq for the United States. He has lost Chamoun and the Lebanon. Only British bayonets can now keep Hussein on his throne in Jordan. Dulles has driven Nasser into closer friendship and alliance with the Communist-led world. There seems little alternative for the United States but to swallow its pride and pull its troops and tanks out of Beirut.**

These may be defeats for Dulles — in fact, they are defeats so far-reaching that in almost any country but the United States the man responsible would not lose any time in resigning and retiring to private life. But they are victories for the cause of world peace, for national independence and freedom. And this new fiasco of imperialist policy in the Middle East has — just like the ill-advised Anglo-French-Israeli adventure of November, 1956 in Egypt — served another purpose not intended by its authors: it has opened the eyes of millions of people all over the world to the true source of the war danger, and it has made it a thousand times more difficult for the spokesmen and apologists of Washington and London to put across their line of a "free world" threatened by "Red aggression." Or at any rate to put it across with any appearance of conviction or rationality.

For example, the "New Age" of July 24, published an interview with Mr. Patrick Duncan, who said he found the Anglo-American landings "an understandable reaction to a subversive underground attack." We need not worry too much about Mr. Duncan's adjectives. "Subversive" is a word used by those in authority to describe those who want to get them out of authority. Only yesterday Mr. Nehru and Dr. Nkrumah were being called "subversive" by the British authorities, and so today, we fear, are Mr. Duncan and his Liberal Party comrades regarded by the South African authorities. As for "underground": movements only operate underground — i.e., secretly — when they are forced to do so because those in power do not allow them to operate publicly. The word has ceased to be a term of abuse: at any rate by all who remember the heroic underground resistance movements of Nazi-occupied Europe during the last war. So, leaving out those two silly and meaningless adjectives, we will find that Mr. Duncan regards the landings as "an understandable reaction" to . . . .

"attacks." But — attacks against whom? Surely even Mr. Duncan will not venture to suggest that the Iraqi, Jordanian or Lebanese revolutionaries propose to "attack" Britain and America. They were attacking their own rulers: and if we concede for one moment that it is "permissible" or "understandable" for Britain or America to send troops into a country because its rulers are on the point of being kicked out by their own people, then we can say good bye to the United Nations Charter and any prospects of saving peace and humanity.

## OIL

Somewhat less naive is the statement of Dr. Wollheim, Cape Town chairman of the Liberal Party (same paper, same issue). He says: "As far as the West is concerned, the question of control over oil is a matter of vital concern." We think that we may not unfairly paraphrase Dr. Wollheim's meaning like this: "There is a possibility of revolutionary Arab governments nationalising British and American-owned oil wells, and in that case they may cut off the supplies upon which Britain's economy depends." And in the circumstances (for neither the Lebanon nor Jordan are substantial oil-producers) we must take these remarks as applying specifically to Iraq. Now, in the first place, the assumptions have proved to be wrong, for the Iraqi Republic has undertaken not to nationalise the oil-wells. (Perhaps this was part of the price for such prompt 'recognition'). But even if this had not been the case, there is no justification whatever for the assumption that the nationalised oil-wells would refuse to supply oil to Britain and other Western countries. On the contrary, it would be in their obvious interests to continue selling the oil to the established present customers. It will be recalled that similar groundless fears were expressed at the time of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, and was made the pretext for the invasion in 1956. But since then the Canal has been used freely by all who were previously accustomed to use it, the only difference being that the fees paid will now go to the Treasury of the United Arab Republic instead of going into the pockets of the private shareholders of the Suez Canal Company in England and France.

In fact, therefore, if Arab oil were restored to the Arabs, the only losers would be not the British and American people but a handful of wealthy individuals who have already accumulated fabulous fortunes out of Arabian oil wells operated by Arab labour. And the time has gone past when public opinion is prepared to sanction the spilling of blood and perhaps the precipitation of a world war to protect the dubious "rights" of a handful of British and American oil millionaires, or the royal pensioners in the Middle East.

## CONTINUING DANGERS

Perhaps, however, the events of the past fortnight have shown our South African Liberal friends that they were mistaken in their judgment of events: they are, after all, intelligent men and capable of learning. We only wish we could say the same of the British Tories and American Republicans, who appear to have learnt nothing from Suez and all the other misfortunes which have dogged their footsteps since the ending of the World War and the opening of the Cold War. All these misfortunes spring from a single cause: their stubborn refusal to recognise that the world is not what it was; that the days of colonial empires have gone for good; that

they have to accept that the Soviet Union, China and other socialist states have come to stay: that military solutions are no longer possible in this nuclear age: and that therefore peaceful co-existence, disarmament and world-wide self-government have become categorical imperatives for mankind.

However blind certain "Western" leaders are to these truths, they are becoming more and more apparent to the great majority of the world's peoples. And they are taking increasingly vigorous steps to bring them home as unmistakably as they can. It may not be polite of the South Americans to spit at Mr. Nixon and Mr. Dulles, still less for Cypriots to throw hand-grenades at British occupation troops. Nevertheless these rude demonstrations may serve to bring home to the rulers of the Western nations that they would be far more popular if only they stayed at home. "Britain for the British!" "France for the French!" and "The U.S.A. for the Americans!" are slogans which express the feelings of most of the inhabitants of the five continents.

Yet — they do not get out. By repeated delaying tactics they made Summit Talks impossible. They show no signs of recalling their forces from the Middle East: on the contrary, they keep reinforcing them — with what object they do not reveal. Britain in Cyprus, France in Algeria, America in Cuba continue with the bloody repression which a score of events of the past decade have proved to be futile and disastrous: causing untold unnecessary suffering and death; imposing heavy burdens on the working people of the West who have to pay the cost; constantly menacing world peace; fruitless in preventing the onward march of the peoples towards freedom, independence and self-government. And day after day, week after week, in the newspapers and over the radio come yet more reports of the new and yet more frightful weapons the Americans are developing; the vast and yet more incredible billions of dollars they are spending on them.

These are deeply disturbing and frightening indications. They show that our world is still in danger; that we have not yet reached the turning point which will lead mankind to disarmament, relaxation and security. And until we reach and turn that point, mankind must continue poised precariously on the brink of unimaginable disaster; with the maddening possibility of some last desperate gambler's adventure from an aging, obsessed monomaniac like Dulles which could plunge us all over that fatal brink.

## **IT'S UP TO US**

What can I do about it? The question may be asked with a helpless, fatalistic shrug of the shoulders — or with an eager quickening of the intelligence and the will. Unfortunately, it is all too often asked the first way, especially in our country. We are so apparently remote from the storm centres of war, so absorbed in the internal struggle against an evil tyranny, that we tend to forget or to neglect our responsibilities as members of the human race.



The African National Congress, true to its tradition of solidarity with other victims of colonial and racial oppression, delivered a message of protest to the American Embassy; the South African Peace Council issued a warning that the military intervention in the Middle East threatened world peace. In Cape Town, the A.N.C. held a mass protest meeting at Langa; the Coloured Peoples' Organisation, as well as various trade unionists and Moslem leaders issued "Hands off the Middle East" statements — all of which activities were completely ignored by the daily press. While these steps indicate an awareness of the seriousness of the issues on the part of the most advanced leaders, it would be absurd to imagine that they were effective in bringing that awareness to the great mass of the people.

As for the rest of the political, religious and other public bodies and personalities of our country: we might have been living on another planet or in another century for all the interest they have shown. In Britain, at least Liberals are getting excited about H-Bombs and even marching in processions to have them banned, but their counterparts over here go on uttering ancient Tory imperialist nonsense — if they bother to say anything at all. Our Trade Union Council seems blissfully unaware of anything unusual going on up at the other end of this continent, or anywhere else in the world for that matter. We could, we fear, prolong this sad list indefinitely, except that we have gone beyond our allotted space already. They are all fast asleep.

They've got to be woken up. Everybody in all the wide world has to be woken up; and we all can and must do something about it — from Iceland to Cape Point and from Peking to London\* — if we don't all want to be fried alive or poisoned by radiation.

Who is to do the job in this country? The answer is clear: the Peace Council should take the lead. We are not criticising the few gallant souls who struggle on to maintain the Council in the face of severe Government repression and — the facts must be faced — absolutely demoralising disinterest on the part of those who should and do know better. In Johannesburg the Council maintains a tenuous existence; in the Cape and Natal, as far as we know, the local branches have faded away to nothing.

We come back to the question: What can I do about it? And, dear reader, if your question is genuine, if you are really interested in preserving human life, including your own, there is a lot you can do. You can talk and go on talking to everybody about you until they understand what is at stake. You can see that whatever organisation you belong to, political, trade union, church or cultural, discusses the menace to humanity and takes a public stand for peace. You can bombard the daily press with letters. You can get into the Peace Council, or revive or start a local branch in your area.

That is the Road to Life.

August 4, 1958.