

times the request for British troops is made, as in the case of the feudal states of South Arabia, to bolster up undemocratic regimes.

Finally, it is not the duty of Britain or of any one power, to provide "Fire Brigade" forces to put out bush fires in distant places. When intervention is required to preserve peace, this should not be the function of one power but rather the concerted action of acceptable international authorities, including the United Nations.

In this article I have dealt with British bases and British association with Western "Defence" because these are Britain's direct responsibility. But one must oppose foreign bases and troops in any territory, whatever Government be responsible. This applies equally to the East and the West and pressure should be exerted to secure the elimination of all foreign bases as an important step towards world disarmament.

In February, 1964, Denis Healey, now Britain's Secretary of State for Defence, said in a speech in Durham: "Our long-term defences have to be adjusted to colonial and foreign policies. We are not, repeat not, going to have bases overseas in ten years' time; certainly not, repeat not, in countries that are not colonies . . ."

"The major problem for the next Labour Government is going to be to decide whether there are any real British interests overseas which it is going to be in the long run both politically and militarily possible to protect by force".

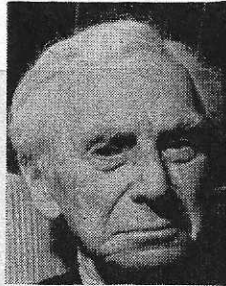
Although this may sound rather like an answer to the question: "Have you stopped beating your wife?" by a man who has not, Mr. Healey's statement is the clearest commitment from an official Labour spokesman yet.

The Movement for Colonial Freedom is urging in the United Kingdom that the Labour Party should decide straight away that there are no British interests overseas which can be protected by force, and that, on the contrary, Britain's real interests overseas consist in relationships of friendship and co-operation based on freedom and equality with the peoples of the world, particularly of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Before such relationships can be established, the military bases must be closed, for nothing is more likely to produce anger than the existence of a foreign fortress in one's own land.

The bases must be closed in far less than ten years; in fact, the attitude of millions of people in the new nations towards the Labour Government will be decided by its actions on Britain's overseas military bases during the next few months.

OPPRESSION IN SOUTH ARABIA



by
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ONE of the most frequently repeated boasts of colonial powers is that their presence is responsible for material and social advances which otherwise would not occur.

This boast is empty and masks the cynical control of peoples and countries for purposes entirely alien to their needs. Nowhere is this more apparent than in South Arabia. South Arabia must be the most ill-treated colony Britain has held.

Britain conquered the country in 1838 and established control first in Aden. Later British power was extended to other parts of South Arabia. At the time, a section of Aden was joined to Yemen. It was developed as an important port for Middle Eastern trade and as a coaling station for shipping en route to India and the Far East.

Discovery of Oil

It was only after the discovery of oil that Aden became a colony of great importance to her designs on the Arab people.

In 1838 the United Kingdom imposed on each of the sheikhs in the region a "treaty of protection". As with all such treaties, it was a crude and one-sided dictate. The sheikhs under pain of armed reprisal were obliged to comply with whatever advice, orders or directions given them by British officers. No objections were tolerated.

This is the heritage of South Arabia under British rule. It is instructive to examine the benefits which have come to the people of South Arabia as a consequence.

There is no written legislation in the greater part of South Arabia and, as a result, personal security is unknown.

The rate of illiteracy is 99 per cent. and 99 per cent. of the population have never attended a school.

There is not one secondary school in the Protectorate. The British administration prevented the South Arabian League from setting up a secondary school in Aden and refused entry to all Arab teachers from abroad.

No Hospital

With the exception of Aden where Europeans live, there is not one hospital of adequate standard for medical attention. The rest of the protectorate of 112,000 square miles has one nurse and three dispensaries. Supplies of fresh water exist, except from wells which are brackish.

This then is the record of Britain in South Arabia.

The method of control devised by the Colonial Office is typical. The Federal Regular Army consists of 5,000 troops which guard the rulers of the Federal States enforced by Britain.

Only a handful of the soldiers speak English. They are recruited from the tribes but all financial control lies with the Colonial Office.

The 1962-1963 budget for this army was £2,600,000. A private earns £11 10s. monthly and the contrast between this salary and the standard of living of the populace is marked. A tribesman averages 3s. a day.

A skilled tradesman in Aden has an average income of £1 daily. Through this means, volunteers are obtained for the army.

A civilian rarely sees meat more than once a month. Most soldiers send money to their families by hand for there are no postal services in the South Arabian Federation.

In recent months Britain has con-

ducted a war against the people of Radfan. Bombing and strafing has been common and 1,000 lb. bombs were used with the approval of parliament including Mr. Harold Wilson when leader of the Opposition.

The Radfani people have been independent and self-administering in the past. Until 1959, when the Federation of South Arabia was formed, the Radfani were both self-administered and without a British resident political advisor, unlike the remainder of the Protectorates.

Because of British fear of the independent spirit of the Radfani, Radfan was transferred in 1959 to the jurisdiction of Dhala State, against the wishes of the populace. The annexation remained nominal only, for the Radfani continued to administer themselves and levied taxes on passing trade in passive resistance to the British edict.

In the autumn of 1963 the British Colonial Authorities sought to depose

Sheikh Saif Hassan, the head of the Radfani tribes, because of his resistance to the transfer to Dhala State. Britain wished to replace him with his brother Mahmood, whose support they had obtained.

An attempt at intimidation was made by Amir Sha'fal of Dhala and by the British political "advisor", Mr. Milne. British and Federal troops were dispatched to Dhala and began to harass the Radfani populace.

Petition

The seven leaders of the Radfani tribes handed a petition to the Federal authorities and the British High Commissioner which is an unanswerable indictment of British practice:

1. The Radfani do not recognise or accept any authority other than their own leadership. They do not accept transference to the control of Dhala State and owe no allegiance to the Amir of Dhala. They do not, therefore, consider themselves to be part of

the South Arabian Federation.

2. If the British Government wishes them to join the South Arabia Federation, Radfan must be considered a State like other States. It will then accept the same obligations and expect the same benefits. Any financial help must be given directly to its leaders.

3. Notwithstanding the above, the Radfani people and their leaders express the strongest resentment over their complete neglect. Not the slightest effort has been made by the "protecting" power to help them in the fields of economic development, education, medical or social services and all these are felt to be long overdue.

The Federal Authorities and the British High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, were entirely unresponsive to the seven leaders of the Radfani tribes. The leaders returned to their people empty handed.

On October 14, 1963, the return of the seven leaders to Radfan after their

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SOUTH ARABIAN BATTLEGROUND. This is the rocky, sun-parched terrain in which British troops are operating. Britain's interest is not in the desert or the needs of the local population. It is a matter of military strategy—and oil! This sordid imperialist struggle in South Arabia does not justify the loss of a single life!

talks with the High Commissioner was greeted by armed repression. The Federal Army opened fire on the Radfan Capital, killing and injuring many people.

The leadership were arrested and remain in prison today with the exception of one man who was permitted to leave on the condition that his son took his place in prison.

The war in Radfan was immediately begun by Great Britain involving the bombing of villages, the destruction of food supplies, the blockade of outside food sources, the use of rockets and 1,000 lb. bombs, and the destruction of irrigation channels on which the people were dependent.

Leaders Arrested

All political leaders were arrested, en masse, after the first attack. Fifty trade union and political leaders went into exile. The British Colonial Under-Secretary, Mr. Fisher, stated on June 3, 1964: "I am not interested in what the Arabs think about the Aden base."

This is to be expected, considering that Britain permits slavery in Hadhramaut, Radfan and other areas of the South Arabian protectorates.

This is the background to the Constitutional Conference held in London. Not one of the participants to the Conference had been elected by the population to any office or to the

Conference.

The 1959 elections were held only in the colony of Aden (now called Aden State).

The election was boycotted by 76 per cent. of the eligible voters on the ground that the council had more appointed members than elected ones. Its power was only advisory.

Finally, although Commonwealth citizens were allowed to vote, the majority of the population are Arabs who come from the north and they were denied the right to vote.

Despite the rigged character of the voting, three-fourths of those made eligible refused to participate.

The legal life of the Council thus elected came to an end in December, 1962. It was unconstitutionally extended by the British Colonial authorities first until December, 1963, and later until July, 1964.

Two members of this very Council, thought sufficiently subservient by the British Government, came to London to oppose the Conference on behalf of five other members. All the Aden State signatories of the 1962 treaty of accession then resigned and announced themselves as firm opponents of the Federation. The Federation comprises one-third of the territory of South Arabia.

Thus, the very people who were contrived to represent South Arabia, in the hope that they would obey

British demands, have repudiated the instruments of British power.

In other colonial countries, independence was secured through a period of peaceful transition after great and arduous struggles by national leadership and a series of conferences of elected representatives including minority spokesmen. This procedure is denied in South Arabia.

PSP Demand

The Peoples Socialist Party asks that the same procedures of peaceful change should be permitted in South Arabia, in Aden and the protectorates. The leadership now faces imprisonment or exile and only this year the Sultan of Fadhli defected to Cairo (July 4, 1964).

It is only reasonable that general elections should be held through the entire territory in accordance with the United Nations resolution of 1949 and that the emergent elected government should be accepted in negotiations with Britain for the independence of South Arabia.

BRITAIN'S RECORD IS THE CLEAR ARGUMENT AGAINST COLONIAL RULE AND IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT NO MORE PEOPLE WILL BE SLAUGHTERED TO PRESERVE ITS OPPRESSION.

ELECTIONS A 'CONSTITUTIONAL FARCE'

WHEN elections were held in October to elect a new Legislative Council in Aden there was again a massive boycott.

Seventy-six per cent. of the electorate went to the polls, but, in fact, the total electorate numbered only 8,000 OUT OF A POPULATION OF 250,000.

The London OBSERVER'S correspondent in Aden referred to the elections as a "constitutional farce" staged "against a background of mild terrorism and behind a protective screen of British guns".

He described the 16 elected members as "mostly men of mature age and large incomes".

The election was conducted under a state of emergency. All political meetings were banned. The Peoples Socialist Party, the largest party, boycotted the elections.

All public buildings were guarded by British troops as a precaution against violence.

Shortly before polling day the offices of two Aden daily newspapers, whose owners were candidates, were burnt out.

In fact, the candidate who topped the poll was in prison at the time.

He was Khalifa Abdallah Khalifa, who a year ago was charged with throwing a grenade at the

British High Commissioner at Aden airport.

When the chief prosecution witness disappeared to Cairo, Khalifa was acquitted by the Aden Supreme Court, but was immediately re-arrested under emergency regulations.

He was still in gaol when the election results were declared.

Sixteen candidates out of 47 were elected. Ten of them were retiring members. There are also six nominated members, one ex-officio member, and a Speaker.

The intention was that this new Council should take part in a new constitutional conference to determine Aden's relationship with Britain and the South Arabian Federation.

Britain's idea was that, after the negotiation of defence agreements regarding the Aden base, the Federation should eventually become independent, probably before 1968.

But the majority of the population want nothing to do with the Federation as they have demonstrated by boycotting both State and Federation elections.

It remains to be seen what action the new Government in Britain will take to deal with this question. Previously, the Labour Party gave no indication of preparedness to give up the Aden base.

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