

AFRO-ASIAN PEOPLES SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE, 1965

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IN the contemporary world, when American imperialism and its lesser brethren are on the offensive in Vietnam, Congo and the Dominican Republic, not to mention their 'peaceful' persecution of Cuba and *coups* on the Brazilian pattern, it is an enormous encouragement to see Africans and Asians gathered together and fully appreciating that the struggle against imperialism is a world-wide phenomenon which embraces not only Africa and Asia, but Latin-America and all progressive forces everywhere.

The Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Conference in May at Winneba, Ghana, included official delegates from all the states that are pursuing a genuinely anti-imperialist policy. It included delegates who represent the opposition in the countries which have succumbed to neo-colonial bribery or pressure. Finally, it included delegates from the still colonial territories and the persecuted majorities in Rhodesia and South Africa.

With this wide variety of countries represented, ranging from the U.S.S.R. and China on the one hand to Vietnam and Angola on the other, the most striking fact about this conference was the high level of unity which it achieved. The tone for this unity was set by the President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, in his opening address which probably marks a record in packing essential ideas into a small space. It covered the following points: The essential contradictions of the world today, 'the conflict between imperialism and the majority of mankind' with its basis in 'economic exploitation . . . the heart of imperialism'.

With this as starting point, Nkrumah then showed the necessity for African unity, Afro-Asian solidarity, the extension of this solidarity to Latin America, and unity with 'progressive people and organisations throughout the world irrespective of race, colour and creed' who 'are mobilised to fight for peace, prosperity and progress'. With this approach, the issue was presented from the very beginning not as a question of race, colour, or even of geography, but as a political issue which must be met as such on a world scale. In conformity with this analysis, racialism was categorically condemned: 'We are neither racists nor racialists . . . although we happen to be non-white in overwhelming numbers' while 'imperialism today oper-

ates from countries where the peoples are predominantly white'. In the speech, Nkrumah also paid due attention to the economic basis, both of imperialism, and of the struggle against imperialism which involves the solution of a whole series of economic problems by the newly independent countries.

It was a remarkable achievement that, while in the Commission there was some protracted controversy, all the resolutions of the Conference were in the end unanimous and not a word was said in dissent from this final outcome. From now on there will be changes in organisation so that the former Afro-Asian movement shall become an Afro-Asian-Latin-American movement. In the course of the Conference, and in deference to the particular importance of Latin-America, the Cuban observer, though neither African nor Asian, was permitted to speak. As to other non-Asian socialist countries, it was finally agreed that they should be allowed to send observers to Conferences of the movement.

If *unity* can therefore be characterised as the main achievement of the Conference, the *breadth of outlook* on which this unity has been based is the second achievement. Nkrumah set the tone for this in his opening speech when he appealed, in relation to countries in which the progressive forces are not yet united, for the admission of delegates from more than one political organisation so long as they were, when judged 'by their programmes and activities, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist and anti-racialist'. This formulation was accepted by the Conference.

In its final resolutions the Conference Commissions worked out a programme which would be a heavy organisational burden on any Secretariat. The antithesis is made clear between 'racial discrimination and exploitation' and 'all progressive people of the world'. All the remaining colonial governments are denounced by name, and a boycott urged against such imperialist *place d'armes* as Israel, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia and against the weakest link in the imperialist states at this stage, Portugal.

The United Nations is warned to 'correct its mistakes and return to principles of its Charter' or otherwise 'we must re-organise it so that it can reflect the will of the peoples'.

The expansion of economic co-operation with the socialist world 'on the basis of equal and mutual benefit' is called for, while limiting 'economic relations with imperialist countries without severing relations with them entirely and without any conditions'. The building up of the 'public sector' of the economy is advocated, together with the nationalisation of foreign properties 'with or without compensation'.

The role of the trade unions was stressed in the resolution from the cultural commission with stress on trade union effort to 'build a national and independent economy' and the proposal to convene an Afro-Asian Trade Union Conference.

The proceedings of the Conference and its final decisions are remarkable examples of how countries and movements which are at very different stages of development and which differ enormously in geography, climate and history, can be united on common ground when their differences are subordinated to a common purpose. The role of Ghana in helping to forge this unity should be fully recognised: President Nkrumah's opening speech, Minister of Information Welbeck's chairmanship, and the speech of Minister of Education Boateng as leader of the Ghana delegation, were all evidence of this fact.

COAL, OIL AND BRITAIN

IN the February Notes under the above title we wrote:

The significance of this oil-based, that is, colonialist dominance in the character of contemporary British monopoly capitalism is far-reaching, equally for British foreign policy and strategy, for the balance of payments, and for the internal economic balance and development or lack of development. Nothing is more sedulously concealed, confused or tucked away under misleading headings than the role of colonialist oil exploitation in the British economic structure. (p. 56)

On the basis of available figures we ventured to suggest the following estimate:

If we accept these figures as correct, it means that half the cost of Britain's oil imports are covered by the overseas 'invisible' earnings of the oil monopolies. No wonder that on this basis oil is found 'more economic' than home production.

The *Economist* of May 15, under the title 'What Oil Costs Britain' has endeavoured to work out its estimate with regard to this. The article confirms the deliberate policy of official secrecy on this subject:

'We are, of course, aware of the immensely important contribution which the British oil companies make to our economy and the balance of payments', said a Government spokesman in the Finance Bill debate this week. Whitehall is aware; but in fact it does its best to make sure nobody else is. The 'oil balance of payments' is never published, and deliberately blurred out of official statistics. Here are some unofficial estimates.

On the basis of these 'unofficial estimates', the *Economist* reaches the conclusion: