

To Win Arab World as Ally Main Task in Middle East

By John Arnold

The most effective way to defend the Middle East is to open a Second Land Front in Europe. Simultaneously it is imperative to mobilize to the fullest the fighting and industrial power available now in the Middle East. This means the mobilization of the peoples, primarily the Arab people, in the war for their own national aspirations, which are realizable only in active warfare against Hitlerism.

In the Middle East we still find expressions of the same weaknesses in British Colonial policy which led to the fall of Singapore and to the failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to India. Great hesitation still prevails to rally the peoples of the Middle East for active participation in the war.

For a period of years, the Axis has been very active among the Arab people. Both Italy and Germany developed extensive Fifth Column organizations which played upon the grievances of the Arab people against British administration and policy.

This does not mean, however, that the Arab masses are pro-Fascist. The Arab people remember all too well Mussolini's persecution of the Arabs in Libya and are conscious of the Nazi threat to national freedom everywhere. What they do not feel, as yet, is confidence that unity with Britain and the United Nations will secure their freedom. The greatest problem among the Arab people today is not active pro-Fascism, but passivity and doubts as to the war aims, which have to be overcome primarily through the efforts of

Great Britain and the United States.

Axis agents in the Middle Eastern countries have already suffered a number of reverses. In March a crisis in the Egyptian Cabinet was resolved in favor of the United Nations. The former Premier of Egypt, Aly Maher Pasha, was arrested as a Fifth Columnist, and parliament supported the arrest by a vote of 185 to 5. Mustafa Nahas Pasha became Premier on a program of collaboration with Britain against the Axis and for the fulfillment of the 1936 treaty of British-Egyptian friendship.

However, while the Egyptian Parliament approved the policy of cooperation with Britain, it was "short of war" collaboration.

What is lacking is enthusiasm and this can only be remedied through greater autonomous participation of the Egyptian people in their own defense. On June 24, Premier Nahas Pasha pointed out: "The British never have asked Egypt to participate in the war or send troops to the frontier."

In Iraq, a fascist putsch was defeated. In April, British forces landed in Iraq, with the approval and welcome of the government, to guard the oil fields. Fifty Axis propagandists have been imprisoned by the new Prime Minister, General Nuri es Said.

In Syria, we find most active support of the Arab world to the United Nations. This is no accident. It grows out of the Free French and British recognition of the sovereign independence of the Syrian republic. In September, 1941, General Catroux, the commander-in-chief of the Free French forces, proclaimed the independ-

ence and sovereignty of the Syrian republic. On Oct. 28, Britain recognized the republic of Syria. On Dec. 18, the new President of the Syrian republic, Sheikh Taj ed Din Hassani, declared in a statement to the press:

"Syria as an ally of Free France has her interests linked with those of the democracies and declares herself the natural ally of all who fight against the Axis."

On Nov. 8, the President of Syria defined his policy to a correspondent of the New York Times as follows:

"The Arabs must unite and cooperate with each other, form a common front of Arab countries, which in collaboration with our democratic allies can defend all Arab territories. Our allies have fulfilled their duty to us. It is our turn to do our duty to realize our national aspiration."

In Iran, with the cooperation of the armed forces of the Soviet Union and Britain, the Axis forces have been defeated and a serious potential base for Axis attack removed.

These facts explode the myth that the Arab world is fascist. That there are still Axis elements, there is no doubt, but steps have already been taken and should be intensified to demobilize the Axis Fifth Column in the Middle East. What remains is the more important task of winning the friendship and more extensive voluntary collaboration of the Arab masses in the Middle East.

(Another article by John Arnold in tomorrow's Daily Worker, will deal with Arab-Jewish relations.—Ed.)