

The War on the North-West Frontier of India.

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The only news we have of the military operations on the North-West frontier and of the movements of the independent frontier tribes against the British comes through the usual imperialist channels. The frontier war was begun in the middle of April and has now continued for exactly four months, and imperialist reports have attempted to produce the impression that the thousands of tons of explosives with which the R.A.F. bombing planes have been blowing the tribes and their villages out of existence have had a "salutary effect" upon those "turbulent" tribes. It was reported that the anti-British movement was dying down and that most tribes refused to be misled by the "young bloods". But now we are told that the situation is again serious, because a lashkar (force) of nearly 10,000 Afridis are moving on Peshawar, and this in spite of the fact that the tribes know the havoc committed by the R. A. F. and that they have been repeatedly "warned" by the British Government. The Afridi advance is described by the imperialist press correspondents as "a temporary triumph over the grave warnings of British Political Officers and over the steadfast advice of the tribal elders". It is admitted, too,

that "there is no indication so far that the operations of the defending forces are producing a general retirement of the Afridis". In passing, we must draw attention to the description of the British imperialist army and air-force as "defending forces", a phrase deliberately employed to conceal the real nature of the war on the N. W. Frontier, the objective of which is the occupation of the frontier of the Soviet Union. For this purpose, "there is a large concentration of troops at Peshawar to meet all eventualities" and "air-bombing of Trans-Border districts" is being continued, according to the latest dispatch of the "Times" correspondent at Peshawar.

As for the North-West Frontier Province which is directly administered by the British, it has been in an indescribable condition of suffering during the last four months, for ever since the historic uprising of the masses in Peshawar on April 23rd and 24th, the heroic refusal of the Garhwali regiments to shoot and the action of solidarity taken by the Frontier tribes led by the Haji of Turangzai, the people of the N. W. F. Province have been living under the most terrible conditions about which the very rigid censorship has allowed no infor-

mation to leak out. But the "Muslim Outlook", a pro-Government daily published in Lahore, publishes some facts in its issue of July 13th. The Province is in a permanent state of siege, since the military occupation which began early in May. During the whole of May and June whole villages in the Province were continually under the fire of machine-guns. The wounded were allowed to lie in the streets and rot, and by order of the military authorities private citizens were forbidden to render any aid to the wounded. A number of villages, including Utmanudi, Tangi, Dargai, Swabi, Marghaz, Takkar, Gujargarhi, Swai Dher, Mardan, Tashi Mairi, Kot Yar Hussain, as well as the towns of Kohat and Bannu were placed under military blockade. The captured members of the "Red Shirts" are being forced to labour "at the point of the bayonet like galley slaves subject to indignities of various kinds".

This imperialist terror and oppression is evidence of the revolutionary unrest among the population, consisting mostly of poor peasants living on the verge of starvation, and is contributing not to the suppression but to the enhancement of the general discontent, which is receiving further stimulus from the anti-imperialist movement of the tribes on the other side of the Frontier.

This well-organised, courageous and uninterrupted movement of the tribes, determined to overthrow imperialist rule altogether, is indeed highly remarkable, and it is no reflection on their heroism to suggest that the war is being deliberately provoked by British imperialism for the furtherance of its sinister designs. The propaganda that is being carried on against the tribes shows what the real object of the British Government is. With regard to the new Afridi advance, the "Times" correspondent cabling from Simla, the summer headquarters of the Government of India, says that "the new hostile movement represents the result of prolonged propaganda by revolutionary agents from India". On the other hand, semi-official Anglo-Indian journals in India are carrying on a systematic campaign to insinuate that Soviet Russia is financing and arming the frontier tribes! For instance, the "Civil and Military Gazette" of Lahore asserts that the activities of the tribes are to be traced to the "supply of money by a Power in the rear". And an officer of the Royal Air Force contributes an article to the same semi-official journal, in which he states that the position is being made difficult by the fact that the rebel forces are able to draw fresh supplies of "young bloods" won over by money that is being supplied by "some mysterious force in the rear". "The nature of the money", says the journal, "gives food for serious thought". This anti-Soviet propaganda is so obviously a manoeuvre to create a war atmosphere that it is discredited even by openly pro-government and anti-communist journals like the "Muslim Outlook" of Lahore.

Very interesting in this connection is an interview with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the imprisoned leader of the "Red Shirts", which has just been published by Sardar Kehar Singh, editor of "Kripan Bahadur", to whom it was said to have been given. Abdul Ghaffar Khan declared that the "Khudâi Khidmatgars" or "Servants of God", who were now known as "Red Shirts", were originally volunteers for social service, adhering to the Congress creed of non-violence, that their uniform was originally white but was later dyed purple and not red, that they had nothing to do with Communism, because in fact the leaders were landowners, and that the Government had associated them with the Bolsheviks in order to find a pretext for advancing into their country and for crushing their movement. The quotations from the Anglo-Indian press show how essential it is for the British workers in particular to realise what is going on on the North-Western Frontier of India. Attempts are deliberately made to provoke the independent tribes to take up arms in defence of their liberty, while at the same time imperialist propaganda insinuates that it is the Soviet Union that is behind the revolt. This is the way in which the war is being prepared against the Workers' Republic.

The military preparations are being forced on in order to concentrate all the forces possible on the frontier before the winter snows in November block the passes and make operations difficult.