

HOW

RUSSIA

TRANSFORMED  
BY THE OBVIOUS

HER

COLONIAL

EMPIRE

*LeDieu*

*George Padmore*

# *Stalin's*

*advice to friends of the*

## *Soviet Peoples*

ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR VISIT TO THE U.S.S.R. IN 1945, STALIN TOLD THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION THAT ON THEIR RETURN TO BRITAIN THEY SHOULD:

“TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT RUSSIA. WE HAVE MANY THINGS THAT ARE GOOD AND MANY THAT ARE NOT. TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT BOTH. WE ARE QUITE AWARE THAT EVERYTHING IS NOT PERFECT IN THE U.S.S.R.”

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES WE HAVE TRIED TO CARRY OUT STALIN'S INJUNCTION.

*Publications by George Padmore*

LIFE AND STRUGGLES OF NEGRO TOILERS

HOW BRITAIN RULES AFRICA

AFRICAN AND WORLD PEACE

(Foreword by Sir Stafford Cripps)

HANDS OFF THE PROTECTORATES

WHITE MAN'S DUTY (with Nancy Cunard)

HOW RUSSIA  
TRANSFORMED  
HER COLONIAL  
EMPIRE

*A Challenge to the Imperialist Powers*

*by*

GEORGE PADMORE

in collaboration with

DOROTHY PIZER

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Yellow, Brown, Black, struggling for  
National Freedom and Social Emancipation  
from the Imperialist System*

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# CONTENTS

PREFACE - - - - - ix

INTRODUCTION - - - - - xiv

## PART I—THE OLD RUSSIA: THE CZARIST EMPIRE

CHAPTER 1—THE RISE OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE - - - 1

1. *The Muscovite Principality and Expansion*
2. *Russian Penetration into Siberia*
3. *The Far East Conquests*
4. *Caucasian and Central Asian Annexations*
5. *Alignment of forces laid for 1914*

CHAPTER 2—HOW THE CZAR GOVERNED HIS COLONIAL EMPIRE - - - - - 14

1. *Russia Proper and Baltic Provinces*
2. *Grand Duchy of Finland*
3. *Caucasia (Trans- and Cis-Caucasia)*
4. *Siberia and the Far East*
5. *Central Asia—Turkestan*
7. *Economic Imperialism*
8. *Inter-racial Discord—"Divide and Rule" policy.*
9. *Role of Orthodox Church*
10. *Cultural Backwardness*

CHAPTER 3—HOW LENIN SOLVED THE NATIONAL QUESTION - 33

1. *Bolsheviks as the Revolutionary Vanguard*
2. *How Finland Got Her Independence*
3. *Lenin's Policy Proves Itself*
4. *The Baltic States Secede*
5. *Role of the Native Bourgeoisie*

## PART II—THE NEW RUSSIA: THE U.S.S.R.

CHAPTER 4—HOW THE CZARIST COLONIAL EMPIRE WAS LIBERATED - - - - -	47
1. <i>Revolution in The Border Regions</i>	
2. <i>Significance of The National Question</i>	
3. <i>The Treaty of Union Between Russians         and Non-Russians</i>	
4. <i>Self-Determination and Socialist         Federation</i>	
5. <i>Soviet-Finnish Blunder, 1940</i>	
CHAPTER 5—HOW SOVIET ADMINISTRATION OPERATES AMONG BACKWARD PEOPLES - - - - -	64
1. <i>Administrative Divisions</i>	
2. <i>Racial Equality in Red Army</i>	
3. <i>Racial Representation in Supreme Soviet</i>	
4. <i>Pyramidal System of Government</i>	
5. <i>Critique of Wilsonian Self-Determination</i>	
6. <i>Utopianism of Zionism</i>	
7. <i>Black "Zionism"</i>	
8. <i>Inter-Racial Basis of Soviet Power</i>	
9. <i>Colour Bar Illegal In The Soviet Union</i>	
CHAPTER 6—HOW ILLITERACY IS BEING LIQUIDATED - - -	89
1. <i>Language and Nationalism</i>	
2. <i>Lenin on National Culture</i>	
3. <i>Application of Soviet Educational Policy</i>	
4. <i>Emancipation of Women In The Soviet         East</i>	
5. <i>Comparison with Education in African         Colonies</i>	
6. <i>Basic Aim of Soviet Education</i>	
7. <i>Cultural Renaissance In The Soviet East</i>	
8. <i>National Culture Comes Into Its Own</i>	
CHAPTER 7—HOW THE FORMER COLONIES ARE BEING INDUSTRIALISED - - - - -	113
1. <i>The Creation of an Asiatic Proletariat</i>	
2. <i>Inauguration of A Planned Programme</i>	

3. *Soviet Industry Moves East*
4. *Agriculture And Collectivisation*
5. *Asiatic Women In Industry*
6. *Great Russian Chauvinism Combated*
7. *Defects of Soviet Democracy*
8. *Soviet National Policy Vindicated*

### PART III—SOCIALISM UNITES—IMPERIALISM DIVIDES

#### CHAPTER 8—SELF-DETERMINATION OR SUBJECTION? - - 137

1. *Malaya*
2. *Singapore*
3. *Burma*
4. *India*
5. *Right of Self-Determination Is Indivisible*
6. *Race-Politics and War*

#### CHAPTER 9—TORY BLUE-PRINT OF POST-WAR EMPIRE - - 161

1. *Labour and the Empire*
2. *Labour Colonial Bureaucrats*
3. *Fascism or Socialism?*





## PREFACE

While there exists an extensive literature on the Soviet Union—good and bad, friendly and hostile—very little has been written on how the U.S.S.R. solved the National and Colonial problems which it inherited from Czarist Russia. The transformation of this vast ramshackle Empire into a socialised commonwealth was one of Lenin's greatest achievements.

This book is an attempt not only to survey the results of this achievement, but also to interpret the *modus operandi* adopted by the Bolsheviks in bringing about the transformation. It is not enough to describe and admire the achievements of the Soviet Union: It is equally important to understand *how* these achievements were made possible. This is the emphasis of the present book. For the solution of the Colonial Question in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean is one of the most urgent problems facing the Western Powers — Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, America—at the end of this war.

We think it fair to say that, in spite of many shortcomings inherent in any project of such stupendous proportions, embarked upon without benefit of a political and economic precedent by which it might be guided, the Soviet Government has, within 25 years, achieved more than any other Great Power has accomplished in centuries. While it has committed grave errors, due largely to the empirical methods forced upon it by historical circumstances, the Soviet Government has every reason to be proud of the results of its National Policy, especially when comparisons are made with the deplorable economic, social and political conditions existing in the Asiatic colonies at the time of Czarism's collapse. In passing judgment, we must remember not only the heights to which the Soviet Union has risen but also the depths from which it emerged. The industrial basis upon which the Bolsheviks founded their economy, after the stress of war, revolution, and foreign intervention, had fallen far behind that even of 1914. The whole vast territory of the former

Russian Empire had been laid waste, and all vestige of industry had almost completely disappeared. However much we may criticise the Soviet Union's sins of commission and omission, its policy towards the former colonial peoples of the far-flung Czarist Empire indicates conclusively that only under a planned economy based on Socialist principles is it possible to abolish, root and branch, national and racial oppression and exploitation.

The Soviet Union is no utopia; it is a new civilisation in the making. The establishment of a socialised economy and the abolition of capitalist property relations have created the psychological conditions engendering mutual confidence between different races, colours and creeds. The October Revolution laid the foundation on which has been built the fraternal collaboration of the world's most heterogeneous population. People who were traditional enemies have during the war been united in defending their common heritage. This was the Soviet Union's secret weapon.

The U.S.S.R. is a political federation of multi-national Republics in which all peoples, *irrespective of their degree of civilisation and social development*, enjoy equal political, economic and social status. It is the one country in the world where the Colour Bar—legal or accustomed—is officially proscribed. Constitutionally, it is a criminal offence to insult anyone on account of race or colour. Never during three years' residence in the Soviet Union did I encounter the slightest manifestation of racial chauvinism or colour bar. To coloured people, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the British Empire, this is of tremendous significance.

Not only was there an absence of colour bar in social and inter-racial relations, but coloured people from foreign countries working in the Soviet Union were encouraged to enter into Soviet public life and take an active part in political affairs. I had the honour of being the first Negro to be elected a Deputy to the Moscow Soviet, and during my term of office I had every opportunity of getting practical experience in the working of Soviet municipal administration. Incidentally, in my own country (Trinidad) I would not be eligible for election to the local Legislative Council, as I do not possess the necessary property qualifications. This again

illustrates the difference in ethnic democracy as it obtains in the U.S.S.R. and the British Empire. In South Africa, Kenya and the Rhodesias, the blacks, who form the preponderating majority of the populations of those countries, are completely disfranchised, while in most other colonies where the coloured peoples are theoretically entitled to vote they are practically disqualified by the property regulations.

The denial of democracy to the coloured races of Asia, Africa, and America on ethnic grounds contains the seeds of a potential conflict fraught with extreme danger. Left unsolved, this problem may, after the present war, contribute to the greatest crisis in human relations—world inter-racial war. This danger cannot be dismissed merely as the ‘hallucination’ of extreme nationalists. It is sufficiently important to have received the attention of the Netherlands Minister of Colonies, Dr. H. J. van Mook, in a recent address to the Royal African Society.<sup>1</sup> “The germs of nationalism and liberty,” he observed, “have been so firmly planted in the minds of great colonial populations that their growth is inevitable, and their suppression would only lead to that most horrible of wars—a racial world conflict.”

It is understandable why the coloured Asiatic peoples of the Soviet Union, former victims of the most ruthless forms of Imperial exploitation and social discrimination, were united behind the Soviet Government in the struggle against the Nazi *Herrenvolk* with a fanaticism and self-sacrificing spirit which has aroused the admiration of the whole world. Not only the valour of the Red Army, but the solidarity of this unique multi-national State, has demonstrated beyond a doubt the loyalty of subject peoples once they have achieved national freedom and entered freely into political unity with the formerly dominant nation. It is the finest testimony to the judgment of the Soviet Union’s National Policy, as laid down by Lenin.

As Chairman of the Negro Bureau of the Profintern, I had the privilege to lecture on the Colonial Question as it exists in various parts of the British, French, and other Colonial Empires to students of KUTVU, in Moscow, the University which trains Asiatic students for administrative leadership in their own territories. I had good opportunity to observe the

<sup>1</sup> July 5, 1943.

fraternal solidarity existing between the diverse peoples of the Soviet East, many of whom were traditional enemies under Czarism. KUTVU students represent a cross section of the Union, comprising more than one hundred different races and nationalities. These young men and women, whom many European colonial officials would no doubt describe as 'backward Asiatic savages,' not only devote themselves to the problems of the Soviet Union in relation to the national reconstruction of the former colonial territories of the Czarist Empire, but take a keen interest in the colonial administrative methods applied by the Western Powers in dealing with Africans and other 'backward' races. This kind of comparative education was fostered by the Soviet authorities; for these Asiatic students have had no personal experience of life under Czarist Imperialism, and can only really appreciate the achievements of the Soviet Government by comparing them with the economic backwardness and cultural stagnation of the colonial peoples in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere.

In all the Union Republics, Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Territories that I visited during my residence in the Soviet Union, I found the natives of those regions taking a leading part in the political administration. Today, throughout the Asiatic Republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakstan, KUTVU graduates are to be found conducting the local soviets, trade unions, co-operatives, kolkhozes, cultural institutions, etc.

Whatever criticisms or charges one might level against Stalin's policy in relation to Socialism and World Revolution and his programme of 'Socialism in a single country,' he has in the main adhered to the fundamental principles laid down by Lenin as far as concerns the Right of Self-Determination for the Soviet national minorities.

Acknowledgment is made to Stalin's book, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*. This is the most comprehensive Leninist treatise on the subject, an indispensable Marxist classic. Other useful books are Prince D. S. Mirsky's *Russia*, providing a *Short Cultural History*, Fannina Halle's *Women in the Soviet East*, the *Soviet Far East and Central Asia* by William Mandel, issued under the auspices of the Institute of Pacific Relations; Dr. Hans Kohn's *Nationalism in the Soviet Union*, the best simplified expose

of the subject, and *Soviet Communism* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The last-named undoubtedly offers the most detailed survey of the Soviet system available in English, and contains much valuable information on the concrete application of the National and Colonial Policy. There is also a Penguin Special, Leonard Barnes's comprehensive study of *Soviet Light on the Colonies*. This presents in popular form an enlightened and detailed description not only of the achievements of the Soviet Union but also of the means by which it has solved the Colonial and National Question. I can highly recommend this as an essential book on this subject.

Due to the limited material available, this book required much teamwork to produce. I, therefore, wish to express my especial thanks to my principal collaborator, Miss Dorothy Pizer, for her valuable co-operation in gathering and sifting historical data, and to our mutual friends, T. R. Makonnen, P. P. V. de Silva, S. Raja Ratman and T. B. Subasingha for their helpful criticisms and suggestions; also to Dr. C. Belfield Clarke, who first suggested the idea of writing the book, and whose encouragement throughout its preparation sustained its course. Finally, I am indebted to Dr. S. D. Cudjoe for reading the proofs and making useful corrections. Whatever merit the book may have is due largely to the unselfish co-operation and helpful criticisms of my Colonial colleagues with whom I have discussed the manuscript at every stage of its preparation. Any deficiencies in this co-operative effort are entirely mine.

GEORGE PADMORE.

London, June, 1945.

## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

A BRIEF SURVEY—FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER

The great significance of the October Revolution is that it placed power in the hands of the common people for the first time in history. That is to say, the proletariat replaced the bourgeoisie as the dictators of power. This in turn opened up the way for the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism.

Never since the Glorious French Revolution, which replaced the power of the bankrupt feudal régime by that of the middle class, had history seen such a social upheaval. It was the first successful socialist revolution of all time!

Unlike the so-called Fascist and Nazi revolutions (in reality, counter-revolutions), the October Revolution encompassed a fundamental change in the political, economic and social life of the Russian peoples.

This complete transference of power from the capitalists to the working class was the essential prerequisite for the solution of the National and Colonial Question. Only the proletariat can cut the Gordian knot which binds the subject peoples to the yoke of imperialism. The following brief survey of the main events which occurred in Russia between the fall of the Czarist autocracy and the rise of the Soviet power will illustrate the incapacity of the Provisional and Kerensky Governments to find a solution to the problem.

What makes a revolutionary situation? There is no specific formula which will reply to this question. An incident in a factory, a strike for economic demands, etc., may, provided the objective conditions are there and a disciplined party exists to take advantage of the situation, lead to a revolution which can change the whole social structure. Thus it was on February 23, 1917, that 130,000 men workers

in Petrograd were out on strike. A considerable number of women workers were demonstrating also. Strikes had been sporadic for some time, but the resentment among the workers seems to have reached its height on that day, and continued until February 25, when the Czar ordered regiments of guards out against them. Some men were shot down, but instead of crushing the workers, the show of authority heightened their revolutionary mood. Next day other regiments of the Petrograd garrison sent against the workers were won over by them. The soldiers joined the workers and began to arrest Czarist officials and generals and to free political prisoners from the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. On February 27 the Czar ceased to control for ever the destinies of the peoples of the Russian Empire.

The Revolution was made by the workers and peasant soldiers, but the power of the state passed into the hands of the capitalists and landlords, who set up a Provisional Government under the monarchist Prince Lvov. "The Provisional Government included Milyukov, the head of the Constitutional - Democrats, Guchkov, the head of the Octobrists<sup>1</sup>, and other prominent representatives of the capitalist class, and, as the representative of the 'democracy' the Socialist-Revolutionary, Kerensky<sup>2</sup>."

Side by side with the Provisional Government, the workers, peasants and soldiers set up their Soviets or Councils. These Soviets first appeared on the Russian political scene during the abortive 1905 revolution, which came about as the result of the Russian defeat in the war with Japan. The abortive revolution was described by Lenin as "the dress rehearsal for 1917." Thus from the very beginning of the 1917 revolution there existed a dual power: the official government composed of the capitalists and landlords, and the power of the common people expressed through the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The first stage of the revolution, the overthrow of the Czarist autocracy and the establishment of a Republican régime, constituted what is known as the *Bourgeois Democratic Revolution*; that is to say, the revolution made by the

<sup>1</sup> The Octobrist Party included Monarchists of various shades.

<sup>2</sup> See History of the "Communist Party of the Soviet Union," p. 178.



workers but control of which fell into the hands of the representatives of the bourgeoisie.

The Provisional Government, however, was fundamentally unable to satisfy the aspirations of the common people, whose revolutionary mood in consequence failed to abate. From the end of February events moved rapidly. About the beginning of May, the Provisional Government gave way to a coalition government composed of ten capitalists, five Mensheviks (moderate socialists) and Alexander Kerensky, a Social revolutionary representing the right-wing of his party (a peasants' party). Kerensky, a middle-class radical lawyer, became Minister of War in the new government. This coalition lasted only two months, inasmuch as it was incapable of solving the questions of 'peace, bread and freedom,' which were becoming most insistent, or of coping with the growing unrest which was spreading all over the Russian Empire, including the colonial border territories, where local national governments had been set up. At the end of June the coalition cabinet was reshuffled and Kerensky added the Premiership to his Ministry of War portfolio.

Kerensky, who entertained imperialist ambitions, wanted to continue the war against Germany, and his government accordingly had the full backing of Britain and France. The Russian workers, peasants and soldiers, however, were more than weary of the war, and the offensive which Kerensky started on June 18 did not encourage their support.

During all this while the Bolshevik Party (the revolutionary section of the Russian socialists) had been gathering its forces. Its leader, Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov, better known as Lenin, who had been in exile at the time of the overthrow of the Czarist Government, returned to Petrograd on April 3. He was given a tremendous welcome by the workers and soldiers of the capital. His first task was to draw together his party, which without his lead had been unable to grasp the historic perspective which the situation was opening up, and to mobilise it for action. For this purpose he drew up a document which has come to be known as the April Thesis, in which he outlined his plan of campaign. He pointed out that Russia needed a second revolution that would wrest power from the coalition of Kerensky, who had not broken with the imperialists, and pass it over to the Soviets, the

organs of the workers, peasants and soldiers. In other words, Lenin sketched the transition from the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution to the *Socialist Revolution*: the passage from the first stage of the Revolution to its second stage.

The success of the transition would decide for the people the end of the Imperialist war on the one hand, and usher in a new social order for the Russian and Colonial peoples on the other. Even before his return to Petrograd, Lenin had advised the Russian workers to prepare themselves for the task of carrying through the revolution from its first to its second stage. He was convinced that they would be cheated out of their rights by the bourgeoisie. In his letters to his party comrades, despatched from exile in Switzerland as soon as news reached him of the Czar's abdication, Lenin wrote: "Workers, you have displayed marvels of proletarian heroism, the heroism of the people, in the civil war against Czarism. You must now display marvels of organisation, organisation of the proletariat and of the whole people, in order to prepare the way for your victory in the second stage of the revolution."<sup>1</sup>

After the collapse of Kerensky's June offensive, the soldiers, in Lenin's phrase, began "to sign the peace with their feet." Wholesale desertions from the front took place. The peasants forming the bulk of the army started for their homes in hordes. The situation provided the opportunity for which Lenin had long been preparing, for the workers were beginning to realise that his warning of Kerensky's treachery was correct. Furthermore, he and his party were alone in favouring a programme of "peace, bread and freedom," and thus the deputies of the Workers' and Peasants' Soviets, which, until then, had been largely under the influence of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, turned to the Bolsheviks, to whom they gave their support in increasing numbers. Assured of the mass backing of the workers and soldiers, Lenin called upon the Petrograd Soviet to get rid of Kerensky and his capitalist colleagues and give "All power to the Soviets."

To carry out this task, he set up a Military Revolutionary Committee, under the chairmanship of Lev Davidovitch

<sup>1</sup> Lenin: *Selected Works*—English Edition, Vol. VI, p. 11.

Bronstein, better known to the world as Trotsky. Other members were Sverdlov, Dzershinsky, Bubnov, Uritsky, and Stalin. Commenting on the role played by Trotsky in the capture of power, Stalin paid tribute to him in the following passage: "The inspirer of the Revolution from beginning to end was the Central Committee of the party headed by Comrade Lenin. Vladimir Ilyitch was then living in Petrograd in a conspirative apartment in the Vyborg district. On the evening of October 24th, he was summoned to Smolny for the general leadership of the movement. All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection was conducted under the immediate leadership of the president of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the skilful direction of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and first of all to Comrade Trotsky. Comrades Antonov and Podvoisky were Comrade Trotsky's chief assistants."<sup>1</sup> Within ten days of Lenin's call for action the Kerensky Government was overthrown, and on October 25 Lenin was able to announce the victory of the *Social Revolution*, the transfer of power from the capitalists and landlords to the workers and peasants. The dictatorship of the proletariat was established in alliance with the peasantry. The first Soviet Government consisted not only of Bolsheviki but also of Left Social Revolutionaries, and others.

The Bolshevik Revolution, astounding as it may seem, was achieved practically without bloodshed. All the important buildings such as the telegraph, telephone, and other Government offices, were taken over without a shot. In fact, it was only in the taking of the Winter Palace and the offices of the General Staff that there was any fighting. The number of dead was certainly less than the number of pedestrians killed on British roads in a month! The transfer of power from the bourgeoisie to the workers was accomplished almost bloodlessly. The actual mass killing only occurred during the civil war which followed, when the capitalists and the landlords, with the assistance of foreign armies, attempted to recover their lost power. The responsibility for the killing, therefore, rests with the former ruling class. The same thing

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, official Russian Communist newspaper, November 6, 1918.

occurred in Spain, where the capitalists and the landlords, led by Franco, were responsible for the civil war. This only confirms that the ruling class will never voluntarily surrender power.

Lenin's supreme role in directing the second stage of the revolution cannot be gainsaid. He was the greatest revolutionary of all time. Not only a unique and profound thinker, he was an organiser and inspirer, tactician and strategist of incomparable stature. Here was a man who, against tremendous odds, created his own party, which at the time of the October Revolution numbered no more than 250,000,<sup>1</sup> trained it in the teeth of innumerable difficulties and, when the moment arose for which he had given a lifetime of preparation, confidently placed himself at the head of the masses and led them to victory, to the first successful Social Revolution in history.

Lenin's part in the Revolution is the outstanding example of the role of the individual in history. For if Lenin had not broken with the Mensheviks in 1903 and organised his own Bolshevik Party, when the political crisis arose the opportunity would have passed, and instead of a Soviet Union issuing, Russia would still have continued to be another imperialist state, possibly in the form of a democratic capitalist republic. It is quite certain that it would have continued to be a financial colony of Western European capitalism.<sup>2</sup> No Lenin, no Bolshevik Party, no Social Revolution!

No less remarkable than his role in the Social Revolution were Lenin's contributions to the international Labour and socialist movement. For Lenin was not concerned only with the emancipation of the Russian workers, but with the social freedom of all the toilers and oppressed peoples throughout the world, irrespective of race, colour, creed or nationality. He took as great an interest in the problems of the black workers in the mines of Johannesburg, of the coolies and dock workers of Shanghai and Bombay, as in those of the British proletariat. He was a true disciple of Marx, who

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky himself gives the figure on the eve of the Revolution as 240,000. See "History of the Russian Revolution" by Leon Trotsky (Gollancz 1933), Vol. 2, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Prince D. S. Mirsky, in an article, *Histoire d'une Emancipation*, in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, September 1, 1931, and quoted by Hans Kohn in *Nationalism in the Soviet Union*, p. 115, develops this argument.

taught that "labour in the white skin cannot free itself while labour in the black is branded." Lenin never tired of emphasising to the workers of the civilised countries of Europe and America that their freedom is inextricably bound up with the freedom of the colonial masses of China, India, Africa and elsewhere, to whom they must render every support in their fight to liberate themselves from the yoke of Imperialism. He insisted that only this unity between the working classes of the economically advanced countries with the toiling masses of the colonies and semi-colonial lands can guarantee the final and irrevocable victory over the common enemy—capitalist-imperialism, 'democratic' or fascist—the victory of all of the oppressed and exploited over the oppressors and exploiters of all races and colours and creeds.

In Russia, Lenin denounced anti-Semitism and racial chauvinism wherever it expressed itself among the Russian workers, peasants and intellectuals. He uncompromisingly proclaimed the right of Self-Determination for all the backward races of Asiatic Russia and the oppressed nationalities under Czarist Imperialism.

This is the aspect of Lenin's teachings and their application to the Russian Revolution with which we are chiefly concerned. Hence in the following pages we shall examine Lenin's method of solving the National and Colonial Question, which today, like yesterday, remains one of the most important issues in world politics. This question is of particular concern to the British people at this moment.

In order to give value to our examination of the Leninist solution of the Colonial Question, we shall first give a brief account of the rise of the Czarist Empire and the conditions which obtained among the subject peoples, particularly among those of Central Asia, before the Revolution. This will enable the reader to appreciate all the more the achievements of the Soviet Government in applying Lenin's principles in practice.

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**THE OLD RUSSIA ——— THE CZARIST EMPIRE**

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**CHAPTER ONE****THE RISE OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE**

CZARIST Russia, 'the Gendarme of Europe' and 'the hangman of Asia,' was the most paradoxical of the great empires of modern times. Culturally the most backward of the European nations, it produced some of the world's greatest writers and social reformers, among them such literary giants as Pushkin (like Dumas, of African descent), Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoievsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorki; such important social figures as Kropotkin, Bakunin, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and many others. Industrially, Czarist Russia was the least developed of the Imperialist Powers, yet it produced the most revolutionary proletariat, the first to make a successful Social Revolution. Itself a semi-colony of foreign finance capital (chiefly French), Russia was one of the most aggressive imperialist nations, constantly expanding its frontiers right up to the very collapse of the Empire. Foreign participation in Russian industry and finance was very great. Eleven of the leading banks were represented by foreign capital: 5 French, 4 German, and 2 British.

"The most important of Russia's metal works were in the hands of French capitalists. In all, about three-quarters (72 per cent) of the metal industry depended on foreign capital. The same was true of the coal industry of the Donetz Basin. Oilfields owned by British and French capital accounted for about half the oil output of the country. A considerable part of the profits of Russian industry flowed into foreign banks, chiefly British and French. All these circumstances, in addition to the thousands of millions borrowed by the Czar from France and Britain in loans, chained Czardom to

British and French Imperialism and converted Russia into a tributary, a semi-colony of these countries."<sup>1</sup>

"Besides the part played by foreign capital in Russian history, Russia's national debt had naturally to be considered as well. In 1910, at least 62.45 per cent of the total national indebtedness, amounting to nine milliard rubles, was represented by foreign loans, France's share alone being from at least 9 to 10 milliard francs, Germany's from 2 to 3 milliard, and those of England, Holland, Austria-Hungary, etc., smaller, but still quite considerable sums. The service of the Russian debt weighed more heavily on the national finances than those of the other Great Powers and would in the long run have proved too much for the country's resources."<sup>2</sup>

Yet at the same time this Eurasian colossus with feet of clay stretched itself out over more than half of Europe and a third of Asia, extending from Poland in the West to the Behring Straits in the Far East, a distance of 5,700 miles; from the Arctic in the North to the Caspian and Black Seas in the South; and the frontiers of Persia, Afghanistan and Mongolia in the South-East, a distance of 2,660 miles at the widest point.

Within this enormous area there dwelt almost 175 different races and nationalities at every stage of cultural and social development, from the semi-civilised nomads of the Siberian plains and the primitive tribes of the Central Asian steppes living under patriarchal-feudal conditions, up to the most culturally advanced Finns, Poles and Baltic peoples, part of Western European civilisation. No other Empire, with the possible exception of the British Empire, was ever based upon such a medley of races. History, therefore, could not have chosen a more appropriate milieu than Czarist Russia for the experiment in inter-racial relations which the Soviet Government has undertaken since the Revolution, and the precedent it has set in the solution of national minority and colonial problems.

First of all, how was it that this colossal Empire, covering 8,250,000 square miles of territory, evolved? "As an ever-expanding empire of peasants and horsemen, Russia had pushed eastward into Siberia, southward towards Constantin-

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Hans von Eckardt, Ph.D.: *Russia*, p. 285.

ople, and westward towards the Baltic, long before the fever of modern Imperialism infected Western Europe. Russia's early expansion was the work of restless frontiersmen, seeking new homes in virgin lands, of ambitious Czars seeking 'warm water outlets', 'window to the west.' It was not the Imperialism of surplus manufactures, surplus capital and national pride. But in the late 19th century, though Russia as a whole remained agricultural, great industries developed in Russian cities, capitalists arose and imperialist doctrines identical with those of Western Europe gained currency among the ruling class. Capitalist projects for railway construction in Manchuria, capitalist interests in Persia, intensified the historic aggressiveness of Russia. French financiers (about 1890) supplied for Russian Imperialism surplus capital which Russia herself lacked; for instance, the Russian-Asiatic Bank, the agent of Russian Imperialism in the Far East, was financed with French capital.<sup>1</sup>

The conquest and consolidation of the Russian Empire falls into two distinct historical periods. First, the Feudal period, before the abolition of serfdom in 1861, when most of the territories to the west and south-east of the Moscow Principality were acquired; and second, the Imperialist Epoch of 19th century capitalism, during which the Trans-Caucasian border regions, the Central Asian colonies and the Maritime Province of Siberia were conquered. This second period of aggressive *Lebensraum* brought Russia into direct conflict with British Imperialism in Central Asia and the Middle East, and with Japanese Imperialism in the Far East. The latter clash of imperialist interests culminated in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. During the period of Russia's expansion into Central Asia, war with Britain was only just averted on several occasions. It was only in 1907 that the two powers composed their differences at the expense of Persia, which was divided into spheres of influence.

#### *The Muscovite Principality And Expansion.*

Ivan IV, better known as The Terrible or The Dread, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, was the first of the Muscovite autocrats to assume the title of Czar (Caesar), in 1547. Ivan conquered the Tartar khanate of Kazan on the

<sup>1</sup> Parker T. Moon: *Imperialism and World Politics*, pp. 54-55.



Middle Volga in 1552, to celebrate which he built the Cathedral of St. Basil on Moscow's Red Square, one of the most beautiful churches in Russia, a land of magnificent churches. Seeking an outlet to the south-east, Ivan reached, in 1556, as far as Astrakhan, outpost of the Golden Horde, which was the name given to the western part of the Mongol Empire founded by Jenghis Khan. This conquest brought Russia to the gateway to the Caspian. During Ivan IV's reign, "Great Russian trade continued to extend eastwards. . . . Cossacks and colonists crossed the Urals and began to open up Siberia. By these means the Moscow boyars created for themselves stable markets and secure roads, founded trading centres and commercial institutions, and succeeded, in close co-operation with the State, in constructing for themselves and for the Czardom a system of economic exploitation of the colonial territories which, though extensive, was coherent."<sup>1</sup> Ivan also looked towards the West. His wars against the Livonian military orders and Teutonic Knights, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (1558-1582) were waged to try and break through to the Baltic and establish commercial links with Europe.

This process of widening out eastwards and westwards was continued by Ivan's successors, most important of whom was Peter the Great (1689-1725), founder of modern Russia. A man of great ability and energy, he introduced a number of reforms borrowed from the West—largely from Germany—and built a new capital at St. Petersburg in 1703, to serve as a 'window' through which his people might look into Europe. Peter's conquests brought into the Russian Empire the provinces of Livonia and Estonia, in 1721, as well as parts of Finland. In the south he entered the Crimea, the whole of which, as well as the Black Sea steppes, was fully annexed from the Ottoman Empire between 1774 and 1791, under Catherine II. The Crimea became known as "the brightest jewel in the Crown of the Russian Czar," because of its beauty and salubrity. During the last years of Catherine's reign the third and final division of Poland took place (1795), when Russia secured the portion which was to remain within the Empire until its fall. The Duchy of Courland (Latvia) and Lithuania were also added to Russia

<sup>1</sup> Hans von Eckardt: *Russia*, p. 32.

by Catherine. Sweden was made to cede Finland in 1809 by Alexander I, who annexed Bessarabia in 1812, at the end of a six years' war with Turkey. Nicholas I, the successor to Alexander, annexed the provinces of Erivan and Nakhichevan from Persia in 1826, and completed the conquest of the Caucasus.

All of the western parts of the Empire—White Russia, the Baltic provinces, Poland, the Ukraine—were incorporated as integral parts of Russia Proper. Finland enjoyed the status of an autonomous duchy.

However, in this study we are primarily concerned with the Asiatic and Far Eastern parts of Russia, which formed in reality the colonial section of the Empire. For the most part these territories were inhabited by primitive races and peoples. Many of them were even more backward in civilisation than the natives of Africa.

#### *Russian Penetration Into Siberia.*

Merchant adventurers were attracted to Northern Asiatic Russia by the prospects which were offered by the great fur belts and mineral resources, and penetration into Siberia had reached as far as the Irtysh and Obi rivers before the end of the 16th century. For instance, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the powerful Stroganov family of merchant princes obtained the exclusive right to exploit the resources of Western Siberia. "For a term of twenty years the Stroganovs and their kinsmen were exempt from all taxes and dues in those new territories, and from every sort of statutory obligation. They were authorised to trade with foreign merchants, free of all Customs duty. . . . and, finally, to crown these privileges of the Stroganovs, they and their men were to be free from all subordination to the local authorities, and subject only to the jurisdiction of the Czar's court of justice in Moscow."<sup>1</sup>

In pursuit of their purpose, the Stroganovs utilised the services of Cossacks, who, under their famous leader, Yermak, in 1582 captured Sibir or Isker, on the Irtysh, and capital of Kuchum, "the formidable and invincible descendant of Jenghis Khan and heir of the Golden Horde." The Cossacks were not a distinct race but communities of Great

<sup>1</sup> Yuri Semyonov: *The Conquest of Siberia*, p. 36.

Russians who had 'seceded' from the Muscovite authority and settled in the valleys of the Don, Yaik and Terek, as well as in Siberia, as early as the 16th century. They lived in fortified villages, subsisting on fishing, and still more on plunder. The Turks and the Tartars were their lawful prey, but they did not always limit themselves to these. They recognised the Czar as their sovereign, but as he did nothing to enforce his authority, the Cossacks were practically independent military democracies."<sup>1</sup>

It was the Stroganov family which enlisted the Cossacks to conquer desired territories in Siberia, and they penetrated the vast spaces by going from one river to the next. They made their way along these northern rivers in boats, and sent out bands in every direction, bringing the natives under subjection. With the aid of these Cossacks, trading establishments were established at intervals along the great river banks, to which the native trappers brought their skins to be exchanged for vodka and other trifles. Forty years after the death of the Cossack leader Yermak, in 1584, the Stroganov family found their monopolistic position being challenged by an influx of adventurers, in the face of whose persistent efforts to undermine them they were unable to maintain their virtual sovereignty of Siberia. They finally retired in favour of the Muscovite Empire, which looked to the furs and minerals of Siberia as a means of exchange for the gold of China which it required to fight its wars in the West. The Stroganovs, relinquishing a monopoly which had become ineffective in practice, contented themselves with millions of acres of land in the Cis-Ural region.

Recruited into the Czar's service, the Cossacks continued to be used in the opening up of Siberia. When territories were conquered, large stretches of land were usually reserved for them on the frontiers, on which they built *ostrogs*, or forts, from which they ruled the scattered native peoples. Liable to military service, the Cossacks received a monetary grant and arms from the Government. They were allowed a certain amount of autonomy and endowed with certain privileges. Their attempts to conquer the Turkic regions of South Siberia were at first unsuccessful, thanks to the determined resistance offered by the Kirghizians and Khkasses,

<sup>1</sup> Prince D. S. Mirsky: *Russia, a Cultural History*, p. 133.

and they were restricted to the north and east, where furs were most easily obtainable. The animal wealth of the country, which stretched from the Urals to the Pacific coast, was utilised by Russian companies, traders and merchants, who operated on lines similar to those of the British Hudson Bay Company in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Parties of Cossacks were sent to settle on the frontiers of Eastern Siberia as far as the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk, while Imperial Guards garrisoned the *ostrogs* (forts). Everywhere the native Tartars offered fierce resistance, the most effective coming from the Tunguses, now known as Evenks. Russian settlements were established at Tobolsk in 1585; at Tomsk in 1604; at Enceisk in 1619; at Krasnoyarsk in 1628; at Yakutsk in 1632; at Okhotsk in 1638. The march across Siberia to the Pacific was so rapid that Cossacks reached the Sea of Okhotsk before they were in Irkutsk, the halfway point, but further south, in 1652, Nerchinsk came under control in 1658. Vladivostok came into Russian possession only in 1860, when it was ceded by China. Alaska remained part of the Russian Empire until it was sold to America in 1869.

As the different parts of Siberia came under control, the Cossacks ruled them under the direction of State officials. Their methods were similar to those employed by imperialists everywhere, possibly because it is difficult to change the pattern of subjection and extortion. All with an interest in exploiting the resources of conquered Siberia, and they included the Moscow officials, the merchants, and hordes of Cossacks, "were concerned with the subjection of the native population and the collection of tribute. The methods were simple. An armed detachment came to a village and assembled the village elders, and the commander informed them through an interpreter of the amount of tribute they would be required to pay in future. A first collection was

<sup>1</sup> The Hudson Bay Company was founded in 1670 by the Anglo-German Prince Rupert of the Palatinate. "His cousin, Charles II," writes Yuri Semyonov (*The Conquest of Siberia*, p. 72) "gave the company its charter for the collection of furs in Canada, of which not a square foot belonged to Charles. Close relations of those beavers and sables and black foxes and ermines that had lured the Russians to Siberia, and established them there, conferred the Dominion of Canada on the British Commonwealth."

made on the spot. If the natives refused to deliver the furs, or produced too few, various sorts of pressure were applied. Their 'yurts' (tents) were burnt, their reindeer confiscated. Any who offered resistance were killed. Women and children were taken into captivity."<sup>1</sup>

The Czars, observing how useful the Cossacks were in conquering and subduing the primitive peoples of the Siberian wastes, later recruited them as mercenaries to suppress revolutionary movements among the Russian workers, to terrorise the Jews, and to further their imperialist conquests in Central Asia.

The Cossacks did not come to Siberia as colonising settlers. The very nature of their role precluded that. Russian settlers did find their way there, however, particularly after the great Schism in the Orthodox Church (1652-1667), when there was a continuous migration of religious refugees into Siberia. Thousands of 'Old Believers,' who would not accept the new religious concepts, political prisoners and out-and-out criminals constituted the bulk of the Russian and Ukrainian elements inhabiting the great stretch of land reaching from the Urals to Lake Baikal. Under the crazy Czar Paul, an ambitious attempt was made in 1799 to settle the region of Transbaikalia. Soldiers and criminals who had incurred punishment, and peasants banished by the lords of the manors for 'bad behaviour' were exiled there. In order to perpetuate these colonies, every man was required to take a wife with him. If he had none, one was provided him by the State, along with a horse and cart and a sheepskin. In the rigorous conditions which existed, and because these 'settlers' were largely convicted wrongdoers, the life of exiles in Siberia was no easy one. The Russian Government might have wanted to colonise the conquered territories, but it was by no means sentimental. In that respect it was very much like other Governments. The English transportation system, for example, was put into operation almost at the same time as the Russian *sylka* (banishment). The first columns of Russian exiles marched to Siberia at the end of the 16th century; the first English ships carrying cargoes of criminals sailed for Virginia and Maryland at the beginning of the following century. "Both Governments pursued the

<sup>1</sup> Yuri Semyonov : *The Conquest of Siberia*, p. 95.

same end—they wanted to rid the mother country of elements of unrest and to provide settlers for the colonies. One difference between the two was that the English sold their criminals to the colonists as slaves through special agencies, whereas the Czarist Government set out to utilise the labour of the criminals itself.”<sup>1</sup>

A new expansionist drive towards the North Pacific was inaugurated by Peter the Great, who conquered Kamchatka in 1707. The fur trade and exploration of these vast regions, including the Aleutian and Commander islands and Alaska, were the monopoly of a Muscovite chartered company. The expansion continued throughout the reign of Alexander II, and by 1860 Russian influence had stretched to the Amur River and east of the Ussari River, a vast area which became part of the Maritime Province of Siberia. This region, together with North Sakhalin, covered a stretch of territory measuring 350,000 square miles.

### *The Far East Conquests.*

About the time when the scramble for Africa was taking place in the eighties of the last century, the Western Imperialist Powers were carving an enormous slice out of the “sleeping giant of the East,” as Napoleon once described China. After three wars Britain finally annexed Burma on January 1, 1886; France annexed Annam on June 6, 1884, and Tongking on April 4, 1885; whilst Japan established sovereignty over Korea in 1895. Three years later America grabbed the Philippines from Spain. In this great battle for concessions in East Asia and Pacific, the Russian capitalists had no intention of being hedged aside. They therefore commenced the building of the Trans-Siberian railway in 1891 with money advanced by French capitalists, and looked covetously towards China's north Manchurian province.

In 1896, the Russo-Asiatic Bank, again a Muscovite corporation operating with French capital, obtained a concession from the Peking Government to build a railway right across Manchuria, linking up with the Trans-Siberian line with the terminus at Vladivostock. “The railway was first

<sup>1</sup> Yuri Semyonov: *The Conquest of Siberia*, pp. 221-223. These and the following pages give an interesting account of the colonisation process.

and foremost a strategic railway, to advance Russian imperialist interests in the Far East. It would facilitate the movement of Russian troops in the case of war; and even in time of peace Russian military guards could be stationed along the line to preserve order. Russia would dominate Manchuria from the military point of view. From the economic standpoint, also, Manchuria would be Russified. Of course the railway would give Russia the commerce of central and northern Manchuria; in addition the company was to have mining rights along the route. Moreover, goods imported or exported over this railway would enjoy a reduction of a third of the established tariff rate. Russia's next step would be to get a concession for a southern extension of the line and a warm-water port, for Vladivostock was ice-bound for several months in the year."<sup>1</sup>

Conniving with Germany, Russia next moved to obtain Port Arthur, which would provide the warm-water outlet she was seeking on the entrance to the Gulf of Chih-li. This was the very port which Czar Nicholas II had prevented Japan from annexing after the Sino-Japanese war of 1895. Japan naturally resented the Russian acquisition of Port Arthur and made preparations to settle accounts with the Czar at all speed. Japan allied herself with Britain in 1902, thus linking herself with Russia's bitterest opponent in the Middle East and Central Asia. Diplomatically assisted by Britain, Japan mobilised her navy, and employing the same tactics as those more recently used at Pearl Harbour, without warning, she opened attack on the Russian navy in Port Arthur on February 5, 1904. The declaration of war followed subsequently. Russia's defeat in the war with Japan marked the first major setback for Czarist Imperialism in the Far East, and delivered the first blow to white prestige in the Orient.

#### *Caucasian and Central Asian Annexations.*

Russia's orientation towards the Near East took shape in the 18th century, and her encroachments on the Ottoman Empire brought her into conflict with the Western Powers, finally culminating in the Crimean War of 1854-56. During this period of imperial expansion, Trans-Caucasia became the scene of her conquering activities. In 1783, Georgia was

<sup>1</sup> Parker T. Moon : *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 333.

declared a Protectorate of Moscow and was finally annexed in 1801. The annexation of Azerbaijan and part of Armenia from Persia followed. Daghestan in the north-east Caucasus along the shores of the Caspian was conquered in 1859. Resistance to further expansion in this region was put up by the warlike Moslem tribes inhabiting the Caucasian mountains under their famous leader, Shamil. They were pacified only about 1864, with the conquest of Circassia. Rather than submit to Russian rule, over 200,000 native Circassians migrated to Turkey. Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Russia acquired Batum, Kars and Ardahan as part of the settlement of the Berlin Conference. It was on this occasion that the wily Disraeli, who dominated the 1878 conference, returned triumphant to England with 'peace and honour,' and Cyprus added to the British Empire.

Most important of the colonial regions of the Russian Empire were those located in Central Asia, comprising the vast area known as Turkestan, bounded by Siberia on the North and Persia and Afghanistan on the South. Its frontier to the West was the Caspian Sea, and in the East the Gobi desert. It is now broken up into several Soviet Republics.

War was carried against the tribesmen of the Kirghiz steppes from 1734, and it was in pushing southward from Siberia across these steppes that the Russians moved up the Syr-Darya River. From there they moved through the desert of Khiva, subduing the Khanates (or Moslem principalities) as they went, until they linked up again with the shores of the Caspian. The Khanate of Bokara was conquered in 1868, following the subjugation of Aralsk in 1848; Kozata in 1849, Turkestan in 1865. Khiva fell in 1873; Ferghana in 1876; Geok Tepe in 1881, and Merv in 1884. This predatory campaign covered the period up to the assassination of Alexander II, and this vast Central Asian region became for Russia what tropical Africa is today for the British Empire: a source of raw materials for the industries of Western Russia. Turkestan provided the cotton for the mills of the great textile industrialists which were set up in Latvia, and at Ivanov and Lodz in Poland.

At that point in her history, Russia, then ruled by Alexander III, moved right up against Afghanistan, over which she began to extend her sphere of influence. During



that period, too, Russia brought pressure to bear upon China to concede Outer Mongolia, which became a protectorate of Czarism in all but name. Enmity with Britain was increased on this score, while the political penetration into Afghanistan threatened India—the 'brightest jewel in the British Crown'—and intensified Anglo-Russia imperialist rivalry in Central Asia. War almost opened between the two nations when the Czar annexed the Pamir Plateau in north-east Afghanistan. It is estimated that Alexander added over 400,000 square miles of Central Asia to the Russian Empire.

While Russia played an active role in Asia, she was the only great Imperialist Power which was left out of the scramble for Africa, although one of the signatories to the Congo Basin Act signed in Berlin on February 26, 1885. This was in the main a consequence of Britain's policy, which from the time of the Crimean War had been to keep Russia bound up in the Black Sea. That is why Disraeli opposed the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 and moved Indian troops to Malta and threatened to despatch the British Fleet to the Dardanelles. Frustrated in their efforts to secure control of the Straits, the Russians attempted to get a foothold on the East African Red Sea coast, to break across the British sea lane to India. After the defeat of the Italians at Adowa in 1896, Czar Nicholas II., the last of the Romanovs, established diplomatic relations with Abyssinia, and sent a mission to the court of Menelik. The Russians soon became great favourites of the black Emperor, and he appointed some of them as officers in his army. The Czar entertained great hopes of drawing Abyssinia under Russian influence, but his ambitions were thwarted after the Russian defeat of 1905.

#### *Alignment of Forces Laid for 1914.*

The British alliance with Japan in 1902, to which reference has already been made, was undertaken as a means of countering the Russian imperialist drive towards the China Sea via Port Arthur, after Russia had failed to secure an ice-free outlet into the Mediterranean, and later the Persian Gulf. Just as France and Britain almost came to blows over Fashoda in 1898, and France and Germany

over Morocco in 1905 and 1911, so similarly Britain and Russia nearly went to war over Central Asia in 1885, and again in 1897, over Russia's annexation of the Pamir Plateau. War was only averted through the instrumentality of France, the ally of both Russia and Britain. Following the Entente Cordiale of 1904 and the Russian defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, French diplomacy succeeded in bringing Britain into rapprochement with Russia. Under the influence of this new-found friendship, Britain and Russia, in 1907, cemented their amity at the expense of Persia, which was divided into two spheres of influence under an Anglo-Russian agreement. This step paved the way for the conversion of the Dual Entente into a Triple Entente, which was consummated between Britain, France and Russia, and laid the alignment of forces for 1914. It will be seen that the Colonial Question in Asia and Africa then, as now, played a leading role in international politics; and it was only after the outstanding colonial differences between the contending parties were allayed that there came into being the political alignment of forces leading up to the First World War, which culminated in the destruction of the Czarist Empire in 1917.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HOW THE CZAR GOVERNED HIS COLONIAL EMPIRE

ETHNOGRAPHICALLY, the Russian Empire embraced the greatest variety of peoples ever included within a single political unit. White, brown, yellow, and even black,<sup>1</sup> they were all incorporated within this vast agglomeration. Almost 175 ethnic groups were analysed at one time by the Russian Academy of Sciences into ten major divisions.<sup>2</sup> These comprised Indo-Europeans (36 groups); Caucasian, now classified as Japhetic (40); Turks (48); Mongols (3); Tungus-Manchurian (6); Palaeo-Asiatics (9); Samoyeds (1); Finns (16); Semites (6). In addition there were groups of tribes from the Far East with an ancient culture. The Russian Empire was, therefore, racially as well as geographically, Eurasian rather than European, the Turkic tribes occupying the most important role after the Slavs.

The national elements included Great Russians, White Russians, Ukrainians (or Little Russians), Georgians, Turks, Armenians, Uzbekians, Turkmans, Tajiks, Tartars, Kazaks, Kirghizians, Chuvashians, Votyakians, Dunganians, Adegaians, Kalmuks, Bashkirs, Loparians, Buriats, Khakassians, Mesheyaks, Shoreans, Oiratians, Komis, and numerous others. In all, they comprised as great a medley of different peoples as there are in the British Empire.

Administration of the Czarist Empire was one of the most patchwork kind. There was no defined policy regarding the political status of the territories; such as one finds in the British Empire — Dominions, Colonies, Protectorates, Mandates. With scant heed for the special needs of the ethnical groups, either culturally, politically or economically, except to use them to play one section off against another in pursuance of the old imperialist policy

<sup>1</sup> African slaves were imported into the Black Sea region of Abkasia.

<sup>2</sup> These statistics are based upon the ethnological studies of Prof. N. Marr of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

of 'divide and rule,' Czarism, for administrative purposes, just lumped the imperial territories under five major divisions:

1. Russia Proper (and Baltic Provinces).
2. Finland Grand Duchy.
3. Caucasia (including Cis-Caucasia and Trans-Caucasia).
4. Siberia and The Far East.
5. Central Asia (Turkestan).

#### 1. *Russia Proper and Baltic Provinces.*

Great Russia, White Russia, the Ukraine, the Baltic Provinces (now Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia) and Poland collectively constituted the metropolitan section, or European Russia. Ukraine came into the Russian Empire in 1654, when the Kossack Hetman Bogdan Khmel'nitsky voluntarily surrendered the Ukraine to the 'protection' of the Czar Alexius Romanov against the Polish invaders. This amalgamation was influenced by the Ukrainian clergy, from the ranks of which the Orthodox Church exclusively recruited its priests until the middle of the 18th century.<sup>1</sup> As a 'protectorate,' the Ukraine enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy until Catherine the Great rescinded it in 1764 during her process of 'levelling' conditions throughout the Russian Empire. Poland, partitioned for the third time in 1795, was completely Russified by Alexander II following the suppression of the second Polish rebellion in 1862-63, from which time it became an integral part of the metropolis.

The Baltic countries of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia (Courland and Livonia), while politically subject to the Muscovite autocracy, in the same way as Kenya and Rhodesia are subject to the British Crown, were actually administered by foreign settlers. Since the Middle Ages, German aristocrats, descendants of the Teutonic Knights, had settled in these countries. They lost much of their political power under the Swedes, but when Peter the Great annexed the territories, he restored the privileges of the 'Baltic barons' in order to win their support against the native populations. Special charters were given to them, which, like those granted to the chartered companies of the British Empire in the 18th

<sup>1</sup> Prince D. S. Mirsky : *Russia: A Social History*, p. 211.

and 19th centuries, gave them administrative powers as well as economic monopoly.

Having contact with western civilisation, the Baltic nobility were economically more efficient and progressive than the Russian aristocracy, as a result of which serfdom in these regions was abolished early in the 19th century. As with the abolition of slavery in the British Empire and the United States, it was not humanitarianism that was the real reason behind the abolition of Baltic serfdom, which was really dictated by economic reasons. Free labour was found to be cheaper than slave labour, because more productive. The results of the termination of serfdom in the Baltic countries of Latvia and Estonia in 1816-19 were similar to those in the West Indies after the emancipation of the Negroes in 1834. The freed men were transformed into landless masses, who were forced to work for their former masters for wages. We see the same process in South Africa, Kenya, etc., under the aegis of British Imperialism. Only by throwing the people off the land can a free labour market, necessary to the development of capitalism, be created. Thus the Baltic barons were able to lay the foundations of industry and large-scale agriculture, which was the most advanced and efficient in the whole of the Russian Empire, the agrarian hinterland of which served as a market for the products of these Baltic regions. Serf labour actually kept back the development of Russian industries, which did not go forward until after the abolition of serfdom in 1861.

## 2. *Grand Duchy of Finland.*

Finland, alone of all the subject nations, enjoyed any kind of autonomy. Having the status of a Grand Duchy, it had its own Diet or Parliament, its political position being near enough analogous to that of India. The Finns were accorded a limited control over internal affairs, subject to the veto of the Russian Governor-General, who was invested with reserve powers and direction of finance, foreign affairs, and defence. Any measure introduced by the Diet which was not to the liking of the autocracy was cancelled by the Governor-General, in much the same way as the Viceroy of India rejects bills unpleasing to British imperial interests. At all events, it would seem that, limited as the Finnish

autonomy was, it was more democratic than any other part of the Russian Empire.

### 3. *Caucasia (A) Trans-Caucasia.*

Georgia, on the Black Sea, was the most important section of the Trans-Caucasian colonies. It became part of the Russian domains in 1801, when the Emperor Paul sought to 'protect' it against the Persian Shah, Aga Muhammad. As a Russian colony, it was ruled through a Governor-General with the aid of the Georgian princes, who enjoyed rights similar to those of the native rulers in the British Empire, their relation to the Russian Crown being akin to that of the Indian princes towards the British Raj. And like these oriental despots, the Georgian princes enjoyed extensive rights which enabled them to exploit the masses of the people ruthlessly. The Georgian nobility was completely Russified and quite decadent. The Georgian people, however, resisted the Czarist policy of Russification and succeeded in maintaining their cultural and revolutionary traditions. Commenting on the vitality of Georgian nationalism, Prince Mirsky observes that "As early as the 'seventies the Georgian democracy began to play a considerable part in the Russian Socialist and Radical movement. In 1905 the peasantry of Guria (Western Georgia), organised by the Social-Democratic party, showed a remarkable spirit of revolutionary discipline and self-help. Georgians played a very prominent role in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, their leaders remaining definitely hostile to any form of autonomy for Georgia. In cultural matters, however, they supported the great national-democratic revival which led to the re-establishment of Georgian as a language of civilization. By the beginning of the century Georgian cultural life was substantially democratic, and the firm foundations were laid for a new Georgian culture which began to bear fruit in the Soviet Georgia of to-day".<sup>1</sup>

The Russian agrarian policy in the Trans-Caucasian colonies was similar to that in the Punjab and other parts of British India. All of the land annexed from Persia was handed over to the Moslem beys (equivalent to the zemindars of India), who collected the rents from the peasants and

<sup>1</sup> D. S. Mirsky : *Russia: A Social History*, pp. 284/5.

handed over a part to the Russian governors. In this way, the Imperial Power created a buffer class between the autocracy and the masses, who were born in debt, lived in debt, and died in debt to the landlords and moneylenders. Among the medley of races and religious sects inhabiting Trans-Caucasia, such as Georgians, Circassians, Mingrelians, Imerians, etc., the influence of the beys was used to incite communal disaffection among the peasantry. Moslems were played off against the non-Moslem peoples like the Ossetians (who were Christians), and Jews. When they got out of hand, the Russians used the Cossacks against all of them, for Cossack communities had been settled on lands taken from the Kabardis and Chechens in the 18th century. Right up to the Revolution, the Caucasus was seething with warring races and tribes. Family and tribal feuds were carried on from generation to generation. No man dared to walk unarmed outside his own village. In the midst of these war-like Moslem tribes, lived the Armenians, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. The Armenian bourgeoisie enjoyed the special patronage of the autocracy. They were wealthy, and pro-Russian in outlook, and dominated the trade and commerce of Trans-Caucasia. Politically, they were used by the Russian imperialists in promoting Czarist influence in Turkey and Persia. On the other hand, the Armenian intelligensia was very progressive and identified itself with the revolutionary movements against the autocracy. After the abortive 1905 Revolution, pogroms were often organised against the Armenians by the Moslem beys with the connivance of the Czarist police.

*(B) Cis-Caucasia.*

Daghestan, situated in Cis-Caucasia along the Caspian Sea, was the most important colonial territory in the North-Eastern Caucasian region, populated by about 80 different Turkic tribes "speaking a bewildering number of related but mutually unintelligible languages, and collectively known to the Russians as Lezgians." Like the tribes of the North-West Frontier of India, the Lezgians were fanatical Moslems and resisted Russian domination for over 25 years under Shamil, a holy man like the Fakir of Ipi. After their resistance had been crushed by the Cossacks in 1859, the rebels,

rather than accept the domination of the infidel Russian unbelievers, migrated to Turkey.

#### 4. *Siberia And The Far East.*

The wide stretches of Siberia, the wildest section of the Empire, were governed with the aid of Cossacks. In the early days of the colonisation of Siberia (an area larger than the whole of Western Europe by more than 1,000,000 square miles), the Cossacks were sent as settlers, but since their interests were military and not agricultural, they failed as colonising material. Another means of colonisation was tried by the Imperial Government, which about 1648 began to send political exiles to the Siberian wastes. By the end of the 17th century a colonisation policy through exile was well enforced, and men were sent to Siberia for the most trifling offences, especially after convict labour was introduced into the mines there. In fact, capital punishment was abolished in 1753 for a short period and replaced by perpetual hard labour in the Siberian mines. Political prisoners were later banished there in droves, particularly to the Yakut region in the north-east. This was the largest administrative unit in Siberia, covering an area of 1,188,000 square miles. It was very sparsely populated by a Turk-Tartar people known as Yakuts, settled cattle and reindeer breeders on the way to becoming agricultural. They were the only indigenous people in Siberia who resisted Russian assimilation and retained right up to the Revolution their own social organisations and customs.

Between 1823 and 1898, something like 700,000 exiles were banished to Siberia, whence they were accompanied by their wives and relatives. Free settlers also played an important part in the colonisation of Siberia. Runaway serfs and fugitives from religious persecution and military conscription sought refuge in the remoter parts. Many of them inter-married with the Yakuts, whose language in many cases they also adopted. The half-caste descendants of these mixed marriages are known as Siberiaks. After the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the government supported organised emigration.

Among the many Siberian tribes collecting and bringing furs to the trading stations of the Russian chartered com-



panies were the Chukchees, who occupied the area in the north-east around Cape Chukotsk on the Arctic Ocean; the Ostiaks (now called Kants), living in the forest region of western Siberia; the Voguls (now called Mansi); the Samoyeds (now called Nentsi), who were in the process of dying out, and lived in the north and north-east; the Nubikh (now Guliaks) grouped along the Amur river and the northern part of Sakhalin island. All of these people are of Ugro-Finnish origin and professed Shamanism, a primitive religion connected with domestic ritual. The Samoyeds were in an extremely primitive stage of social evolution, with a tribal organisational form, and were the most backward of all the peoples of the Czarist Empire. They roamed the tundras and worshipped idols. "Their gods are carnivorous and fond of raw flesh, which is thrust between their teeth at stated times." The stage of social development among these tribes corresponded with that of the natives of the interior of New Guinea.

For administrative purposes this 'land of exile' was divided into eight *Guberniya* (governments), with headquarters at Tomsk, Irkutsk, Omsk, Tobolsk, Yakutsk, Petropaulovski on the Peninsula of Kamchatka, and Vladivostock. Czarism ruled the scattered populations of the extensive Siberian territory through military control. Nothing at all was done to mitigate either for the settlers from Central Russia or the indigenous peoples the hardships which harsh climatic conditions and primitive modes of living incurred.

Of the rather more advanced peoples living within the Siberian colonial empire, the Buriat Mongols occupied a very large territory of over 145,000 square miles around Lake Baikal. As their name implies, they are a Mongol people, professing Buddhism. They lived in a social organisation which did not seem to have progressed since the time of Jenghis Khan, and engaged in primitive farming and pastoral occupations.

The Bashkirs, an admixture of Turk, Mongol and Finn, and of Moslem faith, inhabited the southern Urals, where they had settled between the 9th and 10th century. They were most shamefully exploited, for it was in this region that Russian mining industry first established itself. The Urals, then as now, were the centre of the iron ore industry.

To make way for this enterprise, the natives were driven off their pastoral lands with the same ruthlessness as that displayed by European Imperialism in Africa and elsewhere. One difference there was, however, and that is, unlike millions of natives in Africa, for instance, who have become proletarianised, the Bashkirs continued to maintain their nomadic existence. The mines were worked by Russian convict and other imported labour. Similar conditions existed in the Altai region, an area as large as France. All the minerals—gold, silver, copper, lead, iron ore and zinc—exploited in this part of the Empire were the exclusive property of the Russian industrialists.

Once the Czarist imperialists had secured the land for the large agrarians and mining concerns, they left the social structure of these primitive peoples intact, governing them with the aid of the native chiefs. The semi-feudal gentry of the Bashkir territory were closely linked with the mullahs (Moslem priests) of Kazan. They occupied the same relationship towards the Czarist autocracy as do African tribal rulers towards the British Imperial Government under Indirect Rule. For these privileges the native gentry paid tribute to St. Petersburg.

Czarist Imperialism also made use of the Bashkirs as soldiery. After Napoleon's retreat from Russia in 1812, Alexander decided to 'liberate' the nations of Europe, in alliance with Prussia; and it was at the battle of Leipzig in 1813 that he used Bashkir cavalry units, armed with bows and arrows.<sup>1</sup>

Most assimilated of the Siberian communities bordering the Kazak steppes were the Kazan Tartars. They adopted many Russian ways while retaining their Mohammedan religion, and in return for the services they rendered Czarism in keeping other natives in subjection they were allowed to monopolise the trade of supplying goods in exchange for indigenous products such as hides, skins, cotton and other raw materials. The wealth they obtained from this trade enabled them to send their children to the few schools maintained solely for the sons of the semi-feudal gentry, and even sometimes to Kazan University.

<sup>1</sup> D. S. Mirsky: *Russia: A Social History*, 0. 247.

### 5. *Central Asia or Turkestan.*

Turkestan, which now includes a number of Soviet Central Asian republics, was the name given to the Czarist Empire in Central Asia and, with Trans-Caspia, represented its truly colonial section. Administration was through a kind of Indirect Rule, subordinated to the authority of Russian military governors and the Petersburg autocracy.

When Bokhara and Khiva succumbed to the Czar, Russian political agents were appointed to direct the emirs and other Moslem chiefs of these countries in ruling their populations. "The Emirs remained and became loyal vassals of the Czar, whose 'native states' policy permitted them to continue to enrich themselves at the expense of their subjects. For example, the Emir of Bokhara possessed, at the time of his flight in 1920, a personal fortune in bullion and gems of \$175,000,000, although the population of his fiefdom was smaller than that of New York City and its economy infinitely less productive."<sup>1</sup>

The Emir of Bokhara stood in the same relation to the Mohammedans of Central Asia as the Emir of Sokoto (Northern Nigeria) stands to Mohammedans in Equatorial Africa. He was the Sarikin Muslimin, 'Defender of Islam,' and exercised autocratic power over the Uzbeks, Turkmans, Tajiks, Afghans, Arabs, Kara-Kalpaks inhabiting Turkestan, and even over a Jewish colony said to have migrated from Bagdad, and made great fortunes during the capitalistic boom of the first decade of the 20th century. Samarkand, the Bokharan capital, was one of the most important religious centres of the Moslem world, and was the city in which Tamerlaine was buried.

The Emirs of Bokhara and Khiva, the beys and the mullahs were fully aided and abetted in their misrule by the Russian governors and notorious political administrators and police chiefs. Czarist colonial administration, in fact, reflected the whole corrupt character of the Petersburg autocracy. Not even a pretence was made at 'trusteeship' or 'paramountcy of native interests,' principles enunciated by British colonial administrators. There were no apologists for Czarist Imperialism.

<sup>1</sup> *Soviet Far East and Central Asia* by William Mandel, p.99.

All the non-Russian peoples of the Empire—the Inorodtzi or 'aliens by origin'—comprising largely the populations of Central Asia and along the Volga, on the right side of which lived the Kalmuks, were completely without national rights or individual liberties of any kind. Unbridled licence was the keynote of Czarist colonial rule, which might in general be said to approximate nearest to the atrocious extermination policy associated with the name of King Leopold in the Belgian Congo. Every Russian official was a little Czar armed with inquisitorial and arbitrary powers; the Czarist colonial administration was a scandal. "After the conquest, both the peoples of the native states of Khiva and Bokhara and those inhabiting the bulk of Central Asia (the resemblance to Hitler's device of the *gouvernement-generale* is more than verbal) underwent even more severe exploitation by government and economy. The Czar's taxes on the population of Russian Turkestan were between 50 and 150 per cent higher than those levelled upon the none-too-liberally treated people of European Russia. While the Czar's tax-collectors took the place of the Emir's, where these had been overthrown, down below the social system remained unchanged. The Russian officers who took the place of the Emir's beks sold supposedly elected offices to the highest bidder, and the native lordlings who won in these clandestine auctions made sure to get back their investment and a sizable profit from the dekkans—the peasantry."<sup>1</sup>

By such simple means as expropriating the people of their lands, Russian Imperialism in Central Asia did exactly what European Imperialist Powers have done for the blacks in parts of Africa: dispossessed the natives and left them in many cases to die out. For instance, about a hundred million acres of the most fertile lands of the Kazak and Kirghizian peoples were alienated and given over to Russian settlers. "The sufferers were mainly nomadic peoples, and the whole process was not unlike, though incomparably more painful than, the treatment of the American Indians. Driven into the desert, the nomads' cattle died off, and their masters followed soon after. Between 1902 and 1907, the Kirkhiz cattle herds decreased by 27 per cent, and the number of the

<sup>1</sup> *Soviet Far East and Central Asia*, p. 100.

Kirghiz people itself is estimated to have dropped by 7 to 10 per cent in the years 1903-1913.”<sup>1</sup>

The Kazaks and Kirghizians were subjected to extortionately high direct taxes and indirect exactions of all kinds by the Russian overlords and their native agents. Nomadism was extremely advantageous to the beys, who made the poor and middle families completely dependent upon them by forcing the people to deliver up to them their sheep and cattle. Patriarchal society flourished in Central Asia, and was sanctioned and buttressed by the Russian officials, inasmuch as it carried out the Czarist objective of keeping the people ignorant and tied to local despots whose interests were bound up with keeping them submissive. “The gentry were given support, their privileges confirmed, and even restored or increased. Where there was no gentry the commercial class was chosen as the object of encouragement and support. Old laws and institutions were as far as possible preserved, and the social order that prevailed at the moment of annexation continued and safeguarded.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there were many revolts amongst the people, which were put down with extreme ruthlessness and bloodshed. The last and most serious uprising among the Kirghizians occurred in July 1916. Following the enormous losses incurred on the eastern front, the Czar sent a large force of Russian soldiers to the Kirghiz capital of Pishpek (now Frunze) to recruit men and horses. They were met with strong resistance from the Kirghiz herdsmen, who, however, being unorganised, were overpowered by the Czar’s soldiery. The Kirghizians found their way into the mountains and carried on a kind of guerilla defence, but after several months of brutal decimation, 200,000 out of a population of 800,000 fled to Chinese Turkestan, “to return only after the establishment of Soviet Rule.”<sup>3</sup>

The emirs, beys, and the rest of the semi-feudal gentry, were encouraged by the Russian imperialists to utilise forced labour for the cultivation of cotton, which, distributed from the centre of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, went to feed the ginning

<sup>1</sup> Quote from Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia, Vol. 32, p. 377, Ogiz, Moscow, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> D. S. Mirsky : *Russia: A Social History*, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Prince D. S. Mirsky : *Russia: A Social History*, p. 237.

mills of Krenholm in Latvia and the textile factories of Lodz in Poland. Silk was also largely raised in Uzbekistan. The lands used for cotton and silk cultivation were confiscated from the natives and the people driven into the Gobi desert and the mountain regions. Hordes of Kazaks and Uzbeks fled into the wilds of Siberia and the Gobi regions in order to escape from the Cossacks who were sent from time to time to round them up for work on the cotton plantations of the Russian landlords.

### *Economic Imperialism.*

Czarist Imperialism followed the by no means unique principle of keeping the colonial areas backward, using them only to provide raw materials for the industries of the European section of the Empire. Thus rich and fertile lands were neglected and allowed to fall into the extremities of poverty. Such raw materials as were easily accessible were transferred west. European Imperialism in Africa, while almost as circumscribed in outlook as Czarism, has, in the interests of finance-capital, supported the building of railroads, the construction of docks, and opening up of mines. Railways in Czarist Russia, outside of the metropolitan centres of European Russia and the great imperial arteries like the Trans-Siberian, the Trans-Caspian and the Orenburg-Tashkent lines, were practically non-existent. Where they were built they were designed purely for military purposes. Up to 1913, the Russian railway mileage covered 73,000 kilometres compared with 500,000 in the United States during the same period. Corvée (forced) labour was used for building military roads as part of the imperialist expansion in Central Asia. The primitive tribes of Siberia were rounded up for work on the Trans-Siberian railway and other military construction. Even up to the time of the Revolution, the Central Asian colonies were far more backward politically, culturally and economically than British Africa, with all the disadvantages of Western imperialist rule in that continent.

This is in part explained by the fact that the Russians themselves enjoyed no democratic liberties. Because of the democratic tradition in Britain, there have always been liberal and humanitarian elements among the British people expressing themselves through Parliament and public life in

support of the colonial peoples. It is not that these people are fundamentally opposed to Imperialism. They are not, but they would rather see colonisation of the Liberal 'trusteeship' kind in the place of die-hard Tory Imperialism. They consider that the same ends can thereby be achieved more effectively. Their influence has been used in an endeavour to curb the extravagances of imperialism and the more brutal manifestations of capitalism in the Colonial Empire. Since there was a complete absence of such restraining influence in Czarist Russia, because of the absence of democratic liberties and free parliamentary institutions, there existed no liberalising tendency to counter excessive abuses against the colonial peoples of the Russian Empire. Even the Left-wing parties, with the single exception of the Bolsheviks, paid scant attention to the problems of the Colonial peoples of the Empire; and even they, functioning as they did under conditions of illegality, were in no position to help secure reforms for the subject peoples, or to obtain for them even such limited concessions as are granted from time to time to Indians, Africans, and other colonial peoples of the British Empire. Pissemskiy, a Russian sociologist closely acquainted with the lives of the Kalmuks, wrote in his diary in 1885 that, compared with a Kalmuk, a Russian peasant lived like a prince! So evil, so extremely dire, were the conditions of the oppressed populations of Central Asia that, before the Revolution, many of them were dying out.

There was no direct contact between the Russian people and the more primitive colonial populations, except where Russians were banished or took refuge in Siberia. The only contact the oppressed peoples had with the 'superior' race was through the Czar's political agents and Cossack mercenaries, who levied and collected taxes and maintained 'law and order.' All higher government posts in the national and colonial regions were held by Russian officials. Even the most culturally advanced subject peoples were excluded entirely from such administration as there was, except in the western Baltic provinces and Georgia. Of course, there was no question of representation in the Duma for the 'inferior' Siberian and Central Asian races. They were not even permitted the right allowed to the natives of West Africa, who are provided with the opportunity of selecting a certain num-

ber of representatives to the various colonial legislatures. In every respect Russian colonial rule was inordinately more repressive and backward than British colonial administration.

*Inter-Racial Discord: 'Divide and Rule' Policy.*

The Czarist Government of set purpose engendered among the Slav population hatred and contempt of the subject peoples, who were officially referred to as 'aliens.' National discord between the peoples was deliberately fanned. One people was set against another: Armenians against Georgians; Uzbeks against Turkmans; Cherkees against Chechens and Ingushes; the Great Russians against all the others; and all against the Jews. Ethnic groups were deliberately separated by arbitrary administrative boundaries, which forced them into association with other tribes and groups with whom they had ancient feuds. It was easy enough to incite divisions and internecine strife in such circumstances. All this provided a means whereby the many subject peoples tended to lose sight of the double oppression of the Czar and their own native exploiters, and blamed their unfriendly neighbours as the cause of their desperate economic and social plight.

Of the minorities under Czarism, the Jews were the most vilely treated. Unlike the colonial peoples of Central Asia and the nationalities of the western part of the Empire, living in territories of their own, the Jews were a minority living on the territories of other groups: in Great Russia, in Byelorussia, in the Ukraine, in Poland, the Baltic provinces, and the Caucasus. Like the Negroes of the Southern States of America and the natives of territories in South and East Africa colonised by Europeans, the Jews were segregated from the gentile populations. In towns where they were allowed to live, they were ostracised in ghettos, like the natives of Kenya and South Africa, who are segregated in reserves. The most elementary human rights were denied to them. Their children were not permitted to enter the schools, special taxes were imposed on synagogues, and no Jewish worker could be employed except by a Jew. Like the natives of Kenya and South Africa, Jews were prohibited from owning land, nor were they permitted to work as labourers in the fields. In keeping with the policy of 'divide



and rule,' the Russian capitalists and landlords organised pogroms whenever the peasantry became restive against the despotism of the autocracy. For while inter-racial feeling was fostered between the different national minorities, overpowering hatred for the Jews was stimulated among all. The Jews were represented universally to the workers and peasants of the Czarist Empire as the cause of their poverty and misery. They were told that improvement of their conditions was not to be secured by reforms from the Russian ruling class, but by reprisals against the Jews. The mass lynchings or pogroms which the Czarist ruling class instigated against the Jews in times of crisis can be likened to the lynchings which are fomented in certain parts of the United States by the landlords and capitalists against the Negroes, to divert the attention of the 'poor whites', especially the sharecroppers, from their own white exploiters.

This social exclusion fostered among the Jews, always a literate people, a sort of defence mechanism, expressed through religious cohesion and a sense of 'superiority' towards the rest of the world. They tended to hang closely together and to seek worldly success in so far as they could achieve it within the pale, as a sign of their 'superior' ability.

#### *Role of the Orthodox Church.*

Everywhere the Orthodox Church reigned supreme. Having a primary interest, as the largest single owner of land in the Empire, in keeping the people ignorant, it very ably assisted the State, of which it was a component part, in buttressing the whole system of Czarist Imperialism. There were as many religions and religious sects in Czarist Russia as there are in India today: Orthodox, Uniats (United Greek), Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, Karaite Jews, Sunni-Moslems, Shiya-Moslems, Ismailiya-Moslems (spiritual subjects of the Aga Khan and descendants of the Assassins), the dualistic religion of Avesti of Manichean origin, Nestorians, Shamanists, Lamaists (Buddhists), and many others. Religion was applied in the Czarist Empire as an anæsthetic to lull the masses to sleep. To use the Communistic aphorism, it was indeed 'the opium of the people.'

"The special function of the Orthodox Church was to teach Christian obedience to the Russian lower classes, to

convert the peoples of the East from their dark heathenism, and, above all, to suppress the Old Belief and the dissenting sects that represented the national and plebeian opposition to the Europeanised and noble-owned State. The Church was given full facilities to fulfil its duty towards the State. . . . And the Church did what the State demanded of it. . . .

“The higher clergy was recruited from the class of ‘Learned Monks,’ exclusively Ukrainian till the middle of the 18th century. For the most part they were the sons of secular priests, as only these were as a rule admitted to the clerical schools. The clergy thus grew into a closed caste; parishes were handed over from father to son, or son-in-law, for priests’ daughters were invariably married to prospective priests. The clerical class formed a sort of exotic growth in the midst of secular society.”<sup>1</sup>

The Church also played an important role in the early development of capitalism in Russia. For instance, “the monasteries were among the first capitalists and long retained a leading position as money lenders.”<sup>2</sup>

In the regions of Central Asia, the Moslem religion played a similar role in bolstering the Czarist autocracy. And while the Orthodox Church was in conflict with Islam, the Czarist Government allowed the mullahs religious freedom, using them as instruments of Imperialist policy. In Samarkand, for instance, ten per cent of the population were mullahs.

### *Cultural Backwardness.*

The absence of any native intelligentsia among the Asiatic peoples left them isolated from the progressive current of Western civilisation, and tended to leave the semi-feudal superstructure intact. While European rule in many parts of Africa also tries to maintain the tribal and semi-feudal forms of society, it has been obliged to create some kind of educated class which will provide native clerks and government functionaries able to cope with the commercial and administrative needs of the colonies. In Czarist Russia, colonial administration in Central Asia and Siberia was so corrupt, and the general economic and social level so backward, that this need never arose. While the system of

<sup>1</sup> Prince D. S. Mirsky: *Russia: A Social History*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>2</sup> D. S. Mirsky: *Russia: A Social History*, p. 144.

Imperialism is fundamentally a retarding factor in the industrial development of colonial areas, European capitalists, however, have, in their own interests, made some progress in developing mining, agricultural plantations, and small-scale industries in many African territories. Capitalist exploitation of colonial areas in Czarist Russia was so backward that there was practically no such thing as a native proletariat in Central Asia. Hence the Russian Government were not impelled by self-interest to sponsor education, and the great masses of the people in these parts of the Eastern Empire were almost entirely illiterate, and certainly from the standpoint of western civilisation more backward than the native population of any of the West African territories under British rule.

In the civil administration, in the courts of 'justice,' in the schools run chiefly for the children of the Russian settlers, Russian was the only language used. Due to this restriction, many nationalities did not even have a written language of their own. It was officially laid down that "the Russian state school must be Russian and nationalistically patriotic."

This was the policy known as Russification, and it knew no bounds. The cultural progress of the non-Russian populations throughout the Empire, particularly the 'inferior' races of Central Asia, was totally ignored. Scanty government budgets were allowed for education in the colonial territories of the East, and where official schooling was provided, it was confined almost exclusively to the children of Russian officials, traders and colonists. The natives paid the taxes and the children of the dominant race reaped the cultural benefits. In Turkestan, for instance, 98 per cent of the students were always Russian. In Buriat-Mongolia 95 per cent of the Russian children were admitted into the schools in 1915. Of the Buriat children, there were just 194. The Buriats were, of course, entirely illiterate in their own language. Only the Llamas (the local clergy and monks) were an exception. They used Tibetan characters, and kept exclusively to themselves their knowledge of the Buriat-Mongolian alphabet.

This story was repeated from one colony to another. The position was such that when the Czarist Department of

Education did get down to planning the introduction of universal primary education for the Slav population, it stated that the process would require 125 years, with an annual expenditure of 76 million rubles. It was left to the Soviet Government to wipe out illiteracy among the Slavic and Asiatic populations in less than twenty years.

Most of the oppressed nationalities were almost completely illiterate at the time of the Revolution. In Armenia, only 4.2 per cent were literate; in Tartaria, 8-10 per cent. The Kazaks numbered only 2 per cent of literates; the Uzbeks, 1 per cent; Chuvashians, 5 per cent; Mariys, 3 per cent; Tajiks, 0.5 per cent; Yakuts, 0.5 per cent. And so the last pre-Revolution census, from which these figures are taken, goes on. For the guidance of the reader, we must point out that the census defined literacy as the ability to sign one's name. The people of Byelorussia petitioned the Czar for a university in 1915. Three-quarters of their population could not read. They had 13,000 Greek Orthodox Churches, 704 synagogues, 113 Roman Catholic Churches, 5,000 licensed saloons, but not a single college, and permission to erect one was not granted.

As one of the main conditions for the promotion of cultural progress is a vernacular press, it is not astonishing that this was strictly forbidden in those limited sections where a certain autonomy was permitted, such as Finland, and among the extremely pro-Czarist bourgeoisie of Georgia. Not more than 20-25 newspapers were published in Czarist Russia in the languages of the national minorities.

The other cultural constituents: the theatre, music, drama, were practically non-existent outside the metropolitan centres of St. Petersburg and Moscow. There was the Ukrainian opera in Kiev, and a few Armenian, Georgian and Tartar theatres which led a miserable existence.

Throughout the great stretches of the Empire, culture was reduced to the lowest possible ebb. Only the dance allowed outlet for cultural expression, and the folk songs of the peasants, who, like the Negroes, sang of their misery as they toiled. No wonder the ignorant millions turned to the Church and vodka as their only means of recreation from the wretchedness of their daily existence and the heavy burden of their dreary lot. Not for nothing did the Czarist

bureaucracy use the Church in holding down the masses; not for nothing did Russian Imperialism utilise religion in its depredations.

This, then, was the state of the Russian Empire when Lenin and his party addressed themselves to the task of capturing power and liberating the Russian and Colonial peoples of the East from the Czarist 'prison of nations.'

## CHAPTER THREE

### HOW LENIN SOLVED THE COLONIAL QUESTION

“NO NATION can be free if it oppresses other nations.”

This statement of Marx and Engels, the founders of Scientific Socialism, is a clear formulation of the fundamental principle of Self-Determination for colonial peoples, the implementation of which Lenin, their greatest disciple, achieved in 1917. This achievement still remains one of the most outstanding successes of the Russian Revolution, and provides a living example to the British, American, French, Dutch and other imperialist nations still faced with the task of finding a solution to their colonial and national minority problems.

Realising that “the socialists cannot reach their great aim without fighting against any form of national oppression,” Lenin and his followers not only made themselves the champions of the Russian workers and peasants, but consistently advocated the liberation of all the non-Russian peoples of the Czarist Empire, regardless of their degree of social and cultural development. “The socialist of a great country or nation possessing colonies who does not defend this right is a chauvinist,” taught Lenin. “To defend this right does in no way mean to encourage the formation of small States, but on the contrary it leads to a freer, more fearless and therefore wider and more universal form of government and unions of government—a phenomenon more advantageous for the masses and more in accord with economic development.”<sup>1</sup>

The correctness of this political principle is proved by the solidarity of the Soviet peoples in the present crisis. Furthermore, its rightness and the need for its extension is observable in the aspirations of the peoples of the smaller European States to political independence, now being expressed in the current plans for federated groups on the continent.

<sup>1</sup> Lenin and Zinoviev: *Socialism and War*, Little Lenin Library, Vol. 3, p. 25.

But let us see how the many diverse nationalities of the Czarist Empire were compounded into an economic and political unity with the Russian people, to form a multinational State to be known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Lenin was the most realistic of idealists. To wish to bring about socialism was all very well, but he perceived the necessity to establish a party which would be the instrument for achieving this objective. Having founded his party (the Bolsheviks), he proceeded to impregnate it with the philosophy of Revolutionary Marxism. This he enriched with his own unparalleled knowledge, based upon his critique of Imperialism,<sup>1</sup> the epoch upon which he was to leave an indelible imprint.

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, at a conference in London in 1903, split into two sections on organisational issues of great moment, but the consideration of which is outside the scope of this study. From this conference Lenin emerged as the leader of the majority section—the Bolsheviks. The other fraction was known as the Mensheviks, or minority. From then until his death, Lenin was the undisputed master of his party. The division at the 1903 conference thus laid the foundation of the instrument which was not many years later to sweep Imperialism from one-sixth of the earth—to open wide the gates of ‘the prison of nations.’ And Lenin set about the task of infusing his followers with the will to power, a spirit entirely lacking in the British Labour Party, which has now become an appendage of Tory Imperialism.

### *Bolsheviks The Revolutionary Vanguard.*

Lenin's conception of the Bolsheviks was as the vanguard, the most conscious section of the working class, the industrial proletariat. But the Russian Empire, as we have seen, was overwhelmingly agricultural, with the peasants forming the preponderant majority of the population. Moreover, the subject nationalities of the Empire were an integral part of the structure of Czarism, and no solution of the social problem of the workers of Russia Proper was possible which did not include within its scope the liberation of the great

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.*

masses of the colonial peoples from the yoke of Imperialism. The emancipation of the Russian workers could not be separated from the agrarian revolution and the national liberation movement. The principle of Self-Determination was therefore woven web and warp into the fight for the social emancipation of the workers of the metropolitan country.

Such an alliance between the white advanced workers in the 'mother' country and the coloured peoples in the colonial territories of the Empire has never been even remotely entertained by the British Labour Movement, as the leaders of the British working class think, not in terms of a fundamental social and political change of the British Imperialist system, but merely of securing reforms within the framework of the present Capitalist-Imperialist system. Consequently, they look upon the Colonial Empire as a necessary adjunct to the industrialised metropolis in which they function. Out of this conception there is now issuing a new school of 'Fabian reformers' who are propagating the fallacy that all the subject races of the Colonial Empire need and want is bigger and better Colonial Development and Welfare schemes, to be carried out by the same Whitehall bureaucrats and Colonial pro-Consuls who for centuries have kept the native peoples 'in their place' while British capitalists, traders, settlers and industrialists have exploited their lands and cheap unorganised labour.<sup>1</sup>

'Socialist' humbug of this kind was firmly repudiated by Lenin and his followers, who addressed themselves to the task of working out a concrete programme of action for solving the Colonial Question in the Czarist Empire down to its roots.

In the process of probing the National Minority and Colonial Question, in order to establish where lay its roots and what gave rise to the oppressive conditions which are an inseparable concomitant of all colonial systems, Lenin found it necessary to explore the ramifications of finance-capital as it operated on a world scale. Out of his studies, based largely upon the writings of Rudolf Hilferding<sup>2</sup> and J. A.

<sup>1</sup> See the 1944 Labour Party Manifesto: *The Old World and the New Society*, Sect. 5, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Hilferding: Financial expert of the German Social Democratic Party. Principal work: *Das Finanz Kapital*, 1910.



Hobson,<sup>1</sup> came that great work, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Capitalism had become international, monopolies had been established on a world-wide scale, and colonial and semi-colonial countries like Africa, India, China, etc., were being used for the investment of surplus finance capital. Imperialism had evolved as the final stage of capitalist development. Beyond Imperialism it could not go. There can be no 'ultra- or supra-Imperialism,' a theory fathered by the German social-democratic theoretician, Karl Kautsky.

The truth of Lenin's analysis has been amply demonstrated by the latest development of monopoly-capitalism in Germany and Italy, where vested interests threw off the mask of parliamentary government and set up openly terroristic fascist dictatorships.<sup>2</sup> By this means they hoped to arrest the forward march of social progress and prevent the transition from monopoly-capitalism or Imperialism to Socialism. Fascism is the counter-revolution of the bourgeoisie, established in anticipation of the Social Revolution. It is not, as has been asserted in some quarters, another stage in the development of capitalism. This theory was given the lie by the breakdown of the Fascist régime in Italy under the impact of the present war. The facts revealed that the monopoly-capitalists and large agrarians were the power who pulled the strings behind the seemingly unseatable dictator, Mussolini.

Imperialism, in either its 'Democratic' or Fascist form, means oppression and the subjugation of hundreds of millions of people of different nationalities throughout the world. Opposition to it, Lenin emphasised, must, therefore, be organised on an international scale, but where the imperialist chain was weakest, there it would break first. Czarist Imperialism was regarded by Lenin as so corrupt and decaying that of all the Imperialisms it was the most rotten. There, he was certain, the international imperialist chain would break first. Thus, the National and Colonial Question, of capital importance as a tactical issue, was equally important

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Hobson: *Imperialism*.

<sup>2</sup> In Japan, parliamentary government, while still formally in existence, has been subordinated to a military junta carrying out the foreign policy of monopoly-capitalists.

as a basic fundamental. The strengthening of the nationalist aspirations of the component parts of the Empire strategically undermines the imperial foundations. The open and successful revolt of the colonial countries against the imperial country decides its break-up. The metropolitan masses and the masses of the colonial countries have, therefore, an identical objective which indissolubly links their fate: the overthrow of the common imperialist oppressor.

Such were the strategic deductions arrived at by Lenin, and alone among the contemporary Russian Left-wing parties, the Russian Social Democratic Party (Bolsheviks) concerned themselves with the Colonial and National Question as it operated on the international arena, and it was precisely in connection with this problem that Lenin's statesmanship was to be proved so correct. All the other parties, the Cadets (Liberals), the Mensheviks (Minority Social Democrats), the Social Revolutionaries (primarily a peasants' party: led by Kerensky), were bankrupt as far as the Colonial Question was concerned.

Among the Bolsheviks there was an ex-theological student from Georgia, Joseph Vissarionovitch Djughashvili, now known to the world as Joseph Stalin and the second leader of the Soviet Union. He was entrusted by Lenin with the task of clarifying the party's attitude on the National and Colonial Question in its propaganda, and it was not accidental that he became its leading theoretician on the problem of subject nationalities. Himself a native of a colonial area, unlike most of the leaders of the October Revolution, he had first-hand knowledge of imperialist oppression as it was practised upon an 'inferior' race. In 1913, Stalin amplified Lenin's theories in his pamphlet, *Marxism and the National Question*, first published in Vienna. This became the party's official handbook or 'guide to action,' laying down the principles of strategy to be adopted in solving the National and Colonial Question. Stalin laid the basis of his theoretical reputation with this document, which enunciated and amplified the following Leninist thesis:

- (a) The world is divided into two camps: the camp of a handful of civilised nations which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe, and the camp of the oppressed and

- exploited peoples of the colonies and dependent countries that comprise the majority;
- (b) The colonies and the dependent countries, oppressed and exploited by finance capital, constitute an enormous reserve power and a most important source of strength for imperialism;
  - (c) The revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation;
  - (d) The principal colonial and dependent countries have already entered on the path of the national liberation movement which is bound to bring about a crisis in world capitalism;
  - (e) The interests of the proletarian movement in the advanced countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies require the fusion of these two aspects of the revolutionary movement into a common front against the common enemy, imperialism;
  - (f) The victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of the common revolutionary front;
  - (g) The formation of the common revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nation renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of 'its own country' for 'no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations';
  - (h) This support implies the advocacy, defence and realisation of the slogan of the right of nations to secession and to independent political existence;
  - (i) Unless this slogan is put into effect, the amalgamation and collaboration of nations which constitutes the material basis for the victory of socialism, will be impossible;
  - (j) This amalgamation can only be a voluntary one and must be based on mutual confidence and fraternal relations between the nations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National Question*, pp. 195-196.

The wisdom of Lenin's uncompromising defence of the Right of Self-Determination for the subject nations of the Russian Empire is to be seen today in the enthusiastic support of the erstwhile Colonial peoples of Russia in defence of the Soviet system, which is all the more striking when we compare it with the apathy, disinterestedness and open hostility of large sections of the coloured subject races of Malaya, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, India, Africa, and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Only in the Philippines, where the Americans promised independence in 1946, did the natives offer heroic resistance to the Japanese invaders.

It must be stated, however, that the sincere and wise stand of Lenin did not find wholehearted support among all his associates at the time when the principle was first formulated. Many of them doubted the wisdom of giving so much attention to the National Question. Are we not internationalists? they asked, and are we not definitely fighting against national privileges and against nationalism of any kind? They maintained that since they were fighting for the class interests of the proletariat they could, therefore, have nothing to do with the National Question. But Lenin has proved, and history has confirmed, that these people were absolutely wrong.

It is quite true, as that brilliant revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg warned, that the landlord and capitalist section of the oppressed nations might exploit the Right of Self-Determination to impose their own class domination upon the masses of their own nation. She foresaw this particularly in the case of Poland, her own country, and her forecast here proved unfortunately correct, as also in Finland.

#### *How Finland Got Her Independence.*

Before the October Revolution Finland was a Russian colony, which had been granted a fairly democratic constitution in 1907 as a result of the abortive revolution of 1905, but the Imperial Power reserved the right of veto. Even with these limitations Finland was the most politically advanced section of the Czarist Empire.

The February Revolution provided the opportunity for

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the attitude of the coloured races consult: *Hell in the Sunshine* by Cedric Dover (Secker & Warburg).

the Finns to demand the withdrawal of the Governor-Generalship and the establishment of full independence. The so-called socialist Kerensky opposed this measure and suppressed the Finnish Diet or Parliament with the aid of Russian troops.

With the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in November 1917, Lenin immediately recognised Finland's Right to Self-Determination, even to the point of secession. On December 31, 1917, the Soviet Government issued a decree formally acknowledging this independence. The Finnish workers and peasants then set up their own Socialistic administration in Helsingfors. At this point there came upon the scene an ex-Czarist officer of Finnish birth who had not previously identified himself with the struggle for his country's independence, but on the contrary had shown himself a personal supporter of the Czarist autocracy. Baron General Mannerheim placed himself at the head of a counter-revolutionary 'White' government of Finnish capitalists and landlords which had organised itself at Vaasa in the north. With the aid of German troops under Von der Goltz, who landed an army at Hängo under instructions from the Kaiser, these reactionary Finnish nationalists put down the workers' and peasants' government. "Out of 80,000 Red prisoners," wrote *The Times*, "more than 30,000 are dead."<sup>1</sup>

The Left-wing Helsingfors Government was defeated and its leaders forced to flee. A most brutal massacre was inflicted upon the workers and peasants, and the Right-wing régime then set up under the aegis of Baron Mannerheim has ever since made Finland a jumping-off ground for attack against the Soviet Union and the vassal of the different Imperialist Powers (Britain and France in 1940; Germany in 1941) seeking to intervene against the first Socialist State.

The power of the Finnish workers had proved inadequate to resist the counter-revolution, aided as it was by outside interventionists. For their part the masses had lacked the assistance of the Russian proletariat. Why was this? It was because the Russian workers and peasants were themselves dangerously hard pressed to maintain their power against their own counter-revolutionaries and foreign forces, and found it impossible without threat to the whole Revolution to

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *The Times* of Feb. 11, 1919.

send reinforcement to help the Finnish workers and peasants against *their* landlords and capitalists and their German supporters.

The Finnish workers failed to consolidate their Social Revolution. But did this prove Lenin wrong in supporting Self-Determination for Finland? Absolutely no. As a result of their suppression over centuries, first by the Swedes and then by the Russians, the Finnish people, irrespective of class—workers and capitalists, peasants and landlords—were imbued with an intense desire for political independence of all foreign rule. Should the Bolsheviks have obstructed the realisation of this national aspiration? Should Lenin have behaved like Kerensky and not only refused to recognise the claims of the Finns, but have sent the Red Army to take away even those limited democratic rights which they had achieved under the Czar? What difference in this respect had there been between the earlier Provisional Government and the Czarist autocracy? None, as we have seen.

Most assuredly the Soviet Government would have irretrievably compromised itself had it adopted towards the Finns the same attitude as the Kerensky Government. Any action of the kind on the part of the Soviet Government would have forfeited the sympathy of the oppressed peoples of the Czarist Empire in general. Quite clearly the issue would have been raised: What is the difference between Lenin and Kerensky? What difference between the Soviets and the Czardom? They would have concluded—and rightly—that Russians are all the same, no matter what political faith they profess; that they are all imperialist suppressors of the rights of small nations. We heard this accusation made even by British Left-wing parties at the time when the Red Army marched into the Baltic to keep Hitler out in 1939 and again during the Finnish War of 1940 undertaken to safeguard the approaches to Leningrad.

### *Lenin's Policy Proves Itself.*

Fundamentally Lenin was right, as we can now see more clearly, despite the fact that the Finnish capitalists prostituted themselves to the extent of permitting their country to be used for reactionary purposes by foreign imperialists until it had been brought to a desperate plight as the satellite of the

Nazis. Certainly it is not the Soviets which have been discredited, except before ignorant people, but such ardent anti-democrats as Tanner, who allowed himself to be made the tool of Finnish reaction and German Fascism.

It was unfortunate that the situation in 1918 caught the Russian Soviet power in a position too weak to render that fraternal help and assistance to the even weaker Finnish Socialist Government which, under more favourable circumstances, would have led to the fraternal union of the Finnish Soviet Republic with the greater union which came into being round the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

Certainly Lenin expounded that socialists of the oppressed nations must unequivocally fight for the complete unity of the toiling masses of the oppressed and oppressing nationalities, which implies also organisational unity. Yet it must be borne carefully in mind that the age-long oppression of the colonial and subject nationalities by Imperialist Powers has aroused a feeling of bitterness among the masses of the enslaved nations. There is as well a feeling of distrust towards the proletariat of those Powers, since they have not demonstrated any variance with the attitude of their ruling classes. British imperial history affords the best example of this disposition in the attitude of the Irish people. Only a hypocrite will deny that the Irish have a hatred of the English which extends even to the working class.

This same feeling of distrust is as strong among the masses of Africans, Indians, Burmans and other subject peoples of the British Empire. Accordingly, these colonial masses will not be won to the side of the British working class until they become convinced that the English Left is fighting against every form of racial discrimination, exploitation and oppression, and for the Right of Self-Determination for colonial peoples without regard to their stage of cultural and social progress.

Even where political and economic domination no longer exist, it takes time to remove the legacy of distrust which century-old oppressor-oppressed relations leave behind. This psychological distrust of 'Russians' is an important factor in present-day Soviet-Polish relations, and it is being exploited by reactionary nationalistic Polish landlords and militarists to

prevent the Polish masses establishing 'firm and lasting friendship with the Soviet peoples.

### *The Baltic States Secede.*

The Soviet Union lost the western sections of the Czarist Empire because Lenin's insistence upon the principle of Self-Determination had led to the suppression of the working classes of Finland and the Baltic lands by their native capitalists and landlords. This loss was more than counter-balanced by the support of the peoples of the Asiatic sections of the Empire, and of the Caucasus, who were won for the Revolution by the sincere and determined stand which the Bolsheviks had taken, even to the point of recognising the secessionist governments of the Baltic provinces.

Inspired by the November events, the workers in the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, who had close fraternal contact with the Russian workers, asserted their Right of Self-Determination and set up Soviets. However, the Provisional Governments formed by the native capitalists and landlords called in the aid of German troops and suppressed the workers' Soviets. After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, these 'patriots' appealed to the Kaiser to establish a protectorate over the Baltic states under a Prussian king.

On the downfall of the Hohenzollern régime in 1918, the White Guard General Yudenich occupied Estonia, and with the aid of the local gentry set up a so-called North Western Government. It was from Estonia that the counter-revolutionaries then advanced upon Leningrad. They were, however, beaten back by the Red Army and armed workers under the leadership of Trotsky. Although Lenin would have been justified after this treachery in sending the Red Army into Estonia, in order that by occupying it further use could not have been made of it as a starting point for other attacks upon the Soviets, he refused to countenance such a move. Instead, the Soviet Government signed a peace treaty with Estonia on February 2, 1920. A similar treaty was concluded with Lithuania on July 20, 1920, and with Latvia on August 11, 1920.

This is how the Baltic States became independent. No sooner, however, had they obtained Soviet recognition than,



like Finland and Poland, they prostituted themselves to the Western Imperialist Powers and began to scheme against the Soviet Union. Until the rise of Fascism in Germany, the Baltic States and Poland constituted a sort of military outpost of Western Imperialism in Eastern Europe: the *cordon sanitaire* of Clemenceau and Lloyd George against Bolshevism. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, the Baltic 'patriots,' whose capitalist governments, incidentally, the Anglo-American Governments still recognise, joined the Nazis. They hoped that Hitler would restore the economic and political power which they lost when these territories were incorporated into the Soviet Union in July 1940. Stalin has made it quite clear in his Order of the Day to the Red Army on its 24th anniversary that these Baltic territories will remain integral parts of the U.S.S.R. The role of these Baltic 'client' states as eastern outposts for Western Imperialist Powers is over. The former ruling classes will now have to find more useful occupations.

#### *Role of the Native Bourgeoisie*

There is, of course, another side to this question of Self-Determination. Before colonial countries were subjected to imperialist domination they had existed as independent political or social units. National existence among them had, perforce, achieved varying stages of maturity, due to the law of the uneven development of capitalism. Imperialism, however, arrested the growth of the productive forces and fostered a sense of frustration. This in turn intensified the urge to move forward nationally, and created thereby a common bond between all sections of the repressed nation—the landlords, the middle classes and the toiling masses. This psychological inversion forms the essence of bourgeois nationalism. Undisputedly, in such historic circumstances, the native bourgeoisie is the most conscious section of the subject nation and invariably places itself in the forefront of the national liberation movement with intent to use the support of the workers, and more especially the peasants, in furthering its particular class aspirations. The chief interest of the bourgeoisie of a subject nation is to free itself from the foreign domination so that, in turn, it may itself usurp the state power and impose its will upon its own masses. This

phenomenon was expressed not only among the exploited nations of the Czarist and Austro-Hungarian Empires, but can be seen today in China and India, where the capitalists and landlords who support the anti-imperialist struggle against Japan on the one hand and Britain on the other, are fighting for independence not in order to introduce a socialist system, but to break the fetters which foreign Imperialism has locked upon their industrial and economic development.

Despite the limited social outlook of the native bourgeoisie, however, such a struggle is historically progressive, especially in the present epoch of imperialist wars and revolutions, and must be supported. This applies even where a semi-independent country like China, for military reasons, finds itself on the side of one coalition of Imperialist Powers against another. It is not the military alliance that determines our attitude but the political aims of the struggle of the colonial or semi-colonial country concerned. For war, as Clausewitz has emphasised, is merely the means of attaining political objectives.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is always necessary to ask: What is the war about? What class is conducting it? And what are its aims? The aim of the Chinese people is to prevent Japan today—other Imperialist Powers tomorrow—from reducing them to the colonial status of Indians and Africans, and from exploiting their labour and natural resources in the interests of monopoly finance-capital. China is therefore fighting a socially progressive war, while Japan is carrying out a reactionary role in the war. A Chinese victory will not only deliver a stinging blow to Japanese Imperialism but to all Imperialisms in Asia. This must in turn influence the national liberation movements of the subject peoples throughout Asia.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the Chinese are even fighting for the social emancipation of the Japanese people. For only the military defeat of Japan by China can open the way for the Social Revolution in Japan.

The defeat of Czarist militarism in 1905 prepared the way for the victory of the Social Revolution of 1917. Lenin benefited from the experiences of the abortive revolution.

<sup>1</sup> "War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means"—Von Clausewitz: "On War," Vol. 1, p. 23.

That is why he described 1905 as the 'dress rehearsal' for October, which ushered in the Soviet régime and emancipated not only the workers and peasants of Russia proper, but also the millions of exploited people in the colonial territories of the Czarist Empire. And it was the teeming millions of Asiatic Russia who supported the Bolsheviki in the struggle against the counter-revolution and foreign intervention. For with the granting of the Right of Self-Determination and the concession of voluntary separation by the formerly imperialist country, the national bourgeoisie is deprived of the demagogic platform by which it binds the masses to itself. Once the subject country is freed from the foreign yoke with the voluntary consent of the formerly dominant nation, the native capitalists and landlords are exposed as the substitutes of the foreign overlord. As long as Czarism ruled, the native bourgeoisies of the subject and oppressed nations were able to pose as the defenders of the national aspirations. Once the Bolsheviki had declared the subject nations' Right to Self-Determination, this, their sole prop, was gone. "For communism knows that the amalgamation of the nations into a single world economic system is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and voluntary agreement; that the formation of a voluntary amalgamation of nations must be preceded by the separation of the colonies from the 'integral' imperialist 'whole,' by the transformation of the colonies into independent States."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin : *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 197.

PART II

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THE NEW RUSSIA

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CHAPTER FOUR

HOW THE CZARIST COLONIAL EMPIRE WAS  
LIBERATED

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION was the opportunity and Lenin and his party were *the agents* who used the opportunity to implement the principle of Self-Determination for the subject peoples of the Russian Empire, even to the point of voluntary separation, if desired. Lenin had consistently stressed that without theory there can be no revolutionary practice, and here the Bolsheviks had theory ready for immediate application. The historic moment did not find them wanting. The liquidation of the Czarist Colonial Empire was not accidental, but a deliberate policy of socialist strategy and objective.

Indeed, the more one studies Lenin's interpretation of Marxism and the invaluable original contributions which he brought to revolutionary theory, the more one becomes convinced of the outstanding greatness of the man, of the uniqueness of his mind and personality. Nowhere among Socialist movements of Western Europe has there been thrown up such a theoretical and revolutionary giant. Certainly not in England, where the intellectual class has tended to regard theory with contempt and scorn. That is why the British Labour Movement has grown up in such shapeless form. It reflects the intellectual outlook of its ruling class, which shies away from theory as though it were a deathly contagious disease. Hence the ineffectuality of the British Labour Movement, for without theory practice has nothing to guide it.

The Bolshevik Party, having a clear conception of its goal, was able, four days after the capture of power, to issue on

October 30, 1917, its historical Declaration of Rights of Peoples, in which it established the Right of Self-Determination for the Russian colonial peoples and national minorities. Thus was inaugurated the transformation of the Czarist 'prison of nations' into the present Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Much, however, was to happen before the metamorphosis was finally achieved.

Before the leaders of the Revolution had time, metaphorically speaking, to catch their breath, the counter-revolution had been set in motion. Not only had the capitalists and landlords organised themselves for an attack on the centre of the Revolution, under Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel, Krasnov, Mamontov, Kornilov, Alexayev, Yudenitch, etc., but they called in outside aid for the assault on the Soviet Power. British, German, French, Japanese, Polish, Finnish, American and Czech battalions were massed against the Russian workers and peasants in a wide scale attempt at intervention. In fact, it seemed that all the 'civilised' nations had converged on Soviet territory in an attempt to crush the new Soviet Power. Winston Churchill, at that time British Minister for War and Air, spent £100-million of the British taxpayers' money in trying to break down the new Soviet Power. It was only the action of the British working class movement, expressed through their Councils of Action, which achieved the withdrawal from Soviet soil of the British forces headed by General, now Baron, Ironside of Archangel, and stopped help for the counter-revolutionaries. Since that time the U.S.S.R. has been anxious to avoid the possibility of a British Expeditionary Force setting foot on its territory. The Soviet leaders have long memories.

It took three years to rid the Soviet soil of its own counter-revolution and the foreign intervention. Yet, almost immediately upon the capture of power, on November 16, 1917, Lenin issued the document, signed by himself and Stalin (who had been appointed Commissar of National Minorities), which released the subject peoples of the Czarist Empire from their bondage and raised them from colonial dependencies to the level of independent States. This document was issued in the name of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, and was ratified by the Third Congress on January 18, 1918. It enunciated the following principles:

1. *Equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.*
2. *The Right of the peoples of Russia to self-determination, including the right to secede and form an independent State.*
3. *The abolition of all national and religious privileges and restrictions whatsoever.*
4. *Free development for the national minorities and ethnographical groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.*

Lenin was not afraid to risk the possibility of certain sections of the dependent Empire seceding, as actually happened in the case of Finland and the Baltic Provinces. Even with all the Great Russian people fighting desperately for their lives against the combined capitalist forces of their own and several foreign Powers, Lenin did not say to the subject peoples that they must wait and see what the outcome of the war would be. Today, when Britain is fighting for its national existence, the people of India, Burma, Africa, and other colonial territories, are told that their claims for self-government cannot even be considered until the enemy is first defeated; that the present, when they must mobilise all their forces against the Axis, is not an opportune time to make constitutional changes of a fundamental character.

How differently Lenin behaved. He did not start haggling with the colonial peoples of the Russian Empire, offering them minor concessions in return for their support against the enemies of the Russian Revolution. Inspired by the fundamental principle that all peoples—irrespective of colour, race, creed or degree of social development—have an inalienable Right to Self-Determination, including the most backward Asiatic races, that they have the right to decide their own destinies for themselves, Lenin offered them unconditional independence. This spontaneous declaration had a tremendous political and psychological effect. It inspired confidence in the Bolsheviks, and was instrumental in rallying millions of subject peoples of the Czarist Empire to the side of the Soviet Government at the most critical period of the struggle against the counter-revolutionary and interventionist armies.

Moreover, Lenin recognised with incisive clarity that the

civil war could be won, and the young Soviet Power consolidated, *only* by the immediate liberation of the subject peoples and oppressed nationalities. By proclaiming their independence he gave them something worth fighting for—a ‘vested interest’ in the Revolution—and the Soviet Government was able to mobilise their support against the counter-revolutionaries and foreign armies. This decisive action, this unhesitating, unequivocal declaration of rights for the subject nationalities, made without quibble or stipulation, was the essential factor which guaranteed the victory of the Revolution.

As Stalin observes: “*It need hardly be shown that the Russian workers could not have gained the sympathies of their comrades of other nationalities in the West and the East if, having assumed power, they had not proclaimed the right of peoples to political secession, if they had not demonstrated in practice their readiness to give effect to this inalienable right of peoples, if they had not renounced their ‘rights’, let us say, to Finland (1917), if they had not withdrawn the troops from Northern Persia (1917), if they had not renounced all claims to certain parts of Mongolia and China, and so on, and so forth.*”<sup>1</sup>

This renunciation of imperialist power politics was addressed to all the colonial and semi-colonial victims of Czarist foreign policy in the Soviet Government’s Declaration of December 7, 1917. It declared that “*all your racial and cultural institutions are free and inviolable . . .*

“*Mohammedans of the Orient, Persians, Turks, Arabians, and Indians! People of all countries that have been partitioned among the greedy plunderers of Europe in the wars in which they have staked your lives and your goods, your freedom and your heritage! We declare that the secret treaty of rapine to seize Constantinople made by the Czar whom we have overthrown, and confirmed by the fallen Kerensky, is torn up and denounced! The Russian Republic and its committee of government are opposed to the seizure of the territories of others! . . . The imperialist European despoilers have seized your countries to make them their colonies and to enslave you! Drive them out!*”

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 113.

*Revolution In The Border Regions.*

The only Great European Power to turn its back upon territorial aggrandisement, the young Soviet Republic was able to rally the moral support and goodwill of its Eastern neighbours. This was important for, after the fall of Czarism in February 1917, the Revolution spread from Leningrad, Moscow, and other metropolitan centres of Western Russia, to the border regions—East and West; from Finland to Central Asia and the Caucasus. While the Great Russian workers were fighting to achieve power for the Soviet State in the great industrial centres of the metropolis, the landlords and capitalists of the colonial territories were busy setting up bourgeois-nationalist governments. In Siberia, for example, Social-Revolutionaries and Monarchists vied with one another in setting up governments hostile to the Bolsheviks. In Murmansk and Archangel the Social Revolutionary governments were supported by British troops. These native capitalist exploiters of the Western Empire and feudal lords of the Central Asian Empire laboured under the impression that the Great Russian workers and peasants had made the Revolution just in order that they might instal a number of smaller autocracies in place of a single Czar. They had a friendly regard for the Russian workers then, but when the second—the *October Revolution*—occurred, replacing the bourgeois Kerensky Government with the Bolshevik Government, the landlords and other exploiting elements in the border territories became hostile to the Soviet Government and opened their countries to the armies of the counter-revolution as bases of operation. For instance: "In October, 1919, Yudenich, starting from a neighbouring base in Estonia, actually fought his way into the suburbs of Petrograd, but he was driven out and defeated through a vigorous concentration of troops, due to the energy of Trotsky."<sup>1</sup> But when Wrangel, Kolchak and Denikin tried to draw support from the border regions, the native masses turned against their own reactionaries. Lenin's Declaration of the Right of Self-Determination deprived the native ruling sections in the colonial and dependent territories of the old Empire of the only slogan with which they could rally the masses behind them. They now stood exposed as

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Pares: *A History of Russia*, p. 482.



being concerned with nationalism purely as an end in itself; as bourgeois nationalists desiring freedom from Czarist oppression merely to become petty oppressors themselves.

Commenting upon the attitude of these upper-class non-Russian elements to the revolutionary events in the metropolitan part of the empire, William Mandel, Research Associate of the American-Russian Institute, says that "the opportunity for unbridled development of capitalism for which the national bourgeoisie, the ginners of cotton and traders in wool, had hoped and even fought during the time of the Tsar disappeared with the coming of the Bolsheviks to power. These elements, literate, aware of the course of events in European Russia, and hearing from the local Bolsheviks their plans for development towards socialism, united with the boys and mullahs, who also saw the writing on the wall, to forestall the Soviets. Thus were formed the bands of Basmachi who terrorized Central Asia until as recently as 1931 and had held important territories until 1922."<sup>1</sup>

As the reactionary attitude of the native bourgeoisie became evident, the workers and poorer section of the rural populations and landless peasants began to create their own Soviets in those colonial areas like Trans-Caucasia, which even at that time boasted certain industrial enterprises and therefore possessed an advanced proletariat. Civil war thereupon ensued, as it had done in Russia proper when the workers supporting the Bolsheviks had set up their local Soviets. But this time the newly formed Red Army, under the People's Commissar of War Trotsky, having consolidated power, was able to come to the assistance of the workers and peasants of the border regions and help them to secure power for their local Soviets. In this way Trans-Caucasia was brought under Soviet influence; Georgia was liberated from the Mensheviks, who were being backed by the British and French; Azerbaijan from the Mussavatists, or native bourgeoisie; and Armenia from the Dashnaks. By 1921 Soviet power had triumphed throughout Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia which federated to form the Trans-Caucasian Federated Republic.

This succession of events affords a concrete example of

<sup>1</sup> *The Soviet Far East and Central Asia* by W. Mandel, p. 108.

the interplay of the social revolution starting in a metropolitan country with a national liberation struggle in the colonial regions, which it influences to a very large extent. It demonstrates also the gravitation of the struggle from the metropolitan area to the colonial areas and back again to the 'mother' country. What is the force which promoted this oscillation? It is that the Russian imperialists of the 'mother' country not only oppressed the Russian workers and peasants 'at home,' but had their roots deep in the non-Russian colonial and backward territories of the Empire. Consequently events in St. Petersburg (Leningrad) and other parts of metropolitan Russia stimulated revolutionary uprising in the colonies; and the success of the colonial liberation movements against Czarist Imperialist rule and the counter-revolutionary forces which attempted to use the outlying territories as rallying points influenced again the contest in the 'mother' country between the Russian workers and peasants and their ruling classes.

What is not generally known even among well-informed Western European socialists is the contribution made to the 1917 Revolution by the colonial peoples of Central Asia.

As a result of the tremendous losses inflicted on the Russian Army by the Germans in East Prussia, "the Czar was compelled, in June 1916, to issue an edict decreeing the mobilisation of the colonial peoples for work in the rear of the army. Central Asia was to provide 250,000 men. The very attempt to mobilise the natives for service in the armed forces of the hated Czar added insult to injury. But with a fine disregard for the most elementary needs of these people, the Russian authorities proceeded to carry out the mobilization at the height of the farming season. Central Asia burst into flame. Having no unified organization or plan of action, but determined not to leave their native soil to work for the army of their conquerors, the native peoples, settled and nomad, in town and country, took up arms to prevent the conscription of their men. The rebellion, which began in July, was finally put down in November of 1916. The terror which accompanied the suppression was so great that fully a million nomad Kirghiz and Kazaks fled into Sinkiang. Yet the Czar was able to conscript only 120,000 of the 250,000 workers whom he had hoped to get. The Central Asian

rebellion has a significance in modern world history that is little appreciated. It was the first serious crack in the structure of the Russian monarchy and was, in effect, Central Asia's contribution to the overthrow of the Czar in the following year."<sup>1</sup>

### *Significance Of The National Question.*

The danger of ignoring the National and Colonial Question, of withholding the right of the colonial countries to full Self-Determination, was fully brought home to the Spanish people during the civil war of 1936-39. We must never forget that the Spanish Fascist leader Franco organised his counter-revolution from a colonial territory—Morocco—and then, because the Republican Government made no move to declare the Moors directors of their own national life, Franco was able to bring over the regular battalions of the Spanish colonial force. Then, since the Spanish anti-Fascist forces—Liberals, Socialists and Communists—made no claim to extend Self-Determination to the people of Spanish North Africa, Franco was able to exploit the nationalist aspirations of the Moors by promises of independence to recruit native levies to put down the Spanish workers and peasants at home.

The failure of the People's Front Government was largely a political reflection of its class composition.<sup>2</sup> While the most progressive and democratic régime in Spanish history, capitalist interests predominated. Apart from that, there was not a single political party in Spain—not even the Communists, professedly followers of Lenin, who always stressed the tremendous importance of the right of oppressed peoples to national independence—which so much as broached the issue.

Since the People's Front Government of Spain was essentially an Imperialist Government dedicated to the maintenance of the Spanish Colonial Empire while instituting reforms at home, its denial of liberty to its African subjects was a conscious policy. Progressive though it was as compared with the Monarchy in its desire for social reform in Spain, it still clung to the colonial *status quo*. Coincident

<sup>1</sup> *The Soviet Far East and Central Asia*, by W. Mandel, p.103

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed analysis of this question, read Fenner Brockway: *Workers' Front*, Chapter VI.

with the inherently imperialistic outlook of the Republican leaders on the Colonial Question was their dependence upon the goodwill of Imperialist France and Britain rather than upon the support of their own colonial peoples. Senor Viçens, well-known educationalist and adviser on matters colonial to the Spanish Republican Government at the time, admitted in an interview with an American Negro journalist, Miss Thyra Edwards, that the Republic had not granted liberation to the Moors as it would have increased nationalist ambitions in the adjoining French territories of Morocco, Algeria and Tunis, which France was not yet prepared to satisfy.<sup>1</sup>

All that Republican Spain gained from dependence upon the Blum Popular Front and Chamberlain Tory Governments was the farce of 'non-intervention' and the final success of Franco and his counter-revolutionary allies. Truly, "a people oppressing other peoples cannot be free." The Spanish workers and peasants failed to remember their doubly oppressed coloured brothers and thereby found themselves enslaved under a régime of Fascism, which, to achieve the victory of reaction at home, made use of the very colonial people which the anti-Fascist leaders sacrificed for power politics. The Russian workers and peasants—thanks to Lenin—on the other hand, extended the Right of Self-Determination to their colonial comrades in the struggle against the common oppressor—Czarist autocracy—and were thus able to consolidate their Soviet Power in the first place, and later, in unity with the erstwhile subject races, to bring into being the U.S.S.R., a more stable and unified State than the ramshackle Czarist Empire.

We have said that the Spanish Socialists and Communists neglected the Moors. This was so, although even Stalin himself had long warned Western European Socialists against the 'superior' attitude which they manifested towards the coloured races. "*The tens and hundreds of millions of the Asiatic and African peoples suffering from racial oppression in its crudest and most brutal form did not as a rule enter the field of vision of the 'Socialists'.*" he declared. "*The latter did not venture to place the white peoples and coloured peoples, the 'uncultured' Negroes and the 'civilised' Irish,*

<sup>1</sup> See *Africa and World Peace* by George Padmore.

*the 'backward' Indians and 'enlightened' Poles on one and the same footing. It was tacitly assumed that although it might be necessary to strive for the emancipation of the European non-sovereign nationalities, it was entirely unbecoming for 'decent socialists' to speak seriously of the emancipation of the colonies, which were 'necessary' for the 'preservation' of 'civilisation.' These apologists for socialists did not even suspect that the abolition of national oppression in Europe is inconceivable without the emancipation of the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa from the oppression of Imperialism, and that the former is organically bound up with the latter.*"<sup>1</sup> It is a vast pity that Stalin did not recall this admonition to his Spanish disciples when they most needed the support of genuine allies!

*The Treaty Of Union Between Russians and Non-Russians.*

By the end of the Russian civil war and the victory over the armies of foreign intervention, there were four full-fledged Soviet Socialist Republics and a number of smaller territories respectively designated Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Territories and Autonomous Regions, as well as several Peoples' Republics (later Sovietised), in Central Asia. Outer Mongolia, which was among the last-named, still remains a Peoples' Republic in alliance with the U.S.S.R. The territories formerly comprising the metropolitan regions of the Czarist Empire were transformed into the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. The other full-fledged Soviet Socialist Republics were the Ukrainian, the White Russian (or Byelorussia), and the Transcaucasian.

In 1922, the last-named Republic, where Bolshevik influence predominated, approached the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (R.S.F.S.R.) with the proposal that all the Republics should unite together. Due to the civil war and the famine period, all these countries were economically very much worse off than in 1914, and believed that their union would materially assist their recovery and also provide a greater measure of safety against the possibility of the return of their former rulers and foreign enemies. The

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin : *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, pp. 111-112,

proposal was approved by the Ukrainian and White Russian Republics, and in December 1922, at the first All-Union Congress of Soviets, it was unanimously decided to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, at that time comprising:

1. *Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic*
2. *White Russian Soviet Socialist Republic*
3. *Transcaucasian Socialist Federated Republic, composed of:*
  - (a) *Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic*
  - (b) *Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic*
  - (c) *Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic*
4. *Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic*

Other Republics, as they evolved into full-fledged Socialist Republics, joined the Federation.

The Second All-Union Congress of Soviets adopted the first Constitution of the U.S.S.R. in its final form in 1924. It incorporated special features designed to protect the rights of all the non-Russian national republics from any possible domination by the Great Russians who, with their population of 100 million, formed the preponderating majority of the population of the entire Union. Of set purpose the word 'Russia' was omitted from the name of the Union, in order not to offend the nationalist pride and susceptibilities of the non-Russian peoples.

Certain sovereign rights of the component Republics were merged into the U.S.S.R., which was envisaged as the federal pattern for the future World Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and allowed for the admission of further territorial units as the World Revolution extended beyond the boundaries of the old Czarist Empire. Defence and foreign affairs, for example, became a function of the central federal government, which also established a single form of Soviet citizenship to cover the population of the entire Union. The general economic plan for the whole Soviet territory was the task of the central government of the Union, which also became responsible for regulating foreign trade, currency, utilisation of the land, for controlling transport and communications, and measuring and weighing standards. The education and health of the Union population were also the concern of the federal government, but much of the actual

administrative work was delegated to the governments of the separate republics and smaller political divisions.

Each of the Union Republics retained complete self-government, except in matters over which power had been vested with the All-Union Government. If, however, a Republic introduced legislation which was contrary to the terms of the treaty of Union, this law could be annulled by the All-Union Government. Every Republic, if it wished to do so, had the right to secede from the Union.

The Soviet Government quite early in its career implemented its disavowal of an imperialist policy by concluding equal treaties and pacts of friendship with the Asiatic countries of Persia and Afghanistan in February 1921, and with Turkey and Outer Mongolia in March and November respectively of the same year. These semi-colonial countries were the objects of aggression by Russia during the Czarist period.

#### *Self-Determination and Socialist Federation.*

The right of secession was, of course, the crucial testing point of the Treaty of Union. Exercise of this right, however, is not obligatory. It does not follow from the acknowledgment of the rights of nations to form separate States that nations enjoying this right must necessarily divide. "The aim of Socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small States, and all national isolation, not only to bring nations closer to each other, but also to merge them," Lenin wrote. "*Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can only achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.*"<sup>1</sup>

Nations whose political life is based upon a socialist economy tend towards closer unity in the common interests of all. The most noteworthy fact about the formation of the Soviet Union as a federation of separate Socialist Republics with one centralised government is that the proposal for unity came from the Transcaucasian Soviet Republics—the erstwhile colonial sections of the Czarist Empire; that is, it

<sup>1</sup> Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol. V. pp. 270-271.

was a voluntary union of the newly formed independent States after they had successfully ousted their Russian overlords and native princes and landlords. These former subject races of the Czarist Empire had, during their subjection, borne an intense hatred towards the Russians and everything Russian. Yet, having achieved Statehood at the hands, and with the assistance, of the workers and peasants of the formerly oppressing Russian nation, they forgot their century-old animosities and themselves made the first approaches for unity with the newly established Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. It was as if the Irish masses, after having successfully thrown off British Imperialism and the yoke of their own capitalists and landlords, should approach an English Socialist Government with a proposal for common union; or as if the Boers in South Africa, who are still at enmity with the British settlers in the Union, were voluntarily to come into a British Socialist Federated Commonwealth on an equal basis. In that case, the Europeans, as a national minority, would have autonomous rights within a black republic, since the Africans would constitute the overwhelming majority of such a Soviet State.

Stress must be laid upon two very important factors: (1) that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a voluntary one; (2) that each non-Russian Republic occupied an equal status with the former Imperialist country—Great Russia.

The declaration of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets on January 24, 1918, made it clear that "*The Soviet Republic is established on the basis of a free union composed of free nations. In order to avoid misunderstanding on the question, the declaration offers to the workers and peasants of every nationality the right to make their own decision in their own authorised Soviet Congress: do they wish, and on what grounds, to participate in the federal government and other federal Soviet institutions.*"

The best example of a federated State based upon private property relations is the United States of America, which, in its present form, was not established as a free and voluntary union. The right to secede was brought into question when the Southern States broke away from the Union in 1861, and in order to maintain the unity of the nation, the Federal Government, under Lincoln, began the Civil War against the



Secessionists. It has often been said that the American civil war was fought to decide the question of slavery, but this is a legend built around a myth. Writing to Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, in 1862, Abraham Lincoln declared: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery."

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it—if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it—and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."<sup>1</sup>

Later, Lincoln confessed that his purpose had been solely to restore the Union, and that the question of slavery had been incidental. "I can now most solemnly assert that I did all in my judgment that could be done to restore the Union without interfering with the institution of slavery. We failed, and the blow at slavery was struck!"<sup>2</sup>

Emancipation, however, was at first applicable only to the Secessionist States. It was introduced as a military measure, with the object of inciting the slaves in the rebel States to support the Federal forces against the South. General emancipation came later.

The restoration of the Union, even against the wishes of the Southern States, as expressed in their secession, was the aim of the North. Not so in the Soviet Union, where the objective is *mutual* development, economically and socially, of the separate nations forming the unity. None is concerned to override the other, for here all occupy an equal status and function under a co-operative and not a competitive economic system; production is for use and not for profit, the means of production are under common ownership, not monopolised by individual capitalists. The elimination of private property relations and imperial-colonial antagonisms has contributed largely to the solidity of the Soviet State, whose stability has been so obviously demonstrated in the course of this war.

Had the Soviet revolutions in the western parts of the Czarist Empire—in Poland, the Baltic States and Finland—managed to sustain themselves against their own bourgeoisie and foreign interventionists, they would, as Socialist

<sup>1</sup> From: *Life, Public Service and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Republics, have come into the present union.<sup>1</sup> But, as we have already shown, the Finnish counter-revolution was assisted by German troops; while the Polish landlords headed by Pilsudski were able to assure the workers and peasants that the Bolsheviks were coming to force communism upon them with the aid of the Red Army. They massed an army and invaded the Soviet Ukraine, and when the Russians counter-attacked and had almost reached the gates of Warsaw in 1920, French aid, under General Weygand, helped to push the Red Army back. While the Finnish workers and peasants had already set up their own Soviets, the Polish masses were hoodwinked by their rulers with the bogey of enforced communism, a relatively easy matter, since the Poles as a whole have always looked down upon the Russians as a non-Catholic and less civilised people.

Nevertheless, the Russian Soviet Government recognised the independence of the newly formed Polish and Finnish capitalist Governments. For, declared Lenin, "Every nation must have a Right to Self-Determination. This right promotes also the self-determination of the toilers. It is precisely by recognising the independence of the Polish, Lettish, Lithuanian, Estonian and Finnish Governments that we are slowly but surely gaining the confidence of the most backward among the toiling masses of the neighbouring small nationalities, and of those who are most hoodwinked and down-trodden by the capitalists there. It is precisely by pursuing such a path that we are making the more certain of winning them away from the influence of 'their' national capitalists. We are more certain to gain their complete confidence for the united International Soviet Republic of the future."<sup>2</sup>

This principle was incorporated in the manifesto which the Soviet Government issued throughout the world in 1920, when the Polish gentry were openly inciting the masses against the Soviets. "Your enemies," it told the Polish working masses, "who are ours, speak falsely when they tell you that the Russian Soviet Government intends to force Communism on the Polish people with the help of the bayonets of the Red Army. Communism is only possible in

<sup>1</sup> The Baltic States and Eastern Poland up to the Curzon Line were annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939.

<sup>2</sup> See Lenin's *Collected Works*.

countries where the vast majority of the working people have the will to secure it by their own initiative . . . The organisation of Poland in accordance with the interests of the Polish masses must be the work of these working masses themselves."<sup>1</sup>

*Soviet-Finnish Blunder—1940.*

In direct contravention of this principle was the Soviet attack upon Finland by Stalin in 1940. While at the time we recognised the need for the Soviet Union to anticipate Finnish territory being used as a point of imperialist intervention against its own territory, we considered and still do consider that the method employed to secure against this danger was a great blow to the prestige of the Soviet Union, universally accepted by progressive people as the symbol of International Socialism.<sup>1</sup> The procedure of sending in the Red Army and setting up a puppet government under Dr. Otto Kuusinen—a Finnish communist exile—was diametrically contrary to the whole policy of Lenin's conception of National Self-Determination which Stalin himself had been largely instrumental in carrying through in the early days of the Soviet Power.

It is significant that the Russian workers displayed no such enthusiasm for the Finnish war as they have shown in their stand against Imperialist Germany. Educated since the Revolution in the spirit of internationalism, especially as it related to the National and Colonial Question, they could not but feel instinctively that Stalin, however justifiable his motives, had employed a wrong approach in solving the problem. This passivity among the Soviet peoples in turn created among the Western democracies the impression that "Communism rots the soul of a nation," as Winston Churchill declared at the time; "makes it abject and hungry in peace and proves it base and abominable in war."

Adhering to the principles inherent in Lenin's teachings and to the extract from the 1920 Manifesto, dictated by him and quoted immediately above, Stalin should have appealed to the Finnish workers and peasants over the heads of Mannerheim and other Fascist leaders to take direct action

<sup>1</sup> See *LEFT*, Feb. 1940. Article entitled "Hands off the Soviet Union," by G. Padmore.

against any move which these reactionaries, in alliance with Hitler, aimed at the Soviet territory. Stalin could have reminded them how the Soviet Government had, since its inception, recognised and respected the national integrity of Finland and that it relied upon the masses of the Finnish people to see that they did not allow themselves to be made the dupes of pro-Nazi 'patriots' in any encroachment upon the Soviet Union. There is absolutely no doubt that this approach would have secured the sympathy and active support of the overwhelming majority of Finnish workers and prevented the pro-Nazi elements from exploiting the national and racial antagonism felt throughout the whole population, which expressed itself in the stubborn resistance that all classes of Finns put up against the Red Army. It would have prevented the subsequent sequence of events into which Finland was drawn; and would most likely have achieved a stronger barrier to German intervention than was actually provided by the circumstances when Hitler made his attack upon the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Quite true it is that Communism cannot be forced upon a people from outside; but it seems to be equally true that when subject nations achieve independence and come into free and voluntary unity as equals with the former Imperialist country, they are quite unlikely to want to secede. It is important for European workers to take full cognisance of this fact. If it is possible for the former colonies of the Czarist Empire to come together in fraternal co-operation, there is no reason at all why a Socialist Britain, for example, should fear to extend the Right of Full Self-Determination to the subject peoples of the British Empire. Once these dependent territories are given the right to plan their future, in their own interests, they would link up with the more advanced sections of the new Socialist Commonwealth. It is only in this way that the subject peoples of Asia and Africa can ever hope to reorganise their national lives on a co-operative basis; and it is this basis alone which holds out any possibility of real economic, educational, cultural and social advancement to the common peoples of the world.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOW SOVIET ADMINISTRATION OPERATES AMONG BACKWARD PEOPLES

EQUAL rights for all peoples, regardless of race, colour, creed or degree of civilisation, epitomises the fundamental conception of political democracy in the Soviet Union. One may criticise and even disagree with many things under the Soviet system as it functions at present, such as the curtailment of civic liberties and the absence of the control which the workers wielded over industry in the years immediately following the October Revolution. But there is no other State in the world possessing such a heterogeneous population which extends the same degree of economic, and social opportunities to *all* of its citizens, including also its coloured races, as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. If in the Soviet Union the individual does not enjoy the same liberty to criticise the Government as do the British, for example, then this restriction applies equally to every section of the Union, and not merely to specified racial communities. No one is penalised for not having been born with a white skin, as in South Africa, where the official policy is "No equality between White and Black in State or Church." The coloured races, comprising the overwhelming majority of the country's population, have absolutely no voice in the government. Racial discrimination of the most rigorous kind—legal and practical—is paramount. The same disabilities based exclusively on colour and race exist in varying degree in other parts of the British Colonial Empire.<sup>1</sup>

But "the British commonwealth of nations is not alone among the capitalist democracies in the refusal to institute racial equality within its own territories as a necessary characteristic of political democracy. In the United States, the Negroes, though assumed by the Federal Constitution to

<sup>1</sup> See *Colour Bar in East Africa*, by Norman Leys; and *How Britain Rules Africa*, by George Padmore.

be entitled to vote and represent voters, are by the electoral law and administrative practice of particular States excluded from being full-fledged citizens with the right to vote and become representatives. The Dutch and Belgian Empires have a like discrimination against the native inhabitants. Hence, if equal rights for all races within a sovereign State is the necessary characteristic of political democracy, the U.S.S.R. stands out as the champion of this form of liberty.

“Thus, one of the outstanding features of Soviet political democracy is racial equality; the resolute refusal to regard racial characteristics as a disqualification for the right to vote, to be deputies to the Legislative Assembly, to serve on the Executive, or to be appointed salaried officials.”<sup>1</sup>

The equality of rights between the peoples of the Soviet Union, regardless of race or colour, is not just a statutory principle, but is translated into practice through the apparatus of government from the highest to the lowest administrative units. To white-skinned citizens of the Anglo-Saxon countries, the question of race and colour might be unimportant, but to the coloured races ethnic democracy is all important. In the U.S.S.R. there are no signs reading “Niggers and dogs keep out.” That is why the Soviet Union, despite its many shortcomings, enjoys widespread sympathy among the coloured races of the world.

#### *Administrative Divisions.*

There are within the Soviet Union today sixteen full-fledged Socialist Republics:

1. Russia Proper (R.S.F.S.R.)
2. White Russia or Byelorussia
3. Ukraine
4. Azerbaijan

Formerly Transcaucasian Republic

5. Armenia
6. Georgia
7. Uzbekistan
8. Tajikistan
9. Kirghizstan
10. Kazakstan

<sup>1</sup> S. & B. Webb : *Soviet Communism*, Vol. 1, p. 11 (Revised Edition.)

11. Turkmenistan
12. Finno-Karelia
13. Estonia
14. Latvia
15. Lithuania
16. Moldavia

Within each of the Soviet Socialist Republics there are sub-units called

(a) *Autonomous Republics*.<sup>1</sup> Within the R.S.F.S.R. alone there are 17 such republics:

Tartaria; Bashkiria; Dagestan; Buriat-Mongolia; Kabardino-Balkaria; Kalmuk; Karelia; Komi, Crimea; Mari; Mordavia; Volga-German; North Ossetia; Udmurt; Chechen-Ingush; Chuvashia; Yakutia.

Still smaller units are known as

(b) *Autonomous Provinces or Territories, Autonomous Regions, and National Regions*. The number of these within each of the different Union Republics vary. In the R.S.F.S.R., for instance, besides 17 Autonomous Republics enumerated above, there are:

(c) *Autonomous Provinces or Territories*:

Azov-Black Sea; Far-Eastern; Western Siberia; Krasnoyarsk; and North Caucasian.

(d) *Autonomous Regions*:

Adygei; Jewish; Karachai; Oirot; Khajass; Cherkess.

(e) Then there are 19 *National Regions*:

Voronezh; East Siberia; Gorki; Western; Ivanovo; Kalinin; Kirov; Kuibyshev; Kursk; Leningrad; Moscow; Omsk; Orenburg; Saratov; Sverdlovsk; Northern; Stalingrad; Chelyabinsk; and Yaroslavl.

<sup>1</sup> In 1944, after the Germans were expelled from the Volga region, the autonomous Kalmuk republic, which the Hitlerites invaded south of Stalingrad, has been abolished. The autonomous republic of Kabadrino-Balkaria, in the Caucasus, has been renamed. It is now called the Autonomous Republic of Kabardins. The Kalmuks are Mongols descended from the Tartars of Mamai Khan, who was defeated on the Don by the Russian Saint Dmitri, not far from the site of what is now the town of Stalingrad. The Balkars are obscure relatives of the Turks, and are famous horse breeders.

Every single political unit throughout the Soviet State—Union Republic, Autonomous Republic, Autonomous Province, Autonomous Region, and National Region—has its own independent Soviet (Council), which is entrusted with the special needs of the inhabitants of the given area.

This structural form of administration enables each national and racial minority living within another ethnographic area to maintain its own identity, if it so wishes, and helps to nurture the many distinctive cultures of the several peoples, the interchange of which has greatly enriched Soviet art, especially the theatre.

In this way the All-Union Soviet Government, centred in Moscow, has solved the centuries-old national, tribal, social, and religious conflicts which existed under Czarism and which still exist in India and Africa today. Such a solution is only possible under a Socialist system in which there are no exploiters to incite one people or race against another in order to 'divide and rule.'

Commenting on the success of the Soviet policy on the National Question, a correspondent writing in the *New Statesman and Nation*,<sup>1</sup> provides us with a contrasting picture of the past and present. He affirms that "In Czarist days the aim of Moscow was to keep the outlying colonies in a perpetual state of internal strife. One race would be set against another so that they wasted all their energies fighting each other instead of uniting to combat Czarist exploitation and oppression. My chauffeur in Yerivan, on a fairly recent visit to the Caucasus, explained it in this way: 'You ask me, are things better than they were? There is no comparison. Previously there was always fighting between the Turks, the Georgians and ourselves, the Armenians. . . . Never in the history of Armenia have things been so good, and they will be better yet.'" It is the hope of a yet better future which inspired these Caucasian peoples to resist Nazi aggression.

#### *Racial Equality in Red Army.*

The fraternal solidarity which has developed between the peoples of this multi-national and multi-racial State is best seen in the composition of the Red Army, which includes

<sup>1</sup> September 6, 1941. Article entitled *The Caucasus will not revolt.*



within its ranks more than 100 different peoples and races. There are no segregated racial units such as exist in the fighting forces of the Western democracies. In the U.S.A., for example, Negroes are not admitted into the regular Navy except as mess-men.<sup>1</sup> In the Army, they are segregated into 'Jim Crow' units.<sup>2</sup> In the British colonial armies—the King's African Rifles and the West African Frontier Force—there is only one black commissioned officer (Captain Seth Anthony of the Gold Coast, gazetted in 1942), while in South Africa the Zulus and other Bantu peoples are not even permitted to bear arms.

In the Red Army members of the 'inferior' races are not only commanders and staff officers, but a considerable number of the higher command are Jews, the most despised of all the subject peoples under the Czarist régime. It was a Jew—General Lev Dovator—who was the first to rout the 'invincible Aryans' after having led into the Battle of Moscow a Cossack regiment, the very 'black hundreds' who used to be employed by the autocracy to terrorise the Jews and keep them 'in their place.' General Dovator's decisive attack broke the German offensive on December 5, 1941, and threw the Nazis back from the Soviet capital. The General, who was decorated by Stalin with the highest Soviet title (Hero of the Soviet Union), was killed in battle. These facts

<sup>1</sup> Since Pearl Harbour where a negro, Messman Dave Millar manned an anti aircraft gun and brought down a Japanese plane, negroes are being trained for service in the U.S. Naval Coast Guard. However, writer Dr. Charles H. Hanson, negro member of President Roosevelt's Committee on Fair Employment Practice: "Negroes are still insulted by the Navy's barring all Negro women, except those passing for white, from the Waves, the Marines and the Spars. We have officers in the Army and Navy; but there is still not a single lieutenant in the United States Marines. The army puts Negroes in uniform, transports them South and then leaves them to be kicked, cuffed and even murdered with impunity by white civilians. In places, Negro service men do not have as many civil rights as prisoners of war. In at least one Army camp down South for a time there was one drinking fountain for white guards and German prisoners and a segregated fountain for Negro soldiers. And Negroes know that just as soon as the shooting stops many Americans will give the same Germans, Austrians, Italians, Rumanians and others who were trying to kill them preference over Negroes who were defending them, simply because these Germans and others are white."

<sup>2</sup> The highest ranking Negro officer in the American Army is Brig.-General Benjamin O. Davis, but he holds no command.

were revealed in a stirring tribute to Dovator and his men broadcast by the Moscow radio, and they illustrate the correctness of Lenin's teaching that only under a socialised régime can colour bars and racial arrogance be eliminated.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Racial Representation In Supreme Soviet.*

The unity of the diverse peoples of the Soviet Union is exercised in matters of common political and economic interest through the Federal Government, with supreme power vested in the All-Union Congress of Soviets. Two chambers compose the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., namely:

- (a) *The Soviet of the Union*
- (b) *The Soviet of Nationalities*

Every citizen of the U.S.S.R. over the age of eighteen, without regard to race, colour or creed, is entitled to vote for the election of members to the Soviet of the Union, the basis of representation being one deputy for every 300,000 of the population. Election to the Soviet of the Union, it will thus be seen, is direct. This chamber meets every six months, or more often if necessary.

Election to the Soviet of Nationalities is on a regional basis. All persons over the age of eighteen vote for a nominee to represent the political unit of which they are accredited citizens. Each Union Republic has the right to return 25 deputies; an Autonomous Republic, 11; an Autonomous Province, 5; and an Autonomous Region, and other national areas, one each. In all, there are 1298 deputies—621 in the Soviet of the Union, and 677 in the Soviet of Nationalities. Under this system, the Republic with the largest population (100 millions), the R.S.F.S.R., can return no more deputies than the other very much less populated

<sup>1</sup> In 1944, there were over a hundred Jews holding the rank of General in the Red Army. Among them, Jacob Kreiser, hero of the Soviet Union, who took part in liberating the Donetz Basin, and General Chernyakhovsky, the victor of Minsk and Vilna, who commands one of the Red Army groups on the Polish front. Other leading non-Russian Red Army commanders are: Bagramyan, an Armenian, and Chanchibadse, a Georgian. Stalin, who holds the ranks of Supreme Commander of all the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, is also a Georgian, one of the former subject peoples of the Czarist Empire. Such "inferior" people would never have been allowed to hold the positions they do in the Czar's Imperial Army.

Republics. This mode of representation, therefore, gives no excess of power to any one nationality, such as the more numerous Great Russians, over others.

"During the Congress of Soviets which assembles from time to time in Moscow, I have watched the delegates from these far-flung territories assemble in the 'Big Theatre' which serves as meeting-place for the Congress until such time as the Palace of Soviets is completed. Mongolians, Tajiks, Bashkirs, Uzbeks, Yakuts, and some scores of other nationalities, representing peoples of almost every creed, stand together in respectful silence as the 'International' is played. Later in the proceedings they pass a unanimous vote of confidence in their Central Executive Committee."<sup>1</sup>

To draw an equivalent picture for the British Empire, one would have to imagine deputies from India, from Ceylon, from Burma, Malaya, Africa, West Indies, Cyprus, Fiji, Hong Kong, mixing with members from the English, Welsh, and Scottish constituencies in the House of Commons. But perhaps this would be stretching one's imagination too far, for it is impossible to think that any Imperialist Power would concede so revolutionary a right as the direct representation of all its colonial peoples in its Central Government.

The special function of the Soviet of Nationalities is to watch over the special interests of the different nationalities and minorities, and see that legislation is made to fit their particular needs, customs and culture.

Members of the Soviet Union population, even the most backward, have a dual citizenship: they are citizens of the U.S.S.R. itself, allowing them the right to vote for direct representation in the Supreme Soviet of the Union; and citizens also of the autonomous division (i.e., Republic, Province, National Region, or area, as the case may be) in which they live, giving them the right to vote for representation in the Soviet of Nationalities.

Persons are eligible for election to any Soviet from the age of eighteen, and nominees are put forward by any group of people working together, that is, a collective farm, factory, office, educational institute, etc. Everyone included in the group, right down from the chief director to the cleaner, is entitled to take part in the meeting from which nominees are

<sup>1</sup> Allan Monkhouse: *Moscow—1911-1933*, p. 135.

put forward. A local conference of delegates from all the groups nominating candidates then votes on them, and their number is reduced to the allowed limit by the process of elimination. Candidates can only be returned if they receive over 50 per cent of the total votes in the constituency. Voting is by secret ballot, and representatives must be prepared to report on conditions in their individual constituencies, and when they return to their constituencies they are obliged to report on the proceedings in the Supreme Soviet.

The fact that within all groups Communist Party members act in unity secures that persons advocating policies in opposition to that of the Soviet Government will not be returned. However, the right to recall representatives and the provision for a more than 50 per cent vote does safeguard the wishes of the mass of the people.

The authority of the two chambers—the *Supreme Soviet of Nationalities* and the *Supreme Soviet of Union*—is equal. Together they regulate all affairs affecting the common interests of the entire population of the Soviet State. It is from this supreme authority that the members of the executive body, known as the Council of People's Commissars, are elected.

The Supreme Soviet meets at least twice a year for about ten days, but a small number of members is elected to carry on its work between sessions. This is called the Presidium. It does the major part of the work of the supreme authority, but its actions must be ratified by the whole of the Supreme Soviet. The People's Commissars, who are appointed by the Presidium, collectively form the Government; and they, too, are responsible to the Supreme Soviet.

So flexible is the structure of the Soviet system of government that the component parts of the U.S.S.R. have in most cases corresponding local People's Commissars, distinct from the All-Union People's Commissars, who head each of the State departments. The local People's Commissars head the analogous departments in the separate national republics and autonomous territorial governments. To illustrate, the People's Commissar of the U.S.S.R. co-ordinates the educational plan for the whole of the Union. To translate the general educational programme in accordance with the needs

of each of the different Soviet political and administrative groupings, there is an educational commissar for each Union Republic, each Autonomous Republic, each Autonomous Region, right down to the smallest possible grouping. Thus due regard is given to the cultural development of every ethnic section of the population, while the socialist objective directs all towards mutual amity between the different races and peoples, the only basis on which a Socialist society can be secured. The Socialist aim of the U.S.S.R. imposed the spirit of unity upon the multi-national structure of Soviet society.

The latest example of the flexibility of the Soviet political structure is illustrated by the decision of the All-Union Supreme Soviet on February 1, 1944, to extend to the National Republics a greater degree of autonomy in the field of foreign affairs. This amendment will give each of the Soviet Republics the right to set up People's Commissariats of Foreign Affairs and to appoint their own People's Commissars to head these departments. Thus, in future, the All-Union Supreme Soviet, in which all the Republics already have representation, will not merely approve treaties of war and peace, but will refer back to each Republic for its expression of views on matters of foreign policy concerning its respective obligations as a member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

With each of the sixteen Republics having the status of an independent sovereign State, and with the additional right of appointing its own People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, it will automatically have the right to send its own diplomatic representatives to the capitals of foreign Powers. This may sound an absurdity, but such an arrangement will only follow the long-established precedent set by British Commonwealth constitutional practice. Under the Statute of Westminster, each of the British Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Eire—is considered an independent sovereign State, and as such entitled to appoint its own Minister for Foreign Affairs at home and diplomatic representatives abroad.

In relation to the internal administrative structure of the State, the new constitutional reforms will make no fundamental difference. In the past all matters relating to foreign

affairs were discussed by the All-Union Supreme Soviet, in which, as we have seen, deputies from the National Republics participated and reported back to their respective National Soviets. In future, while this procedure will continue, the Soviets of the different National Republics will have the right to discuss and ratify foreign policy conjointly with the Supreme Soviet of the entire Union. The line to be adopted will, of course, be laid down by the Communist Party Political Bureau, headed by Stalin, and will be guided through the various Soviet State apparatus by the party leaders. Hence a unified policy between the All-Union Government and the different National administrations will be assured. The right of the National Republics to secede, guaranteed by the Constitution, is in no way invalidated by this new administrative change.

The other concession extended to the National Republics by the All-Union Supreme Soviet on February 1, 1944, is in the field of national defence. This is closely related to foreign affairs, for "war is the continuation of policy by other means." In accordance with the reforms, each of the National Republics will be permitted to set up its own Commissar of Defence, and the individual Commissariats will be represented in the All-Union Commissariat of Defence. They will each be responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Supreme War Council of the U.S.S.R. in their respective territories. There will not, of course, be sixteen uncoordinated armies. The armed forces of each of the National Republics will become constituent parts of the Red Army. This right to assemble their own armies could not be accorded to the National territories under Czarism, because of its imperialistic structure. The unity of the Soviet State resulting from its economic structure, and proved indubitably in the course of this war, makes this new departure a possible and feasible one.

The national economy of the Soviet Union has been increased and strengthened by the war. Even more, it has cemented as never before the fraternal solidarity between the various ethnic elements which make up the U.S.S.R. The peoples of the Soviet East have rallied enthusiastically behind the peoples of the Soviet West, whose territories have been devastated by the German armies.

None of these constitutional changes will in any way undermine the fundamental political unity of the Soviet State, but will rather draw closer the divers nationalities constituting the U.S.S.R. by imposing upon them greater responsibilities towards each other. Under a planned socialised system, the contradictions and nationalistic jealousies inherent in capitalism disappear, or are reduced to insignificant dimensions. The economic life of the entire Union is planned at the centre, and the National Republics merely implement the central plan in their respective territories. All this enables the All-Union Soviet to control trade and commercial relations with foreign Powers.

#### *Pyramidal System of Government.*

Soviet government starts at the very base of the great pyramidal system, and every citizen, apart from certain legally disqualified categories, from the age of eighteen has the right to vote under the new Constitution. Neither sex, race, colour, degree of literacy, nor property qualification excludes anyone from the right.

At the very bottom of the Soviet system is the Village Soviet. There are 70,000 of these in the U.S.S.R., and they represent about three-quarters of the whole population. Within its territorial limits the village soviet guards the carrying out of the laws of the Union and is empowered to establish village courts. It is also urged to consider the affairs of the Autonomous Region, Autonomous Province, and Autonomous Republic. It has the duty of watching the operations of the State manufacturing and trading departments in its locality, and those of the consumers' co-operative societies. As far as the village itself is concerned, "there is practically nothing that the soviet may not organise, regulate or provide at the public expense, from roads and water supplies, through club-houses and dance floors, up to schools, theatres, and hospitals. To the British reader, accustomed to the narrow range of work allowed to the parish or rural district council, the lengthy and varied catalogue of duties prescribed for the local authority of the village in the Russian steppe or Siberian forest will seem absurdly pretentious, all the more so when it is told by the soviet jurists that within the village the selosoviet is 'sovereign'; meaning that nothing

which it does requires the sanction of any higher authority before it is put in operation."<sup>1</sup> Today the village soviet makes out its own budget, in just the same way as the constituent republic. In this way, every Soviet citizen is compelled to take an active interest in the affairs of the State.

The system of elections and representation took several years to elaborate, and it arose out of long discussions and many congresses. For the Bolsheviks when they assumed power had no cut and dried plan upon which to base the Soviet system. They saw its design as giving to all peoples of the Union, no matter how small and culturally backward, active participation in the direction of government. The Soviets (or Workers' Councils) had been thrown up by the workers of St. Petersburg themselves in the abortive 1905 revolution, and Lenin recognised in them the basis of the future transition government which would direct economic planning towards the Socialist goal, when the centralised State will cease to exist in its present form. Quite true, much of the original power of the early councils has been curtailed; but this curtailment of Soviet democracy operates throughout the Union, and does not apply merely to certain racial sections, as it does in America and the British Empire, where democracy is the monopoly of the whites while the coloured races are denied all democratic rights and economic opportunity.

The system of representation in the Soviet of Nationalities formerly in vogue was that of indirect delegation, with the village and city soviets at the bottom. Under that system the primary soviets responsible for local government elected deputies to higher congresses of soviets governing the larger area; e.g., the village soviet sent its delegates to the congresses of the Autonomous Regions, which sent its deputies to the congresses of the Autonomous Province. This procedure continued right up to the Republic congresses. This system, however, has now been changed, and representation to the Soviet of Nationalities is today by direct election. In fact, all representation is now direct, thus giving all citizens more immediate connection with and control of their representatives.

There is, of course, only one political party in the Soviet

<sup>1</sup> S. & B. Webb: *Soviet Communism*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30.



Union—the Communist Party. Non-party candidates are allowed, and even encouraged, to contest elections, but the absence of freedom to propagate political views differing from those of the ruling party gives the Soviet State its 'totalitarian' character. Nevertheless, it can unhesitatingly be said that the people of the Soviet Union have in actuality greater participation in their government than those of the Western democracies, chiefly through their representation in and direct contact with their local soviets and the interest they are induced to take in the affairs of the whole State collectively.

How does this system compare in operation with that obtaining within the British Empire in Africa, for instance? Neither under Crown Colony nor under Indirect Rule do the Africans enjoy anything even remotely related to political democracy. But quite apart from their lack of participation in the machinery of government in their own countries, the Colonial peoples of the Empire are denied direct representation in the supreme legislative assembly: the British House of Commons. But even the most backward of the Soviet peoples enjoys representation in the Soviet of Nationalities, as well as general representation as citizens in the Soviet of the Union. Deprived of the privilege of directly voicing their many grievances, the British colonial peoples—Indians, Africans, West Indians, etc.—are unable to draw the attention of those who are supposed to be their 'trustees.' Quite true, there are some Members of Parliament (their number can be counted on the fingers of the hands) who from time to time voice the grievances of the subject peoples, but they are under no compulsion to do so, since they do not represent Colonial constituencies. Capitalist democracy, even in its most liberal form, has positive racial limitations; it does not embrace the coloured sections of the population. Everywhere the coloured races are treated as political pariahs.

"Modern democracy," declared the South African Bantu paper, *Imiro za B Ntundu*, "is a democracy only of the white-skin peoples of the world, and its philosophy is that of brazen spoliation, and the violation of human right of all whose colour is black. The black peoples wherever they reside, under so-called civilised authority, are not respected in the matter of human rights. There is," the paper adds,

“great unrest in Africa amongst the intelligent black inhabitants through the oppressive laws under which they live. Truly the white man’s religion (Christianity) has failed to interpret to us the meaning of life in the world.”

The Soviets are the political embodiment of Lenin’s interpretation of Self-Determination based upon the principle of a planned socialised economy for all the national units constituting the Federated Union. This State structure provides the machinery through which the former subject peoples and national minorities may give expression to their national and cultural aspirations and at the same time unite with each other on matters affecting the common interests of all, such as the defence of the U.S.S.R. against aggression. If the machinery is not functioning as democratically as Socialists in the West would like, then the remedy lies largely in their hands. The sooner the European and American workers achieve Social Revolution, the sooner will they be able to influence political democracy in the U.S.S.R. in the desired direction. Their achievement of Social Revolution will help the Soviet workers to solve their internal difficulties through the removal of the constant threat of imperialist intervention and war. As long as the Soviet Union remains an isolated Socialist enclave in an ocean of capitalist States she will be unable to achieve those conditions of security upon which full political democracy can alone be founded.

#### *Critique of Wilsonian Self-Determination.*

Let us compare the Leninist interpretation of Self-Determination with that of President Wilson’s. The Wilsonian conception was based upon the capitalistic economic system and conflicting class relations. It is the same conception as that embodied in the Atlantic Charter. Thus it merely fed national exclusiveness. The sovereign States which came into existence at the end of the last World War became an end in themselves. The victorious Allied Powers, Britain and France, exploited Wilson’s political conception of Self-Determination to create in Europe a number of small States carved out of the old Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. These States very soon became vassals of France and Britain and were employed as pawns in Imperialist power politics against the Soviet Union.

The tendency to exclusiveness inherent in bourgeois nationalism has become the greatest obstacle to any solution of the burning economic and social problems of Europe, and this in turn has enabled the Great Powers to intervene and so aggravate between themselves the nascent Imperialist rivalries over markets and colonies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Most of the post-war States degenerated long before the Second World War broke out into hotbeds of reaction, wherein national chauvinism flourished. National minorities were persecuted with the same vigour of which the dominant nationality had been the victim before it emerged as a sovereign State. This was particularly so in countries like Poland where the Jews, Ukrainians and other ethnic minorities were persecuted by the Poles. In contradistinction there has developed in the Soviet Union a harmonious co-operation and fraternal relationship which has given stability to the Soviet régime, a stability noticeably lacking in any of the multi-national Versailles States. Even the Ukraine, long considered by so-called experts to be the weakest link in the Soviet State, failed to revolt when the German imperialists invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

This memorable fact reveals even greater significance when we remember how the Czechoslovak State, for instance, disintegrated under the impact of Hitler's political onslaught. Admittedly the most democratic of the Versailles States, Hitler nevertheless found himself able to stir up dissension among the Sudeten Germans, and later to lever the Slovaks off from the Czech body. The Czechs claim that they had achieved internal stability. Quite true, perhaps, they had secured the greatest possible stability permissible within the framework of a multi-national capitalist régime in the present epoch of Imperialist wars and Social Revolutionary upheavals. But it is not unreasonable to suggest that if they had reached that harmony and stability which it has become most obvious that the Soviet Union (with its far greater diversity of races and nationalities) has attained, the grounds of discontent upon which Hitler played would have been absent. Again, in Yugoslavia, it required very little to create division between the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Conscious of the inherent weakness in multi-national capitalistic States, Marshal Tito, the

leader of the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement, hopes to reorganise Yugoslavia on the basis of a federated State in which all the ethnic groups will enjoy the same rights. Despite the imperfections of the U.S.S.R., it seems obvious that a socialist State structure secures a greater cohesion of its multi-national elements than a capitalist form of society, where the very nature of the economy makes for racial conflict.

While nationalism is not something which is ineradicable from human nature, it is at present a psychological factor which must not be ignored. "To refuse to recognise the thing that is cannot be permitted; recognition enforces itself," wrote Lenin. Thus bourgeois nationalism must be recognised, even though it is a narrow chauvinistic and exclusive nationalism in an age when economic requirements of civilized society can no longer be satisfied within the framework of national States.

It is because Europe failed to reconstruct her political life in keeping with her economic needs, country after country degenerated into Fascism. Commenting upon the crisis of capitalist society Stalin observed that "the post-war period (after 1918) presents a gloomy picture of national enmity, inequality, oppression, conflict, war and imperialist brutality on the part of the nations of civilised countries both towards each other and towards the non-sovereign peoples: on the one hand we have a few 'Great' Powers, which oppress and exploit the mass of dependent and 'independent' (but in fact wholly dependent) national States, and the struggles of these powers among themselves for the monopoly of exploiting the national States, dependent and 'independent,' against the intolerable oppression of the 'Great' Powers; the struggle of the national States among themselves for the extension of their national territory; the struggle of the national States, each in particular, against its own oppressed national minorities; and, finally, the growth of the movement for emancipation on the part of the colonies against the 'Great' Powers and the intensification of national conflicts within these Powers and within the national States, which as a rule contain a number of national minorities. Such is the 'world picture' inherited from the Imperialist war. Bourgeois society has proved to

be utterly bankrupt in the matter of solving the National Question."<sup>1</sup>

In this connection a special correspondent of *The Times*, commenting on the new attitude towards nationalism in the liberated Balkan countries, writes: "An important feature of the new movements, common to the conquered and the satellite countries, is their attitude to nationalism. Understanding that national problems cannot be passed over with empty phrases, the new leaders believe a treatment radically different from that of the past is required. They denounce the old chauvinist imperialism, but admit the right of each nationality to its own national territory and a Government of its own kin. Where nationalities are inextricably mixed all local languages should be used in the administration. In general regional cultural autonomy should be reconciled with the necessity of State formations larger than the territory of the smaller nations. This policy has already been applied with success in some regions. In Yugoslavia the thesis of Tito that Serbian and Croatian peoples had one common enemy—the Germans and their tools the Croatian and Serbian Fascists—was widely accepted. The people saw that in fact Ustashe and Chetniks collaborated with each other and with the Germans against their own and each other's peoples, and that only the National Liberation Movement protected both Serbs and Croats from the invaders. In the areas where the worst atrocities were committed by Ustashe against defenceless Serbian civilians, Serbs and Croats fought side by side against the Germans. Another example is Transylvania, where Rumanians and Hungarians, under the leadership of the left, are seeking a national reconciliation which will enable both to live side by side in peace. In this they are definitely supported by Soviet policy. Perhaps the most striking case of all is Macedonia, whose right to home rule has been recognized after 40 years of bloody disputes between 'Great Serbian' and 'Great Bulgarian' imperialists. Tito realizes that the people of Macedonia do not wish to be made into Serbs or Bulgars, and is willing to let them rule themselves, within the framework of a federal Yugoslav State. Peaceful democratic development in the Balkans is impossible

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 90.

without representative government, social reforms, and national tolerance. No Government is representative which does not derive considerable support from each of the three main social groups—peasants, *intelligentsia*, and industrial workers. Social reform is meaningless unless it improves the lot of the poor majority as well as the prosperous minority of the peasants, and unless the administration that executes the reforms is purged of men compromised either by collaboration with the Germans or by personal corruption and brutality to the population. National tolerance will remain an empty phrase until victimization by chauvinist lawyers and gendarmes is genuinely suppressed.”<sup>1</sup>

Modern European nationalism has its historic roots in a definite epoch—the epoch of rising capitalism—and manifests itself in the modern capitalist State. With the disappearance of capitalism and the bourgeois State, the importance of nationalism will diminish, and from its present significance as a political form will gradually become a cultural concept. Until that time a way has to be found to satisfy the nationalistic feelings and aspirations of those peoples whose national development has been retarded by their subjection to Imperialism. “In its battle with feudalism,” Lenin said, “capitalism had been a liberating influence, but imperialistic capitalism (the capitalism of recent times) became the greatest oppressor of nations.” This is quite true; the oppressors of small nations are all Imperialist Powers.

#### *Utopianism of Zionism.*

Perhaps the clearest example of the redirection of the political aspirations of a minority into cultural channels is that of the history of the Jews in the Soviet Union. Prior to the October Revolution, the Jews were the pariahs of the Czarist Empire. The persecution which these people suffered only strengthened their will to survive and bred in them separatist tendencies, the most popular expression of which was Zionism, a platform extremely difficult of attainment under Imperialism and unnecessary under a Soviet régime, as events proved.

The disabilities which the Jews experienced under Czarism were removed by the Soviet Power, and therefore the

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 26, 1945.

grievances which nurtured separatist tendencies no longer existed. The Jews took their place alongside other Soviet citizens on an equal basis, and today they occupy responsible positions in all government and party institutions. For example, Trotsky founder of the Red Army and the first Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was a Jew. Today Lazarus Kaganovitch, Stalin's brother-in-law, is a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party and of the Supreme Council of Defence. Another Jew, Lieut.-General Jacob Smushkevitch, is leader of the Soviet Air Force. Alexander Losowsky, Assistant Foreign Affairs Commissar and one time official spokesman of the Soviet Government, is also a Jew; and so is Maxim Litvinov, the highly esteemed diplomatist, at present Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

However, recognising that certain sections of the Jewish population harboured national aspirations, the Soviet Government put the territory of Biro-Bidjan at their disposal as the foundation of a Jewish Soviet Republic. Since, however, the Jews enjoyed equal rights with all other citizens of the Soviet Union, the majority of them were not anxious to leave their homes and occupations for the purpose of setting up a new exclusively Jewish republic in the Far East. Moreover, realising that 'race' was no longer a barrier to the attainment of the highest positions or to contact with the soil, the post-Revolution generation of Jews, divorced from orthodox Judaism, look upon Zionism as a reactionary manifestation of bourgeois nationalism. So it was that Biro-Bidjan failed as a Jewish Republic, for only those ardent pioneers enthusiastic for a national Jewish territory faced the exactions of turning a barren region into a thriving country.

Since they are accepted into the body politic of the U.S.S.R., the younger generation of Jews evince no separationist tendencies. Rather, the process is the reverse, one of assimilation. Under capitalist reaction the separationist tendency inherent in Zionism is fostered by wealthy Jews. They have enthusiastically supported Jewish settlement in Palestine, while they were very heated in the early days in their derision of the Biro-Bidjan project, which, if it failed, did so because the fundamental basis of the Soviet system destroyed its *raison d'être*. Rich Zionists are desirous of a

national home founded upon capitalistic and not Socialist economy, a national home in which they will have power to exploit the poorer Jews and any other people who come their way. Palestine, therefore, is much more to their liking than Biro-Bidjan, or, for that matter, the Soviet Union.

*Black 'Zionism.'*

This distorted view of bourgeois nationalism is not confined to Jews. In America, where Negroes occupy a position analogous to that of the Jews under Czarism, and in Nazi Germany, Poland and other east European territories they have developed a similar separationist tendency, which at one time expressed itself in the Garvey Movement. Garveyism was a political reflection of Negro persecution. Afro-Americans, like the Jews, have no territory of their own. They constitute minority enclaves in the territory of white majority populations, and hence hanker after a country of their own.

Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.), was a West Indian Negro who built up a tremendous following. Starting with a membership of 17 Negroes in 1918, his organisation soon developed into the largest coloured mass movement in the Negro world. "There has never been a Negro movement anywhere like the Garvey Movement, and few movements in any country can be compared to it in growth and intensity. By 1920 it was proportionately the most powerful mass movement in America. Supporters of Garvey have claimed that the U.N.I.A. membership in 1920 reached three millions, and Garvey himself claimed in 1924 six millions. The latter figure is certainly exaggerated, for that would have meant at least half of the total Negro population of America at that time. That nine-tenths of the Negroes in America were listening to him is probable, and as far as can be gathered, from very insufficient data, he may well have had two million members already in 1920. Money and members poured in from every State in America, from all over the West Indies, from Panama. Negroes sold their dearest possessions to send money to Garvey. His name rolled through Africa. The King of Swaziland told a friend some years after that he



knew the names of only two black men in the Western world, Jack Johnson and Marcus Garvey.

“What was Garvey’s programme? Back to Africa. The Negroes must have Africa back for themselves. They would go and settle there and live in Africa as free and happy as Europeans lived in Europe and white Americans in America. How were they to get Africa back? They would ask the imperialists for it, and if the imperialists did not give it, they would take it back. That was in essence all that Garvey had to say.”<sup>1</sup>

Unable to challenge the Imperialist Powers that control Africa, Garvey attempted to force a foothold in Liberia, the West African Negro Republic, where he planned to oust the black ruling class. The result would have been to create antagonism between the Negro immigrants from America and the indigenous people, in the same way as a clash has resulted between the two Semitic peoples—Jews and Arabs—in Palestine. The cause of such conflict is chiefly politico-economic, and has little to do with racial differences. It mattered little to Garvey that the people he was trying to displace were African Negroes, any more than it does to the bourgeois Zionists that in their effort to build a ‘national home’ on capitalistic lines in Palestine they are edging off their lands another Semitic (Arab) people. The economic conflicts thus generated inevitably express themselves in a struggle for political hegemony, causing constant strife between the peoples so contending in a given territory.

The only satisfactory solution of the Palestine problem is to be found within the Soviet form of multi-national state, where every community—Arab, Jew and Christian—can find accommodation on the basis of absolute political and cultural equality on the one hand, and the country developed under a planned economy in the interest of all on the other. Such a policy cannot be carried out under the ægis of imperialism—British, French or American. Neither can it be achieved by Arab nationalism nor capitalist Zionism. The same applies to plural societies like South Africa inhabited by English, Dutch and Bantu.

Garvey ran foul of the American Government, was sent to prison in 1926, and after his release, deported back to his

<sup>1</sup> C. L. R. James: *History of Negro Revolt*, pp. 68-69.

native Jamaica. He later came to London, from where he hoped to stage a 'come-back,' but his health broke down and he died in the British capital in 1939, a leader deprived of his mass following. Despite his political limitations, he was undoubtedly the greatest Negro leader since Toussaint L' Ouverture.

Garveyism, as utopian as Zionism, is merely an ideological expression today. As the Garvey Movement began to disintegrate, the American Communists, hoping to salvage its remnants, evolved an equally fantastic scheme to give the Negroes 'self-determination' in the form of a 'black belt' State. The genius behind this scheme was the same Dr. Otto Kuusinen who cut such a sorry figure in the Soviet-Finnish crisis of 1939-40. Kuusinen, who had never seen a dozen Negroes in his life, worked out a detailed plan on the basis of data supplied by American Communists to set up a sort of Biro-Bidjan below the Mason-Dixie Line. Here the American Negroes, under Communist leadership, were to find that 'national home' which Garvey was unable to achieve for them in Africa. But the project was quickly killed by the ridicule of the American Negro press. The black capitalists, unlike their Zionist brothers, had no illusions. They argued, and quite correctly, that such a 'national home' could not be realised within the existing framework of American capitalist-Imperialism. And if and when Socialism came to America, they maintained, there would be no necessity to create a glorified Harlem in the backwoods of Dixieland, for then the Negroes, like the Jews in the Soviet Union today, would enjoy full political, economic and social equality with other ethnic communities and become completely assimilated into the body politic.

#### *Inter-racial Basis of Soviet Power.*

Czarist Imperialism had frustrated the economic and cultural development of the subject peoples. Therefore, declared Lenin, it was the duty of the Russian workers and peasants once they had achieved power to help the more backward peoples along the path of progress, giving their nationalistic aspirations a socialist content. Following out

<sup>1</sup> George Padmore : *Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, pp. 125-126

this injunction, the Soviet Government has harmonised the national energies of the diverse peoples and directed them towards the objective of Soviet civilisation.

In the U.S.S.R., the national tributaries are flowing into one mighty river, enriching the social soil of the entire Soviet Union. This result of Lenin's statesmanship has been testified by Stalin. Since "the Soviet State is a multi-national State," Stalin emphasised, "clearly the question of the relations among the peoples of the U.S.S.R. cannot but be one of prime importance for us. . . . It was necessary to establish fraternal co-operation among the peoples on the basis of economic, political and military mutual aid by uniting them in a single, federated, multi-national State. The Soviet Government could not but see the difficulties of this task. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments of the multi-national States in bourgeois countries . . . .

"Since then fourteen years have elapsed. A period long enough to test the experiment. And what do we find? This period has shown beyond a doubt that the experiment of forming a multi-national State based on Socialism has been completely successful. This is the undoubted victory of the Leninist national policy.

"How is the victory to be explained? The absence of exploiting classes, which are the principal organisers of strife between nations; the absence of exploitation, which cultivates mutual distrust and kindles nationalist passions; the fact that power is in the hands of the working class, which is the foe of all enslavement and the true vehicle of the ideas of internationalism; the actual practice of mutual aid among the peoples in all spheres of economic and social life; and, finally, the flourishing national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., *culture which is national in form and socialist in content*—all these and similar factors have brought about a radical change in the aspect of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; their feeling of mutual distrust has disappeared, a feeling of mutual friendship has developed among them, and thus real fraternal co-operation among the peoples has been established within the system of a single federated State.

"As a result, we now have a fully-formed multi-national Socialist State, which has stood all tests, and whose stability

might well be envied by any national State in any part of the world."<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this stability is that all have an interest in the well-being of the country, since all participate as equal citizens, politically, economically, and socially, in its upbuilding and running. "No widespread Empire," observe the Webbs, "has yet found it possible to establish a parliament effectively representing its whole realm; just as none has yet attempted to carry on its whole production and distribution of commodities and services by a cabinet responsible to a single popularly elected parliamentary assembly. But the U.S.S.R. finds it quite practicable and useful to let each village in Kamchatka or Sakhalin, or beyond the Arctic circle, elect its own selsoviet, and send its own deputies to the rayon congress of the oblast (province) or autonomous republic, and ultimately to the All-Union Congress of Soviets at Moscow, in exactly the same way, and with exactly the same rights, as a village in the oblast (province) of Moscow or Leningrad. Such a remote and backward village, it must be remembered, which uses its own vernacular in its own schools and its own court of justice, enjoys likewise the privilege of filling the local offices, even the highest of them, with its own people."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Colour Bar Illegal In The Soviet Union.*

Aristocracy of colour obtains nowhere in the Soviet Union. Racial discrimination is a criminal offence. "The equality of the rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an indefeasible law," states Article 123 of the Soviet Constitution. It continues: "Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or conversely, the establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as the advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law."

It is not generally known that among the different peoples living in the Caucasus and taking their part in the fight of the Soviet Union against Nazism is a community of several

<sup>1</sup> J. Stalin : *The National Question*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> S. & B. Webb : *Soviet Communism*, Vol. I, pp. 158-159.

hundred Negroes. These people have been living for several centuries on the shore of the Black Sea and constitute an autonomous political area in the Abkasia region near the well-known holiday centre of Sukhumi. They are the descendants of Negro slaves brought from Africa by Arab slave traders to cultivate the fertile tobacco fields on the shores of the Black Sea. Coming successively under the tyranny of Turkish, Persian and Czarist masters, they now live in harmony with their Moslem neighbours, distinguishable from them only by certain traces of negroid ancestry. They represent the most favoured Negro community in the world, living on terms of equality with all other peoples of the Soviet Union, free from all the disabilities of racial discrimination imposed on Negroes in America, and British democracies like South Africa, and with their own village soviet.

The Soviet Government's attitude on Colour and Race is in complete contrast to that which obtains in most so-called Christian lands, where people of colour may be insulted, segregated, and discriminated against with impunity, since the Governments of these countries provide them with no legal and constitutional protection.

It is asserted by certain people who try to discredit the Soviet contribution to the solution of this centuries-old problem of inter-racial strife that Russian people were never as colour-conscious as, for example, the Anglo-Saxon races. The fact remains, however, that during the Czarist Empire, racial persecution existed widely and was sanctioned by official policy. The Soviet Government is the only Government which makes it an offence against the fundamental laws of the State to preach or practise race hatred. Not even in the most advanced democratic countries, Britain and America, does such a constitutional law exist.

With all its shortcomings and limitations of personal freedom and civic liberties, the Soviet Union has much to teach the Western democracies in solving the problem of race relations, which is one of the biggest problems of the twentieth century. And for this reason, if no other, the U.S.S.R. makes a strong appeal to the sympathies of hundreds of millions of coloured peoples in Asia, Africa, America, and other parts of the world.

## CHAPTER SIX

### HOW, ILLITERACY IS BEING LIQUIDATED.

THERE are in the Soviet administration many undemocratic features, but there is no doubt that it has made a conscious and forceful drive towards the liquidation of illiteracy and the development of a national culture among the many different peoples of the U.S.S.R. The question of language has been the key factor in the Union's policy of forwarding the cultural development of the former colonial peoples.

To most English people, who are not directly confronted with the problem of national minorities within their own country, the language question does not have the significance which it has in the European countries or within the Colonial Empire.<sup>1</sup> In most European countries, in Jugoslavia, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, etc., it has been the policy of the Governments to impose the language of the dominant racial element within the State upon the other ethnic groups, denying them, in most cases, the right to use their vernaculars in the schools and as official media of communication. Czarist Russia had been the chief sinner in this respect. The Russification of the Empire had been aimed at extirpating the national languages and cultures so that succeeding generations would grow up familiar only with the imposed language and culture of the ruling Russian nation. This policy, however, had precisely the opposite result from that envisaged.

#### *Language and Nationalism.*

With the growth of nineteenth century nationalism, language assumed a most disproportionate importance. The use of one's own national tongue became a mark of prestige. arising out of this circumstance, national consciousness among

<sup>1</sup> The British Parliament in 1943 recognised the right of the Welsh people to use their own language in the law courts of Wales.

oppressed peoples and national minorities became linked with the necessity to adopt the use of the vernacular. The more rigorously the alien speech and culture were forced upon them by the ascendant nation, the more bitterly they were resented, and the greater became the determination to achieve national independence and the right to assert the repressed language. The question of the Afrikaans language of the Boers in the Union of South Africa was and still remains a controversial issue in Anglo-Dutch relations. As a compromise both languages are given official status, but the Dutch speaking element is still trying to make Afrikaans the only official language.

In Europe, wherever it was possible for oppressed peoples to wrest the concession from the alien ruler to use the native language there was an efflorescence of literature and drama given over to themes of extreme nationalism.

With the birth of the U.S.S.R. there began a great cultural renaissance throughout the land. As we have seen, Czarist Russia was not only politically reactionary and economically backward. Culturally, except for the Western areas, it was positively medieval. Only a small section of the Russian peoples—the aristocracy and intelligentsia—had been touched by the great cultural influence of the European Renaissance the Reformation and the philosophical thought of the French Revolution. The Mongol-Tartar-Turkic races of the East were relegated to what might be termed a cultural grave. The Soviet Government, therefore, had to provide these people with the most rudimentary elements of knowledge in order that they might be elementarily equipped for the great work of economic and social reconstruction which was planned.

Like most Colonial Governments, Czarism had devoted very little money to the education of the peoples of the Empire outside the restricted circles of the clergy and bureaucracy. The educational needs of the subject people as a whole were completely ignored. This is not really remarkable, when it is noted that even 80 per cent of the people of Great Russia itself was illiterate. It was this appalling, almost universal illiteracy which presented one of the biggest difficulties for the Soviet Government when it

turned to grapple with the problem of rebuilding the country's economy on Socialist lines.

Illiteracy is the backbone of reaction. It is not accidental that the education of the native races of Asia and Africa is neglected, for history shows that as soon as an intelligentsia emerges among subject peoples it becomes the vanguard of the political struggle against alien rule. In all oppressed countries the middle class intelligentsia provides the nucleus of nationalist aspirations. As a corollary to this, wherever a people is illiterate, there reaction flourishes. Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Italy, are examples which come immediately to mind, but even in Germany, formerly one of the most intellectual of nations, the people were becoming more and more unintellectual as a result of Fascist reaction. The wholesale destruction of the best German literature, the persecution of the most progressive thinkers and scientists who refused to betray the cultural heritage of the German people, the propagation of a stupid theory of racial exclusiveness, have contributed to the decline of German culture. Reaction finds it necessary to maintain a population at as low a level of ignorance as possible: intellectual freedom has no place in a totalitarian society.

#### *Lenin On National Culture.*

"Without literacy," said Lenin, "only rumour, small talk and prejudices." This aptly summed up the condition prevailing among nearly 175 races and nationalities when Lenin faced the task of formulating a programme of education which would embrace them all, while taking into account their individual national needs. Since the Soviet Power had turned its back upon the Czarist policy of Russification, the execution of such a programme involved the revival and strengthening of the languages of the different nationalities and groups, which were to be made the media of governance.

The proposal to carry forward the education of the multitude of peoples of the Union through a diversity of languages aroused controversy in the inner circles of the Bolshevik Party, where some of the Great Russian elements thought the adoption of a uniform language the easiest way out. Lenin rejected this contention as an expression of latent Russian chauvinism. He censured them on the ground that they



were supporting a continuation of Czarism, of the process of Russification, which would in practice annul the Right of Self-Determination which the Revolution had effected. If the New Russia was to triumph over the old, it must take the opposite road, not the same one. The old and the new were diametrically opposed; therefore, their methods must be as wide apart as possible. They could have no use for force. "Communism could not be imposed from the outside. We must attain our ends," Lenin postulated, "through propaganda, through agitation, through a voluntary alliance." Lenin was always on the look-out for any manifestation of racial and national 'superiority' which he never failed to denounce, even among his most intimate colleagues. "Scratch some Communists and you will find Great Russian chauvinists," he once declared. In his concluding speech at the 8th Party Congress on March 19, 1919, Lenin discussing the relations between the Great Russians and the Bashkirs, former colonial people in the Urals declared that: "The Bashkirs distrust the Great Russians because the Great Russians are more cultured and use their culture to rob the Bashkirs. That is why in these remote places the name Great Russian for the Bashkir is tantamount to oppressor, swindler. This must be reckoned with, it must be combated. But, after all, this is a prolonged process. You cannot eliminate it by decree, you know. In this matter we have to be very cautious. Caution is particularly necessary on the part of a nation like the Great Russian nation, which aroused furious hatred among the other nations, and we have only now learned to correct the situation, and that badly. For instance, there are in the Commissariat of Education, or connected with the Commissariat of Education, Communists who say: 'There is a unified school, and therefore don't dare to teach in any language but Russian!' In my opinion such a Communist is a Great Russian chauvinist. He lurks in many of us, he must be combated.

"That is why we must declare to the other nations that we are out-and-out internationalists and are striving for a voluntary union of the workers and peasants of all nations. This in no way precludes wars. War is another question, and arises out of the very nature of Imperialism."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Lenin's concluding speech at the 8th Party Congress, March 19, 1919.

The realist Lenin had no illusions that because the Czar had been overthrown and the Bolsheviks were in power, race prejudice and national chauvinism had automatically disappeared. Vigilance was necessary, and Lenin never lost an opportunity of purging the ranks of his own party of the slightest manifestation of racial arrogance. So deep-rooted was the spirit of internationalism within him that he never despised any human being. He realised so well that national and cultural backwardness is the result of historic conditions. Peoples have reached various stages in social development. Unlike the racial theorists, Lenin rejected entirely the doctrine of innate inferiority and incapacity of any people. We find it necessary to stress this point very carefully, for the British Left-wing movement (especially its intelligentsia) savours most strongly of this subtle form of racialism. There are those who give lip-service to the right of Self-Determination for certain peoples within the British Empire, but not for others. With Lenin it was all or none. And it was all—civilised Christian Finns; uncivilised Moslem Bashkirs. Some quarter century later the Finns were fighting against the Soviet Power, while the 'savage' Bashkirs were in the Red Army, destroying the Nazi enemy of the Christian European peoples! The genius of Lenin is incomparable; the correctness of his theory of Self-Determination for all peoples regardless of their degree of social development, race or colour is unquestionable.

#### *Application of Soviet Educational Policy.*

Lenin's forcefulness carried the point. The policy of carrying out education in the native vernaculars was adopted. Many of the peoples had not even an alphabet, for their language had never been written. For these, alphabets were evolved. Many others had intricate alphabets which were simplified. Most of them were latinised. The easier means of using Russian characters was not adopted, again to obviate any apparent manifestation of Russian chauvinism.<sup>1</sup>

A thorough-going effort was commenced to exorcise illiteracy. Every citizen in the Union was accorded the right to education by the Constitution, Article 121 of which states: "Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to education. This

<sup>1</sup> The Russian alphabet was universally introduced in 1939.

right is ensured by universal compulsory education; by the fact that education, including higher education, is free of charge; by the system of state scholarships for the overwhelming number of students in the higher educational establishments; by instruction in schools being conducted in the native language, and by the organisation of free vocational, technical and agronomic training for the toilers in the factories, state farms, machine and tractor stations and collective farms."

Education in all elementary schools was carried out almost from the start in the native languages. At the onset, however, there was some difficulty in introducing the native languages into the secondary schools. This was due largely to lack of teachers, and special schools were provided to train staffs. The formerly oppressed nationalities had to be specially induced to attend the technical and higher specialised educational institutions. There had been very sparse provision of these schools under Czarism. Very few members of the backward races had reached them, and those exclusively the upper strata of the semi-feudal native aristocracy. In 1918 when compulsory education was introduced, illiteracy was as high as 95 per cent in most parts of the Soviet East.

Technical difficulties stood in the way of using the native languages in the national universities, but it was obligatory to reserve two chairs for the national language and the national literature at each of them. As these difficulties are being overcome, the national language is taking precedence. But almost everywhere Russian is being adopted as a secondary tongue, for it is but natural that many young people will prefer the famous authors in the original, just as many English people like to read Voltaire, Racine, Rousseau, Balzac, Zola, in the original French; Heine and Goethe in German.

So effectively was the task of exterminating illiteracy tackled that one of the most backward sections of the Union, Buriat-Mongolia, which had been entirely illiterate, had already reached a degree of 40 per cent literacy by 1931. Where there had been only 48 schools under the Czar, to which Buriat children were admitted only if they were baptised into the Orthodox faith, and then taught Russian,

there were by the end of 1930 a total of 647 schools, of which 285 were Buriat. In some villages literacy was already complete, while the percentage of children between the ages of 8 and 11 in the schools reached 97.6 per cent. Secondary schools, technical institutions and workers' training schools had been established, and of the students attending them about half were Buriats. In this country the alphabet had been the exclusive possession of the landlords and Lama Buddhist clergy, who desperately opposed its latinisation, but by 1932 it had been universally adopted throughout the republic.

Prior to the Revolution there were throughout Daghestan, the small autonomous republic on the Caspian Sea, 82 schools, catering solely for the privileged classes, in which 4,667 students were instructed exclusively in the Russian language. There are now well over a thousand primary schools teaching something like 120,000 children, schools for the collective farms, many technical institutes training thousands of students, almost three-quarters of whom are local mountaineers. There is a workers' university, a number of schools attached to the factories and also to the scientific research institute which was already founded before 1930.

Czarism had seen only a single Kazak university. With a population of 6,000,000 Kazakstan had a school attendance in 1944 of 1,320,000. Of the 89,500 pupils in its elementary schools in 1915, only 13,000 were actually Kazaks; the majority were the children of Russian colonists. Today, about 10,000 primary schools provide for the elementary education of the Kazaks and national minorities within the Republic. There are 20 universities and colleges, attended by thousands of Kazak students, 116 technical schools, 33 scientific institutions, a branch of the Soviet Academy of Science and 22 scientific museums.

The cultural and social backwardness of the colonial peoples under the Czar can be gauged from the fact that in many of the languages there was no word for doctor, hospital, clinic, etc. This was the case in Kirghizia, where there was total illiteracy, a very limited vocabulary, and no written alphabet. In 1940, the adult population was 76 per cent literate. Kirghizia today possesses 1,754 schools with 300,000

pupils, 5 higher educational institutions and 28 technological institutions (for applied science), with 8,000 students.

Nothing illustrates more strikingly the phenomenal cultural development which has taken place in these formerly benighted Asiatic colonial countries as the following comparison between Uzbekistan and Sweden published by the American Institute of Pacific Relations. "Sweden is universally recognised as one of the most advanced nations on earth in its economy and culture. . . . The population of Uzbekistan on the eve of the war was almost the same as that of Sweden—6,300,000 in an area slightly smaller. How do they compare in the field of popular education? In 1938, Sweden, which has had a law requiring universal elementary education for exactly a century, had 569,000 children in its elementary schools; Uzbekistan, which then had had compulsory education only for about five years, had 916,000—this is in a country which had a one per cent literacy rate in 1914, when Sweden's rate was 99.7 per cent! Sweden had 60,000 students in secondary schools of all types in 1940; Uzbekistan, which could not boast of a single university graduate among its native population at the time of the Revolution, had 17,500 in its own higher educational institutions on January 1, 1939, not counting the considerable number studying in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere."<sup>1</sup>

Again, in Armenia, out of 1,147 schools, 957 were built after 1922, and out of every 1,000 students secondary education is had by 81.5, while 5.8 reach universities. Nine higher educational institutions have been set up, enrolling 7,000 students. There are 45 technological institutions and 15 institutes for scientific research. One out of every three of Armenia's inhabitants is studying. "Education was introduced at once after the Revolution, in the native languages, and with it went a great movement for the fostering and revival of native culture. Culture and language had been largely suppressed in Czarist days and education was so scanty as to leave at least 90 per cent of the Caucasian people illiterate. Today this is all changed; every village has its new school. Technical schools and colleges are to be found in all the larger towns; Tiflis has a whole new University Centre with accommodation for thousands of

<sup>1</sup> *The Soviet Far East and Central Asia* by William Mandel, p. 199.

students. Both young and old have been learning in recent years. I spoke to Armenian boys and girls in a park in Yerivan who were doing homework in the quiet study corner. They were writing in Armenian, and told me they were learning Russian as their first foreign language. In many places I saw elderly people studiously reading and writing, sitting on their doorsteps or on benches in the parks. The native theatre, dancing, singing and art are highly developed and completely unfettered. Theatre and other groups travel all over Russia giving performances of the highest standard; I saw them myself in Moscow and other places.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics could be repeated for each of the erstwhile colonial regions of the Union. Suffice it to say that schools are now to be found literally in every part of the vast territory of the U.S.S.R., and that their number increases year by year. Every day 33,000,000 children go to school in the Soviet Union, as compared with 8,000,000 before the Revolution. The universities have increased from 71 before 1917 to 716, with accommodation for 600,000 as against 112,000 under the Czar. Even in the Far North, among the scattered tribes of the Nentsi, Mansi, Evenks, Knahte, etc., the Soviet Government is bringing knowledge where before there was nothing but ignorance and superstition. Without writing symbols, these people had to be provided with alphabets. Not more than fifty of the one hundred and seventy-five peoples and nationalities of the Soviet Union had written languages before the Revolution. Now that alphabets have been provided, in parts with scattered populations, boarding schools have been established at which children live and study free of charge.

It is extremely noteworthy that there has been no cessation of Soviet education and culture during the war. There has been a continuous maintenance of the educational programme, and one of the first tasks of the Government has been to re-establish schools forthwith in territories retaken from the enemy.

With the growth of literacy, there is a tendency for Russian to be adopted more universally as an additional language. But this process cannot at all be identified with

<sup>1</sup> From an article: *The Caucasus will not revolt*, in *New Statesman and Nation*, September 6, 1941.

the pre-revolutionary system of Russification, because the national languages are just as much encouraged as ever. There is no doubt that they are taking in a large number of Russianised words, in the very same way as the Continental languages, for example, are incorporating many English and American expressions. Some considerable criticism has been made of the Soviet adoption of the Cyrillic or Russian script in 1939 in Central Asia as a retrogressive step. That it is not obligatory is evident from the fact that while there has been a change-over from the Latin to the Cyrillic script in Azerbaijan, Central Asia and the Volga-Ural region, the traditional native scripts have been retained in Georgia and Armenia. When the problem of the liquidation of illiteracy was first approached, it was considered that the Latin text was simpler for the purpose, particularly as such a large proportion of pupils were adults. But with the advancing growth of literacy, the Soviet authorities deem the Cyrillic script to be better adapted to the wide range of sounds in eastern languages. With only 24 letters, the Latin alphabet provides very small scope for these languages, which are better facilitated by the 32 characters of the Russian alphabet, which, for certain Asiatic languages has to take on other letters. In actual fact, the change-over of alphabet really means that the international influences which have been made on the Russian language also reach the remotest of the Soviet people. There is no doubt, too, that it is more convenient to a country at war, which is obliged to mass so large a part of its multi-speaking people in the armed forces, to have one language which is more or less universally understood by the troops.

#### *Emancipation of Women in the Soviet East.*

As far as the women in the Soviet East are concerned, the October Revolution brought them a three-fold emancipation: as members of oppressed national groups; as members of an oppressed sex; as members of an oppressed class. The women were urged to cast off their veil, a bold step for many in the face of opposition and insult from their menfolk. For instance, in 1928 it happened in Uzbekistan that "many women who had unveiled on Women's Day resumed the veil afterwards, under pressure from relatives and from the

counter-offensive which promptly set in, and many of them had to pay with their lives for the brief ecstasy.<sup>1</sup> In 1938, there was not a single veiled woman in Bokhara. The Soviet Government used all its influence to urge the women out of seclusion, to placate the prejudices of the men. An old Buriat-Mongol woman wrote how "people came from the town and summoned us women to a meeting. At first we went suspiciously, even in fear. And then it seemed that scales fell from the eyes of some of us. We grasped, though dimly at first, that they were taking us women under their protection, and summoning us to labour. And the days flew past, swifter than deer. Every day we felt more and more the new factor in our lives.

"In 1926 there was our first kolkhos (collective farm). In our ulus, the old village, the organisations began to work vigorously; we rose to the light as if from an underground cave, and threw ourselves heart and soul into the cause. In 1927 I joined the kolkhos too. A year later, at the age of fifty-five, I was elected to the women's organisation.

"My inner life grew brighter and brighter, the feeling that a new, really human life was beginning for me grew stronger and stronger, since we women were accorded equal rights."<sup>2</sup>

It was in this way that women were drawn not only into the industrial life of the Soviet Union, but into the orbit of its educational and cultural activities. The women of Central Asia became the most zealous scholars; young and old joined the classes held to liquidate illiteracy. At the University of the Labouring East in Moscow "there are many women, too, and you see the most varied types; sturdy Mongol women with flat faces, sometimes almost concave, high cheek-bones, and yet often pretty Buddha-like countenances. . . . Then there are slender Caucasians, as lithe as gazelles, their skin having often the wonderful faint, mat pink of a peach. . . . And then again bronze-coloured Turkmen women with heads of Byzantine Madonnas; animated brown Uzbeks, sometimes resembling Mongols, sometimes Turks, with fanatically

<sup>1</sup> Fannina Halle: *Women in the Soviet East*, p. 174. This book is the best on the subject, and should be read by all students of the National Question in the U.S.S.R.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Fannina Halle: *Women in the Soviet East*, p. 208.



glowing eyes, and wearing their hair short now instead of the former countless plaits that hung like a cape over their shoulders; Turks from Azerbaijan whose heads express their strength of will and sometimes seem almost masculine . . . tall, handsome Tajiks and Iranians, sometimes blue-eyed, who might have strayed hither from the north of Europe.

“But whatever the differences among these women and men may be in regard to origin, race and nationality, they are all equally eager to learn, and all understand Russian, the international language of the Soviet States.”<sup>1</sup>

To-day the number of women occupying government positions is steadily rising, and in the Soviet Union there are now more women doctors, dentists and teachers than men. Only those who had any acquaintance with the closed-in empty existence of the millions of women of the Soviet East can have even the faintest realisation of the release and expansion which the Revolution and the educational facilities provided for them by the Soviet Government have brought to them.

The rapid stride towards the elimination of illiteracy has been made possible only because of the unified educational programme of the Union and the allocation of funds from the central budget. A programme having been decided upon by the Educational Commissariat of the Union and funds allotted to each of the several Republics and Autonomous Territories, the individual Educational Commissars for these areas are responsible for the administration of the programme in accordance with local requirements and conditions. And because the needs of the backward regions are greater, their share of funds is proportionately larger. In all, about 12 per cent. of the national budget is devoted to education and cultural institutions.

#### *Comparison With Education In African Colonies.*

Astounding progress has been made in Soviet education in less than twenty years, progress which the European Imperialist Governments have been incapable of achieving in all the time they have been in Africa. Up till as late as 1924, education in tropical Africa was chiefly the concern of the missionaries. In that year the Advisory Committee on

<sup>1</sup> Fannina Halle: *Women in the Far East*, pp. 220/221.

Education in Tropical Africa was set up by the British Colonial Office as a separate department, and a more definite Government policy declared. But education in Africa still touches only the bare fringe of the population. In none of the tropical African colonies do more than 20 per cent. of the children get any kind of schooling. In Sierra Leone, for example, the percentage falls to 8 per cent. Moreover, these percentages are misleading without explaining that for the most part the children attending schools never complete even the elementary course. After a year or two, economic exigencies force them out into the labour market, and it is only the fortunate few who make the fifth standard. What kind of education is provided can be imagined from the fact that in 1938 the Kenya Government spent £80,284 on African education, of which £53,949 went in subsidies to missions. "In sub-elementary schools children are taught what our children learn in their first standard," writes Dr. Norman Leys, a foremost British authority on Native Affairs in East Africa, "and most of the 150,000 children who in Kenya get any education at all never get beyond them." The Educational Report of the Colony for 1938, in referring to them, observes that "very few of these schools obtain grants because the elementary schools in the next grade absorb all the available funds. In 1938 the Government suspended its subsidies to mission schools, the cost of running which now devolves on the missions themselves and the fees which are demanded of parents." Dr. Leys quite firmly asserts that "many thousands of children are expelled from schools because their parents will not or cannot pay their fees. There is no Government secondary education for Africans in Kenya, and the average cost of education, according to Dr. Leys, is 12s. for each native child in the Government schools and 4s. 3d in the mission schools. On the 1,160 European children in Government schools £49,000 was spent in the same year, the net cost for tuition only being reckoned at £23. 13s. each.<sup>1</sup>

The following short table, taken from *Colour Conflict* (p. 109), by the Rev. Gerald Webb Broomfield, General Secretary of the Universities Mission to Central Africa, illustrates most pointedly the wide disparity between the

<sup>1</sup> Norman Leys: See *The Colour Bar in East Africa*, pp. 130-135.

amounts spent upon the education of native children and the children of white settlers in a number of African territories:

	<i>European child per head</i>	<i>African child per head</i>
S. Rhodesia	£30. 13. 9.	13. 9d
N. Rhodesia	28. 8. 7.	4. 6d
Nyasaland	18. 7. 11.	1. 10d
Tanganyika	10. 18. 2.	5. 7d
Uganda	14. 10. 8.	5. 3d
Kenya	26. 7. 5.	16. 0d

In Nigeria, the largest and richest British colony in the sub-continent, 11s. 0d is the yearly expenditure on the education of each child. Sierra Leone spends £2. 0s. 9d per head, and in the Gold Coast, where education for the native peoples is considered to be the most advanced in Africa, the average yearly expenditure per child is £3. 10s. 10d. During the 18 years between 1913 and 1931, the Government allotment on education increased from £25,000 to £250,000. At the latter figure, however, it still represents only 7 per cent. of the revenue. Its unimpressiveness is further increased when it is known that in 1931 only one child out of every five in the Gold Coast was receiving any kind of schooling, and less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent passed the primary stage. Experts have calculated that at the present rate of progress, and disregarding any increase of population, it will take 700 years before the natives of the Gold Coast are literate, or 3,000 years if the natural increase of population is taken into account.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is education free. Even African children attending State-aided missionary schools have to pay fees.

Lamentably small are the proportions of their total revenues which Colonial Governments spend on native education. "So long ago as in 1919, 18 per cent of the revenue of the Phillipines was spent on education," observes Dr. Leys. "In no country in our Colonial Empire is the proportion as high as 5 per cent. In the countries of British East and British West Africa it lies between 1.5 per cent and 3 per cent."

After a century of European rule, the natives of Africa are immeasurably in arrears of the cultural progress which those in the former Asiatic colonies of the Russian Empire

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Africa*, April 1938.

have achieved in barely two decades. The British Labour Party, in its recent statement on Colonial Policy, has affirmed this. "A primary obligation of British administration," it asserts, "must be an educational policy which will give an opportunity for all Africans to acquire the necessary knowledge and education. It cannot really be said that even the beginnings of such a policy at present exist, despite the fact that there has been some educational progress in Africa in the last 25 years."

Let us see why after its lengthy rule in Africa British Imperialism has failed utterly to make anything like the cultural progress which the Soviet Union has achieved among the formerly oppressed peoples in a mere twenty years.

#### *Basic Aim of Soviet Education.*

The aim of Soviet education is to make Socialist beings of its citizens, to fit all of them for working collectively in the common interests of all. Its educational policy is not designed, as in capitalist countries, to equip its men and women for a competitive system in which only the fortunate few can achieve 'success.' "The economic basis of the Soviet Union is, as is well known, a Socialist system of the national economy," writes Madame Maisky, "in which private profit-making and the exploitation of man by man is excluded, and the training and education of our children is in conformity with this principle. . . . While our teachers and our leaders enjoin upon our young people the need to be loyal, devoted, brave Soviet citizens, they also stress the rights of all other countries to Self-Determination, to an equal place in the sun."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, national chauvinism is rejected, and Soviet children are taught to regard all other peoples as equal to themselves. Racial arrogance as it is known in capitalist democracies like America and South Africa, and in Fascist countries, is entirely repudiated by Soviet education. .

This cannot be the case in imperialist countries, based on the exploitation of Colonial territories. Doctrines of 'racial inferiority' are inevitable. For the same reasons it is

<sup>1</sup> Madame Maisky: "Article on *Russia's most precious Asset*, in *News Chronicle*, January 14, 1942. Madame Maisky is the wife of the former Soviet Ambassador in Britain.

impossible to propound collectivist ideas to children who will have to go out later into a competitive world, where each must struggle for advantage over the other if he is to make economic headway. The high-born and the influentially assisted have all the advantages in such a system. On the other hand, the U.S.S.R. fosters special ability. Until quite recently education from the primary grade to the university was free to all its citizens, although now a small fee is payable by students in the three top classes of secondary schools and by university students except those attaining a certain standard. This is a tremendous achievement and contrasts glaringly with the position in Africa, where education for the native is nowhere either free or compulsory. It is estimated that there are about six and a half million native children of school age in nine African territories, but only 1,300,000 attend school. Of these, 2.9 per cent are in government schools, 30.8 per cent are in government-aided schools and 66.25 per cent are in unaided schools. "In the Rhodesias and the East African territories about 96 per cent are in or below Standard II; about 90 per cent are in the sub-standards; those who reach Standard IV are about 2.5 per cent, and those who get above Standard VI are put at .1 per cent, or one in a thousand."<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this is in the Imperialist aim, which has been quite clearly amplified by Mr A. I. Mayhew, C.M.G., Joint Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Education of the Colonial Office, in his book on Education in the Colonial Empire. Mr. Mayhew asks: "Is our primary aim to provide effective labour for the development of the country's resources under European direction and control? In this case the village communities in the native reserves would be regarded primarily as reservoirs of labour supply for the white man . . . Or is our aim the training of the native population for the development of his own land and of his industries? . . . Or is it right and possible to combine both these aims?" Mr. Mayhew does not leave it for the reader to decide. Having observed British colonial educational policy in action, he replies to his own enquiry: "Left to himself, the African," we are assured, "is not an ideal wage-earning employee . . . If he is to work harder, longer, and more honestly and con-

<sup>1</sup> Broomfield, *Colour Conflict*—p.108.

tinuously education must inoculate ideas of sanctity of contract and of ordinary honesty to his employer. . . . This is the task of the urban or mines school—which it may take generations to perform. Even the most effective schools will not ensure for European capital the kind of labour it needs.”

There you have it. The African is lazy, yet the English language has acquired the phrase “to work like a nigger.” Where is the compatibility between these two viewpoints? It seems that the Negro does not regard with the needful reverence the right of the white man to exploit him to death in return for vanishing wages, and therefore that such education as he may receive shall be directed towards making him duly observant of his sacred obligations to the European capitalists who have taken away his lands and erected the prerequisite conditions for transforming him into a helot.

Lord Hailey points out that “there are Africans, especially on the west coast, who feel that an educational course which is designed to suit African conditions carries with it its own confession of inferiority. There are again Europeans who feel the policy ministers to the prejudices of those who, apprehensive of the economic competition of the native, would confine him to a separate world of thought and social habit.”<sup>1</sup>

British colonial officials and many others interested in colonial matters have come to a gradual realisation that the present position, particularly with regard to education, is so deplorable that an overhaul is long overdue. The Advisory Committee on Education declared in 1925, “the door of advancement through higher education must be increasingly open for those who, by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education.” But this has remained just a grandiloquent phrase, for in West Africa, out of a total native population of 30 millions, just thirty Africans are doctors in the Government Medical Service. In the Union of South Africa there are no more than ten Bantu doctors.<sup>2</sup> Uganda boasts only one African, and he originates from the West Indies.

Because of recent events and as a consequence of persistent demands from the colonial peoples themselves, the

<sup>1</sup> *An African Survey*: Lord Hinley.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

British Government has been induced to demonstrate an interest in altering the present disturbing situation in the sphere of education. Adopting the time-honoured procedure, a number of commissions have been appointed to consider the problem of mass education in various parts of the Empire.

As already stated, the Colonial Office set up in 1924 an Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, and this Committee has now established a sub-Committee, with Mr. C. W. M. Cox as chairman, "To consider the best approach to the problem of mass literacy and adult education, other than literacy, in the more backward dependencies, taking into account the emphasis which the Advisory Committee has laid in past years upon community education; and to make recommendations." This Committee has special reference to Africa, but there is a Commission, under the Hon. Sir Cyril Asquith, which is enquiring into education for the British Empire as a whole. Another Commission, headed by the Rt. Hon. Colonel Walter Elliot, is to wade through the wilderness of West African illiteracy, while a further Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir James Irvine, Vice-Chancellor of St. Andrew's University, is approaching the problem of university education in the West Indies.

What is there to hope from this plethora of commissions? Reviewing the problem, over which it seems to be somewhat exercised, *The Times* is of the opinion that "if mass education were to be solely a matter of a team of experts moving into a district and taking illiteracy by storm, it is doubtful whether the manœuvre would succeed . . . Mass education must be, above all, a popular movement. It must well up from within the community like a spring, not descend like rain from heaven."<sup>1</sup> But how is such a popular movement possible in countries where the people, desirous as they are of education, are governed by an alien people who allow them no voice in planning their own affairs? In the Soviet Union, it was to the advantage of the Central Government to have an educated population, and utilising the new awakening brought about by the Revolution, the authorities sponsored a popular movement from below. The Com-

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, January 13, 1944.

unist Party sent its representatives among the people to spread a fervour for education, and inasmuch as the whole system for the elimination of illiteracy was planned for the entire Union, and not piecemeal, a greater proportion of the budget was allocated to the most backward regions. Everything was done to keep the popular desire for education at boiling point. The efforts of the Soviet Government convinced the ignorant masses of the genuineness of their interest in education. But the position in the British Empire is vastly different. The great mass of colonial people are suspicious of the Government, and it is impossible under the present system of imperialism to fan a popular movement. Where are the acolytes to promote such a cultural renaissance, and what economic benefits can the Imperialist Government offer as a motivating desire for education?

Then again, there is, of course, the burning and ultimately most crucial question of financing any plan for mass education. As the same article in *The Times* points out, "finance will, inevitably, be the limiting factor." It is frankly recognised, especially by those responsible for planning imperial matters, that the cost of any wide scheme of colonial education will be far beyond the resources of the Colonies concerned. It has been suggested that the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund shall provide the resources. In fact, it is becoming a habit now to fall back upon this fund as a prop when all other means fail. But this is a very rickety prop. The Colonial Welfare and Development Fund can draw upon £50,000,000 over a period of ten years, thus providing an average expenditure of £1 per head of the Colonial population for every kind of welfare and development.<sup>1</sup> It is ludicrous, therefore, to imagine that anything more than a very tiny fraction would be available for education. And it is well to remember that any part of the £50,000,000 which is not spent in any one year out of the Fund cannot be carried over to the next year.

The general hopelessness of the whole position has been realised in the decision of the Viceroy of India to hold over

<sup>1</sup> Criticising the niggardly appropriations of the Colonial Office, Mr. Ben Riley, M.P., observed that "Less than £1,000,000 has been spent in five years on the African Colonial population of 50,000,000 people—an average of one penny a year." Quoted from Hansard July 20, 1944.



the plan drawn up by Mr. John Sargent for mass education in India until that country has increased its industrial and agricultural wealth to pay for it. This is tantamount to deferring the whole plan forever. British interests, in the first place, are against the industrialisation of India, and its whole policy has been directed towards the retardation of it. But even if this were not so, it is absolutely essential, as the Soviet Government realised, for mass education to progress simultaneously with industrialisation. It was largely in order to create an intelligent working class that the Soviet Government was so zealous in promoting literacy throughout the population of the U.S.S.R., emphasising most particularly the needs of the more backward peoples in this direction.

With mass education seemingly beyond the reach of the Colonial peoples of the British Empire, it is not surprising that science and research are entirely beyond the ken of African natives. Throughout the British possessions on the African continent there is not a single research institute or school open to the natives. Africa is equally poor in public libraries. Apart from a few in West African coastal towns, such institutions hardly exist. In 1941, friends of the Africans established a small library in Johannesburg in memory of the writer, Winifred Holtby, whose sympathy for these oppressed peoples often found expression in acts of kindness towards them. But this is a private effort only. Throughout the once colonial territories of the Soviet Union libraries have sprung up with almost mushroom-like rapidity. For example, whereas Uzbekistan did not have a single public library at the time of the Revolution, it boasted 187 in 1928, 607 in 1932, and 1,150 in 1937, to serve a population of a little over six millions! The same cultural results could be obtained in Tropical Africa within a generation given the proper political and economic set-up. "We have splendid human material," observed Dr. Haden Guest, M.P., speaking about future possibilities in West and East Africa. "They are, in fact, exactly comparable with the human material which the Soviet authorities found in Central Asia and in the Soviet Union when they came to power. Some of these people were at that time nomads and some were entirely illiterate; while others had even no methods of writing. Some had no education at all. By help and proper planning and the

organisation of economic resources for their benefit, the Soviet Union, out of people as primitive as those in Tropical Africa, made that mighty power of which we are now seeing the strength on the front against the Germans. The people who are now fighting the Germans were 20 years ago as primitive as some of these people now are in West Africa."<sup>1</sup>

### *Cultural Renaissance in the Soviet East.*

The resurgence of learning in the Asiatic territories of the Soviet Union has had its effect in a Press whose scope is wider and greater than anywhere else in the world. Every national section or group has its own newspapers in its own language. Factories have their own newspapers, collective farms theirs. Just before the first World War, there were published in the Czarist Empire 859 newspapers, with a total circulation of 2,700,000 copies. These papers were in the hands of the bankers, large industrialists and big landowners. Policy was largely dictated by the Russo-Asiatic Bank, and the newspapers were, therefore, quite naturally organs of the aggressive policy of Czarist Imperialism. In 1939, there were 8,550 newspapers, with a circulation of 47,520,000 copies. *Pravda* (Truth) and *Izvestia* (The Gazette), the chief Soviet organs, have large circulations running into 2 million and 1,600,000 copies respectively. Kazakstan has 322 newspapers for a population of six millions. Each industry has its newspaper, and so have the Red Army and Navy. In addition there are travelling newspapers, which go into the agricultural districts during the sowing and harvesting seasons. Periodicals and magazines of all kinds are numerous.

The cultural emancipation of the oppressed peoples and national minorities has given a tremendous fillip to the production of all forms of literature. In Central Asia, for instance, the number of books published increased from 1,936,000 copies in 1925 to 25,400,000 in 1930. In Azerbaijan alone, there were 8,100,000 books published in 1938. Books are being published in 111 languages, alphabets for 40 of which have been developed since the Revolution. The 86,000 public libraries of the Soviet Union have a circulation of 166-million. In addition to this, the public has purchased since 1917 more than 692-million books.

<sup>1</sup> Hansard—June 6, 1944.

Such a situation where classics like Balzac's books run to about 1½-million copies; where Victor Hugo's works sell to the extent of 3,378,000 copies, and Pushkin's works to the extraordinary number of 27,864,000, is absolutely impossible within the British Empire, the total population of which is almost three times that of the Soviet Union. It is superfluous to debate the demands which this universal enthusiasm for literature in all its forms has made upon the publishing facilities of the Union. All publishing is in the hands of the State publishing houses and Co-operatives, which have been established in each Republic, and they employ huge staffs.

Incentive has been given to writers, who, unlike those in the rest of the world, are not left to starve while they endeavour to turn out work from which so often they reap small benefit while they live. In the early days of the Union there was a great cult of 'proletarian' literature, and culture which, with the swing of the pendulum, veered in a direction quite opposite from the Czarist kind, which was termed 'bourgeois' and despised as such. Much of the material which was turned out was inferior, and it was urged that there was a good deal in the best of Russian literature which it would benefit young people to study, so long as they did not adopt the nationalist content. For European literature is undoubtedly bourgeois in content, while literature in the Soviet Union reflects a Socialist content. Soviet literature is rooted in the lives of the people; it belongs to the people, and is far removed from the 'ivory tower' literature which still predominates in Great Britain, where, generally speaking, there is no contact between writers and the common people.

The classics of the great writers of the world are widely popularised, and literature in the Soviet Union is not the preserve of a single section or group. The U.S.S.R. translates more books of foreign origin than any other country in the world. For example, it has printed 2½-million copies of Upton Sinclair's works; over 7-million of Jack London's books, and more than 2-millions of Mark Twain's. Agitation and propaganda is designed to awaken the interest of the peoples in literature. The native peoples of Africa are too poor to develop their own literature, and are not aided by the administrations. Moreover, the people are illiterate, and therefore even where one or two native publishers have set up

independent newspapers, as, for instance on the West African coast, their distribution is very limited indeed. It can easily be recognised what an extension of the British publishing market there would be if there were literate populations in the colonies. As it is, there is no incentive to the young educated natives of Africa to take up writing as a career, and everybody is the loser thereby.

#### *National Culture Comes Into Its Own.*

The efflorescence of national cultures in the Soviet Union has led to an interchange between the different peoples and races, enriching the whole. Their cultural growth has served to break down the racial prejudices and animosities of long standing. While developing their own individual cultures, each borrows from the rest, and there has been a rebirth of poetry and drama. Music, opera and the theatre in the national regions have been sponsored in their growth by the Soviet Government. Georgia, Armenia, Kazakstan have in recent years produced prominent writers—those countries where illiteracy was most widespread under the Czar. In Kazakstan, where an intelligentsia has come into being, national literature and culture is flourishing steadily. There are 38 municipal and village theatres playing in the national language, among them the Academic Drama Theatre and Opera and Ballet Theatre in Alma Ata, the capital. The works of the Kazak national poet, Jambul, and writers like Mukhanov and Auezov, are read widely by all the Soviet peoples—Russians and non-Russians alike. It is a truism that culture cannot flourish without patronage, and in the Soviet Union money has been forthcoming for the purpose of founding art centres everywhere. Today there is no country in the world where writers and artists are so honoured as in the Soviet Union, where they have a status which in other countries is generally reserved for generals, successful industrialists and politicians. First values really come first.

And this cultural growth of the people is pointedly reflected in their outlook as citizens. They take most seriously their right to self-government and are truly being groomed to take their part in directing their own affairs. The following table shows, even as early as 1931, what active

participation the national minorities were taking in Soviet Government:

<i>Republic</i>	<i>No. of Voters 1931</i>	<i>Voted at elections</i>	<i>Percentage voting</i>
R.S.F.S.R.	58,686,000	41,482,000	70.8
Ukrainian S.S.R.	16,208,000	12,214,000	75.3
White Russian S.S.R.	2,733,000	1,871,000	68.4
Transcaucasian S.S.R.	3,270,000	2,420,000	74.0
Turkman S.S.R.	652,000	480,000	73.6
Uzbek S.S.R.	2,655,000	1,981,000	74.6
Tajik S.S.R.	662,000	497,000	75.1
U.S.S.R.	84,866,000	60,945,000	73.1

It will be seen that the average percentage of voters at the Soviet elections in a number of National Republics was higher than the average for the whole of the U.S.S.R.

In truth, the countries of the once oppressed peoples and national minorities of the Soviet Union are becoming Socialist in essence while retaining national form. But the form is less political than cultural. National boundaries as they are understood in Western Europe do not exist. It is the differences of culture which mark the division of peoples in the U.S.S.R., and even these are now, under the prevailing conditions, tending to fuse. East and West have disappeared in the Soviet Union, giving the lie to those who persist that the barriers can never fall, that the two are mutually antipathetic. There is no inherent clash between Colour or Race. A socialist society has proved that artificially created dissensions based on race, colour and creed can be wiped out in quite a short time by providing for the economic needs of all. The Soviet multi-national form of state enables people to maintain their national and cultural separateness and at the same time preserves their economic and political unity.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HOW THE FORMER COLONIES ARE BEING INDUSTRIALISED.

How is it, many people are asking, that the Soviet Union, despite the fact that its chief arsenals, European Russia and the Ukraine, were destroyed in the early months of the German onslaught was yet able to achieve and maintain superiority of arms and war weapons? The answer lies in the fact that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world where erstwhile subject territories of Imperialism have been transformed from backward agrarian regions into highly industrialised centres. The Soviet Government is able to draw upon the former colonial territories of Soviet Asia to redress the losses of Soviet Europe.

Long before the Revolution, Lenin stressed that the granting of the Right of Self-Determination to the subject races and oppressed nationalities was in itself merely a gesture innocent of meaning unless they were given assistance in exercising the right in practice. This was possible only if they were rendered aid in achieving a higher standard of civilisation as speedily as possible. The essential prerequisite for this condition was the control of the State authority by the proletariat, who would abolish capitalism and socialise the means of production, that is, the land, the factories, the mines, and so forth. Lenin never regarded the establishment of the 'proletarian dictatorship' as just an end in itself, as some of his critics assert, but as the necessary circumstance for bringing about the fraternity of peoples and nationalities in building the new civilisation along Socialist lines.

Hence the consolidation of the various administrative units into a multi-national State, the U.S.S.R., provided the political instrument through which the Bolsheviks were able to tackle the economic and cultural problems inherited from

Czarism. The importance of reconstructing the economy of the whole country was paramount. But the transition towards industrial development presented formidable difficulties. The superstition and ignorance of centuries had to be uprooted; the struggle against abject poverty and disease had to be attacked. Nomadic tribes had to be encouraged to settle; age-old religious and tribal feuds had to be adjusted. But the outstanding problem raised by the necessity to push forward industrial development in a country overwhelmingly agrarian was that of the creation of a skilled working class. Such a class hardly existed outside the old industrial cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tula, Kharkov, and Odessa. In the Soviet East and Central Asia, there were oppressors and oppressed, feudal landlords and serfs, but not a middle class or a proletariat. Russian capitalism had been content to exploit within these regions such wealth as was easily accessible, and had not penetrated even to the limited extent of Western Imperialism in Africa and India. The building up of the Soviet industry entailed enormous sacrifices, the full extent of which we shall perhaps never know. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the Soviet peoples defended with such extreme tenacity the system which they have built up at so much individual and collective expense of strength and comfort. For what the common people build for themselves, they defend beyond death.

#### *The Creation Of An Asiatic Proletariat.*

Within the Soviet Union as a whole the urban population was some 19 per cent in 1918. The proportion in the Tartar Republic was 11 per cent., in Kazakstan it was 8 per cent. In the autonomous republics of the R.S.F.S.R.—Chuvashia and Yakutia—some 5 per cent. only. And even these and other outlying urban populations were largely Russian. Only 338 out of every 10,000 occupied persons in the Soviet Union were engaged in industry. This figure dwindled to tapering point in the eastern territories, where it ranged down from 85 to 9, and here again was made up chiefly of emigrant Russian workers. Russian workers in Turkmenistan accounted for more than a quarter of the Russian population there, scarcely 2 per cent. of the Turkmans being industrial workers. Even in the Ukraine, among the most industrialised

of the subjected territories, there was little difference in the proportion between urban and rural labourers. The town workers were mainly Russians, the Ukrainians almost exclusively peasants.<sup>1</sup>

Central Asia and the more easterly territories, moreover, because of climatic and soil conditions, were sparsely populated. Even in 1940, the combined populations of the S.S. Republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, Kazakstan, and Turkmenistan numbered 16,640,000, that is, less than the population of the British West African colony of Nigeria, which is 21 millions.

In such a situation it was left for the Bolsheviks to do for the Soviet East what capitalism has accomplished in Africa, India, and elsewhere; that is, to break down tribal and feudal society. This was the necessary prelude to take these people farther than Imperialism ever can take them; to help them forward to the Socialist objective by raising them up out of their primitive tribalism and pre-capitalist forms of social production, and to carry them forward to socialist conditions and higher standards of life without passing through the hazards of the intermediary capitalist stage. "As a result of this violent perturbation," observed Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, "the social structure of Russian Central Asia had undergone modifications. The power of the native rulers, the Moslem clergy, and the feudal chiefs, the beys, had now been broken. The curious medieval guilds which had controlled the trades in the cities had disappeared. Thus the whole framework of a social order was done away with by one formidable blow."<sup>2</sup>

The process of proletarianisation went on simultaneously with the Industrial Revolution in these countries. This was first started with the assistance of the Russian proletariat of the more advanced sections, who were used by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to create cadres from the native populations of the backward national regions. These cadres were then used to train further numbers of indigenous workers in skilled labour. Besides the expert technicians and some skilled operatives from the existing Russian proletariat and from abroad, vast numbers of un-

<sup>1</sup> Hans Kohn—*Nationalism in the Soviet Union*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, July 1928.



skilled workers were recruited from the indigenous populations. Many of these were nomad and pastoral people living in a primitive tribal stage. They represented the genesis of the proletariat of the Soviet East who during the war operated the most intricate machinery for providing the Red Army with its weapons and war apparatus.

John Scott, writing in *Behind the Urals* of his experiences in the building up of Magnitogorsk, tells of a little class he had "with the farm personnel, which consisted as a score of absolutely green shepherds, about half Russians and the rest Bashkirs and Tartars. They had never seen any kind of machinery or equipment before coming to the farm. They had been taught that when you pushed the pedal the tractor moved. That was the extent of their technical education. Matters such as lubrication and timing were completely beyond their ken. We tried our best to explain some simple points, but I am afraid very little of what we said was understood. . . .

"I visited the same farm four years later and found astonishing changes. . . . several of the Tartar tractor drivers were still there and showed me with pride their new tractor barn full of comparatively well-cared-for machines. They had become fair mechanics and nearly all the machinery on hand was in working order."<sup>1</sup>

The facility with which these 'raw' Asiatic natives adapted themselves to the new conditions of technology has been a cause of astonishment to all who knew them just over two decades ago. They not only rapidly adjusted themselves to work at the benches and forges, and in the mines, but grasped the intricate technical knowledge propounded to them at the technological institutions which the Soviet Government provided to complement their practical experiences on the actual work. In just over twenty years there has been brought about a social transformation which in other industrialised countries has taken several generations, and in some cases even more than a century. The rapidity with which these semi-civilized tribes assimilated the essentials of industrial technology surpasses even the speed with which the Japanese adapted themselves to modern industrial methods.

<sup>1</sup> John Scott: *Behind the Urals*, p. 79.

This example of the almost lightning transmutation of dis-united backward peoples, unfamiliar as few Africans are with even such common products of modern times as trains, automobiles, radios, into a solid unity of intelligent workers, familiarised with the most intricate modern machinery, is the best repudiation of the oft-repeated falsity that Colonial peoples are inherently incapable of adapting themselves to Western civilisation and of taking over their own self-government. It is the practical and effective negation of a plausible, fallacious apology for Imperialism, indulged in not only by rank imperialists behind the mask of 'trusteeship,' but even by people kindly disposed towards coloured races, whom, however, they regard as creatures akin to children, to be treated as such and not as adult people capable of directing their own destinies.

The backwardness of the peoples of Central Asia, like those of Africa, rested on economic inequality resulting from historical circumstances, and therefore the first step was to secure to them economic equality with the most advanced centres of the Union. It was decided that aid to the backward national areas "must first of all be expressed by taking practical measures to organise industrial centres in the republics of the formerly oppressed nations."<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Union, as can be imagined, was in no position to inaugurate a comprehensive reconstruction until internal counter-revolution and foreign interventionist forces had been defeated.

#### *Inauguration of A Planned Programme.*

However, even before this had been achieved, Lenin called for the drawing up of a plan of economic rehabilitation and development which would embrace the whole Union. The Committee which was set up to supervise the carrying out of the plan in 1921 was known as the Gosplan. It entailed a survey of the natural resources of the whole of the vast area of the Soviet Union, and the redistribution of industry so as to utilise the wealth of the land at the source. No longer were the Asiatic sections of the country to be skimmed to feed the industrial centres of the erstwhile dominant people, the Great Russians. Wherever riches could be wrested from

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Twelfth Congress of the C.P.S.U., April 1923.

the earth, there the industries would be placed. This is in marked contrast to the system of Imperialism, which uses colonial areas as agrarian hinterlands for the benefit of the industrialised metropolitan country, thereby keeping the native races backward and poor.

Between 1921 and 1927 there was a certain progress in industrial reconstruction, but it was the first Five-Year Plan (1928-32) which really set it in full swing. "The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan," said Stalin, "was to create such an industry in our country as would be able to re-equip and reorganise not only the whole of industry but also transport and agriculture—on the basis of Socialism."

Never in history was there such a gigantic programme of planned development as this. A capital of 64,600,000,000 rubles was involved. Of this sum, 19,500,000,000 rubles were invested in industrial and electrical power development; 10,000,000,000 rubles in transport; and 23,200,000,000 rubles in agriculture. To enable the former colonial areas to catch up quickly with the more industrialised parts of the Union, the largest proportions of capital investment were allotted to them. Inasmuch as these Asiatic territories are largely the sources of raw material, the Soviet Union as a whole would gain doubly from this policy. The more backward areas would be brought to the level of the more advanced, so paving the way for the further progress of all, while at the same time they would be laying the basis of those heavy industries of which the Union stood most in need. In helping forward the level of development amongst the former colonial peoples, the Russians were also helping themselves. The good of one verily reacted to the good of all.

The policy of devoting the greater aggregations of capital investment to the former colonies had its rewards in the enormous excess of output in the basic industries over the estimates of the Five-Year Plan. The following table gives the percentage of increase in the last year of the Plan (1932) over the first, taking the increase in the U.S.S.R. as a whole as 289 per cent.:

Crimea	290	Yakutia	350
Transcaucasian		Middle Asia	494
S.F.S.R.	302	Daghestan	500
Karelia	306	Kazakstan	549

Ukrainian S.S.R.	358	Kirghizia	673
White Russian S.S.R.	442	Chuvashia	949
		Buriat-Mongolia	967

From the above figures it will be readily apparent that all the territories inhabited primarily by former colonial and oppressed nationalities, without exception, achieved a greater increase than the average for the whole of the Union.

Such results are impossible of achievement under Imperialism. Certainly nowhere in Africa could one envisage the establishment of production on the Soviet scale or basis, all redounding to the common good. In Africa, the proletarianisation of the native peoples has gone hand in hand with the appropriation of the land, the imposition of head tax, and the opening up only of mining industries and the building of railways and docks. These fields of capital investment as well as large-scale farming offer the best profits to the European capitalists who dominate the blacks. But such raw materials as are drawn from Africa are carried to the European 'mother' countries to feed the metropolitan industries, leaving Africa barer and poorer.

The innovation of the Soviet policy of advancing the industrialisation of the remoter national territories was made possible only because it had abolished capitalism and dissolved the previous oppressor-oppressed relationship between the Imperialist metropolis and the Colonial periphery. No detailed analysis is required to observe the immediate advantages of establishing industry at the source of raw materials. There is the avoidance of waste, and of unnecessary transport; there is greater speed in producing the finished article from the basic raw materials.

#### *Soviet Industry Moves East.*

During the second Five-Year Plan (1932-37) Soviet industry shifted eastwards, and these regions achieved a greater industrial development than the western sector. The Central Asian Republics in particular made tremendous progress.

(A)—*Kazakstān*, covering an enormous stretch of land which reaches to the western borders of China on the East, and as far as the Volga and the limits of the R.S.F.S.R. on

the West, possesses the most varied conditions of soil and climate. For all its great area of 1,585,000 square miles, however, it has a population of only some 6,145,300. For the first time in the history of this expansive territory its vast resources of coal are being fully exploited. The coal mining centre is at Karaganda, which produces more than 8 million tons a year, as against 90,000 tons ten years ago. Kazakstan's non-ferrous metal industry is fast becoming the chief centre for the whole of the Union. This Republic is extremely rich in mineral resources. Rich deposits of gold and other rare minerals like antimony, mercury, cobalt, etc., are found in the Altai region. Copper, lead, nickel, zinc are possessed in such quantity as to make the Republic of Kazakstan first for these metals in the Soviet Union. The lead-zinc industry at Chimkent is indispensable to the Soviet economy—(producing 61 per cent.)—and is supported by the lead refineries at Ridder and Ust-Kamenogorsk. The world-famous medical preparation, Santorun, is also produced at Chimkent. Kazakstan actually provides 60 per cent. of the Union's lead resources, and 50 per cent. of its zinc. A large chemical combine has been established at Akyubinsk, in Northern Kazakstan, which also has important chrome deposits. Rubber, salt and phosphorus industries are also highly organised in this Republic, which also boasts a large petroleum industry.

It was through the territory of Kazakstan that the great railway project, the Turk-Sib (Turkestan-Siberian) railway was completed within four years. This "country of desolate steppes and no roads" was laid with 1,442 kilometres of railroad, which traverses its whole length. The railway, opened in 1930, together with branch lines laid then and subsequently, connects the basic industrial and agricultural districts of the Republic. More railways have been built here than in any other Central Asian Republic. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, skilled workers were drafted from the West to these areas. Chimkent, for example, formerly a nomad village, is now the capital of South Kazakstan, with a population of over 74,000. It mines two-thirds of the country's lead and zinc.

(B)—*Uzbekistan* is the most thickly populated of the Central Asian Republics with 6,282,000 people occupying

64,000 square miles. Tashkent, the capital, famous as an historic Moslem city, is taking first place among industrial towns in this part of the Soviet Union. Its 1941 population of 600,000 is approaching that of the great American town of Pittsburgh, to which it may be compared industrially. Near Tashkent were discovered the Angren coal fields, and about fifty miles from the town, at Almalyk, are located the biggest copper mines, for Uzbekistan is the third largest producer of copper in the U.S.S.R. It also has large deposits of wolfram and molybdenum, and oil is being increasingly yielded. In 1940, the output of crude oil neared 300,000 tons, and much of it was refined locally. Branches of heavy industry for the production of agricultural machinery and chemicals have been established at Tashkent.

The many rare and valuable metals and minerals found in Tajikistan, Kirghizstan and Turkmenistan are being worked on a profitable scale, but the fact that two-thirds of Turkmenistan is desert, and the mountainous character of both Tajikistan and Kirghizstan makes railways a difficult problem, for the moment restricts these to a largely agricultural economy. Railway construction, however, has been by no means neglected. On the contrary, it has been planned and carried out to link up all important points. The capitals of Tajikistan and Kirghizstan, Stalinabad and Frunze respectively, are connected with the main Central Asia railroad, and the trackage laid covers several thousands of miles. New roads and railways are helping to overcome the difficulties of communication. Industries are springing up in the desert oases of Turkmenistan, and the populations of the chief towns like Ashkabad, the capital, and Krasnovodsk, at the beginning of the Trans-Caspian railway, are expanding. The Central Asian achievements in industrial construction are particularly distinctive, since prior to the Revolution it was entirely devoid of any kind of industry.

Cotton is the staple production of Central Asia, and its major industry, especially in Turkmenistan, while fertilisers for the fields are now for the first time being manufactured locally. This is as a result of the erection of a big hydro-electro-chemical plant at Chirchik, near Tashkent, which was put up shortly before Hitler invaded the Ukraine. This industry is now able to clothe the Red Army. In 1938,

production had reached as high as 239,000 tons, an output very much greater than ten years before. Total production is planned to reach 354,000 tons, and everything is being done to increase the yield, which can be improved. The planned production is to meet the growing needs of the textile industry, which still has to import cotton from abroad from time to time. Mechanised methods are now so widely used that they perform 80% of the ploughing, 57% of the cotton sowing, and 42% of cultivation. "In the modernization of agriculture, Uzbekistan is ahead of any European country. In 1938, Germany with twelve-fold the population had fewer tractors and harvester combines in use than Soviet Uzbekistan." In the days of the Czar the cotton was just carried off in the raw state, as still happens in the African cotton growing regions of Sudan, Uganda and Northern Nigeria, which cannot produce even a handkerchief. The aim of the Five-Year Plan was to build up the textile industry in the cotton growing districts, so that now spinning and weaving combines at places like Tashkent, Stalinabad, Ashkabad, and Ferghana help to turn the raw material into yarn and cotton piece goods.

"But it has been during the war that Uzbek industry has made its greatest strides, eclipsing the progress previously recorded. In 1913, industrial production came to only 42 per cent of the Russian economy. By 1937, 77 per cent of the economy of the U.S.S.R. was industrial. Today Uzbekistan, which had barely emerged from the Middle Ages a decade ago, is at approximately the same level. For by August, 1942, 75 per cent. of the value created by Uzbek economy was coming from industry. During the prosperous period of the twenties, American economy was 83 per cent industrial, and German 80. Thus, the Uzbeks are the first Asiatic nation, with the possible exception of the Japanese, to close the gap in economic development between East and West. And their agriculture is fully modern while Japan's is incredibly primitive. Moreover, they are the most powerful, economically, of the states of Islamic background either in Asia or Africa, a fact which has become known during the war to the people of so important a Moslem state as Iran. In 1939, before its remarkable wartime expansion, Uzbek industrial production exceeded that of Turkey, Iran and

Afghanistan put together, although these three states have a combined population seven times that of Uzbekistan."<sup>1</sup>

(C)—*Azerbaijan*, the Trans-Caucasian Republic, with Baku as its capital, "is one of the richest oil-producing regions in the world. Before the Revolution, this oil was exploited by foreign interests and little of the benefits or profits went to the inhabitants. Today the Azerbaijan people own the oil wells and refineries for themselves, running them in the interests of the whole country. Trade unions help to fix wages; they run all the social services and are largely responsible for new housing, schools, clubs, hospitals, etc., which are built out of profits from the oil."<sup>2</sup> Baku, whose population stood at 809,000 in 1939, has developed auxiliary industries, covering metals, textiles, and timber. Azerbaijan is the second largest producer of cotton after Uzbekistan, and possesses the second largest silk plant in Europe.

(D)—*Daghestan*, an Autonomous Republic within the R.S.F.S.R., on the western Caspian, before the Revolution possessed one single industrial enterprise in Port Petrovsk, a mill manufacturing cheap cotton. Now there is a mechanised glass industry, wool-washing and wool-weaving establishments, canneries, chemical and leather producing works.

Under the Czar the Russian bourgeoisie could not bear the idea of despoiling the scenic beauty of the Crimea with the smoke of industry. Therefore, the food and tobacco industries were the only ones fostered in the Russian 'Riveria.' The Kerch metallurgical plant in the Kerch peninsula, the gateway to the Caucasus, and the metal works opened under the first Five-Year Plan prepared the way for the intensification of large-scale industry. Sulphur refining was established at Cherkurkayash, and cement production at Kharadog.

The geological surveys carried out by the Gosplan assisted in determining the geographical allocation of industry throughout the Soviet Union. In view of the fact that raw materials derived largely in the Soviet East, it meant that heavy industry had to be established there. For instance, the Urals-Kuzbas combine was formed to utilise the vast reserves

<sup>1</sup> *Soviet Far East and Central Asia*, pp. 119-120-121.

<sup>2</sup> Article entitled *The Caucasus will not revolt*, in *New Statesmen and Nation*, September 6.



of coal at Kuznetsk in Siberia and link it up with the iron ore of Magnitogorsk in the Urals, each area exchanging with the other the raw material which it lacks. Trucks from Kuznetsk taking coal to Magnitogorsk returned thence with iron ore, so that both districts, making full use of their own natural resources, with the aid of each other maintained heavy industries in two distinct areas, to the benefit of the whole Union. Such collaboration as this is absolutely impossible under private capitalism. The new railway system now links transport halfway at Karaganda, allowing Karaganda coal to be carried to the Urals, greatly reducing the long hauls of Kuznetsk coal. The Luznetsk-Karaganda-Magnitogorsk resources are now being used exclusively for the Soviet Union's war industries. This is the Red Army's main arsenal. During the course of this industrial growth of Western Siberia a number of towns have sprung up, and their expanding size will give some indication of the industrial development. Novosibirsk with its present population of over half a million had only 120,000 in 1936; inhabitants of Kemerovo, numbering 21,000 six years ago, are 200,000 strong today. Stalinsk, formerly a town of 3,000, now has a quarter of a million workers.

Almost in the centre of the Soviet Union, the Ural industrial region possesses valuable deposits of basic ores—iron and coal—and in addition numerous metals and minerals without which modern industry is unable to forge ahead. Manganese, aluminium, copper, oil, lead, asbestos, potash, gold, silver, platinum, all contribute to the riches of the territory, whose wide forests also provide timber. "Until 1930," says John Scott, "these fabulous riches were practically undeveloped. During the decade from 1930 to 1940 some two hundred industrial aggregates of all kinds were constructed and put into operation in the Urals."<sup>1</sup> For example, manganese discovered a few miles from Magnitogorsk began to be mined in 1934; and today it is used in blast furnaces all over the Soviet Union, besides being exported.

One of the vastest sections of the U.S.S.R., *Yakutia*, occupies about 15 per cent of the entire territory of the Union. The almost complete absence of any means of com-

<sup>1</sup> John Scott : *Behind the Urals*, pp. 202-203.

munication, its severe climatic conditions, sparsity of population, lack of specialists and skilled labour, contributed to retard its development. Nonetheless, important strides have been made under the Soviets. Saw mills and leather factories have been built, the Saganur and Kangal coal mines are now being worked. Transport facilities are being increased, as the economy of the Republic rests upon this factor.

(E)—*Chuvashia*, the Autonomous Republic nearest to Moscow, possessed in 1913 a total of 29 industrial enterprises, primarily lumber and food concerns. Their basic capital was estimated at about a million rubles. While the main trend of development is still towards the lumber and food industries, headway is being made in chemical and non-ore mineral industries. A phosphorite plant has been built at Burnat, and a large clinker factory.

#### *Agriculture and Collectivisation.*

Agriculture in the Soviet Union has been subjected to the same thorough revision and development as industry. In fact, the metamorphosis which has taken place in the outlook of the great mass of peasants is perhaps greater than that of the industrial workers. For it must be remembered that where the principle of private property obtains every peasant is a potential landlord. Therefore, the effort to collectivise the land, so essential to the Soviet régime with its Socialist objective, met with considerable sabotaging opposition from the wealthier peasantry (kulaks), particularly as the circumstances forced its adoption by ruthless measures from the administration.

When the time comes for the African territories to be collectivised under a Socialist régime, there will not be the great difficulty of overcoming an individualistic peasantry, as there was in the Soviet Union. The native peoples of Africa still find it difficult to understand the capitalist system of individual tenure which the European is trying to impose upon them. Even against Western capitalist influence they still, in the majority of cases, work their lands communally, and will not have to be taught to forget a system which they have not succeeded in acquiring. Collectivisation will come readily to the native peoples of Africa, thanks to the tribal laws and customs governing common ownership in land.

However, by September 1931 collectivisation in the Soviet Union had made considerable progress, and embraced a large percentage of peasant households, as illustrated in the following table:

Georgia	40%	Bashkiria	66.7%
Turkmenistan	56.7%	Chuvashia	41.5%
Tajikistan	38.5%	Mariy region	42.5%
Tartaria	62.3%	Komi region	56.1%
Kazakstan	62.5%	Buriat Mongolia	68%
Kirghizia	51.3%	Armenia	32.2%
Daghestan	20%	Uzbekistan	66.7%

A number of national districts, such as the Crimea, Adygeya, Moldavia, the German Volga Republic,<sup>1</sup> and others, had in the main completed their collectivisation. Today there are a quarter of a million collective farms of an average size of 1,230 acres, involving a population of nearly 10,000,000 people, and employing half a million tractors and 150,000 combines.

Naturally, with the collectivisation of farming there went hand in hand an increase in the sown area. Uzbekistan today grows well over 60 per cent of the Union's raw cotton, and large-scale irrigation schemes, such as the Ferghana canal, are constantly enlarging the area under cultivation. Opened up in 1939, it brought the newly cultivated area in this region up to 65,000,00 hectares. The Ferghana valley is, indeed, one of the great natural gardens of the world, and produces excellent crops of cotton, rice, and fruit, which is also dried on a large scale in local factories. Silk is also produced on quite a large scale, and there are cotton and silk mills at Tashkent. Reed grown in Kirghizstan is being commercially utilised by being manufactured into paper. This Republic is also producing sugar beet on an increasing scale.

Inasmuch as collective farming is largely mechanised, even the land workers on State farms can be classified today as proletarians. The machine and tractor stations (of which there is a large one at Tashkent), which are the most important means of aiding the national policy of the Union, are also the strongest proletarian influence on the

<sup>1</sup> The German population of this republic were transferred to Siberia as a precautionary measure when the Hitlerite German armies were advancing towards the Volga in 1941.

agricultural populations of the eastern nationalities. They supersede at a bound all the archaic social and economic survivals of the semi-feudal era and strike directly at backwardness. Farming, through the medium of machinery, draws the millions of peasants into new ways of living, and its results prove to them the superiority of the iron tractor over the wooden plough. Not only has it resulted in an agrarian revolution, but has changed the psychology of the people from an individual to a collective outlook.

Even in 1924 and 1925 the wooden plough was the chief agricultural implement in the backward national regions, as it still is in Africa; even the metal plough was comparatively rare in many places. But by the autumn of 1931 there were 48 machine and tractor stations in Uzbekistan, ten each in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, 24 in the Transcaucasian republics, 4 in Daghestan, 44 in Kazakstan, 8 in Kirghizia, 17 in the Tartar Republic, 16 in Bashkiria, etc. Today, of course, these numbers have been multiplied many times. In Kirghizia there are 63, in Turkmenistan 52, in Uzbekistan 177, in Kazakstan 308, in Tajikistan 48 and so on.

State farms have played and still play a most important part in reconstructing agriculture in the backward national regions. They are organised principally on land which had remained uncultivated for centuries, and have changed the areas into cultural bases in a comparatively short time. They have become the economic and cultural centres for the surrounding districts, and it is not too much to say that they have literally transformed the economy of the national regions. By 1939 there were 3,957 state farms occupying an area of 168,000,000 acres.

These farms in particular play an important part in the development of technical crops and cattle breeding. The specialisation of agricultural areas introduced by the Soviet develops the agriculture of the national regions in accordance with their different natural peculiarities and the industrial needs of the territory in relation to raw materials. In the Caucasus, for instance, "irrigation has created vast new areas of cultivation, for much of the land is extremely fertile, but lacks sufficient water to produce crops. The Ararat valley, formerly desert, now produces cotton in large quantities. One irrigation scheme alone, from Lake Sevan, is turning

many hundreds of square miles of semi-desert into rich, green farmland. . . . Around Batum, a place of heavy rainfall, the opposite is taking place. Dangerous swamps have been drained and are now covered with groves of citrus fruits. Upon the hill sides we drove for miles through endless tea plantations where a few years before had been only a tangle of sub-tropical forest. At various strategical points were large modern tea factories surrounded by beautiful gardens."<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which science has been harnessed to the efforts to widen the area of land placed under agriculture of all kinds in the U.S.S.R. exposes once and for all the specious arguments of British Imperialists about the connection of soil erosion in Africa with the abject conditions of the native peoples, particularly in East and South Africa. If desert in the Caucasian regions can be turned into rich fertile land, there is every reason to believe that modern methods of irrigation and canals could do the same thing in Kenya and the South African Protectorate of Bechuanaland, for example.

In the backward regions of the East and of Central Asia, the livestock raising problem was closely connected with the effort to settle the nomadic peoples, who predominated in particular in Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and a number of other places. This way of life made the poorer nomads a source of exploitation for the beys, the rich semi-feudal overlords. Up to 50 per cent of nomadic families in Czarist times were virtually farm labourers for the large cattle breeders, or beys. The new use of machinery in farming, the collectivisation and the establishment of state farms has delivered these lately nomadic peoples from the hardships of their former existence. In Kazakstan alone some 200,000 people of nomadic origin were settled on state farms during the first Five Year Plan.

The whole Soviet system has revised and completely altered the social status of the people of the former colonial countries. Before the Revolution, most of the land was held by the Church, the autocracy and the large Russian landlords. It is not remarkable that as the largest single owner of land the Church had a vested interest in saving the Empire, and hence lined up with the reactionary forces when the cry of

<sup>1</sup> From article entitled *The Caucasus will not revolt*, in *New Statesman and Nation*, September 6, 1931.

"Land to the peasants" went up. In Kazakstan, Daghestan, the Tartar Autonomous Republic, where before the beys reigned supreme and the people were as serfs, the landlords have been eliminated and co-operation between the people is the new note in society.

In fact, "On the morrow of the Great October Revolution, the Soviet Government issued its decree on land. The land which for many centuries had been the object of the peasantry's struggles was nationalised. It was proclaimed the possession of the Socialist State. Landed proprietorship was abolished. Over 370,000,000 acres of land that had formerly belonged to the landlords, the Czar's family and the monasteries was transferred to the peasants for their free use in addition to the land already held by them. The peasants were released from the burden of annual rent payments to the landlords, which amounted to over 500,000,000 gold rubles."<sup>1</sup>

In Africa the natives are squeezed into inadequate reserves, while the 'beys,' the white overlords, enjoy the best lands. In South Africa, for instance, wide areas are set aside as game preserves, while the only solution the administration has to offer for soil erosion on the reserves is the killing off of the people's cattle.

### *Asiatic Women In Industry.*

Greater almost than the emancipation of the workers and peasants from the yoke of Czarist oppression is the emancipation of women in the Soviet Union, and in particular the women of the Soviet East.<sup>2</sup> These women, "the oppressed of the oppressed," as Lenin described them, condemned to the veil and shut off from even the most cursory contact with the outside world, today have their place in the workshops, the factories, the collective farms, the universities, the Soviets and the councils of State. They have taken their place among the explorers, the inventors, and even in the Red Army.

The loosening of the women from their domestic ties opened up untouched sources of labour to assist in Soviet

<sup>1</sup> *Socialist Planning*, issued by K. Borin, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> The best book available on this subject is *Women in the Soviet East*, by Fannina Halle.

reconstruction. They took their place in factory and farm on an equal status with the men. They are paid the same rate of wages for the same kind of work, and receive the same social benefits. They have become proletarianised alongside their men. The civilisation of a country can be judged by the status of its women, who are only socially free when they enjoy freedom from financial dependence upon their menfolk.

In the Soviet Union, neither sex, colour, nationality nor creed is a barrier to economic and social advancement. The trade unions are open to all, and benefits are the same for members of any national or racial group. Formerly oppressed national and colonial peoples were right from the beginning encouraged to join the unions, so that in the Ukraine in 1929 the number of workers thus organised was 1,767,411, of which 56.68 per cent were Ukrainians, 25.41 per cent Russians and 11.97 per cent Jews. In Armenia there were 58,461 organised workers, 89.41 per cent being Armenians. In Azerbaijan, workers organised in the trade unions in July 1928 numbered 214,670, of which 38.1 per cent were Azerbaijan Turks, 36.5 per cent Russians, 15.5 per cent Armenians. In Uzbekistan in 1929 there were 142,163 organised workers, including 56.47 per cent Russians and 26.29 Uzbeks. The proportion was similar in Turkmenistan: 59.35 per cent Russians, 22.66 per cent Turkmenians. Since then the total of workers organised in trade unions has increased vastly, with the bias towards the indigenous nationalities in the different regions.

One of the purposes of the universal programme of modern technical progress undertaken by the Soviet Union was the training of proletarians equal to the task of building up the Socialist State. Hence the former colonial peoples and oppressed nationalities were drawn into the apparatus of government. Guided by Communist Party agents, either from the local ranks or from outside, painstaking attempts were made to recruit them into the party, and they were not precluded from holding any kind of office on the ground that they were culturally backward.

#### *Great Russian Chauvinism Combated.*

The policy of industrialising the Soviet East met with

great opposition from certain elements among the Great Russian Communists, who denied its necessity, considering these territories merely as agrarian appendages of the central industrial regions, just as colonies are regarded under Western Imperialism. It was this kind of Great Russian chauvinism which had to be contended, and because of which the Soviet Power was so careful in its approach to any question on which the national sensibilities of the non-Russian peoples might be disturbed. This 'touchiness' of oppressed peoples towards the ruling race does not disappear with decree. It takes time and example for them to understand the difference between the capitalist class and the workers, and where the workers of the oppressing nation make no attempt to define the distinction in action, the hatred of the colonial peoples for their oppressors embraces the whole dominant nation, irrespective of class.

As far as the South African natives are concerned, they have as good reason to detest white labour as to hate the European farmer-capitalists and exploiting mine owners. For it is the Labour Party of the South African Union which was partly responsible for the introduction of the Colour Bar legislation by the Hertzog Government in 1924, in observance of the promise given in exchange for labour's support against Smuts. This Colour Bar deprives the African natives of the opportunity of advancing themselves economically, culturally or politically. The agreement that white labour must receive a minimum of £1 per day limits the posts which it may occupy to the category of supervisors, while at the same time it prevents the native who, through long contact with a particular job has become skilled, from earning anything but an unskilled wage based at the extremely low level of 3s. per day.

This 'Civilised Labour Policy,' when it was proposed to legislate it, was strongly opposed by the South African Chamber of Mines, not out of any concern for the natives. Business acumen obliged it to recognise that such a policy would react unfavourably upon the efficiency of industry. It realised that white labour assured of a high wage would not trouble to maintain its efficiency, while black labour, deprived of incentive, and de-energised through malnutrition resulting



from an inadequate standard of living, could never be relied upon to work energetically. Not only that, but as so many of the industrialists are beginning to see, the depression of a large population (8-millions) below the barest subsistence level, means the loss of an extensive market for consumption goods for which, owing to superior competition, there is no overseas market. Many perspicacious business men in South Africa are realising with bitterness that the official policy of excluding blacks from the enjoyment of civilised standards of life is preventing the growth of the consumption industries.

At the same time the practice of reserving the administrative posts in West Africa as the preserves of the sons of the British upper middle class creates resentment and a sense of frustration among the small community of educated natives, who are elbowed out of what they consider their rightful due. A nationalist opposition is developed which eventually becomes something to reckon with.

Imperialist policy in Africa has produced a proletariat without recourse to intensive industrialisation. In the Union of South Africa, for instance, out of a native population of 8-millions, about 3-millions have become urbanised, while the majority of the agricultural workers can be classed as semi-proletarians, inasmuch as during some part of the year they are drawn into industry in an endeavour to earn tax money. Their technological standard at the moment, however, is not high.

In striking contrast is the knowledge of modern technology acquired in less than twenty years by the former colonial peoples of the Soviet Union, as a result of the intensive industrialisation of the Eastern areas. The conclusion one may draw from this is that when Africa, India, and other colonies become industrialised their rate of development and the level of technology will surpass that presently obtaining in Great Britain. This is certain, because each new Industrial Revolution moves forward from the point already reached in the most highly developed centres. Of necessity this higher technical knowledge demands in turn higher technical requirements from labour. Moreover, already possessing a proletariat and a semi-proletariat, a socialised economic régime in Africa will not have to set about creating an

industrial working class, with the concomitant difficulties which faced the Soviet Power when it addressed itself to the industrialisation of Central Asia and the East.

*Defects of Soviet Democracy.*

Having paid our tribute to the genuine achievements accomplished by the Soviet Union in its policy towards the previously oppressed peoples and national minorities, we feel obliged to make it clear that we do not regard everything in the Soviet Union as perfect, which Stalin himself admitted to the British Parliamentary delegates to the U.S.S.R. in 1945. The U.S.S.R. has achieved great things, especially in the sphere of industry, education and social well-being of the common people. But to pretend that the Soviet Union is all perfection is sheer sycophancy. There are certain shortcomings in the Soviet régime, especially the curtailment of workers' democracy, but the fact that these unpleasant features have emanated in no way invalidates the correctness of Lenin's national policy. The defects of Soviet Democracy arise out of the failure of the proletariat of the industrialised countries of Western Europe, particularly Germany, to carry through a successful Social Revolution, which left the U.S.S.R., an isolated industrially backward, agrarian country, to carry forward its comprehensive industrialisation alone against the ever-present threat of war and intervention from surrounding capitalist States. Those ugly features of the Soviet régime so repugnant to Western European socialists as being alien to the principles and spirit of International Socialism will, in our opinion, disappear as soon as the objective situation which gave rise to them no longer exists: chiefly, the threat of foreign intervention. That is why it is so necessary for British socialist critics of the Soviet Union to work for the Social Revolution in Europe while at the same time exposing the anti-Soviet schemes of the Anglo-American ruling classes, the last bulwarks of monopoly-capitalism and social reaction. Unquestioning admiration of the Soviet Union is not enough. Concrete aid in assisting forward fundamental social changes in Europe is the surest and most effective way of helping the U.S.S.R. ward off another capitalist attack.

*Soviet National Policy Vindicated.*

Meanwhile we are able to observe the results of the Soviet treatment of the Colonial problem since the fall of the Kerensky Government. Two decades of Soviet rule have done more to develop the self-respect, self-confidence and self-reliance and to raise the general level of culture of the Central Asian peoples than two centuries of alien rule have done for the native races of the British Empire. In this great Eurasian land of the U.S.S.R. there is no longer East and West. Socialist economy has replaced the semi-feudal patriarchal system of the semi-civilized peoples of the Eastern territories; it has revitalised their national cultures and brought them into the main current of economic and social development. As a result of the sympathetic attitude of the Soviet Government, the primitive races have been able to catch up with the more advanced sections. Contrary to popular belief, Socialism does not aim at levelling downwards, but bends all its energies to raising the level ever upwards in keeping with the economic productivity of society.

The aim of Soviet policy is to bring about an interchange of civilisation between the diverse peoples and races comprising the Union, while each retains its national characteristics. Wherever this policy has been ignored within multi-national States, we find the backward ethnic elements becoming millstones around the necks of the more advanced races, holding back the general progress of all. The most tragic effects of racial exclusiveness are to be seen in the Union of South Africa, which is one of the most backward countries in the world precisely because the coloured races have been so shamefully neglected, economically and socially. No longer can the peoples of the world remain half slave, half free; civilised alongside uncivilised.

The Soviet Union is the only part of the world where erstwhile subject territories of Imperialism have been transformed from backward regions into highly industrialised areas. So it was that in the hour of crisis the Soviet Government is able to fall back upon these lately agrarian and pre-capitalist territories of the East for essential needs, in contradistinction to the position of Great Britain, who has been unable to secure any of the vital weapons of war—

planes, tanks, ships and guns—from her colonies and dependencies.

How difficult is the present position of Imperialist Britain. Although in West Africa, for instance, there are iron ore mines in Sierra Leone, large deposits of manganese ore in the nearby colony of the Gold Coast, and coal and tin in Nigeria, these three colonies, with a population of over 30,000,000, are unable to produce a cartridge much less a rifle. To take advantage of these raw materials, Britain is obliged to transport them across the sea to factories at home, with all the risks, additional expense and loss of time which this entails.

It is not surprising that we see at the present time such a paradoxical situation. The British Government, with all the tremendous natural resources of the Empire at its disposal, could look only to the metropolis and the United States for the weapons Britain so badly needed to carry on the struggle against Germany and Japan. Imperialism in its application to colonial areas is such a repressive, retarding system, that in a time of crisis the colonies are unable materially to assist the 'mother' country with the products of industry. How different is Britain's position from that of the Soviet Union, which was able to get enormous quantities of war materials from its former colonial areas.

The incontestable truth stares us in the face. Imperialism strangles itself in its own net.

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**SOCIALISM UNITES—IMPERIALISM DIVIDES**

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

**SELF-DETERMINATION OR SUBJECTION?**

IN the preceding sections we have surveyed the rise and fall of the Czarist Empire and described the transformation of that vast imperial structure into a new kind of State—a Multi-National Federated Socialist Commonwealth based on the common ownership of the means of production and distribution and a planned economy. We have in the course of our survey traced the tremendous political, economic and social changes which have taken place in the territories which, just over a quarter of a century ago, formed the Asiatic colonies of the now defunct Czarist Empire. There is no doubt that the peoples of those erstwhile colonies have undergone the most radical transformation recorded by history in such a short space of time.

There is only one other political aggregate in the world today which includes such a heterogeneous multitude of peoples as the Soviet Union. That is the British Empire, which is made up of the white Dominions, forming, together with the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth of Nations; and the dependent coloured Empire, composed of India, Burma, Africa, and a number of territories scattered throughout the world, variously described as Crown Colonies, Protectorates, Mandates, Condominiums. The white population is 70,000,000, and the coloured over 500,000,000.

In the light of the experiences attending the war we may well profit from a comparative examination of the attitude of the non-European or coloured peoples of the U.S.S.R., and those of the British Colonial and Indian Empires. This comparison provides the most definite illustration of the fundamental difference between the non-Imperialist Soviet and the

Imperialist British systems. Here we are not concerned with the white self-governing Dominions of the Commonwealth,<sup>1</sup> but with those parts of the dependent Empire—India, Burma, Malaya, Africa, etc.—inhabited largely by coloured races. For the acid test of the stability of any multi-racial and multi-national political structure is the spontaneous loyalty and enthusiasm demonstrated by the diverse ethnic elements constituting that political system in times of crisis. What does the application of this test reveal?

It reveals, on the one hand, the U.S.S.R., a union of peoples at varying stages of social and cultural development, of many races and colours, forming a monolithic phalanx before the enemy, inspired by an enthusiastic fanaticism which evoked the admiration of friend and foe alike. These comrades-in-arms, these European Slavs—Great Russians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians—and Asiatics—Georgians and Azerbaijanians, Turkmans and Tajiks, Kazaks and Kalmuks, Bashkirs and Tartars, Buriat-Mongols, and other descendants of Jenghis Khan's hordes, have fought tenaciously to preserve that way of life which, despite many shortcomings, gives them so much hope of a happy future.

“The German-Fascists stupidly expected that the Soviet Union would fall apart at the first onslaught,” writes a leading Soviet authority on the National Question. “Not a single Soviet Republic withdrew from the Union, not one of them so much as thought of taking advantage of its right freely to secede from the Union. Far from it—in the years of war the moral and political unity of the Soviet people has become so firm that the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., in its session of February, 1944, found it possible to extend the sovereign rights of the Union Republics, and to grant them the right to have their own military formations, and enter into direct relations with foreign States.”<sup>2</sup>

It was not the German-Fascists alone who expected the Soviet State structure to disintegrate under the impact of war. There was a large section of opinion in Britain which held

<sup>1</sup> According to the Government of Eire External Relations Act, Eire is a sovereign independent State, associated for certain purposes with the British Commonwealth of Nations.

<sup>2</sup> *Soviet War News*, June 28, 1944. Article entitled “Force and Vitality of Soviet National Policy,” by V. Karpinsky.

this same view, and its standpoint was given expression by the leading Right-wing publicist, Frederick A. Voigt, editor of the influential journal, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, who predicted uprisings from among the Ukrainians and Georgians, who "have suffered under the Muscovite despotism."<sup>1</sup>

How chagrined these reactionary anti-Soviet elements must have felt to witness how solidly the Soviet Union held together as against the contrasting development in East Asia, where events have graphically exposed the inherent weakness of the Colonial structures—British, Dutch, French, etc. According to the Singapore Correspondent of that venerable organ of British Imperialism, *The Times*, "After nearly 120 years of British rule the vast majority of the Asiatics were not sufficiently interested in the continuance of this rule to take any steps to ensure its continuance."<sup>2</sup> What a damning indictment of British Colonial administration!

Why is it that these Asiatic peoples—Malayans and Burmese—after enjoying more than a century of British rule, with its culture, 'trusteeship,' and the rest, display such ingratitude for the gifts which the British imperialists have brought them that they desert their 'trustees' and 'benefactors' just at the time when they are most in need of support? The answer to this question is to be found in the economic and social conditions prevailing in those Colonial countries at the time of the Japanese invasion, which it will do no harm to review.

### 1. Malaya.

Malaya represented the wealthiest unit of the British Empire. With 50 per cent of the world's tin and 70 per cent of the world's rubber, it was a veritable Eldorado for predatory capitalism; it was the dream of the City of London come true. The alien conquerer came into this rich land and took possession of most of the wealth after "a long, a harassing, and expensive war which was only brought to a conclusion by hunting the rebels out of Pahang, and even

<sup>1</sup> *The Nineteenth Century and After*, August 1941.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence was omitted from the dispatch as published in *The Times*, but was printed in *The Manchester Guardian* (18 2 1942), for which paper the same Correspondent reported.

following them into the independent neighbouring states."<sup>1</sup> The conqueror did not even give the Malaysians the Bible in return for their lands, for they remained Mohammedans. The nabobs, having taken possession of the best areas of the country, turned to India, whence they brought indentured labour into Malaya to develop their lands and mines. This they did because foreign coolie labour was even cheaper than the indigenous kind, the Malaysians having showed no desire to work for the Europeans at the prevailing wages paid for labour in the tin mines and on the rubber plantations. Those people who believe that Imperialism is a philanthropic institution creating jobs for backward races need not look farther than Malaya to see how wrong they are.

The pukka sahibs were in Malaya to line their pockets. These 'birds of passage' were feathering their nests as fast as they possibly could. Even now they hope to return and develop resources at the point where they were forced to leave the Japanese in charge. That is the reason why, while they duly admired at a great distance the scorched earth policy operated in the Soviet Union, they left things in order for Japanese interim control. They look forward to a speedy return and a renewal of the 'good old times.' And when that time comes, "we must regard our imperial heritage as our responsibility in the investment of our surplus cash,"<sup>2</sup> the Tory M.P., Captain Gammans, exhorts the old gang.

Wages in Malaya averaged one shilling to 1s. 6d. a day for men and eightpence to ninepence for women. These were the ruling rates in factories, mines and on plantations, and the legal maximum working day was fixed at nine hours. During December 1940, workers on an estate of the Dunlop Rubber Company demanded higher wages and went on strike when they were refused. Three strikers were shot and others wounded when military forces were called in to quell the workers. At Selangor during May 1941, seven thousand workers went on strike, and five of them were killed in the clashes with the police which followed.

These labour disturbances were ascribed to "subversive propaganda," questions in Parliament drawing the reply that

<sup>1</sup> *British Malaya*, by Governor Swettenham, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Singapore Sequel*, by Capt. L. D. Gammans. Signpost Booklets.



there was no economic justification for them. Members of Parliament may, of course, consider one shilling to 1s. 6d. a day sufficient wages for colonials. At any rate, these were the wages which caused the strikes, and the fact that the trade union law forbade peaceful picketing gave an excuse for the official attacks upon the workers. At the same time extremely handsome profits were being pocketed by the rubber companies.

Not even the semblance of political or industrial democracy was enjoyed by the indigenous people. "The Societies Ordinance makes political organisations illegal, and prior to 1940 also made trade unions illegal. Now, as the result of tremendous labour unrest, trade unions are legalised under the Trade Union Enactment in the Straits Settlements but this enactment seeks merely to bring the unions under the control of the Governor, and it makes all trade union activities—strikes, political activities, etc., illegal. The Official Secrets Enactment and the Sedition Ordinance give the Governor tremendously wide and vague powers. Under these ordinances persons can be convicted not only for actions but for 'seditious tendencies' and 'purposes detrimental to the interests of the British Empire.'

"The freedom of the press, of publication, of the importation of books, of the showing of films, of meetings, etc., are all severely restricted. In all the Malay States freedom of conscience is infringed by the power of the sultans to compel attendance at the mosques and to declare 'false doctrines' illegal. Everywhere police services are highly developed, particularly political police. Judges are usually colonial service officials. Deportation without trial is very frequent."<sup>1</sup>

One of the moral justifications of Imperialism, used particularly by the British, is that European occupation of backward territories will abolish slavery and kindred practices incompatible with modern standards of civilisation. Child slavery, however, flourished in Hong Kong and the Malay States. Known as *Mui Tsai*, it fed on the grinding poverty of the people, who were only too glad to receive a few dollars in exchange for the children they could not afford to feed and clothe. The girls, from the very youngest age (even

<sup>1</sup> *Civil Liberty*—Journal of the National Council for Civil Liberties. March, 1941.

under three years), were as a rule sold into domestic slavery and very often passed over into brothels. Boys were bought to work in factories and for other kinds of labour.

When he was Secretary of State for Colonies in 1922, Mr. Winston Churchill told Parliament that he desired "to make it clear that both the Governor (of Hong Kong, the distributing centre) and I are determined to effect the abolition of the system at the earliest practicable date, and I have indicated to the Governor that I expect the change to be carried out within a year."

That expectation was too optimistic, for Lady Simon, writing in 1929, told that the system still flourished in Hong Kong,<sup>1</sup> and on May 29, 1941, Mr. Creech Jones, M.P., asked the Under-Secretary of State for Colonies "whether steps are being taken by legislative action in the Straits Settlements to prohibit the traffic in boys, who are sold for employment in factories and industries outside the territories, for domestic service and for training in circuses and theatres?"<sup>2</sup> Replying to this question, Labour's representative, Mr. George Hall, then Colonial Under-Secretary, completely evaded it and talked some drivel about there being a traffic of some extent in boys from China ports to Malaya since the extension of hostilities in the Sino-Japanese conflict.

The Secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, which for some time had concerned itself with this question of *Mui Tsai*, addressed a communication to the Colonial Office on June 17, 1941, in which attention was invited "to the statement, in the report of the Governor of the Straits Settlements on the *Mui Tsai* System for the second half of 1939 (Ref. S.C.A. 1003 1939), that there is no legislation in the Straits Settlements to prevent the traffic in boys. The fact is recorded without comment, without any suggestion of its being a hitherto undiscovered omission in the law of the Colony, and without any indication of any intention to remedy the law."<sup>3</sup>

According to Mr. Hall's reply to Mr Creech Jones, of the 29th May, 1941, the Governor of the Straits Settlements had decided to take steps to prevent the traffic, but unfor-

<sup>1</sup> Lady Simon: *Slavery*, see pp. 96-114.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, May 29, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> *Anti-Slavery Report*, ½ October, 1941.

tunately for the victims history does not wait upon the leisurely reforms of pro-consuls. For over a hundred years Britain had been in Malaya and she had failed to eradicate the evil which has been one of her avowed reasons for taking up the burden of imperial rule. Now the Japanese have taken the situation into their hands, and it is too much to hope that these perpetrators of horrible outrages in Hong Kong will play the role of social reformers in Malaya.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Singapore.*

And what was it like in Singapore? At the Singapore headquarters of the British administration, the Governor, the representative of the Imperial Power, combined in his person the office of High Commissioner, with control over the sultans of the Federated and Unfederated States, who governed the native subjects in those territories. The system of Indirect Rule was the only contact between the imperial 'trustees' and their native 'wards.' Unfortunately the 'wards' did not recognise any benefits from the 'trustees.'

The Legislative Council of Singapore, the Crown Colony area, was composed of 13 officials, heads of the various civil and military departments, and 11 members hand-picked by the Governor. Only two members were elected, and they represented the European Chambers of Commerce of Singapore and Penang. The Singapore natives, like those of the mainland, had no voice in their own affairs. Surely it is not really surprising that when the crisis came the Governor, Sir Shenton Thomas, was unable to mobilise the common people—Malayans, Chinese, Indians—to withstand the Japanese onslaught? How could a people whose existence had been entirely ignored, presumably because they were considered unfit to participate in the government of the country, suddenly resuscitate themselves as it were and assume responsibility in defence of the system which had until then failed to recognise their existence?

These Colonial people, exploited, oppressed, victims of colour bar practices and theocracy, subjected to the racial arrogance of the ruling *Herrenvolk*, recognised only the enemy

<sup>1</sup> The best detailed study on the subject is *Child Slavery in Hong Kong*, by Lieut. Comdr. and Mrs. H. L. Haslewood. The Sheldon Press.

already entrenched in their land. For while Colonial intellectuals and Socialists have no illusions about Japanese Imperialism, which, despite its demagogic appeal of 'Asia for the Asiatics,' is equally as predatory and brutal as Western Imperialism, it cannot be expected that illiterate native masses should be able to make this differentiation. They have a feeling of *omni ignatum pro magnifico*: the untried master is the best. The word 'Briton' to the native Colonial peoples, like the word 'Russian' to the former subject peoples of Czarism, is synonymous with 'oppressor.'

"The British had no roots in the people," asserted the *Times* Correspondent. But why, we ask, did they have no roots in the people after a hundred years? Because an Imperialist Power can have no roots in a subject people except the roots of bayonets. The very nature of Imperialism is a negation of fraternal relations between peoples. Its only relationship with the subject peoples can be that of the rider to the horse: the one on the back of the other. And he who carries the White Man's Burden has to have a strong back.

Describing the status of the white overlords in Malaya, a distinguished authority on the Far East says: "The functions of the white man in a colony are limited to ruling, owning and managing. Any other form of occupation is degrading and damaging to the white prestige on which the whole system rests . . . Even national lines, so bitterly held at home, have a way of softening down as against the overwhelming numbers of the coloured races; all who are of the white race are Europeans and stand potentially together in the face of the enemy, who is being ruled and exploited."<sup>1</sup>

Tired of carrying this burden, the masses of the coloured population of Singapore showed no enthusiasm when the Japanese attacked the island fortress. "With the exception of certain sections of the Chinese community—some inspired by Free China's struggle for survival, others by Soviet precept and example—the bulk of the Asiatic population remained spectators from start to finish. Their inclination was to get as far as possible from the scene of hostilities. In Singapore this caused acute difficulties in the field of labour. . . . There was no native labour at the docks. Soldiers had to be taken away from military duties to load and unload ships."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, February 18, 1942.

Being politically educated, the people of Britain may argue and debate the ideological character of the war: Whether it is an inter-imperialist conflict; whether it is a struggle between Fascism and Democracy, or just Good against Evil. To the natives of Malaya—whom their British rulers describe as ‘backward’ and, therefore, as unfit to enjoy the benefits of democracy—it was simply a fight between two bands of marauders who were overrunning their country; a fight in which they were not concerned except as the prize. Their attitude was ‘a plague on both camps.’

And when all is said and done, what example did the 20,000 Europeans set for them? While the fate of their Empire was being decided on the Malayan peninsula, the pukka sahibs in Singapore were having a good time, declared Lady Brooke-Popham, wife of the Commander-in-Chief, on her return to England. “The majority of the civilians,” she asserted, “were immersed in a long round of tennis and dancing. I tried to wake them up, but it was hopeless. . . . They were too busy with their social engagements.” They were so obsessed with white prestige and their own importance that even Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s offer to send crack Chinese forces to Singapore to help defend the fortress was declined. The Japanese overran the whole peninsula in nine weeks!

In a handbook published about the time of the fall of Singapore, inspired by the Colonial Office and entitled *The British Colonial Empire*, the author assured us that “The wealth of Malaya . . . is laid on secure foundations, and its future, under British administration and protection, is equally secure. . . . Malaya is today a contented and peaceful country, and one of the most successful examples of British colonial administration.”<sup>1</sup> How these official apologists misled the British people, and how history has given them the lie!

But taking everything as a whole, the pukka sahibs have no legitimate reason for complaint. For over a century they had been living on the fat of the land. Three British tin mining companies, Tronoh Mines, Southern Tronoh Mines

<sup>1</sup> *The British Colonial Empire*, p. 125. By W. E. Simnett, a former editor of *Crown Colonist*, official organ of the Crown Agents for the Colonies.

and Sungei Besi Mines published profits in 1942 of phenomenal size.

“Tronoh, with a capital of £300,000, made a net profit after taxation, etc., of £169,196, and paid a dividend of 55 per cent, the profits being well over half of the capital. Southern Tronoh, with a capital of £200,000, made profits on the same basis of £69,762 and paid 30 per cent. Sungei Besi, with a capital of only £144,000, made no less than £95,731 and paid 58.1/3 per cent dividend, the profits being two-thirds of the capital. The colossal profits from these and similar undertakings will now be flowing into Japanese coffers instead of back to London. Those are the stakes for which Britain fights!”<sup>1</sup>

The pukka sahibs would not even pay taxes for the defence of their properties. A war-time bill re-introducing income tax—which had ceased in 1922—was passed in February 1941. The tax ranged from 2 per cent up to a maximum of 8 per cent on incomes over £3,400. The re-introduction of this war emergency tax almost caused a revolution among the ‘patriots.’ Assuredly, Sir Shenton Thomas could have had no easy time with those “whisky drinking rubber planters and tin miners.”

It was the Chinese and Malaysians who paid for the upkeep of Singapore, from revenue derived largely from the Government opium monopoly. Out of the taxes squeezed from the Malayan peasants the sultans contributed over £20,000,000 toward imperial defence between the two world wars.<sup>2</sup> And when the enemy struck the natives were left defenceless. Most of the European planters and mine owners were evacuated with their families.

### 3. *Burma.*

Even before the war in the Pacific broke out, the Burmese people made their attitude to Britain plainly known through U Saw, at the time Prime Minister of the Colony. His claim for Dominion status for the 17-million natives of Burma was categorically rejected by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India and Burma, when U Saw visited

<sup>1</sup> Don Bateman, *The New Leader*, January 31, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> See John Gunther: *Inside Asia*, Ch. 19, in which he described how the trade in opium helped to pay for Singapore's defence.

London in November 1941. "Burma," declared U Saw, "was brought into the war by an edict of the Governor. The elected representatives of the people were not consulted. . . . If Burmese people were convinced that they were fighting for their freedom as well as for that of the rest of the world, then there can be no question about it—Burma's war effort would be increased fourfold." He made it quite obvious that "There is a small section of Burmese opinion which believes that to aid Britain win the war means to aid Britain to keep us in subjection. . . . There is another section, which, while it cherishes no love for the Japanese, feels that if it is Burma's destiny to remain a subject nation, then it might prefer to be governed by a nation that is of the same blood and of the same religion." U Saw is now held somewhere as a potential enemy of Britain's imperial interests.

U Saw himself did not enjoy any mass backing in Burma. He was a reactionary nationalist, the son of a feudal landowner whom the British officials made use of to combat the growing agrarian movement headed by Dr. Ba Maw, the former Prime Minister and leader of the Sinyetha (or Poor Man) Party. Dr. Ba Maw was arrested and sent to prison in 1940 for making anti-British speeches. U Saw formed his own party, the Myochit (or Patriot) Party in September 1940, and was made Prime Minister. He was subsequently accused of treachery to his masters and for making contact with the Japanese after Pearl Harbour. As in Malaya, so in Burma the British authorities were completely isolated from the native masses. With the progressive leaders in gaol and U Saw under arrest, their last link was severed.

As a result of this isolation the Japanese, on invading Burma, instead of being met by a hostile population, were joined by 'Free Burmans,' organised by the extremist national associations, chief of which was the Thakin Movement.

Imperialism is incapable of saving itself from the trap which it creates of its own volition. British Imperialism is incapable of offering freedom to its subject peoples, the only means by which it can secure their unswerving loyalty and enthusiastic support. To do so would be to commit *hara-kiri*. "The Colonial Empire is essential to our economic

well-being," observes Captain Gammans, "else we become a small island on the fringe of Europe unable to defend ourselves or to feed ourselves. Without our overseas dependencies we should become like Austria after the last war."

#### 4. *Postscript on Burma.*

Like the Bourbons, the British Tories learn nothing and forget nothing. Thus, no sooner had the Japanese evacuated Rangoon, the capital of Burma, than the Tory Secretary of State, Mr. Amery, issued an official statement in the form of a White Paper setting forth the Government's proposals for the future of Burma.

As soon as the military hand over the capital to the civil authorities, the Governor, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, will exercise complete autocratic powers "until conditions permit" the country to return to the *status quo ante*.

It is proposed that when the 1935 Constitution (suspended in 1942) is restored, a government formed from an elected Legislature, controlling matters excluding finance, defence and foreign affairs, will be set up. And from this political level Burma will gradually proceed along the slippery constitutional road to "full self-government within the British Commonwealth", arriving at that goal at some unspecified time. This, in brief, is the political blank-cheque offered 17 million Burmese.

Considering the fact that the Burmese enjoyed a much greater measure of self-government during the Japanese occupation than they even had before the invasion, it is very unlikely that the political parties and organisations associated with the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League will co-operate with the Governor in carrying out Mr. Amery's plans.

When the Japanese first entered Burma, the various anti-imperialist organisations formed a Burma National Army under the command of General Aung San. This army co-operated with the Japanese against the British. But when the Burmese discovered that the Japanese military commander in Burma had no intention of implementing the promise of the Japanese Foreign Office to grant Burma complete independence, the National Army withdrew its support and later joined with the British 14th Army in expelling the Japanese from Rangoon.



The Burmese, the first Asiatic people to be 'liberated,' have discovered that the Japanese are just as imperialistic as the whites, despite their slogan: 'Asia for the Asiatics'. And that they will have to depend upon themselves in the future if real freedom is to be achieved.

"Their nationalism is intense", observes *The Times* Special Correspondent in Rangoon. "Their aim," he asserts, "is simple—full independence for Burma. It is this aim which has dictated their actions during the past four years. Dominion status, it may be frankly said, makes little appeal for them, although many realise the advantages of membership of the Commonwealth, they do not realise that Dominion status would give them freedom to decide for themselves whether to remain in the Commonwealth, and freedom also to conduct their foreign affairs and conclude alliances if desirable with their neighbours, India, China and Siam."<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that the Tories are preparing to resolve this fundamental conflict between the political aspirations of the Burmese people and die-hard Imperialism by force of arms. Not without reason, Mr. W. G. Cove, M.P., declared that "we are prolonging British dictatorship in Burma," during the debate on the second reading of the Bill vesting autocratic powers in the Governor. However, Mr. Cove advised the Tories to learn from their Russian ally. "The only country in the world that is solving the problem of nationality is Russia," he asserted. "She has the means and a policy whereby she can meet the aspirations of these people. The old die-hard Imperialist Tory outlook will not fit in with the modern world."<sup>2</sup>

### 5. India.

There is little need to dilate upon the problem of this "jewel in the Crown of the British Raj." The causes of the present deadlock are too well known. India has for some time been the running sore in the imperial body politic. Only a major political operation can now save the situation. But this is impossible within the framework of imperialist-colonial relations. It is possible by means of the Leninist method alone. It must be fully understood that the Indian

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*—May 31, "Nationalism in Burma"

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*—June 1, 1945.

problem is fundamentally economic and social, and while political hegemony remains with British Imperialism the problem can never be solved. A culturally backward India is essential to British Imperialism, and that is why we say it is quite incapable of solving the Indian question. India, of all the Imperial possessions, provides the greatest tribute to the ruling class.

"If China means much in the life of every Britisher, India means much more," declared Upton Close in 1927. "Trade with this possession still totals more than that with any of the White Dominions. It oversteps every national item of British commerce save that of the United States. No railway crosses the six-thousand-mile-long British border between Persia and Indo-China, but 119 million dollars' worth of trade passes over it yearly on the backs of men and animals. The products carried between Bhamo, Burma, and Yunnanfu in China are worth annually eight million dollars. Can Great Britain keep this trade in her hands and yet stand out against the native nationalist aspirations?"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Winston Churchill himself answered this question in 1930, when he addressed the Indian Empire Society. "We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and and precious jewel in the Crown of the King, which more than all our other Dominions and dependencies constitutes the glory and strength of the British Empire,"<sup>2</sup> he proclaimed.

Since that time Mr. Churchill has not changed his view. He has unequivocally asserted that he has not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. This position, however, is clearly understandable. The continuance of British Imperialism is a vital necessity for the British ruling class. What is deplorable is the attitude of certain so-called Socialists like Sir Stafford Cripps, who allow themselves to be used as the servants of British Imperialism. There was a time when Sir Stafford Cripps was outspoken in his condemnation of imperialist rule and posed as an aggressive supporter of self-determination for India and other Colonial countries.<sup>3</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Upton Close: *The Revolt of Asia*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>2</sup> December 12, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Speech delivered at the Conference on Peace and Empire under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru at Friends House, London, July 15-16, 1938.

seems, however, that quite a number of people on the Left become ardent patriots as soon as the 'mother' country goes to war and, like Sir Stafford Cripps, undergo a sea-change in political outlook. There are a number of people on the Left who support some kind of Indian self-government which they would make dependent upon that country's support of Britain's war effort. These people are prepared to support any scheme for the "liquidation" of Imperialism providing that it is put off for an indefinite period, while meantime the Indian people can be utilised, in return for a few precarious concessions, as adjuncts to the struggle against rival Imperialisms.

These Social-Imperialists do not see the claims of the subject peoples to Self-Determination as a fundamental right of *all* peoples, regardless of their stage of social development, but as a bargaining weapon in the game of power politics. Indians, Africans, Ceylonese, Burmese, West Indians, Arabs—all Colonial peoples, no less than Europeans—have an inalienable right to their freedom without being under any obligation to help their Imperialist masters pull their chestnuts out of the fire. The principle of Self-Determination admits of no equivocation. People have a right to be free—today and not tomorrow. And those Socialists who assume the pontifical right of determining who will be free today and who tomorrow are reflecting the typical arrogance of the British ruling class towards the coloured peoples of the Empire.

There is also a widely held view that the populations of Colonial territories do not generally wish to be rid of British rule, and that claims for independence are largely instigated by disgruntled agitators, pursuing selfish aims. Quite a large section of the so-called Left also shares this view, by which they give support to the Imperialists who use it as a pretext for continuing their domination. "We hear it said of India, of Ireland, of the Negro, of the proletariat that they would be perfectly contented if it were not for agitators who work up the people to demand a freedom of which they are incapable and which they do not really want. The peculiar fact is the recurrence of this phenomenon in every case where there is repression. It is not true, as is alleged, that the agitators are merely psychological or moral perverts who are evacuated

by self-interest. Their type is much the same in whichever of the groups they are found. They are symbols of the psychosis of the group, and are the stuff of which martyrs are made. Sometimes they are personally normal and eminent, and sometimes they are excitable and fanatical, but in either case they are the product of the condition under which they develop. They discover that, as members of the nationality or class to which they belong, there are limitations placed upon them of which they cannot help becoming conscious, and they react to that consciousness on behalf of the whole group. When the movement has gained some momentum, the leaders become identified with it in a peculiar way, so that the mass feels that any attack on the leader or agitator, according to the point of view, is an attack upon themselves. It is a customary procedure to try to suppress these leaders, and invariably the result is an increase in the solidarity of the group behind them, which it is the real object to suppress."<sup>1</sup>

*Right of Self-Determination is Indivisible.*

All these arguments are subterfuges disguising the refusal to recognise the right of all peoples to Self-Determination. And this right carries with it the privilege of the people concerned to decide themselves whether or not they want to fight in any particular war. The acid test of national freedom is this right of peoples to decide their own foreign policy. It is conceivable in the concrete situation today that if the Indian peoples enjoyed national freedom they would voluntarily give their wholehearted support to the war, not for British Imperialism, but to defend their newly won freedom against Japanese aggression. It is not for any of us to determine the future policy of a free India. That is a matter for the Indians to decide.

A subject people may be dragged into imperialist struggle through open nor disguised coercion, but such 'co-operation' carries no enthusiasm and in the nature of modern warfare is more or less worthless. A people can only give of its best when it feels it has something to fight for. The Soviet peoples, and the Chinese—the most civilised and

<sup>1</sup> Herbert A. Miller : *Races, Nations and Classes*, pp. 120 ff. Quoted by Hans Kohn in *Imperialism and Nationalism*, pp. 64-65.

peaceful of people—have demonstrated to the world what a tremendous and heroic self-sacrifice a people can exhibit once it is inspired by some ideal in whose achievement it feels it will have a part.

The peoples of the Soviet East, Moslem races, former subjects of an Empire even more oppressive than the British, achieved just over a quarter of a century ago not only national freedom but social emancipation, thanks to Lenin's policy. Today, the Russian people, having disencumbered themselves of their Imperialist baggage, have found among these millions of the Soviet East enthusiastic friends and allies, who flew to arms at once in the common cause. The Asiatic peoples of the Soviet Union are not fighting *for* the Russian people, but *with* the Russians and other peoples of the U.S.S.R. in defence of a common heritage. This point, frequently stressed by Soviet leaders, is, for reasons which will be quite obvious, conveniently ignored by Anglo-American commentators. Illustrative of the present attitude of the former Colonial peoples of the Czarist Empire is that of the Uzbeks, as expressed in a collective letter to their sons at the front, carrying 2,412,000 signatures. In this they "compare the Soviet Union to a fortress in which sixteen brothers live in friendship and together defend it against enemies from without. They address their warrior children in these words: 'Free sons and daughters of the Uzbek people! The German robber has broken into the home of your elder brother, Russia, into the homes of your elder brothers, the Byelorussians and Ukrainians. He brings a brown plague, the gallows, the knout, hunger and death. But the home of the Russian is also our home, the home of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian is our home. For the Soviet Union is a courtyard and the economy is one and indivisible. . . . Be among the best sons of your family, and among the best fighters of the Soviet peoples.'"<sup>1</sup>

Can anyone imagine such a manifesto being written by coloured races of any part of the far-flung Indian and British Colonial Empires? Even so-called British Socialists do not seem to be able to recognise the fundamental distinction between fighting 'for' and fighting 'with'. For instance, in their support of India's right to Self-Determination (or is

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Soviet War News*, June 28, 1944.

it Dominion status?) they approach the problem like petty shopkeepers. To them it is not a question of India's inviolable right to independence, regardless of the attitude of the Indian peoples to Britain's war. Theirs is a purely opportunistic tactic: if India is prepared to support British imperialists against their Japanese rivals, then, and only then, are they prepared to recognise India's claim to Self-Determination. With Lenin how different. He and his party demanded and fought for the right of Self-Determination of the subject peoples of the Czarist Empire even to the point of secession; that is, regardless of whether they wanted to come within the Soviet and help to fight the enemies of the Revolution. Hence the contrasting picture today of united Soviet peoples opposing in fraternal solidarity the common enemy, and disgruntled Colonial peoples of the British Empire, many of whom, as in Malaya and Burma, actively supported Japan.

The facts which we have recited are historically incontrovertible, and are largely admitted even by Imperialist commentators. We have emphasised them in an attempt to make convincing the reasons for the different attitudes of the Asiatic peoples of the Soviet Union and those of the British Empire in Asia. The Soviet Union is far from being an earthly paradise, but the October Revolution was not used simply to secure the social emancipation of the Great Russians and other Slav peoples only. It was used to break the yoke of Czarist Imperialism which had for so many centuries been bearing down the non-Russian peoples of the Empire.

As equal citizens, the coloured races of the Soviet East look forward to the future with hope, but those subject peoples bound to Western European Imperialism have no reason to hope. Has not Mr. Churchill declared that they are not included within the scope of the Atlantic Charter? While the democratic principles for which Britain professes to stand may be operative to a greater or lesser degree among the white peoples of her Empire, they are consistently denied to her coloured subjects. British democracy is fundamentally a democracy of colour; a minority of less than 70 million whites enjoy rights denied to 500 million coloured people. Civil and political disabilities do exist in the Soviet Union, but they exist for all—Europeans and Asiatics, Russians and

non-Russians alike. Stalin does not use pigmentation as a screen for the denial of popular rights. And this is the reason, all the criticism notwithstanding, for the greater admiration among the coloured races of Asia and Africa for the Soviet system than for Anglo-Saxon democracy. Political democracy, as we know it, is circumscribed at the present time in the U.S.S.R., but this shortcoming is not inherent in a socialised economic system. On the contrary, one of the basic postulates of Socialist ideology and one much stressed by Lenin is the broader popular democratic base which such a Soviet system provides. The restrictions which have been the main target of British Left-Wing and Liberal critics of the Soviet Union living comfortably in the metropolis of the Empire and enjoying directly or indirectly the spoils of Imperialism, can be traced immediately to the isolation in which the failure of the Socialist Revolution in the West left the U.S.S.R. If those same Left-wing critics had been as diligent in exposing the inequalities of Imperialist exploitation in which they shared and in eradicating that system of racial inequality which exists within their Empire, they would have contributed excessively to the liberalising of political democracy and the widening of civil liberties in the Soviet Union. It is a pity that those who deprecate the shortcomings of the Soviet system refuse to recognise the greater lack of political, economic and ethnic democracy obtaining in their Colonial Empire. Surrounded by hostile capitalist and Imperialist States, attempting in the face of tremendous difficulties and obstacles to build up an industrial structure in an overwhelmingly agrarian country, forced to establish, maintain and expand an army against the constant threat of external intervention, the Soviet leaders are not altogether to blame for imposing a curtailment of democracy. To a very large extent this curtailment of political democracy was the result of circumstances, and now that the stability of the State has proved itself in the course of the war steps will undoubtedly be taken to widen its scope. For once the economic power of the capitalists has been broken, the groundwork has been laid for political and racial democracy. The signs all point to a progressive increase in democratic rights in the Soviet Union. And the coloured peoples of the Soviet East will share these equally with the rest of the population.

*Race, Politics and War.*

Ethnic democracy in 'plural' or multi-racial societies is as important as political democracy. The whole question of 'race' has been made one of the principal ideological instruments of aggressive Imperialism. Hitler has used it in Europe to promote his 'New Order,' and the Japanese Imperialists are using it in Asia to advance Japan's 'East Asia Co-Prosperity' policy. Projected as this question of race has been into the forefront of power politics, it urgently demands solution. A decisive solution, however, is impossible within the framework of the present system of Capitalism-Imperialism, since the problem of 'race' is but one of the sharper facets of the crisis in which the whole system now finds itself, and has direct connection with the Colonial Question and the present World War. "Every war," maintained Lenin, "is inseparably connected with the political system which gives rise to it. The politics which a certain country, a certain class in that country, pursued for a long period before the war are invariably pursued by that very same class during the war; it merely changes its form of action."<sup>1</sup>

Examined on the basis of this determining principle, the war has fallen into three main and distinct categories:

1. *The purely inter-Imperialist conflict between Anglo-American capitalism on the one hand, and Axis capitalisms and their satellites on the other.*
2. *The defensive war of the Soviet Union—a collectivistic state—against predatory German Imperialism. The principal consideration of the U.S.S.R. is security against hostile capitalist intervention. This can best be achieved by the socialist revolution in Western Europe, but failing this the Soviet leaders are forced to rely upon military and diplomatic methods.*
3. *The Sino-Japanese conflict, in which we have a semi-colonial country (China) defending itself against Imperialist aggression and annexation.*

These three wars, therefore, have had distinctive and separate political objectives. As a result, however, of Axis action they have been merged militarily on a global scale. The

<sup>1</sup> Lenin: *War and the Workers*, pp. 6-7. Little Lenin Library, Vol. XX.



resultant combined anti-Fascist front is being exploited by certain sections of the Left in Britain to justify support for British Imperialism and Tory foreign policy.

Germany and Japan embarked on aggression, attempting to redistribute the world to their advantage. On the other side, Britain and America are opposed to any such redivision, since it can only be made at their expense, as the acquisition of territories by Japan in the Pacific and Far East has shown. These colonies, offering sources of raw materials and markets, are the spoils for which Germany and Japan went to war against the Anglo-American and Dutch Imperialists who controlled them. For Japan it was a comparatively easy matter to wrest the Pacific Islands and the territories bringing her on to the Indian frontier, since they are, so to speak, on her doorstep. Germany, however, in order to reach out to the rich colonial territories of Asia and Africa had first to attempt the conquest of Europe. In the course of her march on the road of Imperial aggrandisement, Germany widened her productive resources by the acquisition of the output of the European countries she had conquered. Such acquisition added to her arsenals of war. Her geographical position, however, dictated these preliminary conquests, which in no wise affected the ultimate objective of a world-wide Colonial Empire.

“The fundamental fact about these wars,” observed an organ of American monopoly-capitalism, “is that they are being waged to decide who is going to control business in the future, and how it is going to be done. That is why we have sent a force of American soldiers to protect the bauxite deposits of Dutch Guiana, and why American warships guard the sea lanes to the Orient. . . . The trade which now flows across national frontiers is essential to the maintenance of an industrial economy. All the nations of the world are deciding how that economy will operate in future years.”<sup>1</sup> Big business is well aware of the aims of the war, knows that the struggle between the Axis and the ‘democratic’ Powers constitutes an Imperialist conflict.

Modern war, by its very nature and because of its strategy, cannot be confined to any particular geographical area or national groupings. Hence, after nearly two years of

<sup>1</sup> Cleveland Trust Company Business Bulletin, December 15, 1941.

armed conflict, Germany, in pursuit of her imperialistic objective and to replenish her larder and stocks of wheat from the Ukraine and oil from the Caucasus before attempting a direct challenge to Britain and America, drew the Soviet Union into the general maelstrom.

Although forced against its will into the primarily imperialist conflict, the Soviet Union, unlike the Axis and their 'democratic' adversaries, has no imperialist aims, its sole objective being to defend and secure its frontiers and the collective achievements of the workers, peasants and intellectuals. Having abandoned the capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution, there are no monopoly capitalist pressure groups using the State to promote and defend the selfish interests of 'free enterprise.' Consequently, the Soviet Union seeks no markets, sources of raw materials or spheres for the investment of finance-capital abroad. It therefore cannot have imperialist aims. Bureaucracy or no bureaucracy, the Soviet Union is defending a higher socio-economic form of society than predatory capitalism, and therefore is waging a socially progressive war, even though its leaders are waging it in alliance with Imperialist Powers.

Similarly, China, even headed by the anti-Socialist, anti-Communist Kuomintang,<sup>1</sup> is fighting a progressive war of national liberation, even though it fights on the same side with Britain, the enslaver of China's neighbours—India and Burma. Weak peoples fighting for self-preservation cannot afford to pick and choose their allies. The Chinese people are defending themselves against Japanese Imperialism, which seeks to deprive them of their national sovereignty, reduce them to the Colonial status of Africans and Indians, and exploit their labour and natural resources in the interests of Japanese capitalism. This distinguishes China's struggle, for instance, from that of the Dutch, who, having been liberated by Anglo-American arms from the Germans, are fighting not for the emancipation of the 60 million coloured people of the Netherlands Indies, but rather to continue to hold them in subjection. China's struggle is an inspiration

<sup>1</sup> See *China Struggles for Unity*, by J. M. D. Pringle (Penguin) for a good factual account of the Generalissimo's counter-revolutionary record prior to the Sino-Japanese war.

to all oppressed peoples in Asia and Africa. Should China succeed in throwing off the Japanese yoke, it will blaze a path to the liberation of the East from all forms of Imperialism—'democratic' or totalitarian. The Chinese struggle, therefore, is historically progressive.

The fact that the Soviet Union and China happen to be linked up in the same military alignment with the Western 'democracies' in no way invalidates or alters our analysis of the multi-character of the present war. Nor does it change one whit the original Imperialist nature of the conflict between the Axis and Anglo-American capitalism. That the Soviet Union and China are allied with Britain and the U.S.A. is simply a matter of military expediency; it does not imply that the character of Anglo-American monopoly capitalism has experienced a fundamental change and that the interests of the four Great Powers have suddenly become inextricably intertwined.

Events at the San Francisco Conference have only served to underline the political differences which exist, even between the Anglo-Americans. After five years of comradeship in arms, their diplomatists squabbled over the methods of sharing out the colonies to be annexed from the defeated Powers on the one hand, while they united to oppose the Soviet and Chinese demand for colonial independence, on the other.

It was just over a decade ago, at the time of the attack on Manchuria, that Sir John Simon pleaded Japan's case at Geneva even better than the Japanese representatives, while "the report of the Lytton Commission (August 1932) said many severe things about China, and stated Japan's case with sympathy and consideration."<sup>1</sup> No action was taken by the Western democracies to check Japan's wanton attack upon China, which Mr. Leopold Amery, Secretary for India, justified on the grounds that Japan was carrying out her civilising mission in the Far East. "Japan has got a very powerful case based upon fundamental realities," he said in 1933. "... When you look at the fact that Japan needs markets and that it is imperative for her in the world in which she lives that there should be some sort of peace and

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Pratt: *Japan and the Modern World*, p. 15 (Oxford Pamphlet).

order, then who is there amongst us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stands condemned if we condemn Japan."

China was not embraced as Britain's ally during all the time (4½ years) that Japan was bombing her defenceless millions. Almost up to the very entry of Japan upon the scene of the present war against the 'democracies,' British policy had sustained Japanese action in China, and it was only just prior to Nippon's bombardment of Pearl Harbour that this policy gyrated somewhat, as though not quite sure whether appeasement were really succeeding or not. The British Government oscillated between closing the Burma Road or keeping it open, and finally closed it, thus cutting off China's life line. Only with the threat to the Far Eastern colonies was China accepted as Britain's ally, and then really because the Chinese Army offered the sole means of operating on the Asiatic mainland. There is no fundamental community of interest between China and Britain; there is only a temporary mutual military necessity. It would be folly to maintain that there is a community of interest in view of the fact that Britain, stripped of Hong Kong, has refused to surrender her claims to its recovery.

Japan only became an 'Imperialist aggressor' when she directly challenged Anglo-American interests in the Far East, where her military achievements, great though they have been, are due more to the ineptitude of her opponents' politics than to anything else. She is able to exploit the 'Asia for the Asiatics' propaganda, because she knows that the only way to counter this form of demagogy is for Britain to concede the right of Self-Determination to India, Burma and the British Colonies occupied by Japan. The present situation in Burma and India demonstrates most palpably that military warfare is governed by politics. This is because war is a continuation of policy by other means. "There are wars and wars," wrote Lenin. "We must examine the historical conditions which give rise to each particular war, the class which conducts it, and for what objects."

## TORY BLUE-PRINT OF POST-WAR EMPIRE

WHAT are the objects of the British Imperialist class which is directing this 'sacred war against Fascism?' For some time past these political objectives have been made the subject of detailed plans. The design of the post-war world in relation to the Colonies was worked out by the Tories long before the military issue in Europe had been determined and the enemy defeated. For example, the directors of the London Tin Corporation, a company which has large interests in Far East mines, especially in Malaya, are calling for an international consultative body for the industry to take the place of the pre-war International Tin Restriction Committee, which was run by the producers. The Corporation "has supplied the necessary information for resuming production to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the broad basis of the group of companies as a whole," says the chairman, Mr. J. Ivan Spens.<sup>1</sup> So much for the industrial aspect of colonial development.

What might be termed the Tory political blue-print of post-war Colonial Imperialism has been put forward by Field Marshal Smuts, who was the strategist of the Mandates System of Colonial redistribution at the 1918 peace.<sup>2</sup> It was he who was mainly responsible for drafting the clauses which made it possible for South Africa to annex the mandate of South West Africa, and for other British Dominions to put in a claim for nearby Colonies formerly in the possession of defeated enemies. The Mandates System was a screen which, in the words of the noted historian, H. A. L. Fisher, draped the crudity of conquest in the veil of morality. It

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*: October 20, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> In formulating the Mandates System, Smuts was aided by Lord Lothian then Mr. Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's Private Secretary. See Parker T. Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*.

was a complete blind, which managed to hoodwink quite a large section of popular opinion, even British Socialists. As Marshal Smuts put it himself so very recently, "The mandatory system was introduced to solve the difficult question of annexation. The Senate will remember that after the last war there was a strong feeling against the annexation of territories, and to overcome this difficulty the mandatory system was introduced. There is a feeling in many quarters that the mandatory system has outlived its time, and that another arrangement must be made that will have to be decided in the future. As far as South Africa is concerned, there is a mandate in South West Africa, and I have been asked whether the Government intended to incorporate that territory and whether there is any objection to that course. Personally I do not believe that there is any constitutional difficulty, even under existing mandate conditions."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Smuts on Regionalism.*

But to safeguard against any such difficulty, Marshal Smuts's newly formulated Imperialism bases itself upon a kind of condominium, which will supersede mandates. Briefly, his plan is to group British Colonial regions into federal units according to their geographical position. For example, the Caribbean territories, including British Guiana and British Honduras, will be united into a kind of West Indian Federation under a joint Anglo-American Commission, in which Canada will also participate. The West African Colonies of Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, together with adjoining French regions, will be brought into a West African federation. Here again America will be offered certain interests in view of the proximity of points like Dakar and Bathurst, Freetown and Monrovia, to the South American countries (Brazil in particular). In East Africa, a similar group will comprise Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, British, French and Italian Somaliland and part of the Abyssinian, Somali and Ogaden provinces, under South African and British control. The native territories of Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland, now British protectorates, will be incorporated into the Union of South Africa; and the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, with the

<sup>1</sup> Address to the South African Senate, April 3, 1944.

Belgian Congo and the Portuguese territory of Mozambique, will be linked up to form a Central African bloc. This would provide new lands for the increased white population which the South African Governments intend to promote as a means of augmenting the present white minority population, to counter the vast black populations in these regions. They will also provide an internal market for the Union industries which have come into being since the outbreak of this war, and which will have to be turned over to peace-time manufactures in order to stave off unemployment and economic collapse.

A similar scheme is envisaged for the islands of the Pacific and the regions of East Asia. In that part of the world, England and America, Australia and New Zealand, will operate as joint partners. Certain territorial concessions may be made to China, but Britain still intends to hold Hong Kong and also sole control of India and Burma.

This, in very simplified outline, is the Tory plan for post-war Empire, and viewed realistically, this scheme of 'regional' administration of Colonial territories will provide easy opportunity for the annexations for which the Mandates System has prepared the way. Nevertheless, there are a number of primary considerations which the scheme does not entirely manage to co-ordinate.

Let us take first the question of sovereignty, a fundamental one. For political control reserves the right to the Colonial Power to place its own nationals on the administration and gives it economic prerogatives. A principle of Marshal Smuts's scheme is that the possessing Powers shall retain political control of their Colonies. His suggested Regional Councils are to be purely consultative and shall have no administrative or executive powers. Representation on these Councils will be allowed to States having interests of an economic or strategic nature in the region concerned, even though they may not actually have Colonies there. This provision will allow a voice to British Dominions and America in areas in which they consider themselves to have interests.

United States' representation on a number of the Councils is a concession to America's dominant imperialist position in world affairs today. Production potential in the U.S.A. has

increased enormously during the war, so that even the vast continental domestic market will be unable to absorb her industrial output. Wall Street is accumulating greater and greater financial reserves, for which it must seek avenues of investment abroad. Marshal Smuts believes that the participation of America in his 'Regional' set-up would offer her appropriate markets for capital goods and machinery. All of this will be a welcome necessity to settlers in South Africa and the Rhodesias, who have not themselves the resources with which to expand their industries.

It is quite true that America's Big Business does not seem anxious to acquire political control of Colonies, at any rate in Africa. Dollar diplomacy can secure to the United States all the advantages it seeks without the responsibilities of policing overseas territories with Marines. This attitude is not evidence of any unique aversion of American Imperialism from expanding territorially, but is rather the outcome of its world economic superiority. America stands today in that same position which Britain occupied in the middle of the last century, when she was the workshop of the world, its banker and shipper; when Disraeli could say: "Colonies are millstones around our neck." Today America has wrested from Britain her former industrial and financial supremacy, and it is Mr. Truman and not Mr. Churchill who can describe Colonies as "millstones around our neck." Shortly before his death, Mr. Roosevelt was able to declare for Philippines independence before the due date of 1946. He also recommended to Congress that self-government be extended to Puerto Rico as a step towards either complete 'independence' or inclusion as another state within the U.S.A. When you are rich you can afford to be generous.

Whether, however, America participates in any scheme of international co-operation or resumes her inter-war role of isolationism is all one as far as her world economic dominance is concerned. In an imperialistic age, America, the greatest Imperialist Power, must play lead, and all other interests will finally be subordinated to hers.

International co-operation such as that envisaged in Marshal Smuts's proposal will, there is no doubt, provide a means of satisfying the 'Open Door' policy and the 'Most Favoured Nation' principle which leading Americans are



demanding, although others, in particular the late Wendell Willkie, look upon any retention of political Empire as standing in the way of Yankee interests. Mr. Willkie represented that point of view which believes that if Colonial territories are free from the political control of European Governments, especially Britain, the native capitalists are more likely to turn to Wall Street than to the City of London for the capital machinery and financial assistance that they will require to establish some kind of modern industry in their new sovereign States. This is the motive of Mr. Willkie's advocacy of Colonial independence, which is a very clever manoeuvre.

Because it is not unlikely that the co-operation of America in exploiting the natural resources of Africa and other parts of the British Empire will to a very great extent suit the interests of Yankee capitalism and British colonisers, there is a busy attempt to popularise the new idea of 'Regionalism.' It is accompanied by a new dictionary of euphemisms. 'Regionalism' is substituting 'mandates' and 'partnership' will oust 'trusteeship.'

Association of natives on the Regional Council is one of the proposals, behind which can be detected a very tricky device to put off self-government of those territories which are considered to be almost 'ripe' for it at the present time, while the need of independence of more backward countries cannot possibly have any *raison d'être* in a regionally constituted world. The British Tories intend to meet the national aspirations of the native peoples, which have been stimulated and reinforced by the lofty ideals embodied in the Atlantic Charter and Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, by offering very minor representation through members of their intelligentsia on councils, commissions and legislative bodies, and a wider participation in local administrative services, hitherto exclusively reserved for Britishers. In this way it is hoped to placate public opinion both in Britain and the Colonies themselves, but there should be no shadow of doubt that administrative control will not be transferred to the Colonial peoples. The Governor will always be there to exercise his powers of determination and veto. Even where a wider democracy is permitted through the Constitution (Jamaica has been given universal suffrage) the ultimate result will be

the same as it is in Ceylon, which has the most advanced Constitution of all the British Colonies. The Governor's veto decided affairs in the final resort, and in most instances the wishes of the people come to nothing.

Viewed pragmatically, Marshal Smut's scheme provides possibilities for meeting the post-war needs of British capitalism in the Colonial sphere. Even as the Mandates System carried over British Imperialism between the First and Second World Wars, 'Regionalism' will contrive to carry it over into the Third World War.

Almost fifty years ago, Cecil Rhodes, that greatest of Empire builders, maintained that the Empire "is a question of the stomach. If you do not want civil war, you must become imperialists." This attitude has been re-stated very lately by none other than the Dominions Secretary, Viscount Cranbourne. Talking to the Scottish Unionist Association in Edinburgh on October 22, 1943, he told the Tories that those people who could not look beyond their personal interests should remember that their employment and standard of living depended mainly on the existence of the Empire. "The vital trade with the Dominions and Colonies," he said, "amounts approximately to nearly half of the whole of Britain's trade with the rest of the world. Without it there would be no future for Britain. We would degenerate into a small, insignificant over-populated island." It is not accidental that Lord Cranborne was the representative of the United Kingdom Government on the Colonial Committee at San Francisco. The colonial interests of the Tories was safe in his hands.

#### *Labour and the Empire.*

Tory thinking on Empire is realistic. Its policy, therefore, is a quite definite one. The Labour Party, the organised expression of the British workers, on the other hand, has no individual Colonial policy. Regarding its existence, as it does, to be bound up with the continuation of Empire, it supports the Imperialist policy of the Tories. British Imperialism has had the support of the leaders of organised labour by sharing with them some of the spoils of its Colonial exploitation, which makes Labour the defender of British Imperial interests whenever they are threatened.

Engels commented upon this pro-imperialist outlook of British Labour as far back as 1882 in a letter to Kautsky, when he wrote: "You ask me what the English workers think of colonial policy? Exactly the same as they think about politics in general, the same as what the bourgeoisie think. There is no working class party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers merrily devour with them the fruits of the British colonial monopoly and of the British monopoly of the world market." While to Marx he wrote even earlier (1858), "The British working class is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. Of course, this is to a certain extent justifiable for a nation which is exploiting the whole world."<sup>1</sup>

This prophecy of Engels' has been fulfilled to the letter. Today the British Labour Movement stands as the expression of a bourgeois proletariat. And particularly on Imperial and Colonial questions it has no definite programme of its own to set against that of the Right. Take, for example, the recent debate on Burma. On June 1, 1945, Mr. Amery on behalf of the Tories came before the House of Commons with a Bill in which he demanded dictatorial powers for the Governor during the transition years from military administration to the restoration of the form of government the country enjoyed before the Japanese invasion. The policy envisaged under the Bill is definitely a reactionary one unlikely to find approval among even moderate Burmese political leaders. After a number of Tory members had given their blessings to Mr. Amery for preserving their imperial interests in that part of the Empire, Mr. W. G. Cove, a left-wing Labour member, had the courage to criticise strongly the proposals outlined in the Bill, declaring that "it was a tragedy that at this juncture in world affairs Mr. Amery should be Secretary of State, because he (Mr. Amery) had said in 1931 that we could not object to Japanese aggression in Manchuria because if we did we would condemn our control and government of India and Burma." At this stage of the debate, Mr. A. Creech Jones, the Labour

<sup>1</sup> Lenin *On Britain*, p. 65. Marxist-Leninist Library, Vol. XVIII.

Party Colonial Affairs spokesman, intervened and dissociated himself from his colleague's remarks. He informed the Tories that he was instructed to endorse Mr. Amery's Bill on behalf of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

To understand properly this bankruptcy of the Labour Party it is necessary to review briefly its historical background. Unlike the Liberal Party, which it superseded after the last war as the official Opposition, the Labour Party was originally conceived by its founders not simply as offering an alternative Government to run the capitalist system, but to wage a political struggle as a means of bringing about a transformation of property relations with all its social implications. The Liberal Party, for instance, differed from the Tory Party only as to the methods of running the capitalist system; it never challenged the fundamental social and economic structure of British society. On the other hand, the Labour Party in its early days did at least pose a theoretical challenge to the existing social order, though one might disagree with the methods proposed for bringing about the change. Unlike scientific Marxists, the Labour leaders of the early period envisaged the change in the social system through evolutionary constitutional means. That is to say, they hoped that at some time the electorate would return to office Labour Governments, which would, by legislative enactments, achieve Labour's objective. This theoretical prognosis was always disputed by revolutionary Socialists, who maintained that even if Labour did ever secure a majority at Westminster the ruling class would resort to illegal measures to prevent such a transition. But we are not here concerned with the polemics of reformism versus revolution, for history has already resolved this question as far as Britain is concerned. How has this come about?

As it developed into a mass organisation, the Labour Party became more and more dependent upon the trade unions for financial support and as vote gathering apparatus. For this financial and political support it has been obliged to pay a great price: it has been obliged to abandon its early theoretical programme. Unlike these socialist idealists, the trade union leaders have never really been converted to the socialist objective, even though they have given lip service to it. Their concern has been to guard and advance the trade

union interests of their members, and they have used their positions in the Labour Party to impose their aims. These aims have been to wring concessions from the ruling class, and they have come progressively to the point of view that if the capitalist class is to be in a position to accede to their economic demands, that class must have their support whenever its position is threatened. The result has been that whenever British Capitalism-Imperialism has been faced with a crisis, the Trade Union leaders have not utilised that crisis to forward the socialist aims of the Labour Party, but rather they have joined forces with the capitalist class to resolve the crisis. An ideological union has come about between the leaders of Labour and of Capital on the basis of Empire. This tacit agreement between the Tories on the Right and the Trade Union leaders on the Left constitutes the historic basis of Reformism in the British Labour Movement.

The Empire is conceived as a world wide trading concern owned by the British capitalist class and operated primarily in the interests of that class. And since the reforms desired by the Labour leaders for the working class in the metropolis derive from the spoils of Empire, these leaders have, willy nilly, been forced into the role of junior partners in the Imperialist concern. They conclude that without tribute from the Empire they will be unable to obtain these concessions, except they are prepared to challenge openly the whole fundamental basis of British Imperialism. But this position they have not taken up, as they are unwilling to take the risk. So they are now pursuing a conscious policy which is the outcome of the conclusion they have arrived at: that the standard of living of the British workers can only be maintained and perhaps extended on the basis of Empire.

To further their point of view they regard and use the Labour Party, quite without deference to its professed socialist aims as a political apparatus which will look after the interests of trade unionists at Westminster. The Trade Union Congress leaders meet the bosses on the industrial sector, while the Trade Union M.P.s do so in the Parliamentary arena. In this way both angles of the joust for better working conditions are covered.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Greeting the 1944 Trade Union Congress at Blackpool on behalf of the Labour Party, Ellen Wilkinson chided the trade union bosses on

One point we would like to stress in this appraisal of the stand of the Trade Union officials, who, thanks to the financial support of the Unions, dominate the Labour Party; and that is that the Fabian-Imperialist course they are pursuing is absolutely conscious. The concern of the leaders is now to try and persuade the rank and file membership to abandon the vestiges of anti-imperialism still clinging to the party and to support in an unqualified manner the Colonial system. There yet remains in its ranks, however, a number of idealists who wish to see the worst features of Colonial rule abolished or ameliorated, and as a sop to this orientation on the problems of Empire, the Executive from time to time issues pious resolutions, statements and manifestos, giving lip service to the aspirations of the subject peoples in terms of Dominion status for India by and by, and the gradual evolution of the Colonies of the West Indies and Africa towards self-government. This is nothing but demagoguery aimed at creating among the subject peoples the impression that the Labour Party stands for a fundamental change in the *status quo*. Nothing of the sort. While Mr. Bevin draws lances with Mr Churchill on domestic issues, the most radical reform he offers the Indians is to close down the India Office and put them under the Dominions Office.

The basic principles of Labour's Colonial thesis were revealed in all their glaring nakedness in a Parliamentary debate on the future of Empire.<sup>1</sup> And it was left to Mr. Emanuel Shinwell who, by his past record at Westminster, had earned for himself the reputation of a genuine Left Socialist, to expose the bare ribs of Labour's pro-imperialist leanings. Mr. Shinwell, seemingly having repented of his previous Left attitude, declared that "I have occasionally found myself in disagreement with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but I am in hearty accord with the view he expressed some time ago on the suggested liquidation of the

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their attitude towards the Labour Party. "Some of you are getting into the habit of treating the Labour Party as a poor relation. We are poor and we are a relation, but you need not treat us as though the Labour Party was a negligible quantity, because, if you do, the electors will believe you," declared Miss Wilkinson. She also asserted that "there is a growing tendency to treat M.P.s as union delegates rather than as representatives of a whole constituency."

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, April 20, 1944.

Empire. Sir, we have no intention, any of us, of throwing the British Commonwealth of Nations overboard to satisfy a section of the American Press, or indeed any one else." Having thus shown himself a supporter of the new Fabian-Imperialism, Mr. Shinwell presented his case very logically. "I ventured to cross swords very humbly with General Smuts who declared that after this war we should be a poor country," he said. "Of course we shall be a poor country, of course our plight will be precarious, of course we shall have to reduce the standard of life of our people, and, of course we shall become a second-rate or even a third- or fourth-rate Power unless we take appropriate steps to prevent it." And what are the appropriate steps proposed by Mr. Shinwell, spokesman of the Labour Party? "The Colonies," he maintained, "are not being developed in an economic sense as they ought to be . . . There should be an inquiry into the possibilities of expansion in all the Dominion countries, in India particularly, and in our Colonial possessions. . . . We ought to take accumulated savings and invest a great proportion of them in those Empire countries who need them—some of them do not need them, having large sterling balances—and particularly in the Colonies."

The *Daily Herald*, official organ of the Labour Party, observes in its editorial on Mr. Shinwell's speech, which supported a motion to promote post-war co-operation between the nations of the British Commonwealth, that "the motion was tabled in the names of Mr. Shinwell, a Socialist; Lord Winterton, a Conservative; Sir Edward Grigg, a die-hard Conservative, and Sir Herbert Williams, an ultra-Conservative."<sup>1</sup> Clear evidence, this, of the close tie-up between the Tories and Labour on the basis of Imperialism. The *Herald* attempts to take Mr. Shinwell to task for his views, but in doing so itself exposes Labour's attitude on Empire. "He (Mr. Shinwell) was far too much concerned with answering 'sneers at the British Empire' and with giving superfluous assurances that we have no intention of 'throwing the British Commonwealth overboard.' Who ever seriously supposed we had?" asks the *Daily Herald*. "A Socialist can afford to ignore the critics of the Empire and to concentrate on the exposition of his Party's aims."

<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Herald*, April 25, 1944.

But since Mr. Arthur Greenwood, then official spokesman of the Labour Party in Parliament, fully endorsed Mr. Shinwell's views, we can only conclude that they also expressed the party's aims. Mr. Greenwood even went so far as to refer to Field-Marshal Smuts as "a man of great, ripe wisdom and a man whom we all honour," that same Field-Marshal Smuts whose Dominion of South Africa is notorious for its treatment of its majority black population. Marshal Smuts is the author of the Regionalism scheme, the latest device for joint Imperial control by the United Kingdom Government and the Dominions. This Regionalism has also received recognition and acceptance by the Labour Party, as testified in an official report of the National Executive issued on April 24, 1944. The report declares that "In regions such as Africa, South-East Asia, and the South-West Pacific, where neighbouring Colonies are administered by different Governments, we strongly recommend the early creation of Regional Councils to co-ordinate economic policy, with a view to making the interests of the Colonial peoples primary beyond all doubt." The Labour Party, judging from this document, stands, then, on the same side as the Tory Party, even though it may give lip service to the interests of the Colonial people as being primary in any system of Imperial rule. In fact, ever since Colonel Oliver Stanley, the Secretary of State for Colonies, adopted the Colonial Development and Welfare Plan, the Tories have appropriated more and more from the programme of the Fabians. Now there is hardly any difference between Tory 'Democracy' and Fabian-Imperialism on Colonial affairs.

Mr. A. Creech Jones, who has so often championed the Colonial peoples in Parliament and exposed their grievances, while under no particular obligation to do so, since they did not elect him, feels that "This country has an Empire it cannot shed," although he assumes that "it is our responsibility." Mr. Creech Jones understands the role of Monopoly Capitalism in the Colonies, and asks in an article on British Imperialism whether the Colonial territories are "moving to political and economic freedom."<sup>1</sup> He tells us that there are vested interests which must be removed,

<sup>1</sup> *British Imperialism and the Colonial Empire*, by A. Creech Jones, M.P., in *The Left News*, April, 1944.



and then demands: "But how is it to be done?" That, of course, is the questions which Colonials always ask. How is it to be done? How are vested interests to be removed? That was the burning question which faced Lenin, and we have seen how he solved it; how he removed the vested interests of Czarist Imperialism by superseding them entirely. And Lenin was faced also with the same problem of resolving the inequities and oppressions and disabilities suffered by the widespread populations of the Russian Empire. This, too, he did, as we have also seen, but only after having superseded the power which was exploiting them. Having achieved this prerequisite, Lenin drew those people into association with the former ruling nation, the Great Russians, by admitting the right of Self-Determination for the Colonial peoples and national minorities, by admitting them as free and equal partners into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

But when this question of how to achieve progress for the Colonial peoples of the British Empire is posed by official spokesmen of the Labour Party like Mr. Jones, a likely Colonial Secretary, all they propose is an extension of social welfare, more civil rights, greater trade union facilities. All these are very good suggestions, but it is quite legitimate to ask who is to allow all this, and how? For finally, of course, the financial question is the root problem of the extension of social well-being in the Colonies. This was clearly brought out in the case of the Sargent Plan for education in India, referred to in Chapter VI. This plan, drawn up by Mr. John Sargent, Commissioner of Education for India, was put on one side to wait "full realisation until India had increased its industrial and agricultural wealth to pay for it."

It is quite illusory for Labour Party idealists to imagine that wide schemes for improved education, extended social services and better economic conditions will be provided by the British ruling class in Colonial areas, when they have hesitated to implement the Beveridge plan at home. Many of these people fall back upon the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, which was passed largely to placate the populations of the West Indies, who had demonstrated their extreme dissatisfaction with British rule by a wave of militant strikes. Under the Act there was created the Colonial

Development and Welfare Fund, which was to devote £5,000,000 a year over a period of ten years towards the well-being of the Colonial territories of the Empire (with a population of over 60,000,000) by way of rehabilitation schemes. A noteworthy feature of the Fund is that any part of the £5,000,000 not spent in any one year may not be carried over to the following year. The total expenditure up to the end of June 1943 out of the Fund was stated in Parliament to be only £742,924. In the same period, the Governors of the various Colonies contributed to the British Treasury in the name of the populations, in cash or interest-free loans between £40 and £50 millions, to assist Britain's war effort. What a great hoax this Fund is!<sup>1</sup>

Yet the colonial theoreticians of the Labour Party fall back upon the Development and Welfare Act to correct the economic and social ills of the Colonies. It is their Bible, their rod and staff of Imperial progress. They use it to camouflage the pro-imperialist line of much of the Left. The Fabians have been delegated the role of anæsthetists, to administer the chloroform while the Trade Union officials assist the Imperialists in the operation on the victims. Their camouflage has the purpose of blurring the sharp pro-imperialist orientation of the T.U.C. with a pastel pink colouring. Ameliorative measures form the main plank of their platform, but the Parliamentary spokesmen of the Party undermine them by coming out openly and blatantly for what is now euphemistically termed the 'greater development of the Empire.' Literally translated, this means more intensive exploitation of the natural resources and labour power of the Colonial territories.

#### *Labour Colonial Bureaucrats.*

In fact, there is now a working tie-up between the Labour

<sup>1</sup> In October, 1944, the Colonial Office declared a profit of £3,676,253 accumulated from transactions in West African cocoa in 1939-1943. Instead of distributing the profit among the native producers or using it for promoting social services among the Africans, the Colonial Office will use the money to subsidise a Marketing Board set up as part of the British Ministry of Food and for a Cocoa Research organisation which it proposes to establish after the war. (Report on Cocoa Control in West Africa, Crnd. 6554.)

Party and the Colonial administration. For Transport House is working in collaboration with the Colonial Office in recommending trade union functionaries to go out to the Colonies to act as Labour Advisers and subordinate officials in the new labour departments which have been set up since the Imperial Government has recommended the extension of trade unions among Colonial workers. In the past, civil servants attached to the Colonial administrative organs were drawn exclusively from the middle classes; they were university men who used the Colonies as a career. But since the official recognition of trade unionism in the Colonies in 1940, there has been a departure from the traditional policy of appointment and trade unionists are being placed in the Colonial labour offices. These trade unionists, who were never Socialists at home, will not put themselves out to propagate Socialist ideas among the native workers. The Colonial Office's enlistment of the active aid of the T.U.C. in supervising labour organisations in the subject territories is quite a brilliant piece of strategy. In doing this, it will use the British trade union appointees to put a curb upon the militancy of the native workers; for the intensification in the development of Colonial resources will bring forth the active opposition of the Colonial masses to the intensified oppression which it is bound to produce. The trade union men, as the servants of the Colonial Office in the labour departments of the Colonies, will have the task of maintaining industrial peace among the coloured under-paid workers.

There is no doubt that the Colonies, especially India, will be milked to restore Britain's declining capitalism. Mr. Shinwell has, in fact, done the ground work for the Tories, and how much better that he, a supposed Socialist, should have done it than they! He has filled out the framework of Marshal Smut's Regionalism, providing the economic content, dotting the i's and crossing the t's of the South African Premier's proposals. It is hoped to rally working class support behind an expansionist production programme by assuring the workers of Britain that this is the only way in which they can hope to ensure decent conditions of living at home, while the ruling class will continue to play its centuries-old game of power politics in opposition to the United States and the Soviet Union.

No sooner had the war in Europe come to a victorious conclusion, thanks to the stability and mighty power of the Soviet State, than the fundamental economic and political conflicts between the British and American capitalists on the one hand, and between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union on the other, broke into the open at San Francisco. Temporarily blurred by the exigent imperative for forming an anti-Hitler front, the essential differences between the 'United' Nations cannot be suppressed too long. Marshal Smuts's scheme of Regionalism and Mr. Shinwell's detailed amplification of it are proposed as the *modus operandi* for meeting America's world imperialist hegemony.

It the British working class falls for these power-politics nostrums—and they will if no political party emerges to re-direct them into the path of Socialism—they will find themselves drawn into greater and more destructive wars. The fundamental problems posed before Britain and the world cannot be solved in terms of 'ultra-Imperialism,' or 'supra-Imperialism,' but only in terms of Socialism. It is, of course, possible to effect temporary adjustments, to establish some sort of patchwork pattern such as has been envisaged by the American Agreement. But no permanent solution of the problems of the British people is possible within the framework of the existing social system. More intensive exploitation of India and Africa must result in violent resistance from those people. And this resistance will react upon the stability of the Imperial structure, which will not gain strength as is maintained by those putting forward plans to better it, but will be progressively weakened by the energetic struggles of the exploited masses of the Colonial territories. It is well to remember that the British Empire is not a cohesive entity of white people. It includes 500 million coloured people as against 70 million whites. And even the adherence of the white section of the Empire is not permanently guaranteed. The Dominions of Australia, New Zealand and Canada are gravitating towards the United States, and the loyalty of the Union of South Africa is questionable. Marshal Smuts is holding it to Great Britain at the moment, but when he is gone there will be a big drive from the Boer Nationalists, headed by Dr. Malan, to sever

the Imperial connection by declaring South Africa a "Fascist Christian National Republic."<sup>1</sup>

'Regionalism' or any other plan designed to secure the more intensive exploitation of the Colonial masses can only destroy what remains of their traditional loyalty. In reality, the Imperialists are digging their own grave. It is significant that while Mr. Shinwell recognised that there are 13 million dissatisfied Negroes in America, he was unable to make a similar accusation against the Soviet Union, and it is quite certain that he would have no hesitation in doing so were Stalin vulnerable in that regard. The most he could say was that "even our friends of Soviet Russia, for sound and proper purposes, in order to safeguard themselves against possible aggression in the future, have sought to exercise, I shall not put it higher than this, a protectorate over other countries." Aggression from whom? Only from some Imperialist Power or Powers. Obviously not Germany, now prostrate. Which Power or combination of Powers only history will reveal.

These people may have plans for Empire, but history has its own logic. This war and the part which the Soviet Union in particular has played in it has done more to educate the workers of Britain and of all lands, not excluding the subject peoples of the Empire, on the fundamental merits of Socialism, even with the limitations of the present Soviet régime, over the present decaying system of Capitalism-Imperialism which reaction is making desperate attempts to keep alive. History, in fact, has done the job which the Labour Party was founded to do but rejected. But these reactionary elements, though they may try to cheat history and succeed in arresting temporarily the historical process, cannot do so for ever. As Lenin said, "the Social Revolution may meet with defeats and temporary setbacks, but only Socialism can lead humanity out of the blind alley into which it has now been dragged."

#### *Fascism or Socialism?*

Only two alternatives are offered by the historical circum-

<sup>1</sup> See Alexander Campbell's *Smuts and Swastika* (Gollancz) and *The Garment Worker*—official organ of the Garment Workers' Union of South Africa for May-June, 1944.

stances of the present: Fascism or Socialism. The question of Socialism no longer remains an academic one. The contradictions and seething conflicts which exploded in the present war will not be solved by the war. Indeed, its conclusion can only deepen and sharpen them. Arising out of the sufferings which the peoples of Europe have undergone in the course of the holocaust will be an exaggerated nationalism whose dimensions are already discernible. Dislike it we may, but ignore it we cannot. It is a factor which we must face realistically. But like the nationalist struggle of the subject peoples of the British and other Empires, it is just another aspect of the deep-rooted crisis of the social and political system and is impossible of solution within the capitalist social structure. The Soviet form of multi-national State gives the only real answer. Within the framework of such a State the pressing problems of frontiers, of monetary exchange, of tariff walls, of markets, of production and distribution, are at once capable of solution.

The political and economic differences rampant under the present system of Capitalism-Imperialism are, within the Soviet type of State, with its common ownership of productive means, its socialised and planned basis, sublimated into a broader and richer Cultural Nationalism which enhances the social unity of all the components. "In the old days, when the Czar, the capitalists, and the landlords were in power in our country, it was the policy of the government to make one people—the Russian people—the dominant people, and all other peoples subjugated and oppressed peoples. That was a bestial, a wolfish policy. In October, 1917, when the great proletarian revolution began in our country, when we overthrew the Czar, the landlords and capitalists, the great Lenin, our teacher, our father and tutor, said that henceforth there must be neither dominated nor subjugated peoples, that the peoples must be equal and free. In this way we buried the old Czarist bourgeois policy and proclaimed a new policy, a Bolshevik policy—a policy of friendship, a policy of brotherhood between the peoples of our country.

"Since then eighteen years have elapsed. And now we already see the beneficial results of this policy. The present conference is a vivid proof of the fact that the former mistrust between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. has long been laid

to rest, that the mistrust has been replaced by complete and mutual trust, that the friendship between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. is growing and gaining in strength. That, comrades, is the most precious thing that the Bolshevik national policy has given us.

“And friendship among the peoples of the U.S.S.R. is a great and important achievement. For as long as this friendship exists, the peoples of our country will be free and invincible. Nothing can daunt us, neither enemies at home nor enemies abroad, as long as this friendship lives and flourishes. You need have no doubt of that, comrades.”<sup>1</sup>

The means by which the Soviet Union solved its Colonial and National Problems inherited from Czarist Imperialism, and united the world's most heterogeneous ethnic society into a powerful State whose diverse peoples are culturally individual, but whose entity is economically and politically united, provides the finest guide to the solution of similar problems on a world-wide scale. Only when the subject peoples of Asia and Africa, and the national minorities of Europe are united within a Soviet form of multi-national State will the racial, religious and sectional frictions, and the conflicting interests which Imperialism breeds and exploits and which lead to constant wars, be at peace and live in harmony. For Imperialism divides: Socialism unites.

<sup>1</sup> Address by J. Stalin at Conference of Collective Farmers from the Asiatic republics of Turkmenistan and Tazikistan—Dec. 4, 1935.

## INDEX

- AFRICA, 5, 9.  
  American exploitation, 164.
- AFRIKAANS, 90.
- AGRICULTURE—mechanisation, 127.
- ALASKA, 7, 9.
- ALEUTIAN, 9.
- ALEXANDER I, 5.
- ALEXANDER II, 11, 15.
- ALEXANDER III, 11.
- ALEXAYEV, 48.
- ALPHABETIC CHANGES, 98.
- ALTAI REGION, 21.
- AMERY, LEOPOLD, on Japanese imperialism, 158.
- AMUR RIVER, 9.
- ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT, 13.
- ANGLO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY, 12, 13.
- ANNAM—annexation by France, 9.
- APRIL THESIS OF LENIN, viii.
- ARCHANGEL, 51.
- ARDAHAN, 11.
- ARMENIA, 31, 52.  
  — literacy, 96, 97.
- ARMENISN, 27.  
  — pogroms, 18.  
  — in Trans-Caucasia, 18.
- ASTRAKHAN, 4.
- ATLANTIC CHARTER AND COLONIAL PEOPLES, 153.
- AZERBAIJAN, 52.  
  — annexation, 10.  
  — books, 109.  
  — industrialisation, 123.
- BAIKAL, lake, 8, 20.
- BALTIC, 2.  
  — barons, 15, 16.  
  — provinces, 5, 27, 40.  
  — States, 60.
- BASHKIRS, 20, 92.  
  — exploitation, 21.  
  — rule by native chiefs, 21.
- BATUM, 21.
- BERLIN CONFERENCE SETTLEMENT, 11
- BESSARABIA, 5.
- BIRO-BIDJAN, 82.
- BLACK SEA STEPPES, 4.
- BOKHARA, 22.  
  — women, 99.
- BOLSHEVIKS, ix, 37, 93.
- BOLSHEVIK party, viii, x.  
  — clear objective conception, 47.
- BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION, x.
- BREST-LITOVSK, 43.
- BRITISH HUDSON BAY COMPANY, 7.
- BRITISH-JAPANESE ALLIANCE, 12.
- BRITISH LABOUR—bourgeois proletariat, 166.  
  — defender of Empire, 165, 166.  
  — share of imperialist spoils, 168.
- BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT—in effectuality, 47.  
  — attitude to Colonial Empire, 35.
- BRITISH WORKING CLASS—a warning, 175.
- BUBNOV, x.
- BUDDHISM, 20.
- BURIAT MONGOLS, 20.  
  — illiteracy, 30.  
  — literacy, 94, 95.
- BURMA—constitution, 147.  
  — dominion status claim, 145, 146.  
  — national army, 147.  
  — nationalism, 148.  
  — persecution of nationalist leaders 146.
- BYELORUSSIA, 27, 31.
- CATHERINE THE GREAT, 15.
- CATHERINE II, 4.
- CAUCASUS, 51.  
  — conquest, 5.
- CENTRAL ASIA, 27, 51.  
  — books, 109.  
  — colonies, 11.  
  — conquest, 11.  
  — cultural and social backwardness, 29-30.  
  — feminine emancipation, 99.  
  — illiteracy, 31.



# INDEX

- industry, 121.
- rebellion of 1916, 53.
- CENTRAL RUSSIA, 30.
- CHECHENS, 27.
- CHERKEES, 27.
- CHINA, 9.
- British policy, 159.
- Japanese attack, 158.
- war aims, 45.
- war of national liberation, 157.
- CHINA AND SOVIET UNION, 158.
- CHINESE, 151, 152.
- CHUKCHEES, 20.
- CHURCH—vested interest, 128.
- CHURCHILL, WINSTON
- imperialist, 149.
- interventionist, 48.
- CHUVASHIA — industrial develop-  
ment, 125.
- CHUVASHIANS, 31.
- CIRCISSIA, 11.
- CIVIL WAR OSCILLATES, 52.
- CIVIL WAR IN COLONIAL AREAS, 53.
- CIVILISED LABOUR POLICY, 131-132.
- CLAUSEWITZ ON WAR, 45.
- CLEMENCEAU, 44.
- COLLECTIVISATION, 125-126.
- COLONIAL ATTITUDE TO WHITE  
WORKERS, 131.
- COLONIAL BOURGEOISIE EXPOSED, 46.
- COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WEL-  
FARE FUND, 107, 172-173.
- COLONIAL NATIONALISM—HISTORIC-  
ALLY PROGRESSIVE, 45.
- COLONIAL PEOPLE—BITTERNESS CON-  
SEQUENCE OF OPPRESSION, 42.
- COLONIAL PEOPLES IN IMPERIALIST  
WAR, 151.
- COLONIAL QUESTION IN INTER-  
TIONAL POLITICS, 13.
- COLONIES—Governors' veto, 164.
- nationalist aspirations, 44, 45.
- milching ground of imperialism,  
174.
- "Open Door" policy, 163.
- post-war design, 160.
- sovereignty, 162.
- COMMANDER ISLAND, 9.
- COMMUNISM—cannot be forced, 63.
- CONGO BASIN ACT, 12.
- CONSTANTINOPLE, 2.
- CORDON SANITAIRE, 44.
- COSSACKS—colonial rulers, 7, 8.
- origin, 5-6.
- COSSACKS AND OPENING UP OF  
SIBERIA, 5-7.
- COSSACKS AND SIBERIA, 4.
- COSSACKS IN SIBERIA, 19.
- COTTON, 121, 122, 126.
- COUNCILS OF ACTION, 48.
- COURLAND, DUCHY OF, 4.
- COUNTER REVOLUTION ORGANISED,  
48.
- CRIMEA; 4.
- CRIMEAN WAR, 10.
- CRIPPS, SIR STAFFORD, 149, 150.
- CROATS, 78, 80.
- CULTURAL RENAISSANCE, 90.
- CZARISM—education, 90.
- CZARIST IMPERIALISM—comparison  
with imperialism in Africa, 25.
- no restraining democratic oppo-  
sition, 25, 26.
- CZARIST RUSSIA, 1.
- CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 78.
- DAGHESTAN, 18.
- literacy, 95.
- DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF  
PEOPLES, 48.
- DENIKIN, 48, 51.
- DICTATORSHIP OF PROLETARIAT, x.
- DOLLAR DIPLOMACY, 163.
- DUTCH AND NETHERLANDS INDIES,  
157.
- DZERSHINSKY, x.
- EDUCATION—adoption of vernac-  
ulars, 93.
- African colonies, 100-103.
- EDUCATION IN COLONIES—commu-  
nism, 106-107.
- objective, 104-105.
- racial inferiority doctrines, 103-  
104.
- EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES, 60.
- EMPIRE—tory realism, 165.
- ENGELS, 33.
- on British labour and Empire,  
166.
- ESTONIA, 4, 15, 43, 51.
- ETHNIC DEMOCRACY, 154-155.
- ETHNIC DIVISION OF RUSSIAN EMPIRE  
14.

INDEX

- FABIAN IMPERIALISM, 170.  
 FAR NORTH—literacy, 97.  
 FASCISM—alternative to Socialism, 178.  
 — bourgeois— counter-revolution, 36.  
 FEBRUARY REVOLUTION AND FINLAND, 40.  
 FERGHANA VALLEY, 126.  
 FINLAND, 4, 39, 44, 51, 60.  
 — autonomy, 16.  
 — failure of workers' revolution, 40-41.  
 — German intervention, 40.  
 — Great Power vassal, 40-41.  
 — Kerensky's suppression of Diet, 40.  
 — Lenin's recognition, 40.  
 — Soviet attack, 1940, 62.  
 FIVE-YEAR PLAN, 1932-37, 118, 119.  
 FORCED LABOUR, 24, 25.  
 FRENCH CAPITAL IN RUSSIA, 9.  
 GARVEY MOVEMENT, 83-85.  
 GEORGIA AND GEORGIANS, 17, 27, 52  
 — annexation, 10, 11.  
 — resistance to Russification, 17.  
 GOLD COAST EDUCATION, 102.  
 GOLTZ, VON DER, 40.  
 GOSPLAN, 117, 118, 123.  
 GREAT RUSSIA AND GREAT RUSSIANS, 27, 92.  
 — chauvinism, 130-131.  
 GUCHKOV, xv.  
 HITLER, 78.  
 — and Baltic patriots, 44.  
 ILLITERACY, 91.  
 — under reaction, 91.  
 IMPERIALISM—inherent nature, 144.  
 — its meaning, 36.  
 — labour policy in Africa, 132-133.  
 INDIA, 149.  
 — left-wing view, 151.  
 — problem, economic, 150.  
 — right to self-determination, 153-154.  
 — Sargent plan for mass education, 107-108.  
 — Worth to Britain, 150.  
 INGUSHES, 27.  
 INORODTZI—"aliens by origin," 23  
 INTERVENTION, 48.  
 INTER-RACIAL DISCORD FOMENTED, 27.  
 IRRIGATION, 127-128.  
 IVAN THE TERRIBLE, 3, 4, 5.  
 — wars, 4.  
 JAPAN AND PORT ARTHUR, 10.  
 — as imperialist aggressor, 160.  
 JENGHIS KHAN, 5, 20.  
 JEWS—comparison with segregated Africs, 27.  
 — in the Soviet Union, 81-82.  
 — pogroms, 27.  
 — treatment under Czarism, 27.  
 JUGOSLAVIA, 78.  
 — national liberation, 80.  
 KAGANOVITCH, LAZARUS, 82.  
 KALMUKS, 26.  
 KAMCHATKA, 9.  
 KARS, 11.  
 KAZAN, 3.  
 KAZAN TARTARS—assimilation, 21.  
 KAZAKSTAN—industrialisation, 119  
 120.  
 — literacy, 95.  
 — press, 109.  
 KENYA, 27.  
 — education, 101.  
 KERENSKY ALEXANDER, xv, xvi, 41.  
 — government overthrown, xvii.  
 KHIVA, 22.  
 KIRGHIZIA—literacy, 95.  
 KIRGHIZIAHS AND KAZAKS, 6.  
 — flight to Sinkiang, 53.  
 KOLCHAK, 48, 51.  
 KOREA—Japanese sovereignty, 9.  
 KORNILOV, 48.  
 KRASNOV, 48.  
 KUUSINEN, DR. OTTO, 85.  
 — puppet government, 62.  
 LABOUR PARTY—bankrupt view of imperialism, 168.  
 — colonial administration, 175.  
 — dependency on unions, 168.  
 — illusions of idealists, 173.  
 — reformist, 169.  
 — removal of colonial imperialism, 172, 173.

# INDEX

- LABOUR'S COLONIAL THESIS, 170-172
- LATVIA, 15.
- LENIN, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, 39, 48, 55.
- a tribute, 47.
  - and Estonia, 43.
  - against national oppression, 33.
  - attitude to Finland, 41.
  - conception of Bolsheviks, 34.
  - Declaration of Right of self-determination, 51.
  - duty of Russian workers, 85.
  - Great Russian chauvinism, 92, 93.
  - internationalism, 36.
  - on illiteracy, 9.
  - on imperialism, 36.
  - on social revolution, 177.
  - on war, 160.
  - on women, 129.
  - on 1905, 46.
  - "proletarian dictatorship," 113.
  - realist, 93.
  - revolutionary Marxism, 34.
  - right to secede, 58.
  - right of self-determination, xvii.
  - self-determination, 49, 61, 173.
  - self-determination inviolable right, 93.
  - thesis on self-determination, 37-38.
  - theory and practice, 47.
  - vindication of policy in Finland, 41, 42.
- LENIN'S ROLE, xix.
- LEZGIANS—migration to Turkey, 19
- resistance, 18.
- LIBERAL "TRUSTESHIP," 26.
- LINCOLN, ABRAHAM—object of civil war not to free slaves, 60.
- LITHUANIA, 15.
- LIBRARIES, 108.
- LITVINOV, MAXIM, 82.
- LIVONIA, 4.
- LLOYD GEORGE, 44.
- LOSOWSKY, ALEXANDER, 82.
- LUXEMBOURG, ROSA, 39.
- LVOV, PRINCE, vii.
- MACEDONIA, 80.
- MALAYA, 139, 140.
- illegality of political organisation, 141.
- Mui Tsai (child slavery), 141-143.
  - native attitude to war, 145.
  - pukka sahibs, 145, 146.
  - Selangor strike, 140, 141.
  - wages, 140.
- MAMONTOV, 48.
- MANCHURIA, 2, 9, 10.
- MANDATES SYSTEM, 161, 162.
- MANNERHEIM, BARON GENERAL, 40.
- MARITIME PROVINCE, 2, 9.
- MARIYS, 31.
- MARX, 33.
- MARXISM v. REFORMISM, 168.
- MENSHEVIKS, xvi.
- MILYUKOV, xv.
- MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE, xvii.
- MULTI-NATIONAL STATE—a political instrument, 113.
- MURMANSK, 51.
- NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTION, xiv.
- its importance, 36-37.
- NATIONAL BACKWARDNESS HISTORICALLY CONDITIONED, 93.
- NATIONAL CULTURE, 111-112.
- NATIONAL MINORITIES—percentage of organised workers, 130.
- NATIONALISM, 79.
- importance of language, 89-90.
  - bourgeois form, 44, 45.
  - in modern Europe, 81.
- NEGRO SEPARATISM, 83.
- NICHOLAS I, 5.
- NICHOLAS II, 10.
- NOMADS, 128.
- NORTH PACIFIC EXPANSION, 9.
- NORTH SAKHALIN, 9.
- NORTHERN ASIA—Russian penetration, 5.
- OBJI RIVER, 5.
- OBJECT OF WAR—American opinion 157.
- OCTOBER REVOLUTION, xiv, 47.
- OCTOBRISTS, xv.
- ORTHODOX CHURCH, 15.
- its role in Russia, 28, 29.
- OSTIAKS, 20.

## INDEX

- OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 4.  
 OUTER MONGOLIA CEDED, 12.  
 PALESTINE PROBLEM, 84.  
 PAUL, CZAR, 8, 17.  
 PERSIA, 3, 5.  
 PETER THE GREAT, 4, 9, 15.  
 PHILIPPINES, 164.  
   — annexation by America, 9.  
 PILSUDSKI, 61.  
 POLAND, 4, 5, 27, 39, 44, 60.  
 POLISH PARTITION, 15.  
 POLISH REBELLION, 15.  
 POPULATION—distribution of workers, 114, 115.  
 PORT ARTHUR SECURED, 10.  
 PRESS, 31.  
 PROLETARIANISATION, 115-116.  
 RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN U.S.A., 169.  
 RED ARMY, 52, 62.  
   — racial equality, 67-68.  
 REGIONAL COUNCIL—association of natives, 165.  
 REGIONALISM, 162, 162, 177.  
 RELIGIOUS SECTS, 28.  
 RHODES, CECIL—on empire, 166.  
 RIGHT OF SECESSION, 58.  
 RUSSIA AND ABYSSINIA, 12.  
   — and British policy, 12.  
   — and Ottoman Empire, 10.  
   — borders, 2.  
   — Central Asian Colonies, 2.  
   — foreign financial exploitation, 1-2.  
   — Provisional Government, xv, xvi  
   — racial inhabitants, 2.  
 RUSSIAN EMPIRE—administrative divisions, 14-15.  
 RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM IN CENTRAL ASIA, 23-24.  
 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION—its course, 51.  
 RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY—1903 Conference, 34.  
 RUSSIFICATION, 30.  
 RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, 3.  
   — outbreak, 10.  
 RUSSO-TURKISH WAR, 11.  
 SAMOYEDS, 20.  
 ST. PETERSBURG, 4.  
 SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE, 159.  
   — open hostility of Big Three, 176.  
 SAN STEFANO TREATY, 12.  
 SELF-DETERMINATION, 39, 44, 46, 55.  
   — aid to Soviet power, 55.  
   — and a Socialist Britain, 63.  
   — and Great Russian chauvinism, 92-93.  
   — and social-imperialists, 151.  
   — British left standpoint, 93.  
   — consequences of negation to Spanish, 54.  
   — fundamental right, 151.  
   — indivisible right, 152.  
   — Left-wing fallacy, 151, 152.  
   — Leninist and Wilsonian conceptions, 77-78.  
   — necessary adjunct to social emancipation of metropolis 35.  
   — practical interpretation, 113.  
 SERBS, 28, 30.  
 SERF EMANCIPATION IN BALTIC, 16.  
 SHAMANISM, 20.  
 SIBIR OR ISKER, 5.  
 SIBERIA, 2, 3, 5, 6, 19, 25.  
   — administrative divisions, 20.  
   — banishment, 19.  
   — fur collecting tribes, 19-20.  
   — colonising settlers, 8.  
   — exile policy, 8.  
   — immigration, 19.  
   — settlement, 19.  
 SIBERIAKS, 19.  
 SIERRA LEGNE—education, 101, 102  
 SINGAPORE, 143.  
   — Legislative Council, 143.  
   — native apathy, 143, 144.  
   — opium monopoly, 146.  
 SINO-JAPANESE WAR, 10.  
 SLOVAKS, 78.  
 SMUSHKEVITZH, LIEUT.-GEN. JACOB, 82.  
 SMUTS, MARSHAL, AND MANDATES, 161.  
   — and Regionalism, 162.  
 SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES, xvii.  
 SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENTS, 51.

## INDEX

- SOVIET ASIA**—cultural resurgence, 109-111.  
 — women, 129.  
**SOVIET DECLARATION TO SUBJECT PEOPLES**, 50.  
**SOVIET DEMOCRACY**—its defects, 133  
**SOVIET EAST**—emancipation of women, 98.  
 — industrialisation, 123, 124.  
 — Russian allies, 153.  
**SOVIET EDUCATION**—objective, 103.  
**SOVIET-ESTONIA TREATY**, 43.  
**SOVIET-LATVIA TREATY**, 43.  
**SOVIET-LITHUANIA TREATY**, 43.  
**SOVIET LITERATURE**, 110.  
**SOVIET MANIFESTO**, 61.  
**SOVIET MULTI-NATIONAL STATE**, 178.  
**SOVIET NATIONAL POLICY**, 134-135.  
**SOVIET OF NATIONALITIES**, 70.  
**SOVIET STATE**—structural administration, 67.  
**SOVIET UNION**, 44, 60.  
 — a union of equal states, 59.  
 — a voluntary union, 58, 59.  
**SOVIET UNION AND BRITISH EMPIRES**—comparison of attitudes, 138, 139.  
 — administrative divisions, 65, 66.  
 — Colour Bar illegal, 87.  
 — comparison with rule in British Empire, 76, 77.  
 — democratic defects, 155.  
 — democracy, 75, 76.  
 — dual citizenship, 70.  
 — equality of races, 64, 65.  
 — expression of national minority aspirations, 77.  
 — flexibility of government system, 71-73.  
 — loss of Baltic states, 43.  
 — multi-national state, 86.  
 — political democracy, 64.  
 — pyramidal system, 74-75.  
 — representation, 69, 70.  
 — solution of coloured problem, 179.  
 — stability of state, 87.  
 — two-chamber equality, 71.  
**SOVIETS**, xv.  
**SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES**, xv, xvii.  
**SPAIN**—People's Front, 54.  
**STALIN**, 50, 56.  
**STALIN AND FINLAND**, 1940, 62, 63.  
**STALIN**—crisis in capitalist society, 79.  
 — theoretician on Colonial Question, 37.  
 — tribute to Trotsky, xviii.  
 — warning, 55.  
**STATE FARMS**, 127.  
**STROGANOV FAMILY**, 5, 6.  
**SUDETEN GERMANS**, 78.  
**SVERDLOV**, xviii.  
**SWEDEN**, 5.  
**TAJIKS**, 31.  
**TANNER**, 42.  
**TARTAR RESISTANCE**, 7.  
**TARTARIA**, 31.  
**TEXTILE CENTRES**, 11.  
**TITO, MARSHAL**, 80.  
 — federated Yugoslavia, 79.  
**TONGKING ANNEXED BY FRANCE**, 9.  
**TRANSBAIKALIA**, 8.  
**TRANS-CASPIA**, 21.  
**TRANS-CAUCASIA**, 17, 52.  
 — agrarian policy, 17-18.  
 — race mixtures, 18.  
**TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY**, 9, 10, 25.  
**TRANSYLVANIA**—national reconciliation, 80.  
**TREATIES OF FRIENDSHIP**, 58.  
**TROTSKY**, x, 51, 52, 82.  
**TURKESTAN**, 11, 22, 30.  
 — rule through Empires, 22.  
**TURKESTAN-SIBERIAN RAILWAY**, 120.  
**TURKEY**, 11.  
 — war with Russians, 5.  
**TURKMANS**, 27.  
**TURKS**, 6.  
**UKRAINE**, 5, 27.  
 — clergy, 15.  
 — protectorate, 15.  
**U.S.A. AND COLONIES**, 163, 164.  
 — example of federated state, 59.  
**U.S.S.R.**—Article 121 of Constitution, 93-94.  
 — creation of proletariat, 115.  
 — formation, 56, 57, 58.  
 — transitional problems, 113, 114.  
**URALS**, 8, 20.  
 — industrialisation, 124.

## INDEX

- URITSKY, xviii.  
 USSARI RIVER, 9.  
 UZBEKISTAN—industrialisation, 120  
     123.  
 — literacy, 96.  
 — women, 98.  
 UZBEKS, 27.  
  
 VLADIVOSTOCK, 9, 10.  
  
 WARSAW, 61.  
 WEYGAND, GENERAL, 61.  
 WHITE RUSSIA, 5.  
 WILLKIE, WENDELL, 165.  
  
 WOMEN, 100.  
 WORLD WAR—German needs, 158.  
 WORLD WAR 2—an examination,  
     156, 157, 159.  
 WRANGEL, 48, 51.  
  
 YAKUT, 19.  
 YAKUTS, 31.  
 YAKUTIA—industrial development,  
     124, 125.  
 YUDENITCH, GENERAL, 43, 48, 51.  
  
 ZIONISM, 81, 82.