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 i in complete contrast to that which obtains in most so-calle Christian lands, where people of colour may be insulte segregated, and discriminated against with impunity, since th Governments of these countries provide them with no lege and constitutional protection.

It is asserted by certain people who try to discredit th Soviet contribution to the solution of this centuries-ol problem of inter-racial strife that Russian people wer never as colour-conscious as, for example, the Anglo-Saxo races. The fact remains, however, that during the Czari Empire, racial persecution existed widely and was sanctione by official policy. The Soviet Government is the on Government which makes it an offence against the fund mental laws of the State to preach or practise race hatre Not even in the most advanced democratic countries, Brita and America, does such a constitutional law exist.

With all its shortcomings and limitations of person freedom and civic liberties, the Soviet Union has much teach the Western democracies in solving the problem race relations, which is one of the biggest problems of t twentieth century. And for this reason, if no other, t U.S.S.R. makes a strong appeal to the sympathies hundreds of millions of coloured peoples in Asia, Afric 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.[1] 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

[1] 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 peoples 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."[1]

[1] 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.[1]

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

[1] 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 Llama 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 guaged 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."[1]

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

[1] *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.[1]

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

[1] 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.[1] 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."[2]

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

[1] 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.

[2] 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."[1]

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

[1] 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 2s. for each native child in the Government schools and £1. 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.[1]

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

[1] 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:

	European child per head	*African child per head*
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 ½ 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.[1] Nowhere is education free. Even African children attending State-aided misionary 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

[1] 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."[1] 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

[1] 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 substandards; 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."[1]

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 continuously 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."

[1] Broomfield, *Colour Conflict*—p.108.

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."[1]

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.[2] 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

[1] *An African Survey*: Lord Hinley.
[2] 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."[1] 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 Communist 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?

[1] *The Times*, January 13, 1944.

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 ricketty 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.[1] 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

[1] 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."[1]

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.

[1] 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

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

ational Culture Comes Into Its Own.

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

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

participation the national minorities were taking in Soviet Government:

Republic	*No. of Voters 1931*	*Voted at elections*	*Percentage voting*
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.

ow is it, many people are asking, that the Soviet Union, spite the fact that its chief arsenals, European Russia and e Ukraine, were destroyed in the early months of the rman onslaught was yet able to achieve and maintain periority of arms and war weapons? The answer lies in e fact that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world here erstwhile subject territories of Imperialism have been nsformed from backward agrarian regions into highly dustrialised centres. The Soviet Government is able to aw upon the former colonial territories of Soviet Asia to dress the losses of Soviet Europe.

Long before the Revolution, Lenin stressed that the grant- of the Right of Self-Determination to the subject races d oppressed nationalities was in itself merely a gesture nocent of meaning unless they were given assistance in ercising the right in practice. This was possible only if ey were rendered aid in achieving a higher standard of vilisation as speedily as possible. The essential pre-quisite for this condition was the control of the State thority by the proletariat, who would abolish capitalism d socialise the means of production, that is, the land, the ctories, the mines, and so forth. Lenin never regarded the tablishment of the 'proletarian dictatorship' as just an d in itself, as some of his critics assert, but as the necessary rcumstance for bringing about the fraternity of peoples and tionalities in building the new civilisation along Socialist es.

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