

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.

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 the 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 Bolsheviki 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 Kazakhstan 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. Republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan, 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		Chuvashia	949
S.S.R.	442	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)—Kazakstan, 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, Santoron, 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

4,000 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 largest 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 produced. 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 Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan makes railways a difficult problem, at 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 Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan, Stalinabad and Frunze respectively, are connected with the main Central Asia railroad, and the trackage laid covers several thousands of miles. Air roads and railways are helping to overcome the difficulties of communication. Industries are springing up in the fertile 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 textile industry, especially in Turkmenistan, while fertilisers and 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 set 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 309,000 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 will 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 will, 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 Turkmans. 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.