

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

¹ Joseph Stalin : *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 197.

PART II

THE NEW RUSSIA

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW THE CZARIST COLONIAL EMPIRE WAS LIBERATED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, Lenin recognised with incisive clarity that the

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

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

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

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

¹ Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 113.

Revolution In The Border Regions.

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

¹ Bernard Pares: *A History of Russia*, p. 482.

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

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

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

This succession of events affords a concrete example of

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

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

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

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

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

Significance Of The National Question.

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

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

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

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

² For a detailed analysis of this question, read Fenner Brockway *Workers' Front*, Chapter VI.

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

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

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

¹ See *Africa and World Peace* by George Padmore.

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

The Treaty Of Union Between Russians and Non-Russians.

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

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

¹ Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* pp. 111-112.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Self-Determination and Socialist Federation.

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

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

¹ Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 270-271.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ From: *Life, Public Service and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln*.

² *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

² See Lenin's *Collected Works*.

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

Soviet-Finnish Blunder—1940.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW SOVIET ADMINISTRATION OPERATES
AMONG BACKWARD PEOPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

Administrative Divisions.

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

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

Formerly Transcaucasian Republic

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still smaller units are known as

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

(c) *Autonomous Provinces or Territories*:

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

(d) *Autonomous Regions*:

Adygei; Jewish; Karachai; Oiro; Khajass; Cherkess.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Racial Equality in Red Army.

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

¹ September 6, 1941. Article entitled *The Caucasus will not revolt.*

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

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

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

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

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

Racial Representation In Supreme Soviet.

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

(a) *The Soviet of the Union*

(b) *The Soviet of Nationalities*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Allan Monkhouse: *Moscow—1911-1933*, p. 135.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pyramidal System of Government.

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

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

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

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

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

There is, of course, only one political party in the Soviet
¹ S. & B. Webb: *Soviet Communism*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

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

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

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

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

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

Critique of Wilsonian Self-Determination.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

be utterly bankrupt in the matter of solving the National Question."¹

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

¹ Joseph Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 90.

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

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

Utopianism of Zionism.

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

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

¹ *The Times*, May 26, 1945.

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

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

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

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

Black 'Zionism.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inter-racial Basis of Soviet Power.

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

¹ George Padmore: *Life and Struggles of Negro Tollers*, pp. 125-126

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Colour Bar Illegal In The Soviet Union.

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

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

¹ J. Stalin: *The National Question*, p. 31.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER SIX

HOW ILLITERACY IS BEING LIQUIDATED.

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

To most English people, who are not directly confronted with the problem of national minorities within their own country, the language question does not have the significance which it has in the European countries or within the Colonial Empire.¹ In most European countries, in Yugoslavia, 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.

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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 Lama Buddhist clergy, who desperately opposed its latinisation, but by 1932 it had been universally adopted throughout the republic.

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

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

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

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

Nothing illustrates more strikingly the phenomenal cultural development which has taken place in these formerly benighted Asiatic colonial countries as the following comparison between Uzbekistan and Sweden published by the American Institute of Pacific Relations. "Sweden is universally recognised as one of the most advanced nations on earth in its economy and culture. . . . The population of Uzbekistan on the eve of the war was almost the same as that of Sweden—6,300,000 in an area slightly smaller. How do they compare in the field of popular education? In 1938, Sweden, which has had a law requiring universal elementary education for exactly a century, had 569,000 children in its elementary schools; Uzbekistan, which then had had compulsory education only for about five years, had 916,000—this is in a country which had a one per cent literacy rate in 1914, when Sweden's rate was 99.7 per cent! Sweden had 60,000 students in secondary schools of all types in 1940; Uzbekistan, which could not boast of a single university graduate among its native population at the time of the Revolution, had 17,500 in its own higher educational institutions on January 1, 1939, not counting the considerable number studying in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere."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 Yerevan 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 revolves 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 15s. for each native child in the Government schools and 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 £3, 13s. each.¹

The following short table, taken from *Colour Conflict* (1939), 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:

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

In Nigeria, the largest and richest British colony in the sub-continent, 11s. 0d is the yearly expenditure on the education of each child. Sierra Leone spends £2. 0s. 9d per head, and in the Gold Coast, where education for the native peoples is considered to be the most advanced in Africa, the average yearly expenditure per child is £3. 10s. 10d. During the 18 years between 1913 and 1931, the Government allotment on education increased from £25,000 to £250,000. At the latter figure, however, it still represents only 7 per cent. of the revenue. Its unimpressiveness is further increased when it is known that in 1931 only one child out of every five in the Gold Coast was receiving any kind of schooling, and less than 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. Nowhere is education free. Even African children attending State-aided missionary schools have to pay fees.

Lamentably small are the proportions of their total revenues which Colonial Governments spend on native education. "So long ago as in 1919, 18 per cent of the revenue of the Philippines 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 sub-standards; those who reach Standard IV are about 2.5 per cent, and those who get above Standard VI are put at .1 per cent, or one in a thousand."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 con-

¹ Broomfield. *Colour Conflict*—p.108.

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

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

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

¹ *The Times*, January 13, 1944.

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

Then again, there is, of course, the burning and ultimately most crucial question of financing any plan for mass education. As the same article in *The Times* points out, "finance will, inevitably, be the limiting factor." It is frankly recognised, especially by those responsible for planning imperial matters, that the cost of any wide scheme of colonial education will be far beyond the resources of the Colonies concerned. It has been suggested that the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund shall provide the resources. In fact, it is becoming a habit now to fall back upon this fund as a prop when all other means fail. But this is a very rickety prop. The Colonial Welfare and Development Fund can draw upon £50,000,000 over a period of ten years, thus providing an average expenditure of £1 per head of the Colonial population for every kind of welfare and development.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 66,000 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

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

National Culture Comes Into Its Own.

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

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

participation the national minorities were taking in Soviet Government:

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

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

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

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

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

The Creation Of An Asiatic Proletariat.

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

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

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, Kazakstan, and Turkmenistan numbered 16,640,000, that is, less than the population of the British West African colony of Nigeria, which is 21 millions.

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

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-

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

² *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."¹

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.

¹ 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."¹

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

¹ 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, the trackage laid covers several thousands of miles. New roads and railways are helping to overcome the difficulties of communication. Industries are springing up in the desert oases of Turkmenistan, and the populations of the chief towns like Ashkabad, the capital, and Krasnovodsk, at the beginning of the Trans-Caspian railway, are expanding. The Central Asian achievements in industrial construction are particularly distinctive, since prior to the Revolution it was entirely devoid of any kind of industry.

Cotton is the staple production of Central Asia, and its use for industry, especially in Turkmenistan, while fertilisers for the fields are now for the first time being manufactured locally. This is as a result of the erection of a big hydro-electro-chemical plant at Chirchik, near Tashkent, which was 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."¹

(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."² 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 U.S.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

¹ *Soviet Far East and Central Asia*, pp. 119-120-121.

² 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."¹ 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-

¹ 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,¹ 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

¹ 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."¹

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, Tajikstan 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

¹ 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."¹

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.² 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

¹ *Socialist Planning*, issued by K. Borin, 1942.

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

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

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

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

Great Russian Chauvinism Combated.

The policy of industrialising the Soviet East met with

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defects of Soviet Democracy.

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

Soviet National Policy Vindicated.

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

The aim of Soviet policy is to bring about an interchange of civilisation between the diverse peoples and races comprising the Union, while each retains its national characteristics. Wherever this policy has been ignored within multinational 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.