

*Publications by George Padmore*

LIFE AND STRUGGLES OF NEGRO TOILERS

HOW BRITAIN RULES AFRICA

AFRICAN AND WORLD PEACE

(Foreword by Sir Stafford Cripps)

HANDS OFF THE PROTECTORATES

WHITE MAN'S DUTY (with Nancy Cunard)

HOW RUSSIA  
TRANSFORMED  
HER COLONIAL  
EMPIRE

*A Challenge to the Imperialist Powers*

by

GEORGE PADMORE

in collaboration with

DOROTHY PIZER

LONDON

DENNIS DOBSON LIMITED

1946

First published in 1946 by  
DENNIS DORSON LIMITED  
29 GREAT QUEEN STREET  
KINGSWAY, LONDON WC 2

*Dedicated To All Subject Peoples,  
Yellow, Brown, Black, struggling for  
National Freedom and Social Emancipation  
from the Imperialist System*

*All rights reserved*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
*In 10 pt. Times*  
BY J. B. MACKIE AND CO. LTD.  
ST MARGARET ST., DUNFERMLINE

## CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	ix
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xiv
<b>PART I—THE OLD RUSSIA: THE CZARIST EMPIRE</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1—THE RISE OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
1. <i>The Muscovite Principality and Expansion</i>	
2. <i>Russian Penetration into Siberia</i>	
3. <i>The Far East Conquests</i>	
4. <i>Caucasian and Central Asian Annexations</i>	
5. <i>Alignment of forces laid for 1914</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 2—HOW THE CZAR GOVERNED HIS COLONIAL     EMPIRE . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
1. <i>Russia Proper and Baltic Provinces</i>	
2. <i>Grand Duchy of Finland</i>	
3. <i>Caucasia (Trans- and Cis-Caucasia)</i>	
4. <i>Siberia and the Far East</i>	
5. <i>Central Asia—Turkestan</i>	
7. <i>Economic Imperialism</i>	
8. <i>Inter-racial Discord—"Divide and Rule"         policy.</i>	
9. <i>Role of Orthodox Church</i>	
10. <i>Cultural Backwardness</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 3 HOW LENIN SOLVED THE NATIONAL QUESTION . . . . .</b>	<b>33</b>
1. <i>Bolsheviks as the Revolutionary Vanguard</i>	
2. <i>How Finland Got Her Independence</i>	
3. <i>Lenin's Policy Proves Itself</i>	
4. <i>The Baltic States Secede</i>	
5. <i>Role of the Native Bourgeoisie</i>	

PART II—THE NEW RUSSIA: THE U.S.S.R.

CHAPTER 4—HOW THE CZARIST COLONIAL EMPIRE WAS LIBERATED - - - - - 47

1. *Revolution in The Border Regions*
2. *Significance of The National Question*
3. *The Treaty of Union Between Russians and Non-Russians*
4. *Self-Determination and Socialist Federation*
5. *Soviet-Finnish Blunder, 1940*

CHAPTER 5—HOW SOVIET ADMINISTRATION OPERATES AMONG BACKWARD PEOPLES - - - - - 64

1. *Administrative Divisions*
2. *Racial Equality in Red Army*
3. *Racial Representation in Supreme Soviet*
4. *Pyramidal System of Government*
5. *Critique of Wilsonian Self-Determination*
6. *Utopianism of Zionism*
7. *Black "Zionism"*
8. *Inter-Racial Basis of Soviet Power*
9. *Colour Bar Illegal in The Soviet Union*

CHAPTER 6—HOW ILLITERACY IS BEING LIQUIDATED - - - - - 89

1. *Language and Nationalism*
2. *Lenin on National Culture*
3. *Application of Soviet Educational Policy*
4. *Emancipation of Women in The Soviet East*
5. *Comparison with Education in African Colonies*
6. *Basic Aim of Soviet Education*
7. *Cultural Renaissance in The Soviet East*
8. *National Culture Comes Into Its Own*

CHAPTER 7—HOW THE FORMER COLONIES ARE BEING INDUSTRIALISED - - - - - 113

1. *The Creation of an Asiatic Proletariat*
2. *Inauguration of A Planned Programme*

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

PART III—SOCIALISM UNITES—IMPERIALISM DIVIDES

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

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

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

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

# *Stalin's*

*advice to friends of the*

*Soviet Peoples*

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

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

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

## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GEORGE PADMORE.

London, June, 1945.

## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

A BRIEF SURVEY—FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART I

THE OLD RUSSIA — THE CZARIST EMPIRE

CHAPTER ONE

THE RISE OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE

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

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

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

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

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

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

xx

PART I

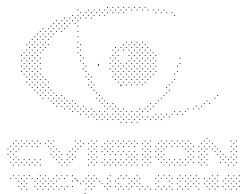
THE OLD RUSSIA — THE CZARIST EMPIRE

CHAPTER ONE

THE RISE OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Russian Penetration Into Siberia.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *The Far East Conquests.*

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

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

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





and foremost a strategic railway, to advance Russian imperialist interests in the Far East. It would facilitate the movement of Russian troops in the case of war; and even in time of peace Russian military guards could be stationed along the line to preserve order. Russia would dominate Manchuria from the military point of view. From the economic standpoint, also, Manchuria would be Russified. Of course the railway would give Russia the commerce of central and northern Manchuria; in addition the company was to have mining rights along the route. Moreover, goods imported or exported over this railway would enjoy a reduction of a third of the established tariff rate. Russia's next step would be to get a concession for a southern extension of the line and a warm-water port, for Vladivostock was ice-bound for several months in the year.<sup>21</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>21</sup> Parker T. Moon: *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 333.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER TWO

## HOW THE CZAR GOVERNED HIS COLONIAL EMPIRE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. *Russia Proper and Baltic Provinces.*

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

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

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

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

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

### 2. *Grand Duchy of Finland.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(B) *Cis-Caucasia.*

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

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

4. *Siberia And The Far East.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. *Central Asia or Turkestan.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Economic Imperialism.*

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Cultural Backwardness.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER THREE

## HOW LENIN SOLVED THE COLONIAL QUESTION

"NO NATION can be free if it oppresses other nations."

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER THREE

## HOW LENIN SOLVED THE COLONIAL QUESTION

"NO NATION can be free if it oppresses other nations."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Bolsheviks The Revolutionary Vanguard.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

exploited peoples of the colonies and dependent countries that comprise the majority:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The February Revolution provided the opportunity for

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *The Baltic States Secede.*

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Role of the Native Bourgeoisie*

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

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

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

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

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

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

That is why he described 1905 as the 'dress rehearsal' for October, which ushered in the Soviet régime and emancipated not only the workers and peasants of Russia proper, but also the millions of exploited people in the colonial territories of the Czarist Empire. And it was the teeming millions of Asiatic Russia who supported the 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."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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