



THE AUTHOR

Leonard Barnes was educated at St. Paul's School and University College, Oxford. He served in the infantry on the Western Front, 1914-19. On demobilisation it occurred to him to wonder what the war had been about, and what its causation was. So sprouted his interest in imperialism. To test the imperialist hypothesis, he entered the Colonial Office in 1921, and there helped to deal with the affairs of Ceylon, Mauritius, St. Helena, the West Indies, the East African dependencies and the South African High Commission.

In 1925, wishing to supplement this paper knowledge by direct acquaintance with conditions on the spot, he set sail for Africa, where he lived for the next seven years, partly as a settler and partly as a leader-writer for the *Natal Witness*, the *Cape Times* and the *Johannesburg Star*. Some of the fruits of this experience are recorded in *Caliban in Africa* (1930) and *Zulu Paraclete* (1935).

During 1930-31 he investigated social conditions in the half-forgotten territories of Basutoland, Swaziland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, publishing his findings in *The New Boer War* (1932). In these years he also made visits to the Rhodesias, Tanganyika and Kenya.

The general study of colonial questions, especially in their relation to the problem of world peace, was continued in a series of writings, *The Duty of Empire* (1935), *The Future of Colonies* (1936), *Skeleton of the Empire* (1937), and *Empire or Democracy?* (1939).

He visited the U.S.S.R. in 1938.

SOVIET LIGHT ON THE COLONIES

BY

LEONARD BARNES

Maps and Diagrams

BY

J. F. HERRABIN

First published 1944

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
<u>FOREWORD</u>	5
I. <u>NATIVE AUTHORITIES</u>	10
II. <u>INDIRECT RULE AND TRUSTEESHIP</u>	20
III. <u>FROM EMPIRE TO DEMOCRACY</u>	37
IV. <u>DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY'S RESERVES</u>	65
V. <u>THE MACHINERY OF POPULAR SELF-GOVERNMENT</u>	83
VI. <u>THE CONTEXT OF NATIVE LABOUR</u>	104
VII. <u>THE COLOUR BAR</u>	117
VIII. <u>PUBLIC HEALTH AND POPULAR ENLIGHTENMENT</u>	128
IX. <u>VOVA SUMS UP</u>	142
X. <u>LEADERSHIP</u>	156
<u>APPENDIX: THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS</u>	167
MAPS AND DIAGRAMS	
1. <u>BRITISH AFRICA</u>	9
2. <u>AFRICA AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS</u> (Drawn to scale)	53
3. <u>THE POWER CABLE: DEMOCRACY</u>	71
4. <u>THE POWER CABLE: BUREAUCRACY</u>	72
5. <u>NORTHERN RHODESIA</u>	104
6. <u>THE GOLD COAST</u>	128
7. <u>RATIO OF HOSPITAL BEDS AND COTS TO POPULATION</u>	129
8. <u>RATIO OF DOCTORS TO POPULATION</u>	130
9. <u>PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION UNDERGOING ORGANISED INSTRUCTION</u>	136
10. <u>SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA</u>	166
11. <u>TADJIKSTAN</u>	168



## FOREWORD

This book does not sing the conventional praises of the British Empire, or of the principles on which it is organised. In a certain sense, however, it has the same aim as the exercises in self-laudation that our imperialists delight to make. It seeks to defend the good name of Britain in the eyes of our allies. But it does so in an unorthodox fashion—not by vindicating our current or historic performance in the Empire, but by showing that a forward-looking school of thought exists among us, keenly aware of past shortcomings and eager for reconstruction at a higher level of human association.

There is much evidence that this task urgently needs doing, and that it will soon have to be tackled in some large-scale organised way. The colonial question, in the widest meaning of that term, and the British attitude towards the colonial question, are two of the main rocks on which the whole allied effort to win the peace may founder. Even during war they make the United Nations much less united, and therefore militarily weaker, than they might be.

International misgiving about our political good sense and the good faith of our democratic professions is not greatly stirred by the relations between Britain and the Dominions. It is greatly stirred by the relations between Britain and the dependent peoples of India, Africa, the Far East, the Middle East, and the West Indies. About the Dominions, therefore, I have nothing to say here. India too, though very relevant to my theme (indeed it is the crux of the entire colonial problem) needs for its proper treatment a mass of specialist knowledge which is not at my disposal. So I restrict my attention to the case of the colonial empire in the narrow sense, and in illustration of it I deal chiefly with certain territories of British Africa.

Our professional imperialists use the phrase “British Commonwealth of Nations” with studied ambiguity, now to denote Britain and the self-governing Dominions merely, at another time to cover all the peoples, white, brown, or black, who owe allegiance to the Crown. By this simple stratagem they hope to suggest to the uninstructed that all British subjects and British protected persons, whatever their skin-colour, enjoy an essential similarity of civil and political status; that, for instance, the liberties of Africans in Northern Rhodesia are much the same as those of New Zealanders in New Zealand. No notion could be more false.

On the whole the trick has worked better at home than abroad. Our present allies are not mocked. They continue to distinguish sharply between the freedom of the Dominions and the dependence of India, Africa, and the other parts of the colonial empire.

The people of Britain, never much given to seeing themselves as others see them, do not yet appreciate how deep, and how damaging to ourselves, is the anxiety, felt throughout the United Nations, about this continuing dependence.

Take the U.S.A. Consider the snapshot of public opinion there which an American correspondent gave in the *Economist* of November 28th, 1942. This writer accords the lack of enthusiasm for Anglo-American post-war collaboration. Such collaboration when sought from the British side is viewed, he says, as “a veiled attempt to perpetuate the supremacy of the white race, to maintain imperialism, to defeat the subject nations’ passionate desire for freedom.” The picture which is steadily growing in the public mind is of Britain as an old Empire, learning nothing, abandoning nothing except under the pressure of military defeat. It is of the British Government as a Tory Government committed to the old order. It is of a straight issue between imperialism and freedom, servitude and independence, peoples’ governments and aristocracies—with Britain always on the wrong side.”

Take China. “The wisest man in China” made this comment on Sir Stafford Cripps’ Indian

mission. "When," he said, "the aspiration of India for freedom was put aside to some future date, it was not Britain which suffered the loss of public esteem in the Far East, it was the United States." At first sight the remark may seem to lack point. Actually its significance is profound. It means, first, that because they made no effective protest against British dealings in India, the Americans have drawn heavily on their reservoir of good will in the East. It means, second, that this Chinese sage, while he still expected some enlightenment in American policy, had long abandoned hope of it in British. "We have learned," he says in short, "to look for black reaction from Britain, and without fail we get it. From America, whose pledges still mean something to us, we sometimes look for behaviour at a higher level of wisdom and morality. When it does not come, we are disappointed."

I do not know what effect this glimpse into the mind of the East has upon, let us say, Lord Croft; but, by God, it frightens me.

Take the U.S.S.R. The belief of the soviet authorities, as is well known, is that imperialism is privately owned industrial and financial monopoly in action; and that the causation of modern war is rooted in the characteristic policies of imperialism. In other words, they think that organisations of the type of the British colonial system make world war inevitable. They are fighting for the future security of their soviet order. That security is incompatible with the further world wars whose occurrence, in their view, the survival of imperialism would guarantee. They are thus also fighting for the ending of imperialism, as represented by such colonial systems as ours.

Take India. In all that populous and politically divided sub-continent there is full unanimity on one point. Every Indian man and woman of every social condition is repeating for the information of King George VI the words addressed by Thomas Jefferson to King George III in ominously similar circumstances 170 years ago. "The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them. This, sire, is our last, our determined, resolution." And Indians are not merely using the American words; they are saying them with the authentic American accent.

Take Africa, the Middle East, and the Arab world. Here it is enough to remind ourselves of the message which Mr. Wendell Willkie brought back to the American people from his world tour, and broadcast to them on October 26th, 1942. In all these lands, he said, "the peoples intend to be free not only for their political satisfaction, but also for their economic advancement.... Not all of them are ready for freedom or can defend it the day after to-morrow. But to-day they all want some date to work towards, and some guarantee that the date will be kept.... In all these lands freedom means orderly but scheduled abolition of the colonial system. I can assure you that this is true. I can assure you that the rule of the people by other peoples is not freedom, and not what we must fight to preserve."

For one reason or another, then, important sections of opinion in all the chief allied countries want to see a radical transformation of such structures as the British colonial empire in the direction of democratic freedom. Their view is shared by all parties in India, and by most of the men and women who are qualified to lead the people of the colonies. Is the view mistaken and ill-informed? Our official spokesmen are fond of saying so. But it is doubtful if the matter can be disposed of in this way. The soldier who explains that the rest of the regiment is out of step always strikes one as more sprightly than persuasive. And I question whether the other two official signature tunes, "What we have we hold" and "We have no reason to be ashamed of our colonial record," are in better case. They merely confirm, in our critics' minds the worst that can be said against us. Moreover, we should remember that Indians and Africans can well acknowledge the benefits of British rule without wishing for its continuance. They may believe they can secure

ampler benefits by less costly means.

If, as is certainly the case, British imperial propagandists do untold harm to our national cause abroad, the voice of British anti-imperialism may do corresponding good. That voice must make itself heard even above the present din, so as to convince the world that liberal and progressive opinion in this country lives, and has learned, and is a force to be reckoned with. The pages that follow are a call to the democrats of Britain to demonstrate their political vitality.

Of those who claim that title many do not realise how intimately the preservation of popular freedom at home is bound up with the extension of popular freedom in the colonies. The bolsheviks were able to save their revolution and prepare the way for soviet democracy only because, when they had their chance, they were prompt to remove the Russian yoke from the Tsar's colonies. It is a lesson that our democrats—and our imperialists—should ponder well.

Many descriptive and factual surveys of conditions in tropical Africa, and of British methods of rule there, have been made in recent years. It does not form part of my scheme to summarise that work here, since an admirable summary has been done as lately as 1941 by Dr. Rita Hinden in her *Plan for Africa*. My comments on African affairs may be regarded as a footnote to the facts which she sets out. And most of the statements of fact about Africa which I make myself can readily be verified in her book or in Lord Hailey's much fuller *African Survey*, on which she also drew. In writing of Broken Hill I have drawn largely on Mr. Godfrey Wilson's essay *The Economics of Detribalisation in Northern Rhodesia*, published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1942.

It would be unscientific to debate possible ways of reconstituting social and political life in British colonies, without paying close attention to what has been happening during the last two decades in the one country which has reached a definitive solution of its colonial problem. Hence my selection of soviet procedures in Central Asia for comparison with British procedures in tropical Africa.

The facts about Soviet Central Asia are not so accessible as those about British Africa. A word must therefore be said about my sources. Apart from the general literature on the U.S.S.R., I have relied chiefly on the following:

1. A continuous review of the soviet press, undertaken by a well-known research institution, which I am precluded from naming.
2. International Press Correspondence (particularly the special number published in 1937 under the title *Twenty Years of Soviet Power*).
3. *U.S.S.R. in Construction* (1930-1937).
4. *Soviet Progress: A Record of Economic and Cultural Development, 1917-37*. (Issued by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, 1937.)
5. *Memoranda issued by the Soviet Embassy in Washington on Educational and Cultural Facilities in the Central Asian Republics*, 1939.
6. *Memoranda on Soviet Education*, prepared in the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office, 1941.
7. J. Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1940.

I have also consulted with profit:

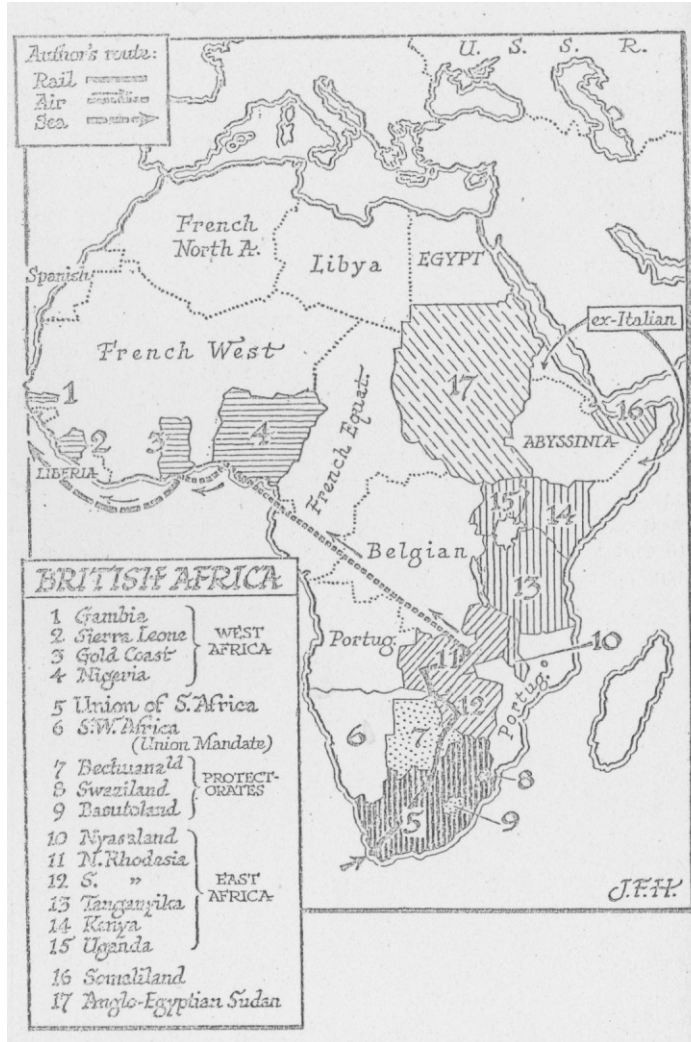
- (a) E. S. Bates: *Soviet Asia*, Cape, 1942; and the publications mentioned in his bibliography.
- (b) Fannina Halle: *Women in the Soviet East*, Seeker and Warburg, 1938.
- (c) John Maynard: *The Russian Peasant and other Studies*, Gollancz, 1942.
- (d) R. A. Davies and A. J. Skeiger: *Soviet Asia*, Gollancz, 1943.

In collecting and examining this soviet material, and in trying to ensure that no important sources were, neglected, I had the invaluable assistance of my friend S. W. C. Phillips, who was also good enough to read the manuscript. He thus helped me to avoid inaccuracies of fact and errors of taste and judgment. The blemishes that remain are not, however, to be laid at his door. ‘

I was no less fortunate in my collaboration with another friend, J. F. Horrabin, who has done me the honour of contributing a number of his uniquely expressive maps and diagrams.

Besides outlining the relevant facts about soviet affairs, I have been concerned to make plain certain of the broad sociological conceptions that inform soviet institutions. For this purpose I have made the assumption that the soviet authorities are as sincere and as likely to be aware of their own motives as authorities in other countries. This is unfashionable. Since June 22nd, 1941, the public mind in Britain is, indeed, no longer open in quite the old way to any and every slander about the U.S.S.R.; but it is still the mode to neutralise favourable comment (if it must be made) with an “objective” admixture of denigration. In departing from this practice, and allowing a soviet mouthpiece to have his say in his own way, I am conscious that I run the risk of being written off in many quarters as just another of the blind idolaters. However, it will not be long now before we know which of us really has eyes to see.





CHAPTER I  
NATIVE AUTHORITIES

I

I want to draw some comparisons between British colonial methods in tropical Africa and soviet policy and practice in the former Tsarist colonies of Central Asia. Such comparisons may, I hope, be of interest to those who conduct the relations between this country and the colonial empire. They might even have some general interest as throwing light on the meaning of empire and the meaning of democracy.

The difficulty with such subject-matter is to present it in readable form. I attempt to meet the difficulty by the free use of dialogue.

The characters who converse in these pages are the merest fictions, and exist for no other reason than to help me in expounding certain facts and ideas. By way of emphasising their airy nothingness, I imagine a situation in which the British authorities allow a soviet citizen to visit several African dependencies. This is perhaps carrying make-believe to the point of absurdity; though, after all, a soviet trade union delegation has actually been admitted to Britain. However, I deal the death-blow to verisimilitude by imagining further that I myself (also with official permission) accompany the bolshevik on his colonial travels. The advantage of this wayward conception is that it enables divergent points of view to be expressed with a minimum of beating about the bush.

As the curtain rises, our soviet friend is discovered on board ship for Africa. At the moment he is engaged in striking up an acquaintance with a fellow-passenger, one Philip Midhurst, a judge of the High Court in Tanganyika, who is returning to his post from leave in England.

“Well, Mr. Korolenko,” Midhurst is saying, “you may think the British Empire wears a somewhat apologetic air at the moment. For my part, I don’t agree. Still, many of us who are busy on the day-to-day work at the outposts are willing to study with open minds any new advice we can get, provided it comes from competent and friendly sources. I gather your view is that the soviet peoples have reached a level of social unity never attained elsewhere; that this all-Union unity, involving as it does a drastic readjustment of the old colonial relationships between the centre and the backward areas, is a main factor in the stoutness of soviet military defence; and that the ineffectiveness of British resistance in the Far East is to be accounted for by the absence of any corresponding readjustment, and by the consequent lack of social unity within the British colonial system?”

“I do not know if I ought to call that my *view*” Vova answered, feeling his way with the newcomer. “I called something like it a hypothesis which might explain the contrast between the bearing of the people of Malaya and Burma and the bearing of the soviet people in the face of foreign aggression. Naturally a hypothesis has to be verified.”

“Very well, then,” Midhurst rejoined. “Let’s call it a hypothesis. I’m not worrying about its logical status. It interests me as an idea. I should very much like to know if you think it applies also to the dependency I have spent my working life in.”

“But, alas, my knowledge of Tanganyika is infinitesimal.” To indicate how microscopic it was Vova held up thumb and forefinger with the narrowest of gaps between them.

“In that case, perhaps I might be allowed to tell you something of what has been happening there since we took it from the Germans during the last war—that is, if you would care, and have

the time, to listen.”

“But of course. Nothing would give me greater pleasure. It would be a real help in my work too.”

“Splendid. Then let’s see if we can kill a bird with a stone, as the Irishman said. Well, I first came to Tanganyika twenty-four years ago, in 1919. For a number of years before that the country had been the cockpit of an East African war, to say nothing of its many troubles earlier still. When I arrived the British were just starting to clear up the mess. And what a mess it was. Economic exhaustion and administrative chaos were acute. Trade and public revenue were less than half what they had been in 1913, the last year of so-called peace under German rule. I suppose things were much the same in your colonial areas, weren’t they?”

“Probably worse,” said Vova. “Under years of Tsarist oppression, followed by the first world war, our own civil war, and your wars of intervention against us, all our people, whether in European Russia, or south of the Caucasus, or east of the Urals, had suffered so much that they had little left which could be destroyed.”

“H’m, pretty grim,” Midhurst skated rapidly over the thin ice. “Still, it has the advantage of simplifying our comparison. For we can say, can’t we, that the British in Tanganyika and the soviets in all the old Tsarist colonies both started from scratch just over twenty years ago?”

“That is roughly true,” Vova replied, “if we look at the colonial end of things alone. All the same, there was a vital difference between your position and ours. In spite of the turmoil and waste of the 1914-18 war, the main base and general headquarters from which the development of British colonies was directed—I mean the social and economic order of Britain itself—persisted in unbroken power and wealth from long before that war until to-day. The soviet order, on the contrary, arose literally from the ashes of its predecessor. In my country the base and headquarters were themselves ruined and prostrate as late as 1923. That made ‘colonial development’ materially difficult for us, but psychologically easy. With you it was the other way round.”

Midhurst wrinkled his forehead. “Could you amplify a bit?” he asked.

“I mean this. By 1923 almost all our capital had been shot away. Hard as it was to exploit our resources, it was impossible not to want to exploit them, in any and every part of the country. With us ‘colonial development’ was from the first equated with soviet construction. You on the other hand possessed all the material equipment needed for high-pressure development of colonial areas. What you lacked was the urgency of our motive for using it. This, I think, tended to make you look on colonies less as factors in a scheme for the even distribution of public well-being, and more as enclosures sacred to certain particular interests in palm oil, chocolate, gold, copper, tobacco, rubber, tea, or whatever the material might be.”

“Perhaps,” Midhurst answered, “you are justified in suggesting that some important business firms have had that outlook. The outlook of the colonial service, and indeed the declared policy of the British Government, are different. We try to make the material and moral welfare of the native inhabitants a first charge on our own energies and on the resources of the dependency alike. That is what we mean by trusteeship.”

“Yes, I appreciate that,” said Vova, “But does the trusteeship principle determine the course of events?”

“Well, we’re only mortal men. If you mean that the shadow is apt to fall between the conception and the creation, the motion and the act——”

“I was thinking rather what a queer world yours must be where Government policy struggles ineffectually to assert itself against the views of business firms, and where private advantage

may take precedence over the general good.”

Midhurst showed a faint flicker of impatience. “I’m not sure what you have in mind,” he said. “I speak of what I know. The story I’m about to tell is of our British dependency only, and one that happens also to have been administered under mandate from the League of Nations. When you’ve heard it, you’ll be able to judge how far trusteeship there has been a reality or a pretence.”

With an encouraging gesture Vova signalled him to go ahead.

## II

“As I was saying,” Midhurst resumed, “it was only in 1919 that Tanganyika passed out of military control and the British began to turn their attention seriously to the problems of civil government. The country was down and out. Something had to be done quickly. But before anything could be done, two essential questions had to be answered.

“The first of these was economic. The Germans had tended to foster production by Europeans rather than by Africans. Towards the end of their regime the products of European-owned land, for example, had more than twice the value of the products of African-occupied land. Under their scheme export crops were to be a European monopoly; Africans were either to stick to subsistence farming or to hire themselves out as wage-labour on the white man’s plantations. The German defeat brought this whole scheme up for review. German subjects were removed from plantations and commercial enterprises, and shipped home to Germany. Were the British going to replace them by their own and allied nationals? Or was the rehabilitation of the country under British hands to be based in the main on African production and African development?”

“And how did the British answer the question?” Vova inquired.

“Ambiguously. That, as you may have observed, is a way we have. But undoubtedly the tendency of British policy was to make African production the prime foundation of economic recovery, and to treat European plantations as important auxiliaries of this aim.”

“I see. And what was the other essential question?”

“It concerned administration. As in the sphere of production, so here also German practice did not seem happily conceived from the standpoint of a mandatory power. I refer to the so-called *akida* system. The Germans made a great point of economising on European officials. In 1913 the territory of Urundi-Ruanda formed part of Tanganyika, and the whole country was larger than Nigeria. It had a population of 7½ million Africans. The Germans governed it with seventy white administrative officers. Under the Versailles settlement Urundi-Ruanda was tacked on to the Belgian Congo, so Tanganyika is now smaller, by a large slice of country and 3½ million inhabitants, than the original German East Africa. Yet the British service in this reduced area comprises a staff of some two hundred white administrative officers.

“German reliance on African agents was therefore a good deal heavier even than British is. That’s not a criticism of the German method; it might even be a recommendation of it. The point is that tribal disorganisation became so extensive under German rule that the Germans were debarred, over the greater part of the protectorate, from incorporating tribal institutions into the machinery of administration. They consequently developed a system, which they took over from the Arabs, of appointing alien native officials called *jumbes* to headship over single villages, and similar, but more exalted, officials called *akidas* to headship over groups of villages. When I talk of alien native officials, I mean that they were native to Africa but not kith and kin of the tribesmen over whom they were placed.

“The British authorities held, and I still think their belief has been borne out by experience, that such a system, being essentially foreign to the people subjected to it, was calculated to stunt the indigenous institutional life which the mandate enjoined them to foster. They thus reverted to the familiar British principle that the country should be governed through the popularly recognised chiefs, wherever they could be found.

“The *akida* system was gradually abandoned, except in certain places, mostly along the coastal strip, where no sure traces of a traditional tribal authority remained. Careful studies were made of the ethnic distribution of the population, and the twenty-two districts of the German administration were first redivided, and rearranged in accordance with tribal groupings, and then themselves grouped into eleven provinces, each in charge of a provincial commissioner. At the same time, efforts were made to restore the natural cohesion of tribal elements which had become scattered or disorganised.

“Next, by the persuasion of district officers, innumerable petty chiefs who once fought and bickered for pre-eminence gradually came to accept what was in native custom no doubt their rightful position of sub-chief to one of their number. And the centripetal movement, gathering way, began to manifest itself also as federations of independent chiefs, each of whom, while co-operating with his colleagues in matters of general policy, retained full executive authority in his own area. By these means, in four provinces alone, the number of units of native administration was reduced from 446 to 50 between 1925 and 1930. , By 1930 the Governor reported that there was not much more amalgamation of units to be done for the time being.”

“Then this preliminary work of re-organisation had taken some ten years to complete?” Vova asked.

“Yes,” Midhurst replied. “I remember we were all rather excited about it. It seemed to us as though the substance of the life of the tribes, long held in solution, had suddenly been precipitated by some awaited chemical agency. We felt we had gathered together social forces long dissipated and run to waste, and in doing this had increased administrative efficiency and improved the prospects of economic and political advance. This feeling was apparently justified also by what was happening in the few districts where the chiefs had never been displaced by *akidas* under the Germans, and where the tribal organisation had never been broken. In such districts, we were told, the administration and the country were a generation ahead of the areas where the *akida* system had operated.

“Do you still think you were right about this?”

“I’m less sure than I was, Mr. Korolenko. But anyhow, British policy in Tanganyika from the first meant a fairly sharp break with the country’s recent past, and a clear reversal of German administrative method. It recognised at once that it must use native institutions in the work of government. Nevertheless for some years it was undecided about how exactly it should use them. Was the plan to impose a form of British rule with the support of African chiefs—in other words, to use the chiefs as instruments and mouthpieces? Or was it to maintain and support a form of genuinely African rule, within certain defined limits?”

### III

“The choice,” Midhurst continued, “was finally made in 1925. On the whole, the tendency during the governorship of Sir Horace Byatt, the first Governor, was in the former direction, and a law was passed in terms of which the administrative officer became the executive for native affairs even in the area of administration of a native authority. In 1925-6, under a new Governor,

Sir Donald Cameron, an important change took place. A new law, superseding the old, was passed, which clothed the native authority and not the white administrative officer with executive power in its own area. Thenceforward the administrative officer, in his dealings with African chiefs, would merely guide, advise, and supervise. He would give direct orders only if the native authority should neglect to issue them itself, and refuse when called on to do so.”

“Tell me something of the concrete basis, the institutional basis, of this type of African local government, will you please, Mr. Midhurst.”

“Well, its basis is, as I say, the tribal group, and its organs are executive, judicial, and financial. In its executive and administrative aspects a native authority remains, as far as possible, what it was under African law and custom. If it was the recognised practice in a tribe or village for the chief or headman to rule with the aid of traditional councillors and advisers, he continues to rule with such aid, and the councillors and advisers are constituted an integral part of the native authority concerned. The powers of every native authority are regulated in two ways. In the first place, the law defines what powers may be conferred and what obligations imposed on native authorities; and in the second place, it provides that the Governor may at any time direct that any such authority shall exercise only so much of the legally conferrable powers as he may specify. The Governor may also direct that any native authority shall be subordinate to any other native authority.

“These provisions mean; in effect, that the Government can always prevent native custom being invoked to justify the oppressive treatment of a tribe by its chief. It can also give legal recognition to traditional differences in status between so-called ‘paramount’ chiefs and their sub-chiefs. If you had ever tried to administer a tribal area, you would agree that these two forms of control are half the battle for good government.

“Thus in Tanganyika the picture is not of two sets of rulers, British and African, working sometimes together, sometimes separately, and having functions that overlap and may conflict. There is a single Government in which the chiefs have their prescribed duties and status side by side with the British officials. The functions of officials and chiefs complement each other, and the chiefs are clearly given to realise that they have no right to their place and powers unless they render proper service to the state.

“In many parts of Africa European penetration has introduced a multitude of new influences which are at work to impair the authority of a chief over his people. Often this tends to make chiefs grab hastily and somewhat harshly at such power as they still enjoy, to repress the natural movements of the tribal mind under the new stimuli, and so to call into being a class of agitators who cry out for some western form of self-government neither understood by the mass of the people nor preserving the truly democratic features of native society.”

“Has that difficulty troubled you much in Tanganyika?”

“Much less than in some other dependencies. As a rule our problem has rather been to identify the living vestiges of indigenous institutions, and then when they were found to nurse them back to vigour. None the less Donald Cameron showed a sound instinct in calling on all administrative officers to study patiently and fully the nature and extent of the safeguards against oppression by a chief or headman, which native society through the ages has set up for its own protection. I well remember with what insistence he used to drum it into us that our primary duty was to educate the native authorities to be rulers according to a civilised standard; to convince them that oppression of the people is not sound policy or to the eventual benefit of the rulers; and to bring home to their intelligence, as far as might be possible, the evils attendant on a system which holds the lower-classes in suppression, so destroying individual responsibility, ambition,

and development amongst them.

“I can see and hear him now bustling round and chanting in his pawky little Scotch voice: ‘We’ve got to sit down firmly to the job of consolidating existing institutions on existing foundations, gradually purifying and strengthening them. We must take the greatest care always that the strongly established democratic character of existing native institutions is not in any way impaired.’”

“And what democratic safeguards did your good Sir Donald set up against oppression by the British?” Vova broke in with a twinkle that was half good nature and half malice.

Midhurst’s mind was so intently set along the line of the story he was telling that it took him a moment or two to adjust. While he was still gazing in blank silence at his interrupter, I made a mild remonstrance. “Steady, Vova,” I said, “you’ve been behaving quite nicely so far. Don’t let’s have a relapse.”

Midhurst, now ready with his reply, threw some sarcasm into it. “I fancy Cameron may have thought the British capable of observing civilised standards without the help of checks and promptings from the outside.”

Vova laughed with joy at this. “Beyond question the British are always beautifully civilised. But standards can be civilised without being democratic, can they not? Your remark has told me just what I wanted to know. You conceive of democracy, I see, not as government of the people by the people for the people, but as the people’s power to protect themselves against such occasional errors of a paternal oligarchy as may result in injustice. When the oligarchies are very benevolent and very competent, as in the case of the British colonial service, the need for democracy lapses. However, that is all by the way. Can you tell me, please, what Cameron meant by the democratic character of tribal institutions?”

#### IV

“Ah now, as to that,” Midhurst began. He considered for a moment or two; then went on: “You see, it is characteristic of the Bantu to regard the chief semi-mystically, almost as though he were the incarnation of the soul of the tribe. Typically, the chief is the living link between ancestors and posterity, at once the symbol and the vehicle of the tribe’s continuity. In the practical sphere, in the religious, social, and political life of the tribe, he is supreme—high priest and rain-maker, legislature, judiciary, and executive all in one. Or rather I ought to say that he was these things in the old days; with the coming of the white man things have changed a lot, and are still changing.

“In the old days, too, in many, though not all, parts of Africa south of the equator, the chief regulated all the important productive phases of tribal life. No man might begin to plough or to reap till the chief gave the word. Heads of families were responsible to him, through the sub-chief of their district, for all acts of the members of their families; and in an informal way they were also judicial courts of first instance, from which appeals lay to the higher courts of the sub-chief and the chief.”

“But is there anything that you would call democratic in this?”

“So far, no. But in all these matters there were acknowledged restraints upon the chief’s arbitrary caprice. He was expected to use any surplus wealth that came his way in the interests of the tribe—for example, by allocating cattle to the poorer members for their subsistence. He was expected to seek and attend to the advice of a council. He had regularly to hold a public assembly, at which all public affairs could be discussed, and where every adult tribesman was free to ex-

press his opinion. And again, the tribes have always shown a tendency towards the fissiparous. Pretenders or usurpers in the form of the chief's sons, younger brothers, and so on, were continually bobbing up, so that a chief could only prevent the disintegration of the tribe and the consequent collapse of his own prestige and authority by carrying the large body of the public with him. Not to keep his council on his side and not to seek the support of the tribe was simply to manufacture openings for possible usurpers; and exile or assassination was the expected wages of wanton misrule.

"So, you see, there was apt to be a good deal of Whiggery about tribal government. The chief was a monarch, if you like: but his monarchy was often a limited and constitutional one. It was these Whig features that Cameron spoke of as democratic, and that he was anxious to preserve as safeguards against chiefly oppression of the rank and file."

"Is that really much of a danger, with British fair play hanging over the chief, like a sword of Damocles?"

"The danger is more real than you may think. In the conditions of to-day a chief is materially strengthened but morally weakened by the white man's government which, while it may admonish and even punish him for failure and neglect, at the same time protects him from what we may call their natural consequences. Buttressed up by the British *raj*, a chief is not seldom tempted to feel that he can do as he likes as long as he keeps on the right side of the district officer. His council become mere courtiers and flatterers, selected by himself as being easy tools to work with; and it becomes safe for him to ignore the main body of the tribe. British protection inevitably makes tribal rule less self-sufficient; if we do not take care, it is apt to make it actually harsher and more arbitrary.

"On Cameron's plan a chief is, of course, continually guided from above. And in some matters, this guidance is enough. But there are many other matters, notably those concerning the personal and civil freedom of the ordinary tribesman, in which guidance from above can be of little effect. Cameron laid so much stress on strengthening the democratic ingredient in the tribal broth because he knew the price of liberty to be eternal vigilance, because he wanted the tribesmen to exercise that vigilance on their own behalf, and because he was determined that, whether they exercised it or not, they should not lack the constitutional right and opportunity to do so."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you for that explanation," said Vova. "It throws light on many things about which I was not clear before."

"Good, I'm glad," answered Midhurst. "Now let me resume the main thread of my story. A native authority has other aspects besides the executive aspect. In Tanganyika each of the new consolidated units of native administration, which have been evolved out of the former crowd of quarrelsome, jealous, and incompetent petty chiefdoms, also functions as a treasury and as a court of law.

"My administrative colleagues are fond of patting themselves on the back over the development of tribal finance. Before 1925 the custom prevailed in Tanganyika, as it still does in some parts of Bantu Africa, by which the tribespeople paid tribute to the chief both in kind and in unpaid labour. The chief also received a small percentage of the hut and poll tax which he collected on behalf of the Government. No clear distinction existed between funds belonging to the tribe and funds personal to the chief, nor was the chief accountable to anyone for the expenditure of any part of his revenues. In practice, a chief's income was commonly spent under three main heads—salaries for his sub-chiefs, the support of his household, including his wives (who might number as many as seventy), and charity and the entertainment of visitors. The allocations to each head no doubt varied widely in different tribes and in accordance with the personal idiosyn-



crasies of chiefs; but in the best regulated chiefdoms they were perhaps approximately equal.”

“One can see how easily that sort of thing might lead to abuse.”

“Yes—the tribute system particularly. In exposing the tribesman to constant, and often capricious, demands from his chief it put a heavy drag on the economic vigour of the country. So far as it took the form of compulsory unpaid labour, it was also, in Tanganyika, of doubtful legality under the mandate. Consequently tribute in both its forms, was abolished there in 1925.

“At the same time, the hut and poll tax was raised from 6s. to 10s. a year, the extra 4s. representing the commuted value of the tribute previously paid. The proceeds of the commutation were not, however, turned over to the personal use of the chiefs. Instead, native authority treasuries were instituted with a view to the benefit of the tribes as such. The treasuries were financed from a rebate on the tax collected, and from court fees and fines. The rebate varied from one tenth to one third, according to the range of approved activities which the native authority was to undertake. Out of the treasuries were paid stipends for the chiefs, their colleagues and subordinates, and all clerks and other employees of the native authority concerned. The balance was carried to a general purposes fund or to reserve,”

“Would you say,” Vova put in, “that these tribal treasuries have come successfully through the tests of practical working?”

“On the whole, yes,” was Midhurst’s reply. “Once the tribes gained a direct interest in the volume of public revenue, the spending capacity of native authorities tended to enlarge itself from year to year, without any increase in the rate of tax or of rebate, and without tapping new sources of revenue. In the best districts some 40 per cent of the total expenditure by native treasuries was, as early as 1930, being devoted to works for the benefit of the people as distinct from the salaries of chiefs, headmen, etc.

“We noticed how surprised and gratified Africans themselves often were to find it possible to do so much with their own funds. Some of the maternity and leper homes maintained solely by native treasuries became known as among the best of their kind in the territory. Within five years of the start one authority was running a school, a demonstration and seed farm, a stock farm, a ghee industry, and was responsible for roads, reclamation, schemes, and so on. Altogether, the native treasuries throughout the territory were by this time disposing of revenues equal to about an eighth of the revenue of the Tanganyika Government. We began to boast that we had transformed tribal life from a static to a dynamic thing.

“Mind you, I’m not saying everything was plain sailing. Many of the chiefs were, and still are, illiterate; efficient and trustworthy clerks did not, and do not, grow on every bush. Of course there was graft; of course there were defalcations. A few of the chiefs had to be sent to gaol for not sticking to the rules. But, in general, irregularities decrease year by year, as the people get accustomed to working the new machinery, as chiefs, headmen, and employees receive their salaries promptly on fixed dates, and as expenditure on public works takes place more and more in terms of written contracts.”

## V

A pause. Vova administered a tactful prod. “And about the native courts, Mr. Midhurst?” he asked. “I suppose you have seen a great deal of how they work?”

“I have indeed,” was Midhurst’s reply. “I’m more familiar with them than with any other aspect of native life. The courts, unlike the treasuries, are part of the traditional tribal system. British administration naturally makes use of them to the full. They deal with practically the whole

range of civil litigation between Africans, and with minor criminal offences too. All this involves a wide knowledge of African law and custom relating to such matters as land, marriage, and succession—knowledge which it would be difficult for the white official to acquire. And even if he did acquire it, the bringing of all African civil cases to his court would merely overwhelm him. He is hard enough worked already.

“But while our administration makes good use of the chief in his judicial capacity, it seeks at the same time to raise the efficiency of native courts by that process of purification and strengthening about which Cameron was, quite rightly, always shouting.

“The courts which we call first-class and second-class correspond generally with the chiefs’ courts and the sub-chiefs’ courts distinguished by native law. But the law of the territory now regulates their jurisdiction by confining it to purely native cases, and by defining its extent on both the civil and the criminal sides. Appeal lies from second-class court to first-class court, and from first-class court to the courts of the white man.

.”Our system also introduces various safeguards which, as we found very early on, it is disastrous to neglect. First of all, proper written records of all cases are kept by African clerks employed by the native authority. These records are as a matter of routine inspected, and if necessary revised, by European administrative officers, who may themselves give leave for an appeal to the High Court.

“In the next place, in some backward areas where litigants do not always fully understand their right of appeal, or perhaps do not care to exercise it for fear of offending their chief, a practice is made of asking the losing party to a suit whether he accepts the judgment of the court, and, if he does not, of treating the case as an appeal.

“Finally, it is impressed on chiefs that their main duty in court is to pronounce judgment, and that the weighing and trial of cases should, in the interests of impartial justice, be left for the most part to the elders and the more esteemed members of the audience whose opinions are worth hearing,

“All these steps are designed to preserve an effective right of appeal, and to keep litigation out in the open and as free as possible from the bribery and corruption to which under unimproved tribal methods it often becomes liable. The court books give the administrative officer a power of genuine supervision, and they also afford a permanent record of completed litigation, thus preventing the tribesman from indulging in the popular pastime of resuscitating old grievances.”

“Is the general feeling in your colonial service that these young native administrations are justifying themselves by their works?”

“I think so. I should sum the whole thing up by saying that a distinct advance is being made, and that the native authorities are beginning to feel greater confidence and to assume a real share of responsibility. More public spirit and broad-mindedness are noticeable, a closer sense of co-operation—and an active desire to work for the general good. Procedure in native courts is improving, their records are better kept and judgments more fairly made. Their cash accounts are clean and generally accurate, their council deliberations aim at the restoration of sound tribal customs and laws, and their tax collections are conducted on approved lines.

“From the broad economic point of view the policy of native production and of local government by native authorities has had this result. Although Tanganyika, owing to the cession of Urundi-Ruanda to the Belgians, is much smaller alike in extent, in resources, and in population than the old German colony—we reckon our African population is even now no more than two-thirds of what the Germans had under them—nevertheless as early as 1930 we were doing a total

overseas trade larger by over 60 per cent than that of all German East Africa in 1913. One can't, of course, compare this with what might have happened under German administration, had there been no war in 1914—still less with what might have happened if- between the two wars Tanganyika had been governed by the communist party of the Soviet Union. But it does go to show, we claim, that here at least British methods have not entirely tailed. Or does that seem to you an extravagant view, Mr. Korolenko?"

## CHAPTER II

### INDIRECT RULE AND TRUSTEESHIP

#### I

After that first conversation of theirs, Midhurst and Vova spent much time together. Morning and afternoon they would pace round and round the deck; in the evening they monopolised a corner of the smoke room; and all the time they hammered away at the problems of human government, looking specially to colonial conditions. They even asked me to arrange with the chief steward for all three of us to have our meals at the same table in the saloon.

Many passages in their endless talks I can still recall. Vova's mind worked in a methodical kind of way. When he had heard something that interested him, he liked to take leisure for reflection, and then to come back at his informant with cross-examination and criticism. This is how he treated Midhurst's Tanganyika story. The next morning Vova and I were leaning over the side watching a school of porpoises at their antics, when Midhurst happened along and joined us. Sure enough, after a brief allowance for preliminary civilities, Vova moved to the attack.

"I should just like to fill in the picture you were giving us yesterday with a few more details, Mr. Midhurst, if I may. Those native authorities, with their treasuries and courts and so on—does their establishment constitute what you call the system of indirect rule?"

"In effect, it does," Midhurst answered. "Though, mind you, Cameron himself didn't like the term indirect rule and avoided it as far as he could. A native authority—we always call it N.A. in the service—is just an organ of local government. It takes the form I was describing yesterday only because we've tried to simplify the machinery of local government to a point at which it can be worked by a society in the tribal stage."

"And this system which I must not call indirect rule—is it typical of British policy throughout tropical Africa?"

"Generally speaking, yes. Of course, N.A.s differ considerably in both structure and function in different dependencies, (in Kenya, for instance, white officials act as the chairmen of N.A.s, and have certain overriding powers. In the Gold Coast, on the other hand, the native 'states' claim to be autonomous, and acknowledge as restrictions on their independence only the various treaty engagements on which they voluntarily agreed with the British Crown a hundred years ago. And there are other forms intermediate between these extremes. But broadly speaking some form of N.A. is the organ of local government in native areas under British control,"

"And what," asked Vova, "is to become of these N.A.s in the end?"

"God knows," said Midhurst, with something between a snort and a sigh. What meaning Vova attached to this odd noise I don't know. For my own part I saw well enough that, being interpreted, it signified 'Don't for heaven's sake expect me to speculate about the ultimate aims of British policy.'

Vova was not in the least put out. "Are they intended," he plodded on, "to become integral units in a self-governing federation, like our village soviets?"

"Really, I've no idea. There has naturally been a good deal of chat among the pundits..."

"And, like most British political discussions, it did little but reinforce the arguments for maintaining the existing position indefinitely. Yes?"

Midhurst laughed. "Well, perhaps you're not far out," he replied. "Hailey has a passage about this somewhere. I suppose the Colonial Office has introduced you to his vast tome?"

I hastened to reassure him. "Vova's the only man in the world who has read it from cover to cover within a week," I said.

"What is more," added Vova mischievously, "I have built a little shrine for the *African Survey* in my cabin, Have I not, John? And at the going down of the sun and in the morning I kneel before it. Do I not, John?" He released his most Muscovite smile.

"To be quite frank," Midhurst continued, "Hailey comes to much the same conclusion as some of the croakers among my colleagues. His language is more diplomatic than theirs, but he admits we're getting into something of a jam. In fostering all these N.A.s Britain is promoting a widespread agency of local government which sometime or other will have to be given a place in the political, as well as the administrative, structure. But how N.A.s are to be integrated with colonial legislatures of our present type, neither Hailey nor anyone else seems to know. The conclusion would appear to be that in the end we shall be forced to scrap either the N.A.s or the legislatures, or both. I need hardly add that no one ventures to say this out loud."

"Is there not here another point too?" Vova asked. "It is not a question merely of hooking up the N.A.s with the colonial legislatures, but also of hooking up the colonial legislatures with the British Government and Parliament."

"I don't quite follow."

"Well, what I mean is this. Your system seems very complicated to me, but I gather that in its own territory the colonial legislature is the only source of law."

"In practice that is nearly true nowadays," Midhurst agreed. "But the British Parliament has quite a live power to legislate directly for any dependency, and the Colonial Office can, and occasionally still does, create law in a dependency by the issue of Orders-in-Council."

"Yes, I see," said Vova. "And I take it that some of the measures passed by the official majority in a colonial legislature are passed at the instance of Whitehall."

"Oh, yes."

"And some of the main lines of policy which a Governor is expected to follow in matters of administration are laid down in directives proceeding from the same source."

"Undoubtedly."

"Then here is my point. Even if a satisfactory method were found of somehow constituting the colonial legislature out of the N.A.s, the African people would still be no nearer participation in a self-governing system. For control of policy and an overriding legislative power would remain in British hands."

## II

"The point is well taken, Mr. Korolenko," Midhurst smiled, "but you'll forgive-me if I say it strikes me as being a trifle theoretical. It relates to a future which we can't yet foresee at all plainly. Our habit is all against stretching provision beyond prevision. Responsible British feeling lays stress on the need for caution in our contacts with African peoples. To raise the tempo and vigour of our assistance to them beyond a certain level would be to cast statesmanship and scientific deliberation aside, and might produce a disrupting effect on native life. Why, only the other day Margery Perham was doubting whether Britain could possibly give self-government to Nigeria in any period short of fifty years. And Nigeria is a good deal more advanced than Tanganyika, Miss Perham, as you know, is one of the most liberal of our imperialists."

"Yes, I know Miss Perham," said Vova.

"Have you built a shrine to her too?"

“No, indeed; I know my place. But I study her works.”

“And pull ‘em to pieces too, I’ll bet. I also recall a *Times* leader, not so long ago, which spoke of tropical Africa as a vast continent of backward races whose future must lie, *perhaps for centuries to come*, in the guidance of Europeans. In treating of all these remoter matters, such as the form of ultimate self-government which Africans may hope to enjoy, our magic word is *Solvitur ambulando*. We aren’t young men in a hurry.”

“Surely all that is rather pre-Singapore stuff,” Vova rejoined. “The question you are faced with to-day is how British Africa is to survive in a world which has destroyed British Malaya. The answer cannot possibly be ‘By following the methods that were adopted in Malaya.’ Yet what you are now saying is precisely what your Far Eastern colleagues were saying right up to the very end. The radical failure of the British there consisted, it seems to me, in the notion that they could govern and defend the country without the active collaboration of its Asiatic inhabitants. If I am right, does it not follow that the pressing problem for your officials in Africa is how to secure the active collaboration of Africans? And is not such collaboration closely bound up with a movement towards African self-government? So, although you demur, I cannot help insisting that the precise forms which that movement is to take are a matter not merely of practical politics, but even of immediate urgency. Unless, of course, you are content simply to repeat in Africa your Malayan experience. By the way, are you content with that?”

Midhurst scowled at this impertinence, but made no reply.

“No?” Vova concluded. “Then surely you will agree that African self-government, even in its incomplete stages, touches both the relation between N.A. and legislative council, and that between legislative council and Westminster?”

Midhurst gave a curt nod. He obviously felt little relish for the course the talk was taking.

“Then, please, Mr. Midhurst,” Vova continued, “do not dismiss as Utopian even fairly large changes in the status of Africans. Utopia—have I read this somewhere?—is a project which imperialists repudiate with scorn while it could save their bacon, and then scramble to adopt after they have let their bacon burn to a cinder. That is very naughty, is it not? But I find it also amusing, with more than a grain of truth.”

“Oh, damned funny,” said Midhurst gloomily.

“You must forgive a soviet observer”—Vova put on his most ingratiating voice—“if he notices something a little prim in this British hesitancy and deliberation. As the pace of social progress in British colonies appears to him tardy beyond the dreams of snails, he cannot help smiling inwardly at your soul-searching fear of exceeding the speed-limit. He may even explain it to himself as grounded in some unacknowledged desire of yours to prolong the imperial occupation of African lands. He will in any case be acutely aware that some fifteen years were the period needed to raise the once-colonial areas in his own country to full and equal membership of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. We did not talk to the Tadjiks and the Uzbeks about centuries of Russian tutelage.”

“What *did* you talk to them about?”

“Ah, one day I hope to tell you that whole story. For the present I merely want to suggest that the British fear of social change in the colonies ignores not only the case of Malaya but also the case of the U.S.S.R. I could give you many illustrations from soviet experience to show that what creates painful stresses and strains in social life and disrupts its unity is not change as such, or even rapidity of change, but only unevenness of change. Suppose you subject the mineral resources of a country to intensive development without providing for corresponding advances in agriculture and in manufacturing industry. Why, then you had certainly better look out for trou-

ble. I gather that this is what has happened in Northern Rhodesia, and their trouble now seems to be with them all right. Trouble, of course, is equally likely if the practical and productive life of a society is revolutionised without any systematic effort to enlarge the means of popular knowledge and to adapt the forms of artistic and emotional expression.

“But if social change is co-ordinated so as to provide for these reciprocal balances over the whole range of man’s associated life, there is no known limit to the rate at which it may take place without causing disruption. This is not to say that the maximum rate is always and everywhere the optimum rate. No doubt, except in crises of the utmost urgency, the optimum rate may remain partly at least a matter of taste. But it does mean that the speed limit, and in practice of course there always is one, is set not by psychological or cultural difficulties of adjustment, but by administrative and technical difficulties of carrying the material alterations into effect. Among the administrative difficulties we may count the obstruction of vested-interests.

“Your British custom, I fancy, is to conceive of social equilibrium as a static condition. But there are many situations in which balance and movement go hand in hand. Balance, as in a spinning top, may quite well assume dynamic forms. It may persist unbroken through large-scale and rapid historical changes, so long as modification of one factor in the balance is not allowed to outstrip modification of the other factors. It is not even true that the slower one marches, the easier it becomes to keep step. The one essential thing is that the movements of all the social variables involved should be suitably geared to one another.”

“I should like to hear more about this sometime,” Midhurst said with a tinge of irony. “But for our present purpose—er—aren’t we getting rather far afield?”

“I am so sorry,” Vova replied. “It is a bad habit of mine to digress. You led me astray by suggesting that the question of African political responsibility was a sleeping dog which could be left to lie for another hundred years or so. Let us return to indirect rule. I have one last query for you on that. How does it work out in the economic sphere? Does the N.A. play any part in organising the people as producers or as consumers? Or is it concerned with them merely in their civic capacity as members of the tribe?”

### III

“H’m, that’s a bit of a teaser. Let me think a moment. Yes... Well, in the first place, Cameron used to insist that N.A.s should never concern themselves with production, marketing, or trade. And it can’t be said that there has been any general or consistent policy of extending their authority to such matters. But somehow, in a haphazard kind of way, they do tend to get mixed up in them. A good example is the story of the Chagga coffee-growers. Can you bear it?”

“Please. I am afraid I do not even know who the Chagga are.”

“Well, they’re a tribe living on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in a district which the Germans had successfully developed for coffee-growing. When the German planters were packed off home at the end of the last war, large numbers of Chagga who had worked for wages on the plantations set up as coffee-growers on their own account. They disposed of their crop to Indian storekeepers, who acted as middlemen linking the grower with the export market. In one sense the industry developed into quite a large-scale affair. At its peak some 30,000 members of the tribe were engaged in it. But none of them was by our standards a large-scale grower.

“The Chagga coffee-growers were primarily subsistence farmers. Coffee was for them a useful cash crop, filling much the same purpose in their lives as work for wages had filled while the Germans were still with them—that is to, say, it provided them with the modest purchasing

power needed for a few consumption goods, and perhaps a little schooling, medical treatment, or witchcraft. But they did much better out of coffee-growing than out of wage-service, since it brought them more money at less cost in time, energy, and psychological strain. You can get an idea of the scale of the thing from the fact that until the great slump cut coffee prices in half, the average sum growers received for their coffee each year was about £4.”

“How long would it have taken to earn that sum in wages?” asked Vova.

“Oh, the best part of a year. You can reckon the average agricultural wage in Tanganyika at 8s. 6d. to 10s. for a thirty-day ticket at that time. So the first part of the picture is bright enough. The Chagga growers were organised in some thirty primary groups, and these in turn were federated in a body known as the K.N.P.A. (Kilimanjaro Native Planters’ Association). The Director of Agriculture kept on reporting that the K.N.P.A. coffee was of quite as high a quality as the coffee grown by Europeans. This means something when you remember that the Chagga co-ops were responsible not for the growing alone, but also for pulping, drying, fermenting, and grading. On the whole, the movement was probably one of the most promising examples of spontaneous democratic mass-activity that modern Africa has to show. The trouble was that its very success made enemies for it among the white settlers.”

“I thought the white settlers had been packed off to Germany,” said Vova.

“At first, yes. But when the Germans were thrown out after the war, their estates were simply sold by auction to the highest bidders. Of these some were British, some Boers from South Africa, some Indian, some Greek, and so on. Moreover, by 1925 the embargo on land-holding by Germans was withdrawn, and after that quite a number of the original plantation owners came back. By 1935 there were nearly 3,000 Germans in Tanganyika out of a total white population of 8,500.”

“It sounds a pretty mixed crowd,” Vova commented. “But why should they object to the K.N.P.A.?”

“Well, there you have the colour bar at work, I’m afraid,” answered Midhurst. “You see, the white settlers in the next-door colony of Kenya had jobbed their Government into banning coffee-growing by Africans. The Kenya settlers thought their own position would be strengthened if their opposite numbers in Tanganyika enjoyed a similar monopoly. So they put the point to the Tanganyika settlers, at the same time offering some useful hints about the tactics which had proved effective in their own case. The Tanganyika gang, nothing loath, moved smartly into action. This was in 1925, and it so chanced that Cameron had just arrived as Governor. He not only turned down the settlers’ demands, but actively helped the Chagga to develop the K.N.P.A., now in the fourth year of its life. In this way he put native coffee-growing on a sounder basis than ever before.

“It was a good deed, but done unfortunately in a naughty world. It made the settlers of every shade of white all over East Africa see every shade of red. They would have burnt Cameron at the stake with the greatest joy. For several years the K.N.P.A. flourished like the green bay tree.

“But Cameron was not the only immigrant into Tanganyika in 1925. The Germans too came trickling back from that year onwards. And they proved, in this particular matter, even stouter allies of the settler party than Cameron was of the Chagga. The settlers, thus reinforced, determined to torpedo the K.N.P.A., Cameron or no Cameron. Various things began to happen. White officials who had the confidence of the tribe and had helped to put K.N.P.A. on its feet, were opportunely transferred elsewhere. The Indian storekeepers, who had originally served as the marketing channel for Chagga coffee, and to whom K.N.P.A. therefore appeared to be acting in restraint of trade, started offering inducements to all and sundry to sell coffee to them again in-



stead of to K.N.P.A. Members of the K.N.P.A. managing committee were suborned and corrupted. One of them, so it was said, absconded with £1,000 of K.N.P.A. money, though he was never put on trial. A small class of professional coffee-stealers mysteriously came into being. The tide of confidence in K.N.P.A. turned to the ebb. By 1929 half the crop was being sold outside to other agencies. The next year K.N.P.A. piled up on the rocks, and an official receiver was put in.”

#### IV

“And was that the signal for the Government to prohibit coffee-growing by natives?”

“No, it didn’t retreat as far as that,” Midhurst replied. “But it did retreat. Its first idea was to set up a Government marketing agency for the handling of all coffee, whether grown by Africans or by Europeans. But this came to grief because the white settlers stubbornly refused to come into any sort of organisation on equal terms with Africans. As the mandate forbade legal discrimination on grounds of race, something of a deadlock seemed to have been reached.

“This carries the tale as far as 1931—I hope it isn’t getting too involved—and now the situation changes in two ways, both unfavourable to the Chagga. First Cameron leaves, promoted to govern Nigeria; and next, the great slump hits Tanganyika good and hard. K.N.P.A. is officially ‘reorganised,’ or in other words forced to transform itself into K.N.C.U. (Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union). The term ‘co-op’ in this connection has always seemed to me a little loose, since K.N.C.U. was from the first controlled by a Government-appointed European manager at a salary of £700 a year. Incidentally, the salary paid to the chairman of the democratically elected management committee of K.N.P.A. had been £120.”

“I take it that he was an African?”

“You’re right, he was. And again, all native coffee-growers were compelled by law to sell their coffee to K.N.C.U.—which was another reason why it didn’t strike me as being very genuinely co-operative.”

“How did they manage to apply compulsion to native coffee-growers without applying it to Europeans in the same line of business?” Vova asked.

“Ah, now in answering that question we come to the answer to your main question about how N.A.s link up with economic organisation. It was done by telling the Chagga N.A. to issue an order obliging all members of the tribe who grew coffee to sell their crop to K.N.C.U.”

“But does that comply with the mandate—I mean with the requirement about not discriminating legally against Africans?”

“No, as it happens, it doesn’t. I can tell you that, because later on the point was argued in my court, and I had to give a judgment on it. But I suppose the administration was a bit desperate at the time, and felt there was nothing for it but to take a chance.”

“In a case like this,” Vova urged, “indirect rule seems rather inconvenient. Would it not have been easier for the government to have issued the order itself, instead of using the N.A. as its mouthpiece?”

“But the N.A. is the government, or rather part of the machinery of government. It is the normal channel of communication between the Governor and the tribespeople.”

“Was the N.A. then quite compliant? Was it willing to assist the white man in the struggle against the true co-operative movement of its own people?”

“It may seem unlikely,” was Midhurst’s reply, “but it was. You see, the great crime of K.N.P.A., in the eyes of the Chagga chiefs, was that it offered the natural leaders of the people

employment which carried higher pay, prestige, and social utility than the jobs the chiefs themselves were doing. Consequently, the incidence of nasal dislocation amongst the traditional leaders was high, and they were not at all averse from doing the coffee-growers' democracy any damage they could. By lining up with the white man's government and allowing themselves to be used as a key point in its coercive machinery, the chiefs thought, perhaps rather naively, that they were asserting their own authority over the coffee-growers' organisation."

"I began listening to this story as a mild social drama," said Vova. "I see now that its interest is less dramatic than musical. Not even your own Elgar could have contrived more enigmatic variations on a chosen theme. You start with a discord involving colour privilege. The white planters, hungry for monopoly, set out to break their black competitors, while the white government stands by the blacks on the 'no racial discrimination' ticket. You end with another discord involving a conflict of classes within the tribe. The protagonists are now the tribal reactionaries (the N.A.) versus the African progressives (the popular leadership of the associated coffee-growers). Planters and government, in a gradual diminuendo, have faded out."

"True," Midhurst replied. "But all the same, the white planters have effected their main purpose. Certainly they have not managed to get native coffee-growing made illegal; they have failed to cut the whole trouble at the roots. But they have broken the democratic movement, and they have put a stranglehold on native coffee at the point of marketing—a second-best perhaps, compared with the point of production, but it will serve."

"Yes, I see," Vova said. "And the government, for its part, though silently conceding the substance of the planters' demands, is not obliged openly to acknowledge defeat at their hands, or even to recant explicitly its nominal principle of no discrimination. And henceforward it can represent the entire issue as a mere squabble between different groups of natives, a little matter of intra-tribal discipline. It is a happy ending for the whites. But it looks rather a Machiavellian piece of work."

## V

"You'd better hear the finish before making up your mind on that," Midhurst answered. "Look at the position in, say, 1932 from the point of view of the Chagga growers. The particular local white officials in whom they happened to feel a special trust have gone. The Governor who had stood up for them has also gone. Their own democratic organisation, though by no means dead, has been prematurely buried. In their capacity of producers they have been brought under the authoritarian control of a European marketing-manager and an angry and jealous N.A. Simultaneously the great slump has struck, and the average sum received by growers has sagged from the 80s. of the palmy days of freedom to a wretched 56s. 6d. (By 1935 it will have crashed to 27s. 6d.)

"The growers, humanly enough, connect the drop in their income with the loss of their free-running K.N.P.A. In this they are no doubt unscientific. And I suppose it's quite likely that K.N.P.A. would have foundered in the great slump, white settlers or no white settlers. Still, we shall all understand and sympathise with them when they start holding public meetings to express their widespread discontent, and to call for the exhumation and resurrection of their now beatified K.N.P.A.

"The N.A. counters all this by flatly banning the meetings, which are nevertheless held, it then arrests, convicts, and imprisons a number of the organisers. The confusion and the rancour deepen. The European marketing-manager boycotts the coffee of a local society which has been

indiscreet enough to elect an anti-N.A. committee. One of the chiefs kills his brother who has 'gone over' to the democratic side.

"I'm telescoping all this a good deal, of course. Events I've outlined in a sentence or two were actually spread out over several years. Anyhow, by the middle of 1937 both the N.A. and the colonial government had come to be regarded with open hatred and contempt by the mass of the tribespeople, including even the women, who normally steer clear of public affairs. So much so that the district officer, still uneasy although the whole recognised democratic leadership was now under lock and key, felt the need of some striking and exceptional step. He urged the Governor to pay an official visit to the coffee-growing area, and address a formal gathering of the tribe.

"The Governor came and, sad to relate, proved a complete flop. Soon after his visit, another prohibited meeting of coffee-growers was held, at which it was decided to close the store belonging to K.N.C.U. The next morning N.A. police were on the spot to open it again—by force. That night an excited crowd burned it to the ground. The government at once chartered all available aeroplanes, and flew troops to the scene, drawing on resources as far afield as Nairobi. The Chagga offered no resistance. A further 200 of their number were gaoled or fined. Since then things have been quieter."

"That is an illuminating story indeed," said Vova. "I am greatly obliged to you. But I judge from some of your phrases that you do not regard it as altogether creditable."

"I think it's a damned bad show all round," replied Midhurst with emphasis. "That wide, spontaneous co-operation of the Chagga started as one of the most hopeful democratic movements of this generation, in the whole length and breadth of Africa. And the best we can do with it is to send it up in flames, ruined."

"Yes," Vova agreed, "it seems a pity that such fine blossom should bear so little fruit. Yet really there is a pathetic inevitability in the whole sequence, is there not? If your people had honestly wanted to give K.N.P.A. its head, would they not have had to scrap the Chagga N.A. and liquidate the white settler, too? And then there was the great slump. Long life and happiness for bodies like K.N.P.A. depend on your abolishing world-wide economic blizzards, or at least on your giving the Chagga adequate shelter from them. But your administrators seem unaccustomed to thinking in such terms. So I suggest that if K.N.P.A. had not fizzled out the way it did, why, it would just have fizzled out some other way."

"Well, you may be right. Native co-ops, I admit, are tender growths. But..."

## VI

"Mr. Midhurst," Vova burst in, "would you object if I told you what I think?"

"On the contrary," Midhurst answered with a broad smile, "I should object to your telling me anything else. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have observed that nothing is more bitterly resented by Englishmen of the ruling class than candour in the discussion of politics or religion."

Midhurst laughed outright at this. "Then please put me down as an honorary proletarian," he said. "For heaven's sake say any mortal thing that's on your mind. I shan't care a tuppenny damn, whatever it is."

"I hope you will not regret having licensed me," Vova replied, 'laughing too. "Well, I take the plunge. What strikes me at once is that the official behaviour in the Chagga affair was essentially aimless. In fact, aimlessness seems to be the main characteristic of the whole scheme of

indirect rule, and even of your conception of trusteeship itself.

“Your Chagga position could hardly have cropped up in just that form in my country. But we have troubles of our own which resemble it in some ways. For instance, we are very familiar with conflicts between reactionary traditional tribal authorities and native leaders of newer and more progressive organisations. And we often deal with them just as wastefully and unintelligently as your people dealt with the Chagga. There is this difference, however. Our blunders do not arise because we are ignorant of what we want to do.

“I had an idea that British colonial administrators were students of Aristotle, or at any rate fellow-travellers with Dr. Joad. We in the Soviet Union seldom enjoy such advantages, but we are nevertheless better Aristotelians than you. At least we have not forgotten that human conduct is directed to ends; that these ends are not independent of one another; that there is a final end to which all others are subordinate; and that the art or science which undertakes to realise the final end is Politics, the social art or the social science.

“For ourselves we have already discovered and defined this final end. Put very briefly and crudely, it is complete political, economic, and social equality among a population of nearly 200 millions, comprising nearly 200 distinct ethnical groups in widely different phases of culture. The soviet government, therefore, is obliged to conceive its task as the building of a new civilisation—a civilisation which we, in our curious jargon, call socialist. This in turn means enrolling for the labour of construction millions of men and women of different talents, temperaments, and training; it means guiding them to recast the economic and social life of the entire community, and in recasting it to change in many far-reaching ways their own habits, occupations, beliefs, and desires.”

“I hope that later on you will tell us something about the efforts you have made towards this final end.”

“You are very kind. At the moment, however, I simply point out that our having chosen and defined that end greatly simplifies for us the problem of choosing between other ends which are subordinate to it.

“Take your Chagga situation as an example. Here there were at least four distinct ends striving with varying degrees of vigour for realisation. One was the claim of the European settlers to be treated as an exclusive group entitled to certain monopolistic privileges. Another was the freedom of certain African producers to associate spontaneously in a co-operative business enterprise. A third was the official preference for avoiding open and acknowledged racial discrimination. And the fourth was the official inclination to maintain the authority of the Chagga N.A. in the general interests of the policy of indirect rule.

“Now a soviet administrator would have no difficulty at all with what I may call the theoretical aspect of the problem thus presented. He would refer each of the four ends to his final end, and decide which of them was compatible with it and which not. The incompatibles he would reject out of hand; and the compatibles he would rank in an order of precedence on a scale ranging from positive furtherance of the final end to mere non-repugnance to it. His practical problem would then be to assist the realisation of the compatibles in accordance with this scheme of priorities.

“For a British administrator no part of such a process is possible, simply because he has no final end in terms of which subordinate ends can be valued. All ends therefore remain, from his standpoint, sheerly incommensurable, and there can be no intrinsic grounds on which he should prefer one to another. But since practical exigencies compel him to adopt some scheme of priorities, the one he actually follows is determined by purely external and opportunist considerations,

such as the line of least resistance, and so on. Hence the impression which British administrative practice so strongly conveys of lack of principle—of being ready to behave in any way whatever, not excluding the most shameful and the least consistent with solemn declarations, provided it yields the minimum of all-round friction and disturbance.”

“I don’t want to interrupt your flow, Mr. Korolenko,” Midhurst put in, “but wouldn’t Aristotle feel bound to remind you that, in charging the British administrator with want of a final end, you are speaking somewhat loosely? All human behaviour he would say, wouldn’t he, is in fact determined by reference to some final end or other?”

“Of course, yes. You are perfectly right. The real question is: What is the concealed final end that operates to produce the appearance of aimlessness? What is the unstated major premise on which British official thinking about colonial affairs depends, and why does it express itself in policies that seem to exhibit no coherent principle?”

“Well,” challenged Midhurst, “what is this mysterious *x*? Have you got a hunch?”

## VII

“There is no great mystery about it really,” was Vova’s answer. “If it appears to work in a mysterious way, that is simply because it governs your colonial policy without being concerned with conditions inside your colonies. I suggest that the British colonial system has always been and still is fundamentally uninterested in the internal state of social health among colonial peoples. Your empire is a trading empire. Your dominant interest in the countries of which you make imperial use is the extra-territorial rights that you have carved out for yourselves there—the iron frame within which trade (and latterly industry as well) could be preferentially carried on. To the problems of the various societies among whom that trade and that industry went forward your attitude has been one of superb indifference.

“Please do not think that any moral reproof is implied here. I am discussing the psychology of imperialism, not its ethics, and my submission is that what lies at the root of all your colonial dealings and gives them a certain consistency, beneath their superficial opportunism, is the conception of extra-territoriality.

“This means that China, Persia, Egypt, Iraq, are the prototypes of British colonies.<sup>1</sup> Your basic formula for empire is concessions, foreign settlements, extra-territorial rights. Administrative responsibility you avoid as far as possible, and when you assume it, you do so with reluctance and for the primary purpose of creating stable economic and political conditions for profit-earning co-operation between British capital and native labour and natural resources. In tropical Africa you have added administration to your other worries in just this way. But the dependencies which you actually govern are secondary forms derived from the extraterritorial prototype to meet special circumstances. Government is conceived as a regrettable but sometimes necessary outgrowth from extra-territoriality, and is felt as something whose scope it is always advisable to restrict to the minimum.

---

<sup>1</sup> Vova is evidently describing the actual behaviour of British adepts, official and unofficial, in these countries, and not the legal basis of that behaviour.

Thus his judgment is not necessarily invalidated by the fact that on January 11th, 1943, Britain formally abrogated the treaties with China which had given legal expression to British extra-territorial rights there. The legal basis of British dealings with the Chinese is changed; how far the character of the dealings themselves will change remains to be seen.

It may be recalled here that extra-territorial rights in China had been relinquished as long ago as 1930 by the U.S.S.R., Germany, Austria, Poland, Finland, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Persia, Mexico and Bolivia.

“I think this hypothesis is capable of accounting for all the characteristic features of British imperialism. First of all, your fondness for working through native rulers—Malayan sultans, Indian princes, African chiefs, and so on. Then what to soviet eyes is your incredible aloofness from the native peoples, your lack of contact with them beyond what is involved in the master-servant relation, the absence in you of any active sense of responsibility for their troubles, your lack of free and equal community with them, and of any impulse to establish it. Next, your inability to lead them towards nationhood, or to conceive that native self-government could be in any realistic sense an advantage either for them or for you.

“Again the grotesque discrepancy between your paper principle of ‘no racial discrimination’ and your extremely thorough practical elaboration of the colour bar in industry, trade, law, education, public and social services, property ownership, political representation, and entry into government service. Yet again your anxiety that natives should develop on their own lines, in order that they may become good Africans and not bad Europeans, as though there were some sinister peril in making them the heirs of an ecumenical civilisation. And finally your shrinking from any positive or constructive role in colonial affairs, your profound conviction that the art of government consists in bringing about some kind of balance of pre-existing social forces and interests, while declining all effort to impart a consciously chosen direction to the social process as a whole.”

## VIII

“Just a moment, please,” Midhurst put in. “You say that we have no active sense of responsibility for the troubles of native peoples. Does this mean you consider the principle of trusteeship, which we like to think of as the foundation of our colonial policy, to represent a fraudulent claim on our part?”

Vova made a deprecating gesture. “Fraudulent is a very damaging term, is it not? No, I should relate the trusteeship principle to the extra-territoriality principle in this way. Trusteeship arises as a secondary feature of policy in what I called the secondary type of dependency—the type of dependency, I mean, in which you *do* assume direct administrative responsibility. Let me illustrate.

“In the last two or three generations Britain, and indeed every advanced country, has been driven to introduce universal compulsory education, a complicated system of social insurance, and a wide-range of social services, in order to maintain the working population at the level of technical efficiency required to enable the ruling groups to pursue the art of power politics with some hope of success. In the same way and for very similar reasons there comes a stage, as world economic relations grow more closely integrated, when even the iron frame in the colonies has to be padded and upholstered a little, if the natives who toil within it are to be kept sweet and made competent to carry out the technical tasks which world economy imposes on them.

“Naturally enough, the standards observed in colonial areas are less exacting than those in metropolitan areas. Education in the colonies is not compulsory, and it is far from being universal; the social services and public utilities are incomplete and fragmentary in the extreme.”

“Do you wish to write off the work of our missionary societies in the educational field, our medical missions, our departments of Public Health, Veterinary departments, Agricultural departments, and so on?”

“Not at all,” Vova proceeded. “All this certainly represents in the aggregate a considerable human effort, and it has certainly helped the people whom it was meant to help. If you wish to

indulge in a little national self-congratulation about it, please do not let me deter you. You should not, however, expect soviet observers to be particularly impressed, since in my country constructive human effort is of a different order of magnitude. You measure your social advance in yards, feet, and inches; we measure ours in light-years.

“In trying to appraise your whole colonial situation, one has to see this trusteeship question in proportion. To begin with, the zone of the effective operation of trusteeship is evidently small by comparison with the total social area involved; your trusteeship measures actually touch only a little minority of the population. The indices of literacy and of infant mortality, to take two examples at random, are enough to show that.

“Secondly, for some months even after the present war had started, you were still clinging desperately to the principle that each dependency should be self-supporting from the standpoint of public finance. This means that until the early summer of 1940 you were committed to a mainly negative and passive interpretation of trusteeship. Well, that sort of atomic self-sufficiency has now been abandoned—nominally. Your authorities announced in 1940 that financial assistance for development and welfare schemes in the colonies would be granted up to a maximum of £5 million a year. What is the total population of your dependent empire?”

“I don’t remember the exact figures,” Midhurst answered. “Somewhere about 60 million, I should guess.”

“Then the British government has now stated its readiness to spend 1s. 8d. per colonial head per year on implementing the trusteeship principle. But in practice it does not do this. My *Economist* records that the total financial assistance given to the colonies under the new scheme was just over £800,000 up to the end of 1941—about one-tenth of what should have been spent if the rate of £5 millions a year was being maintained.

“In other words, on your new ‘activist’ interpretation of trusteeship, you have allocated from central funds over a year and a half about 3d. per bead of the colonial population for welfare and development. This effective rate of 2d. a year does not suggest that the improvement in conditions at the colonial end is likely to be very striking. Nor does it present the people and government of Britain to the mind’s eye as a forceful and resolute group, determined to live up- to their declarations on trusteeship or perish in the attempt. The *Economist* mentions, by the way, that the chairman of the committee, which settles these allocations has another full-time job, and can spare only an hour a week to the committee’s business.”

“Ah,” was Midhurst’s comment, “you mustn’t believe all you read in the newspapers, you know.”

“Has not the *Economist* a reputation for accuracy?”

“Well, I suppose it’s fairly reliable on points of fact. Its views are sometimes pretty erratic.”

“I am not concerned with its views. If its version of the facts is accurate, those responsible for the administration of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act are, according to soviet notions, wreckers and saboteurs. In my country they would be arrested, put on trial, and if convicted sentenced to a fair slice of imprisonment. With you, however, they remain undisturbed in posts of consideration and influence, and apparently give satisfaction to the highest authorities. We in the Soviet Union would infer from this that the highest authorities are themselves wreckers in spirit, so far as trusteeship is concerned. But then we have been brought up to expect a pretty strict correspondence between the declarations of the authorities and their actual policy, and also between their policy and the behaviour of subordinate officials. Does that seem to you very naive of us?”

“I should have thought the attitude likely to lead to a certain disenchantment.”

“But seriously, Mr. Midhurst. This is one of the greatest differences that I notice between the mental climate of your country and mine. When Stalin speaks, he appears as just one of ourselves telling us simply and straightforwardly something he wants us to know. When I listen to your political leaders, I feel that I am intercepting a number of code messages to which I lack the key. People applaud fine sentiments, but no one seems to mind at all whether or not the plain meaning of what is said tallies with the actual substance of what is done. That makes me feel that the real meaning of what is said cannot be its obvious surface meaning.”

“The old yarn about British hypocrisy again, eh?” Midhurst grunted.

## IX

Vova smiled. “Oh, no, I am trying to track down something more deep-seated than hypocrisy. However, we had better not go into that now. My main point is that, in considering the practical significance of the trusteeship principle, one has to remember first that its benefits extend only to a small minority or the colonial population, second that it was a negative principle until 1940, third that, since then, your official agents have indeed pursued it in its positive form, but in a remarkably half-hearted manner and on a remarkably diminutive scale, and fourth that most of your unofficial agents, such as settlers, mine-owners, banks, and big trading concerns, do not make even a pretence of pursuing it in either form.

“This last matter is important, I think, as the great bulk of the active relations between your British society and the native societies of the colonies are conducted by these unofficial agents. The impact made by the officials and their policies is altogether less extensive, less sharp, and less continuous. Trusteeship, in short, is a speciality of officialdom, and is a far less vital influence than the unofficial economic penetration by which it is vigorously and often bitterly repudiated.”

Midhurst raised his eyebrows at this. “And what of the missionaries?” he asked. “I suppose you would rank them as unofficial agents. Does trusteeship mean nothing to them?”

“Ah,” Vova replied, “once again you recall the missionaries. On the whole, they have a higher conception of trusteeship and more honesty in its observance than colonial governments, would you not agree? Certainly they must be reckoned in on the credit side in our calculations. But we should not make the mistake of double-counting. We have already made one entry covering their work when we spoke of education and medical missions.

“I want to give you an example of the work of another sort of unofficial agent. I happened to see in the ship’s library the other day a book by the ex-Chief Secretary of Burma. According to his account, Lower Burma was, until 1930, a land of peasant proprietors. By 1940 more than two-thirds of the land had passed from the peasants into the hands of money-lenders, mainly Indian; and most of the remaining third was heavily encumbered with debt. The former owners had become rent-paying tenants or landless labourers. It is estimated that to buy back the land that has changed hands in this way would cost some £37 millions.

“The-peasant owners were first driven to borrow on the security of their land on this disastrous scale by the great slump, and, may I add, by the fact that their trustees had taken no effective steps to protect them from the consequences of the slump—the same slump that got your poor Chagga friends into such deep water. In Burma, Indian moneylenders were at hand to meet the peasants’ pressing needs, and they lent money freely at a rate of interest which seems to have averaged about 20 per cent. The odd thing, in the view of a soviet observer, is that the Indian money-lenders had previously borrowed the money from British banks in Rangoon at 3 per cent



above bank rate.

“The Burmese peasant did not take kindly to all this. In the early days of the slump, in 1931 to be exact, there was an agrarian revolt which the government had to put down at the cost of hundreds of peasant lives. Is there not some want of co-ordination here? Why do you British let your unofficial agents, the banks, take action whose consequences your official agents, the troops and police, are obliged to counter by shooting down your wards, the-peasants? I do not find it easy to bring any part of the process under the rubric of trusteeship.”

This was too much for Midhurst. “I don’t happen,” he said, “to have any first-hand acquaintance with the events in Burma, Indeed, I have only what you tell me to go on. And not knowing what the case for the Burma government may be, I don’t propose to appear as its advocate. No doubt it has a case. I can think of several rejoinders which might be made. Are you in favour of the freedom of the press?”

Vova laughed at this abrupt transition. “I am in favour of what I mean by a free press,” he said. “But I do not imagine what I mean and what you mean are the same thing. I do not mean, for example, the freedom of a few rich men to poison and delude the minds of millions of ignorant readers.”

“Well, anyway,” Midhurst went on, “a country which has a free press, whether in your sense or mine, must expect to find minority interests sometimes printing matter that the majority would disapprove?”

“Yes.”

“Yet the advantage of everyone, even unpopular minorities, being able to speak their minds is held to outweigh the disadvantage of causing occasional annoyance to the majority?”

“I see what you are getting at.”

“Well, in the same way the-general advantage of having a free-moving banking system may outweigh the disadvantage of occasional misfortunes such as the one you mention.”

“I follow. The legitimate interests of bankers must not be interfered with, even if they entail the ruin of three-quarters of an entire peasant population. If such consequences fall within the scope of the banks’ legitimate interests, one wonders what their illegitimate interests may be. I should have thought, Mr. Midhurst, the whole argument was a hundred years out of date. It reminds me of Lord John Russell’s refusal-to allow corn to be carried to Ireland by ships of the navy at the time of the Black famine, on the ground that governmental poaching on the preserves of private shipowners was intolerable.

“In my country we were lately faced with a position not very different from yours in Burma. We have a name for these money-lenders, you know; we call them *kulaks*. What did we do? We made it illegal for the banks to advance money to them, and we then proceeded to put the whole kulak class out of business. We had many reasons for doing this, and chief among them that not to have done it would have been to wreck our entire scheme for the industrialisation and therefore the defence of the country. The labour of a debt-ridden and dispossessed peasantry, following obsolete agricultural methods, could never have fed our cities and the Red Army.

“More of the crocodile tears of your humanitarians have been shed over the fate of the poor kulaks than over any other instance of bolshevik brutality. What seems inconsistent to us is that these same humanitarians do not turn a hair as they watch, or rather wink at, your own people liquidating whole classes of peasants in Burma and Bengal. Can you blame us if we take the truth of the matter to be, not so much that they prefer humane to brutal dealing, but rather that they prefer bankers and money-lenders to peasants and really believe that the former embody higher cultural and social values?”

“If you want a comparison between the two processes in terms of human suffering, I suggest that the hardships undergone by your Burmese peasants are at least as great as those undergone by our kulaks. If one attempts a calculus in terms of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is not the contrast wholly in our favour? Is not the liquidation of one kulak better than that of forty peasants—for that is about the proportion involved? And you must remember that our methods do at least lead to a great leap in agricultural productivity, whereas yours invite stagnation and perpetuate inefficiency.”

“Forgive my butting in”—Midhurst hurriedly got his word in edgeways—”but what has all this to do with trusteeship?”

“That is, in effect, the question that I was putting to you,” answered Vova. “I cannot myself see that it has anything whatever to do with trusteeship. Indeed, I was adducing the Burma story as evidence that over large tracts of British activity in colonial areas the writ of the trusteeship principle does not run at all.”

## X

“Now, Mr. Midhurst, my Burma story and your Chagga. story, together with all the other points we have been glancing at as part of their context, show, I think, that trusteeship, or what you are now beginning to call partnership, cannot possibly be regarded as the primary operative principle in your colonial policy. It cannot be so regarded even if you restrict the meaning of the term ‘colonial policy’ to the behaviour of colonial governments and missionaries. In point of fact, however, there is no warrant for such a restriction. I suggest that the proper operational definition of ‘colonial policy’ is *the dominant trends observable in the totality of the relations between your British society and the societies of the colonies*. It is in this sense that I use it. When the term is so used, the linkage between your colonial policy and the trusteeship principle is seen to be notably insecure and erratic.

“But the same body of evidence does support the view that the primary operative principle has been specially favoured trade based on extra-territoriality. I conclude, therefore, that trusteeship means to you British what it has always meant to the many paternal oligarchies that have invoked it since the time of Plato—Plato, who was the first thinker to speak of political power as a trust. It means that normally in your dealings with ‘subject races’ you have a general feeling of benevolence. You do not consciously desire to be brutally self-assertive or ruthless in exploitation. The role of kindly protector is part of the collective *persona* in the guise of which you as a ruling imperial group present yourselves to yourselves and to the world. It expresses a subjective attitude which may or may not be reflected in overt behaviour. It is only spasmodically a practical orientation; it is all the time a way in which you like to be thought about by yourselves and by other people.

“In practice it often does little more than cover the broad assumption, which you invariably make, that all backward peoples are automatically improved by contact with the British. They gain in grace, and they gain in material well-being. Of this you are immovably persuaded. In grace, because that notion gives an agreeable formulation to your tranquil sense of effortless superiority. The natives touch the hem of your imperial garment, and though virtue may go out of you, it damned well flows into them. I have many times admired your power of presenting even your most predatory strokes as virtue-transfusions from yourselves to your victims.

“In well-being, too, you claim that the natives are gainers. The claim seems to be grounded in an assumption that trade relations never do anyone any harm. How often have I heard your

spokesmen repeat that, whatever charges may be levelled at British imperialism, China, India, Africa have not been left poorer by trading with British merchants. I find this remark at once curious and characteristic. In a silent and surreptitious way it seems to admit that there is a difference between the position of the British merchant and that of the native who trades with him. The Briton gets richer; the native is left not poorer. This is as close as you ever come to acknowledging that the terms of trade may be favourable to one party and unfavourable to the other.

“But such a possibility would at once dispose of your theory of automatic reciprocal advantage. No general and categorical judgment could be made. It would become necessary to ask whether in a given case the advantage was one-sided or two-sided, and the question could be settled only by an examination of specific transactions.

“While it is not valid to argue that imperial trade is in general absolutely advantageous or absolutely disadvantageous for the native participants, it is valid to say that it is in general disadvantageous for them relatively to the British participants. The analysis of market processes demonstrates that there is no tendency for the various buyers and sellers to make an equal or equitable gain from the price at which they buy or sell. The needs, and therefore the bargaining strength, of those who meet in a market are never the same, either as between buyers and sellers, or as between buyers and buyers, or as between sellers and sellers. Markets, whether competitive or monopolist, are intrinsically unfair modes of distribution. Your own J. A. Hobson taught us that a long time ago.

“Now the history of colonial trade affords abundant evidence that the terms of exchange are normally unfavourable to the native participant, whether he figures as buyer or as seller. Indeed, colonies are valued precisely because colonial trade can offer the imperial participant a wider margin of advantage and can offer it continuously over a longer period than can trade with sovereign, independent, and, one may add, well-armed countries. Orthodox British spokesmen appear to overlook all these points when they expatiate on the topic of trusteeship.

“Once again, please do not mistake my meaning. I speak plainly, as you urged me to. But there is no suggestion of blame in what I say. I do not judge your purposes; I merely describe them as they are manifested in your behaviour. That behaviour, I freely admit, may have been well considered and appropriate for the ends you had in view. But it was not calculated to implant in the native peoples any powerful sense of social unity with yourselves. You may have been right to follow it; you would be wrong to feel surprised at Malaysians not wishing to fight for you, or even at Burmese insisting on fighting against you.

“Conversely, if all-empire social solidarity is what you want, you will have to set about getting it by quite different methods from those which you adopted in the interests of trade and extra-territoriality. Evidently both ends cannot be realised by the same means. Rulers can only win the devotion of the ruled by serving them and sharing power with them. You have not served your colonial peoples. You have used them and served yourselves.

“Need I add that this is offered as a statistical judgment, relating to the broad direction of the group-behaviour of those classes in British society which have undertaken to deal with colonial affairs? It is consistent with the possibility that many individuals of British origin may have rendered selfless service to natives, and that the group-behaviour itself may on some occasions have been designed to serve them. But it implies that such possibilities, if they are ever actualised, take shape as back-eddies and cross-currents within the main stream of tendency. They modify its flow, but not its course.”

There was a pause. Midhurst, who had been growing more and more restive under Vova's in-

terminable tirade, made haste to assume that the grand finale had now been reached. I could see that, in spite of Vova's disclaimers about moral condemnation, he felt he was being talked at as the symbol and the scapegoat of what Vova saw as the historic failures of British imperialism. This he was inclined to resent, yet at the same time he was more impressed by the gist of Vova's critique than he would have cared to admit. He turned to me with ponderous facetiousness.

"We ought to give Mr. Korolenko a big hand," he said. "He's wiped the floor with us properly. But we'll have our revenge. One day we'll make him tell us about his soviet handling of these problems. Then, having listened with polite attention, we'll proceed to tear him into little bits."

## CHAPTER III

### FROM EMPIRE TO DEMOCRACY

#### I

The day we got in at Cape Town there was a wicked southeaster blowing. It blew so hard that the ship had difficulty in berthing. This made us late ashore, and instead of having four or five hours to play about in, we only just had time to get our things through the customs and catch the Rhodesian mail.

As we drove up from the docks to Adderley Street, the “tablecloth” was hanging well down over the edge of Table Mountain. The swirling air was full of dust and grit, of which many grains made a bee-line for one’s eyes and lodged there painfully. At the street corners powerful eddies formed which would catch up sheets of newspaper from the gutter and hurl them twenty feet aloft in a flash, or flatten them adhesively against a wall, as though a billsticker had pasted them there. For a pedestrian the price of keeping hat on head was eternal vigilance. The women suffered front skirt trouble, often in rather serious forms.

The scramble for the train killed my plan for showing Vova the sights. This disappointed me more than him. The Cape peninsula is one of the few corners of the earth that can hold a candle to the southern shores of his native Crimea for natural beauty. In the Crimea he and I had first met. I remembered having jokingly promised then that one of these days I would display the glories of the Cape to his astonished gaze. My idea had been to drive him along the upper road past Groote Schuur and the lion’s den, with a side-glance at Constantia, and so to Muizenberg for a bathe and lunch. That was all off now; and I was sorry. But when I told Vova that he was missing one of the wonders of the world, I am bound to admit he didn’t seem to mind much. He was in no mood to feast the eye on scenery. For the last few days at sea he had been champing at the bit, and now that his feet had touched dry land again, he was urgent to press on with his job.

The train journey to Bulawayo is typical of African travel in this—that it is long, hot, tedious, and grimy. Once the Hex River pass is left behind, there really is not much to keep a discerning eye at the window. The second day, as the train was pottering through the arid wastes of Bechuanaland, we all three began to get a bit prickly. Midhurst wedged himself into his corner and grimly settled down to work through a pile of novels. Vova was restless and fidgety. I had told him that if he was going to Rhodesia, he ought to know something about Rhodes. And he was now turning over the pages of a biography of that hero with evident distaste. After a while he cried out in an agonised kind of voice: “Why on earth do you people deify a robber baron like that?” and pitched the book across the carriage.

Midhurst looked up in alarm. It took him a moment or two to grasp the situation. His eye lighted on the dust-cover of the rejected volume. “Are you talking of Cecil Rhodes?” he inquired, with an inflexion which suggested clearly that he expected the answer No.

“Yes, I am,” Vova replied, with vigour and defiance.

On most days during his leave in London, Midhurst had spent a quarter of an hour before lunch drinking his dry Martini under a bronze bust of C.J.R. in the Royal Empire Society’s lounge, without the least feeling of discomfort. Vova’s point of view seemed entirely novel to him. But before he could comment on it, the train pulled up at a wayside halt, and Vova jumped out to have a look round.

There were some rather part-worn natives moving up and down the platform, hawking their

wares—karosses made of the skins of wild animals, crude wood-carvings, bead ornaments, and things of that kind. Vova rapidly bought a poker-work tortoise for a bob, and, hatless in the intense sunlight, his eyes screwed quaintly up against the glare, stood laughing and joking with the bare-backed and bare-legged *bantu*. A few moments later he was pacing up and down in earnest converse with a huge African who wore shabby European clothes. As they passed underneath the window of our carriage, my ears informed me that the African was treating Vova to a fairly detailed autobiographical sketch—and that he was doing it in fluent English.

Nor was this lost on Midhurst. His whole body stiffened; all his antennae waved with attentive suspicion. Then he leaned forward and tapped me on the knee. His face was clouded with the shadow of a fearful surmise. “My God,” he whispered, “you don’t think he’ll bring that nigger in here, do you?”

To Midhurst’s mind the possibility was evidently more shocking than it seemed to me, and I was ready to smile at his anxiety. But I went on to reflect that I had no idea either how far Vova appreciated the virulence of local colour-prejudice, or how far he was willing to defer to it. He might even feel he had a duty to flout it. In my mind’s eye there began to take shape violent and vexatious scenes, in which Vova’s African acquaintance was beaten up by our white fellow-travellers, and Vova himself saved from a similar fate only on being taken into protective custody by the guard and left behind at some desolate station.

A whistle blew. There was an answering bustle on the platform, and people began to climb back into the train. Vova’s friend hurried off to his own seat in one of the rear coaches. Clearly he knew his place and wasn’t out to be cheeky. The train lurched on; and as Vova rejoined us, he said, with a heartiness that grated on Midhurst: “An interesting fellow that. He was telling me how he used to be secretary to one of the chiefs of the Bamangwato near Lake Ngami, until there was some sort of row, and the chief had him flogged in full *diwan* and driven out into exile. He is now returning for the first time since his disgrace, and wondering what sort of reception he will get. He is on this train as far as Livingstone, and will then strike across country to Maung.”

“That’s very reassuring,” said Midhurst, with an irony that Vova missed completely.

This was as close as either of us got to reading him a lesson in the etiquette of dealing with natives.

## II

My friend Ivor Jones, who met us at Bulawayo, was more direct. Mwanaphuti—for that turned out to be the name of our black fellow-passenger—came up to say good-bye to Vova, as their ways parted here. The pair of them stood talking, while the rest of us collected together our various items of luggage. Jones was vaguely disconcerted by the presence of the black man on the fringe of the group. On looking into the matter somewhat more closely, he found that Vova, to all appearances a white man, was speaking to the black on what were clearly familiar, and might even be equal, terms. The social conventions of Rhodesia stood in jeopardy. There was just a moment’s hesitation. Then he strode forward, nudged Vova, drew him a little aside, and gave him a whispered warning not to shake hands with a native in so public a place as the main-line platform of Bulawayo station.

At this Vova swung round and faced him squarely with a stare of cold fury. I began to fear a scandal even graver than an inter-racial handshake. But Vova’s position was not easy. He had only just been introduced to Jones. He knew him to be a highly placed official of the Rhodesian railways. He knew too that in a general way he had offered to act as guide and host to us during

the next few days. Whatever the provocation, on a long view it was obviously bad policy to have a row with him in the first five minutes. With an effort Vova took a grip on himself. "I am sorry," he said icily. "I am afraid that some of your customs are still strange to me. In my own country it would be a serious legal offence to give the advice you have just given. I must try to adjust myself to my new surroundings."

He turned to take his leave of Mwanaphuti. I saw him raise his hand in a grave gesture of farewell. He did not place it in that of the African. Thus narrowly were the sentiments of the good people of Bulawayo preserved from outrage.

I had been particularly anxious that my Russian friend and my Rhodesian friend should meet. Ivor and I had soldiered together in the last war, and I knew him for the bravest and the best of men. He had left his native Wales sometime about 1909 to seek his fortune, and to taste the romance of a little quiet empire-building; for in those days some people still pictured the empire to themselves in romantic colours. After various adventures he found his way into the railway service in the vast lands that Cecil Rhodes had acquired. Like so many able-bodied Rhodesians he "went home for the war." But when it was over, Africa claimed him once more, and twenty-odd years of industrious efficiency carried him close to the top of the tree in his chosen walk of life.

My notion was that he, if anyone, would be able to exhibit to Vova in a favourable light the kind of life led by the pioneering white communities that had made their homes in Africa. If I understood anything of Vova, he would approach these immigrant Europeans with the prejudice that they were a peculiarly effective type of *kulak*, oppressing and exploiting the defenceless black man for selfish gain. I knew it to be impossible to fit Ivor at all exactly to such a formula, and I hoped he would prove a more attractive figure personally than many of the whites whom we should meet on our travels. Indeed, he was the chief reason why we were breaking our journey at Bulawayo at all. But for him, I should have been inclined to take Vova straight through from the Cape to Livingstone, for, after all, our real business began only in Northern Rhodesia.

So I groaned to see how unpromising a start the acquaintance of these two was making. What could I do to give it a fair wind? Luckily recovery did not have to wait upon my initiative. Ivor was obviously giving no second thought to the incident; it was all in the day's work to him. It occurred to me with something of a shock that quite likely he gave similar instruction in the rudiments of polite manners to most of the raw visitors whom it fell to him, as the representative of White Rhodesia, to welcome. As for Midhurst, he had been fussing about the luggage and had noticed nothing. So, as we all piled into Ivor's car to drive to our hotel, there was much less of constraint than I had feared. Ivor was a capital showman, and he babbled away so amusingly about the features of the town, as we shot by them, that he soon had us all laughing and joking, including Vova. I began to tell myself that the little affair on the platform had not been so untoward after all.

Next morning after breakfast Ivor called to drive us out to the Matopo hills, the Rhodesian Pantheon. "No one who visits Bulawayo is ever allowed to get away again without making this pilgrimage," he told us with a smile, forestalling our protests that we were not rubbernecks.

The hills are an astonishing jumble of granite tors, often made up of huge bare loaves of rock. They remind one of a heap of chippings from the workshop of some divine stonemason. The folds and hollows between and among the rocky excrescences are covered with dark green scrub, the haunt of baboons and leopards. We saw some of the former on the road. In the flat ground where there is some depth of soil, you get park-like country with many fine trees. Some of it was marked off by Rhodes fifty years ago to be a more or less formal park, and at his orders many exotics, as well as indigenous trees, were planted, and plenty of them are by now grown to

great stature. Our route lay through this park, whose limits are marked by iron gates with massive stone gate-posts. I noticed that the road was sprinkled with the flattened corpses of chameleons. Local counterparts of the sparrows, rats, and hedgehogs that lie mangled on our English roads in spring, they seem to be deficient in traffic sense, so that the petrol-driven juggernaut claims them in large numbers.

Like trained tourists, we made the climb to World's View, and inspected the Alan Wilson memorial, where Vova scored a good mark by speaking his admiration of the craftsmanship of John Tweed's frieze. We stood by the graves of Rhodes, Jameson, and Coghlan, and marvelled at the principles on which conventional heroes are selected for canonisation. From this vantage-point we took photographs of the tossing wild scenery round about.

### III

On our way back to Bulawayo, we stopped for lunch at a little lonely hotel overlooking a handsome lake. A table was set for us on an open verandah, and in the garden below a tame ostrich was scratching about much in the manner of smaller poultry. Midhurst, in whom the English love of animal pets was highly developed, could not resist the temptation to make what he thought suitable approaches. Ivor warned him that he was courting a rebuff. And indeed the results he achieved were insignificant. I never saw an animal more unmoved by the presence of man—a man, moreover, bearing bit of bread and lumps of sugar. Vova alone contrived to get a positive reaction from the bird. That was when he insisted on snapping its portrait, with a view, as he said, to explaining to friends in Russia that it was a wild ostrich that he had spent days in stalking. Then the creature stood still and turned a beady and disapproving eye on the photographer. By the time lunch was served, we all felt that the ostrich had been tried and found wanting.

Vova, as we sat down at table, let his eye roam appreciatively over the lake in front of him. "How well that sheet of water stands out against the parched countryside," he said. "How did it get there?"

"It's one more monument to the tireless enterprise of Rhodes," Ivor answered. "Part of his scheme for the development of water supplies throughout the country. If I remember rightly, the dam was built after his death, out of some trust money that he left for the purpose."

Knowing Vova's views on Rhodes, I thought it might be safer to steer the talk along more general channels. So I waved an arm in a comprehensive gesture and asked: "Well, Vova, what do you make of it all? Are you beginning to get the feel of life in British Africa?"

"I think I am making a start," Vova answered; "and to be frank, it does not greatly appeal to me. I cannot help feeling that our soviet arrangements are far better than yours. I fear you will think that self-important and conceited of me. Naturally, I do not mean that we have a point-for-point superiority throughout the whole range of policy and achievement. Such a claim would be entirely absurd. A bare twenty years ago Lenin himself told us that we were a beggarly, uncultured people, living on a level of semi-barbarism. 'We should speak,' he said, 'of that semi-Asiatic cultural backwardness, which we have not yet cast off. The casting-off process has advanced a good deal since 1921, but, as we are well aware, it is still nothing like complete. In many things that make for the good life your best is better than our best, and your average may sometimes be better than our average. On this latter point the advantage generally appears to be with you if the 180 millions of the Soviet Union are compared with the 45 millions of Britain; and with us, if the comparison is between the 180 millions of the Soviet Union and the 500 millions of the British Empire.'"



“In that case,” Ivor interposed, “what becomes of your superiority? Why, at any rate, speak as though it were immeasurable?”

“The difference between the soviet system and the British system is just this,” was Vova’s reply. “We do the right thing, though at present rather badly; you do the wrong thing rather well. Ours is a higher form of life at an immature stage of its individual development; yours is a lower form at a mature stage. We are the human infant, you the adult chimpanzee.”

“Beautifully sententious and all that, but as it stands, obscure. Explain please.”

“The thought in my mind is this. All the complex social problems of our day radiate, I suggest, from a single critical issue—the need to democratise big business.

“To-day the essential goods and services which are the means of continuing life are in the main produced and distributed by vast monopolistic combines. That is as true of soviet communism as of western capitalism. It is beside the mark to rail, as some of your liberals do, at monopoly organisation in itself. Monopoly is necessary, at least in the basic departments of economic life, if the best-planned and most productive use of resources is to be made. But in certain conditions monopoly can also be used for the opposite purpose of artificially reducing and limiting output, of creating avoidable scarcity, or securing a rise or preventing a fall in prices, and of increasing private profits. Amongst yourselves it is notoriously and increasingly so used. In my country it has been freed from its connection with private profit and restrictionism.”

“You mean,” Midhurst deftly edged his word in, “that although the development of productive activities along the lines of monopoly is to be welcomed, it becomes of vital importance to subject that development to control, in order that monopoly may serve the common interest of the general public and not the exclusive interest of a small group of influential financiers and industrialists.”

“Exactly,” said Vova, “for in spite of all that short-term compromises can do, in the long run there is no genuine reconciliation of a general interest with an exclusive one. In the long run, therefore, it is not merely right but also necessary for the exclusive to be sacrificed so that the general may be fulfilled.

“Monopoly of the means of life, when it is operated for the special benefit of a rich and powerful minority, obviously tends to destroy social unity by setting up extremes of social inequality. It is the prime sustainer of class-division, and of the conflict of interest of classes. That division and conflict in a society’s internal relations lead, as throughout history they have always led, to power politics in its external relations, and hence to imperialism and international chaos. On the other hand, a society which learns to combine monopoly organisation with popular and democratic control, and to unite expert management of big business with a policy framed in the interests of the unprivileged, cuts the tap-root of the main social disorders of our time. We in the Soviet Union have done this cutting once for all.”

“And aren’t we engaged, more slowly and deliberately, on the same job?” asked Midhurst.

Vova gazed at him blankly. “Mr. Midhurst,” he said, “you must be pulling my leg. Looking at the political and social system of Britain and her empire from the vantage-point of the year 1943, you cannot possibly imagine that it is moving in the direction of socialism. Why, you in your sector of the world have not yet begun to address yourselves to the task of root-cutting. I can assure you it is no easy one. You will not mistake it when you *do* come to it. At present you do not even acknowledge that it is the task to which you ought to be addressing yourselves—that it should be the governing aim of all social and political movements whose work is to be in any sense progressive. The great weakness of your so-called progressive movement in the inter-war years—your Peace Councils, League of Nations Unions, Federal Unions, Labour Parties,—your

pacifism and internationalism in general—the great weakness of all this lay in the readiness to fight for secondary ends inadequately related to the main purpose of taming the monopolies. The result was the dissipation of energy, the disorganisation of resources, the undisciplined squabbling, and the loss of effectiveness, which we have all witnessed and deplored. In future you will find, I fancy, that would-be progressive activities will have to be much more strictly tested by the extent to which they tend towards the resolution of this crucial issue.

“And since this present war began, you have lost more ground. In Britain the monopoly combines have notably increased their power over the community during these last four years. Not only are they in supreme command of your economic life; they have in many departments assumed political control and taken over the machinery of the state as well. British policy has been to invite executives of the cement ring, the iron and steel combine, the chemical combine, the oil interests, the tobacco trust, and so on, to operate the official war-time controls of the industries in which they are interested as private producers. The policy has been carried out with remarkable thoroughness over the whole economic field. You call it state control of industry, but it is in fact the control of the state by the owners of industry—an entirely different thing. From the short-term administrative standpoint such arrangements no doubt have their convenience; from the standpoint of democratic politics they are perilous in the extreme.

“So it comes about that at this moment the war policy of your country—the direction of your whole people’s war effort—is in the hands of the very interests whose complacency and blindness, through what I can only call twenty of the most humiliating years in British history, lost you the peace. They may not lose you the war; you now have powerful foreign allies. But if you do not unseat these gentry before peacemaking begins again, you will be laying up for yourselves a store of troubles that will make the last few decades look like child’s play.

“In the Soviet Union their counterparts and all their influence have been eliminated. With us monopoly has been submitted to the interest of the whole; industry is subordinated to the universal advance in civilisation of all the soviet people, without any exclusions whatever. We are the only social species which has so far made this decisive biological mutation, and for the moment therefore we stand at a higher organisational level than any other human society. It is in this sense, and in this sense alone, that I claim our arrangements to be immeasurably superior to yours.”

#### IV

“How is this mutation brought about?” Midhurst asked.

“In one way only. By placing in communal ownership and control land, minerals, industrial plant, and banking and finance. Obviously our having done this does not preclude our being still behind you in many details of industrial technique and economic development. Your middle-class visitors to the U.S.S.R. find, let us say, our consumption goods rather shoddy. We are on a ten-cent store standard rather than a Fortnum and Mason one. Quite true.”

“I’ve heard that the housing problem is in a serious state with you too,” Midhurst put in.

“My dear Mr. Midhurst,” Vova flashed back at him, “overcrowding in many of our cities is appalling—almost as bad probably, as it is in Bombay or Calcutta. I assure you that we are just as shocked by it as any bourgeois tourist who pounces on its details with a shriek of delight in order to discredit socialism. But we remember, what seems to have slipped your mind, that we should have coped with it more effectively if your country had not fought against us from 1918-21, and had not actively assisted Hitler, by selling him arms and lending him money, to build up

his war-machine between 1933-38. If your rulers had not thus obliged us to divert about one-third of our total resources to defence, we should have had more to spare for the housing and other constructive purposes on which we should have much preferred to spend it,”

“Sorry,” said Midhurst, “I’ll go back to my basket.”

“No hurry about that. There is any amount of such ammunition for you to use. Our passenger transport, our roads, our drainage, and a dozen other things are primitive still compared to yours. We are ill-provided with public lavatories. Even our private ones are seldom finished in glossy white enamel, nor do our toilet rolls have little musical boxes inside them to tinkle out ‘D’ye ken John Peel’ when one tears off the paper. In short, our modal standard of living is still lower than yours in Britain (though I remind you again, it is higher than the modal standard of the British Empire as a whole).

“We do not worry much about such deficiencies, because we know they are temporary. In a very few years of real peace we could put them well behind us—that real peace of which our enemies, including those in Britain, have so far been able to deny us the enjoyment. We know too that these deficiencies are only the reverse side of our plan for equality. Do you really think that the industrial machine which equipped the Red Army could not have built and stocked a few Fortnum and Mason stores, if we had chosen so? We preferred to dispense with the wealthy minority who might have consumed such luxury goods, and we sought instead to lay the road to universal participation in the plenty of a prosperous community. Dispensing with the wealthy few meant taking the productive property which was the source of their wealth, and turning it over to a central authority which could be trusted to apply it to the well-being of the poor and unprivileged.

“Because we did this, we now have a real and not merely a paper identity of franchise in all the groups that make up our society. We have equal rights for all in law and in administrative practice, without respect of colour or race. We have a fairly close approximation to equality of economic and cultural opportunity for all children born among us. We have universal education, which is not merely compulsory and over most of its range free, but is also the same for all; we do not, like your Eton-and-Magdalen Platonists, favour one education for the rich who rule and another for the poor who serve. We offer every one of our 180 million people complete freedom from exploitation by financier, landlord, employer, or merchant. And we are able to make a persistent and thorough-going effort to raise our economically and culturally backward peoples to the level of the most advanced in the shortest possible time.”

“I’d like to know just what you mean by exploitation”—it was Ivor’s turn to interrupt. “Is it a crime to advance capital for the expansion of industry or for easing the movement of trade goods? Am I a crook if I offer employment to those who can’t live without it, or if I help to distribute commodities from factory to consumers?”

“An exploiter,” answered Vova with severity, “is one who borrows money in order to lend it again at a higher rate, or who leases land or buildings for a rental that exceeds the cost of maintenance and depreciation, or who buys goods in order to sell them at a higher price, or who hires labour in order to make a profit out of it. In my country all these things are crimes, and very serious ones too.”

“Good heavens! What topsy-turvydom! How do you all live?”

“We live by standing on our own feet and working: not by riding on the backs of others and taking a rake-off from their toil. Our world only seems topsy-turvy to you because you have not yet crossed, or approached with any resolute intention of crossing, the great divide between private monopoly and socialised monopoly. That also is why you are unable to distribute evenly

throughout your empire any of the good things I was mentioning a moment ago. Even the privileged tenth at the pinnacle of your imperial system, I mean the 45 millions of Britain itself, move deeper and deeper into cultural collapse under the leadership of groups whose political bankruptcy has been demonstrated time and again through thirty solid years.

The City, the Lords, and the F.B.I.,

The softer they live, the harder they die...

You remember that impolite little ditty? It is so impolite that I forbear to quote more of it.

“But I will ask how long people like yourselves, men of experience and understanding, are going to be content to dance to the tune called by a handful of soft-living die-hards, whose blind guidance has already led you into a series of world-wide calamities scarcely to be paralleled in all history, and who are busy transporting you where more and worse calamity attends you.

“Are you afraid to sweep them into the limbo where they belong? No, fear is not your trouble. For you will fight, under their direction, any number of the world-wars which they bring about from time to time in the pursuit of their class interests.

“Are you then too lazy? You need not worry lest the exertion should prove too much for you. In the immortal words of *The Times*' Malayan correspondent, ‘One good push will send their structure crashing to the ground.’ You have to know the right way of setting about it, of course. Unfortunately you will not take the pains to learn what the right way is. Meanwhile, you become more and more irrevocably prisoners of the past; your country slips further and further to the rear of civilisation's marching column; and you resign the future more and more fully to us.”

## V

“And in order to avoid these disasters all we have to do is to give private capitalism the bird. Is that it? Sounds a bit text-booky to me,”

Vova laughed. “I do not say that is all you have to do, Mr. Jones. It is only the beginning. I am pointing out a *sine qua non*, not selling you a panacea. What I do say is that until you nationalise in some effective way land, minerals, banks, transport, fuel, and heavy industry, you cannot begin to move nearer towards equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, sex equality, or racial equality.”

“But supposing I don't want all these equalities?”

“Well, in that case you had better go over to the fascist camp without further ado. The significance of these equalities is, if soviet experience counts for anything, that they are the only means of creating a democratic society with sufficient coherence and vigour to withstand the onslaughts of aggressive fascism. Fascism has its own methods of producing social unity of a sort—a spurious sort, as we think. But, of course if you prefer the fascist variety... Tell me, do you believe in slavery?”

“Why, no.”

“You are glad it was abolished?”

“Certainly.”

“Why?”

Ivor hesitated a little. “Well,” he said slowly, “I suppose because I think freedom better.”

“Better for whom?”

“For the ex-slaves.”

“And what about the ex-owners? Does emancipating their slaves leave them better off, or worse?”

“I should say better.”

“Why?”

“Heavens above,” Ivor was moved to protest, “anybody would think I was the prisoner in the dock and you were the prosecuting attorney.”

“Never mind,” said Vova relentlessly. “Tell me how emancipation benefits the slaveowners.”

“Well, I can think of two ways. By increasing the aggregate of freedom, it offers them a freer society to live in, and thereby enlarges the scope of their own freedom. It also tends to raise the quality of social life as a whole, by making for greater tolerance and justice, and so strengthening the writ of the golden rule.”

“Then you admit the authority of the golden rule in social organisation? But I still have something else on my mind.” “What is that?”

“You remember that the British government, in abolishing slavery in the 1830’s, compensated the owners in cash to the tune of £20 millions. But when you tell me that abolition did the owners good, you make no mention of compensation. Is your view that the benefit would still have accrued, even if no compensation had been paid?”

“Oh, yes,” Ivor answered lightly, “the £20 millions were just a *douceur* to soften the blow of the apparent affront to the rights of property. The money neither increased nor diminished the substantial advantages I’m talking of.”

“But this gets worse and worse. You now seem to be arguing not only that abolition was a good thing, but also that the confiscation of property is a good thing, if-it has the effect of increasing the aggregate of freedom in society. For then, as you say, it raises the quality of life for everyone, including those from whom the property is taken—provided, of course, that the private interest in it is really extinguished and not merely transferred to other hands. Do I interpret you aright?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Well,” said Vova, “I agree with you, but I am sure the respectable citizens of Rhodesia and of Britain would not. They would think you shockingly seditious. But why do you speak of abolition as an *apparent* affront to the rights of property? Was it not a real interference with them?”

“Only in form,” was Ivor’s reply, “The slaveowners were also landowners, and emancipation didn’t deprive them of their land. So their ex-slaves had to continue to work for them, not indeed as slaves, but as what people call free wage-labour. It was soon found that free wage-labour is more efficient and productive than slave labour. So even from the strictly economic standpoint, emancipation brought a long-term advantage to those who controlled the means of production.”

“Then what you are saying,” Vova pointed out, “seems to lead to this conclusion. The arguments in favour of the abolition of slavery are really arguments for abolishing every stage short of equality in the employer-worker relation. Emancipation changed the owner-slave relation into the master-servant relation—that is all. The change sufficed in the nineteenth century when the main problem was to expand the labour market for an expanding capitalism. But it emphatically does not suffice in the mid-twentieth century when you have to face tremendously powerful engines of destruction bent on annihilating every vestige of the democratic movement. Such a situation puts unprecedented strains on social cohesion. It makes the hope not of progress alone but of sheer survival dependent on promptitude in evolving a system of industrial democracy which gives self-employment to the workers, in the same kind of sense in which political democracy gives self-government to the citizens. One is driven to this whether one likes it or not, (a) because servant labour is much less efficient and productive than self-employed labour, and (b) because the social organism is not close-knit enough to resist the ferocity of fascism’s attack, so

long as within it a highly privileged minority confronts a large majority whose portion of available or producible goods is felt to be seriously unfair. If you can stand it, I will repeat that in the U.S.S.R. alone has such industrial democracy been achieved, not indeed completely, but certainly in part.”

“That’s all very fine and large,” said Ivor. “But I find it difficult to see how it applies to us in the colonies.”

## VI

Midhurst took him up. “It’s plain enough, surely,” he said, “that the application here is exactly the same as the application at home. Mr. Korolenko is telling us that, for *any* society which isn’t prepared to go completely fascist, social equality has become a condition of survival. Or rather the prospects of survival improve with each closer approximation to equality. And he appears to regard social equality as identical with individual freedom.”

“Yes,” said Ivor, “I see that’s the general doctrine. But how would it work out in the case of that *muntu*, for instance?” He nodded in the direction of our waiter, who was in the act of retiring to the back regions with a pile of plates. “What can social equality or self-employment mean for the likes of him? In the context of his life mustn’t they remain mere phrases?”

The waiter was a fine-looking fellow. Handsome Zulu type, well built, light-skinned, with a decorative beard and a proud carriage. But he was ludicrously clad in a white drill tunic and shorts, with a band of red braid at wrist and knee. His bare feet made a curious sibilant as he padded across the coco-nut matting. On the whole, he looked singularly unlikely to remould the cultural environment of Southern Rhodesia.

“*Woza, umfana,*” Ivor called to him in a special voice like a motor-horn which he reserved for conversations with natives.

With dignity and deference, but not obsequiously, the African turned and came towards him.

“*Kosana?*” He stood attentive, waiting for Ivor’s orders.

“What is your name?”

The question seemed somehow embarrassing. The waiter, who looked rather like the Emperor of Ethiopia appearing before the League of Nations, dropped his gaze, and shifted his weight uneasily from one leg to the other. Then in a shy, hesitating voice he said: “They call me Ugeorge, *kosana.*”

Everyone laughed, and with an expression of pain on his face the African left us. Vova moved to meet Ivor on his own ground. “Very well then,” he said, “let us take a look at Ugeorge. Has he any political responsibility?”

“The parliamentary franchise is open to him on the same terms as to me or any other adult British subject living in the colony.”

“Oh come, Mr. Jones,” Vova answered, “are you trying to sell me that ancient fiction?”

Ivor seemed to resent this charge. “What I’ve told you is perfectly true,” he said stiffly.

“There I cannot agree with you.” Vova’s eye had a combative glint. “Formally correct, yes: perfectly true, no. Your statement was, in fact, highly misleading. What is the franchise qualification in your country?”

“A property qualification of £150 and an income qualification of £100.”

“How many adult Europeans does that exclude from the voters’ roll?”

“Hardly any.”

“And how many natives does it admit to the roll?”

“Registered native voters numbered fifty-eight the last time I saw any figures.”

“The total native population is——?”

“Just under a million and a quarter.”

“Now let us assume that, say, two-thirds of these are adults. That would give an adult population of about 833,000, into which 58 goes—let me see—in round figures, 14,000 times. So what you really mean is that an adult native has one chance in 14,000 of being enrolled as a voter, while an adult European has about nine chances in ten. That you call equality of franchise.”

“I didn’t say the franchise was equal,” Ivor mildly remarked. “I said it was open to all on the same terms.”

“Like the Ritz hotel?”

“Exactly.”

“And the terms are fixed as nearly as possible at a level within the means of all Europeans and beyond those of all natives?”

“Yes.”

“Since this colour bar exists in practice, and since you are evidently much concerned to maintain it, would it not be franker to admit it in your laws?”

“Certainly it would be franker; but it would also be less politic. You know the old tag about hypocrisy being the homage that vice pays to virtue. Well, we are at pains to keep explicit anti-native discrimination off our statute book when we can. It is an unwilling concession that white Rhodesia makes to the negrophiles of Exeter Hall and Downing Street.”

“I see. Then to go back to my original question, the answer is that our friend Ugeorge exercises no effective political responsibility?”

“Yes.”

“Does he play any part in administering the tribal area where his home is?”

“It’s pretty safe to say No. Local administration is in the hands of white magistrates. Theoretically it’s possible that Ugeorge might be a member of one of the native councils which have been set up in native areas in recent years. But if he were, it’s ten to one he would not be dishwashing here. In any case, the powers of native councils are very limited and their executive authority, such as it is, is exercised by the white magistrates. The native members really only offer the magistrate occasional and rather perfunctory advice, which he is under no obligation to follow. So you can take it that our friend is not burdened with administrative responsibilities.”

“What about this hotel? Does he have any hand in running it?”

Ivor laughed and shook his head. “If you’d put that question to the proprietors, they’d have spluttered with rage for a couple of days.”

“Is he a member of a trade union?”

Ivor laughed again. “No,” he said, “you can set your mind at rest about that too. Trade unions are ‘white’ institutions.”

“Where does he spend his money?”

“He’s got damned little money to spend. But what he has he spends at the local store. He probably gets into debt with the storekeeper too.”

“Does he help to manage the store?”

“No. The store isn’t run on co-operative lines. It’s run by a licensed trader for his own profit.”

“And what sort of economic opportunities are open to our poor Ugeorge? Is he free to work his way up into skilled employment or into professional status? Can he start an hotel or a store of his own?”

“Well, not exactly. The colour bar would rule him out of all that sort of thing.”

“Can he read and write?”

“Possibly. He may have put in some time at a mission school. But, statistically speaking, that’s not very likely, and even if he had, it’s highly unlikely that he would have reached literacy.”

“Is he a member of the defence forces?”

“Certainly not. We don’t arm our natives.”

“Then what *can* he do?”

“What can he do?” Ivor repeated, as though the question took some comprehending. “Why, he can do what he’s told.”

“I thought as much,” was Vova’s comment. “His function is to do what he is told in the rigidly restricted sphere to which it has pleased you white people to call him. He lives and dies a waiter, with intervals of subsistence farming when he goes home to his tribal reserve. Neither as citizen, nor as producer, nor as consumer, has he any active responsibility for the conditions of his own life. How can you expect people so shorn of opportunity to be anything but passengers in the social process? It would take forty such men to achieve the energy-output of one fully developed human individual.

“You whites are for ever moaning about the idleness of natives. Loafers Rhodes called them, and so you call them still. Can you not see that they must loaf in the social surroundings that you provide for them? There is nothing else, within the law, that they can do. You offer them no chances, and if they make and seize a chance for themselves, you treat that as a crime. When they agitate for chances in general, you call it sedition.

“If you will not run your show by mobilising the resources of human energy, you are obliged to tap the reserves of human apathy. And that is precisely what you are doing with these black folk. Not daring to harness their enthusiasm, you take refuge in their puzzled, their reluctant acquiescence. There are more than twenty blacks, they tell me, to every white in your country. That means that the whole social machine here is running at a mere fraction of its capacity. The good life is not achieved by societies that chug along on one cylinder, nor by the efforts of a five per cent minority, however able and devoted they may be. It calls for an unflinching and strenuous endeavour by all, with no evasions and no exclusions.”

## VII

“You speak with warmth, Mr. Korolenko,” said Ivor sardonically. “Why should you mind so terribly about these things? After all, it is we who have made this bed of ours, and we who have to lie on it.”

“I mind,” said Vova, “because waste exasperates me as something evil and destructive. And your social order is the very incarnation of waste. In peace-time, of course, one may hardly notice that, because it takes a good deal of insight and imagination to see the full contrast between what you are and what you might be. Such powers belong to few. But an advantage of modern war—perhaps its only advantage—is that it displays inadequacies of social organisation so vividly that only half-wits can miss them. Now in the case of Rhodesia it is perfectly clear to me that a couple of Japanese divisions would go through the country like a knife through butter, and would mop up your million and a quarter inhabitants in a fortnight.”

“They’ve got to get here first,” said Ivor.

“Oh, quite, I do not say it is likely to happen, I am not forecasting events. I am testing your society for certain qualities of stability and resistance. What is more, I am suggesting that these



qualities are not, as it were, independent faculties, but are functions of the general creative energy available in a social system. In Rhodesia, indeed in all British Africa, and even, I should be inclined to add, in the dependent empire as a whole, such energy is low. For that reason no part of the colonial empire, if it were put to the test, would be likely to make any better showing than Malaya did.

“You see, you and I, in fact all people everywhere, are now obliged to take up some attitude or other in relation to fascism. We can go in with it, or we can oppose it. I know that within the British social order powerful influences have long sought to go in with it. They seem to be somewhat in eclipse at the moment, but they still occupy key positions in your industry, your finance, and your politics. It would need a bold man to prophesy that they will not even yet, and in spite of present appearances, get their way. However, I assume that we here are not of their party.”

He shot us a questioning glance, and we all solemnly shook our heads. “For those who reckon themselves opponents of fascism,” he went on, “there are only two possible types of successful action. One is to use the methods of fascism itself more effectively than the enemy; the other is to use different and better methods.”

“I doubt if you’ll ever get much better fascists than the Germans or the Japanese,” Midhurst’s booming voice broke in. “Anyway there’s no part of the British Empire that I fancy as a likely candidate.”

“I agree,” said Vova. “Then that leaves only the different and better methods. You are apt to call them democratic methods; we call them soviet methods. The advantage of our term is that democratic is a masked, emotional word that may mean anything to anybody, while the content of soviet is precise and verifiable. Tell me, Mr. Jones”—he turned to Ivor—“when Rhodes took over this country, he had how many natives to handle? A million?”

“Somewhere about that number,” Ivor answered.

“And how did he set about handling them?”

“In pretty much the same way as we do to-day. As soon as he had killed off Lobengula and broken the Matabele power, he divided the country into administrative districts, each in the charge of a European magistrate. In the tribal areas these magistrates dealt with the tribespeople through the chiefs. To-day in some places we have these new-fangled native councils, but their African members have only an advisory function, There has been no real shift of power from the magistrate to a genuine native authority—as there has been in Tanganyika, for instance, hasn’t there, Midhurst?”

“To some extent, yes,” replied Midhurst. “Our N.A.s *are* encouraged to do certain things off their own bat. But even with us they’re given precious little rope really.”

“Well, in Southern Rhodesia a native council hasn’t any rope at all, except in the person of its chairman, who is the European magistrate himself.”

“Then we can say, can we?” asked Vova, “that Rhodes had on his hands a million natives and a handful of white men. The latter would, he hoped, rapidly increase, by immigration as well as by the usual natural processes. The principles on which he organised the two groups into a social unit were, first, white supremacy, second, non-participation of natives in political or any other kind of responsibility, and third, territorial segregation both of white from black and, among the black, of Matabele from Mashona. Am I right?”

“Yes.”

“These principles still form the basis of Rhodesian society to-day?”

“Yes.”

“And what Rhodes meant by white supremacy is meant also by the modern generation of Europeans in Rhodesia— namely the permanent political, economic, social, and cultural inferiority of Africans?”

“You don’t put it very diplomatically. But if we’re going to call a spade a spade, I suppose that’s about what it amounts to.”

## VIII

“Now compare the problem confronting Lenin and his associates at the end of 1917. It differed vastly, of course, from Rhodes’s problem both in scale and in complexity. But in essentials it was much the same. They had to set up stable government for perhaps 140 million people in a territory bounded east and west by the Pacific and the Baltic, north by the Arctic ocean, and south by the Black sea, the Caspian, and the Pamirs, Over the whole region illiteracy amounted to about 70 per cent, and east of the Urals to practically 100 per cent. The population formed a jumble of races, religions, languages, cultural levels, habits of life, and historical traditions—all in fantastic diversity. At one end of the cultural range were the Marxists with their grasp of the historical process as a whole, their synoptic view of society and psychology, their scientific positivism that embodies, so we think, the maturity of the human spirit. At the other end were the food-gatherers and the semi-nomadic pastoralists, who had no written language and who lived, like your African tribes, in what Lenin held to be the dark night of animism and witchcraft. Between, in disorderly profusion, lay every conceivable product of a discredited feudalism and of a particularly crude and barbarous type of capitalism.”

“Not very promising material for democracy,” Midhurst suggested.

“No,” agreed Vova. “Rhodes would have said, and probably all of you would say, that it is absurd even to speak of a democratic system in which every one of such very diverse types should enjoy an effective share.”

“Some of us,” Ivor put in, “would call it absurd to speak of the system you bolsheviks actually set up as a democratic one.”

“Neatly said, Mr. Jones,” Vova answered with a tinge of sarcasm. “But perhaps prematurely too. You may wish to revise that opinion by the time you have heard me out. At any rate Lenin (and Stalin also, for he was intimately associated with the framing of this phase of bolshevik policy) applied principles directly opposite to those of Rhodes.

“The first was political activity for all. Every adult citizen regardless of sex, skin-colour, religion, or cultural condition, was to have a hand in governing the country. And this not merely by voting, but also by taking a direct share in the day- to-day administrative business. Marx hit off the essence of capitalist democracy once for all when, you remember, he said that it permits the oppressed classes every four or five years to decide which particular agents of the oppressing class should go to parliament to carry on the oppression. This, you will admit, is precisely the right which our friend Ugeorge here would enjoy, if he happened to be one of those fifty-eight privileged Africans on your electoral roll. The bolsheviks’ initial step was, therefore, to abolish the division into oppressors and oppressed, thus creating for the first time the possibility that a sovereign assembly might be genuinely representative of the nominal electors. You western Europeans consistently underrate the magnitude of this achievement and its immense significance in the development of democracy.”

“But did you really abolish that division?” asked Ivor. “Wouldn’t it be truer to say that you replaced one set of oppressors by another? Under Tsarism the workers were the underdogs and

the owners were the top-dogs. You bolsheviks just reversed the position.”

“Then where are our private owners of land and of industrial plant to-day? Where are our kulaks, our merchants, our financiers?”

“I should guess they have either fled the country, or are doing forced labour under the G.P.U. on canal construction schemes.”

“Again you are wrong, my friend. We have no landowners at all, no owners of factories, no merchants, no financiers. Such people simply do not exist among us, nor do any of our citizens occupy distinctive positions of privilege in relation to the means of production and exchange. If these-owning classes do not exist, how can they be anybody else’s underdogs?”

“Now you are just juggling with words,” Ivor protested. “Isn’t it a fact that you reduced the owners and financiers of Tsarist times to the position of deprived categories, as you called them, and stripped them not merely of their property but also of their citizen rights?”

“I do not quibble, Mr. Jones. It is a point of the first importance that the places of privilege once occupied by the people you mention are not now occupied by anybody. It is therefore misleading to suggest that the workers have simply stepped into their shoes. We have not just redivided a packet of swag; we have really effected a structural alteration of society. As for the individuals composing the various groups of ex-owners, it was always open to them to remain with us as citizens enjoying equal status with our workers and peasants. If some preferred to go abroad, that was presumably because they rated social equality as a worse evil than exile. Others stayed behind to wage war against our sovereign people and to resist the soviet laws. The law depriving them of the suffrage was the soviet government’s reply to this resistance. From the first it was regarded as a temporary expedient. As early as 1919 Lenin estimated that the deprived categories represented no more than 3 per cent of the population and he suggested that before many years had elapsed the soviet authorities would find it useful to introduce universal suffrage without any limitations; This, as you probably know, was done in the 1936 constitution. Since then no special disabilities have rested on the former anti-soviet elements.”

“And what good has the vote done them?”

“Well, as much good as it has ever done anyone else. But I must remind you again that Lenin was not content to treat the electors as a consultative body making periodical recommendations to their governors. He took the most elaborate steps to ensure that as many electors as possible should be drawn into the daily tasks of government. Perhaps most important of all, he insisted that this activity should relate not only to their lives as citizens, but also to their lives as producers and to their lives as consumers. Organised as trade unionists or collective farmers, they were to discuss and settle the conditions of their work, assuming responsibility for the machinery of production. As purchasers of goods and users of services, they were to discuss and settle the conditions of their consumption and enjoyment, assuming responsibility for the machinery of distribution. In all these ways Lenin carried out a vast extension of the idea and the methods of democracy into regions to which you of the west have not yet even dreamed of applying them.”

## IX

“Then your suggestion is”—Midhurst took up the running— “that there are two types of democracy. In one the people participate; in the other they acquiesce. And you seem to hint also that soviet democracy is of the former type, and British democracy of the latter.”

“You follow me admirably,” said Vova, “though, between friends, t should add the footnote that the first type is a real democracy and the second a sham.”

“How very civil of you.”

“Well, if you do not care for that, let me try to attract you with Lenin’s second principle in the process of decolonisation—the process by which he divested himself of empire. I mean the principle of cultural autonomy. This implies the use, in any culturally distinct area, of the vernacular as the official language. It accords an emphatic preference to natives as teachers in schools and as administrators in the government machine. Even in industrial enterprises we insist that of those employed in every grade of production and management, including the highest, at least 50 per cent must be natives. Cultural autonomy also means that governmental authority is not directed towards interference with religious services and rites,

“And finally natives are vehemently encouraged to set up their own theatres and other means to aesthetic experience, and to publish books, newspapers, and so on, in their own language; in other words, to conduct a campaign of popular enlightenment designed to make primitive minds familiar with modern knowledge and modern attitudes, and to carry through an intellectual and emotional revolution in orderly fashion, step by step with the planned economic and social revolution.”

“And after cultural autonomy comes what?”

“The principle of working-class supremacy—which means, in short, a socialised economy. The economic relations embodied in universal industrialisation *and collectivism* have a tremendous levelling effect; just as private monopoly with you has the effect of a tremendous concentration of social privilege in the hands of a few. With us economic relations unify because they equalise; with you they divide because they issue from and result in preferential advantage. Working-class supremacy in the soviet sense is therefore not a counterpart of white supremacy in the Rhodesian sense. It does not imply permanent inferiority for any group. On the contrary it implies universal equality. But during the transition to full communism the interpretation of the public good remains the prerogative of the industrial workers; or perhaps more accurately, the view officially taken of the public good is conditioned by the objective needs of the industrial workers. This is inevitable in a society which has abandoned private ownership of productive property, and which intends to create universal prosperity by means of industrial expansion.”

“I don’t know that that helps *us* much,” observed Midhurst with distaste. “What else have you got?”

“Only one thing more. The principle of national self-determination. Bolshevism has always insisted that a nation has the right to arrange its life according to its own will on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to federate with other nations; it has also the right to secede from any federation in which it may be included. As Stalin puts it, nations are sovereign and all nations are equal.”

“If we applied that principle here,” Ivor queried, “would the Matabele secede from Southern Rhodesia?”

“I do not know if they *would*,” replied Vova, “but in our view they would be entitled to—provided, of course, that their society conformed to the definition of a nation.”

“That’s just the point,” Midhurst chipped in. “What does one mean by a ‘nation’?”

“Well,” said Vova, “I doubt if you can improve on Stalin’s definition, which is this: ‘A historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture.’”

“I see,” said Ivor. “If the Matabele constitute a nation, they have a right to secede. And if they want to, I suppose that as a good bolshevik I should be obliged to support them in the attempt?”

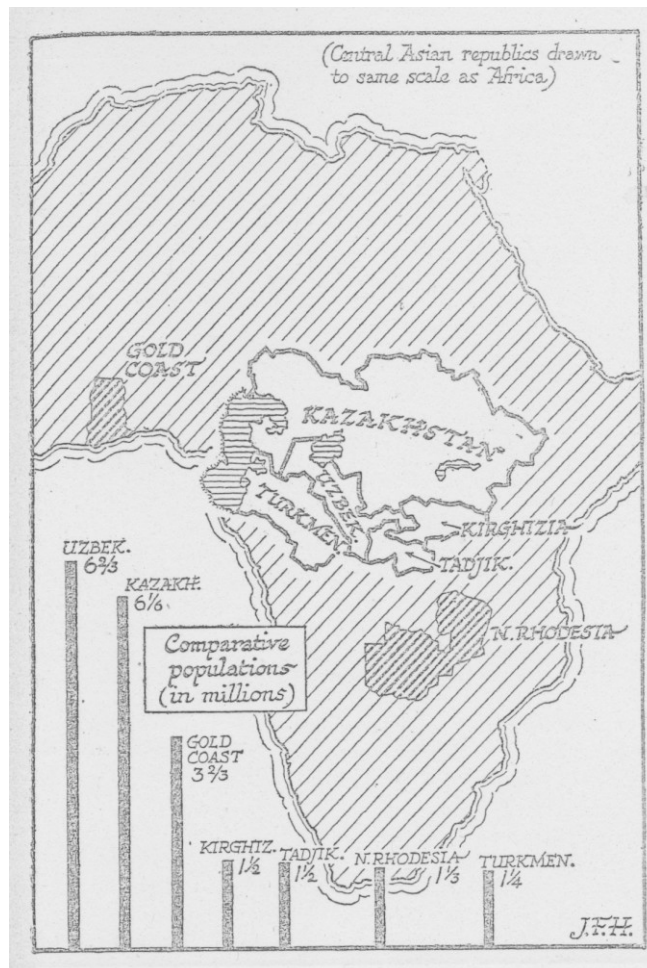
“Not necessarily,” Vova answered. “It is not always politic that every right to which one can lay claim should be exercised. The obligations of socialists, who defend the interests of the workers, are one thing. The rights of a nation, which may consist of various classes, are another. In any given case the good bolshevik, as you call him, will judge the attempt to secede according as it is calculated, or not calculated, to bring the classless society nearer. If it is, he will support it; if it is not, he will oppose it.”

Midhurst’s legal mind began to quarrel with this account, “Are you telling us,” he asked, “that it is one bolshevik principle to proclaim the right of national self-determination and another bolshevik principle to oppose the exercise of that right in particular circumstances?”

“Yes. Does that worry you?”

“Isn’t there”—Midhurst could not quite keep the sneer out of his voice—“a certain inconsistency..?”

“I do not think so,” Vova patiently replied. “Can you not imagine even a consistent Englishman favouring Indian independence without favouring the Pakistan scheme? All I mean is that nations are composite structures and seldom speak with a single united voice, until, at least, they have achieved socialism. Any claim to national independence has to be judged in the light of the class-interest of the spokesmen who put it forward. If such a claim is made in the interest of a few powerful oligarchs, it is unlikely to be advantageous for the majority of the population—in other words, for the workers and peasants who form that majority.”



“Then, whenever there is a clash between the principle of self-determination and that of working-class supremacy, the latter is to take precedence?”

“As a general rule, yes. Not necessarily always.”

“In that case why call self-determination a principle at all?”

“Because that is the right name for it. It is a principle which we have followed whenever it seemed practicable to do so. In deference to it, we have, for example, regrouped the region known in Tsarist times as Turkestan into five distinct *national* republics. Naturally we do not regard the principle as absolute, in the sense of being 100 per cent applicable at all times and in all places. There are no such absolute principles.”

“And what other considerations can affect the validity of a claim for national self-government?”

“Well, there is geography, for instance, I remember Stalin’s speech about the draft of our new constitution at the special soviet congress in November 1936. He argued then that no part of the U.S.S.R. should be given the status of a federal republic unless it bordered on some foreign country. What he meant was that such areas alone have in practice anywhere to secede to; the so-called right of secession could be no more than a scrap of paper for a national area that was an enclave entirely surrounded by U.S.S.R. territory.”

“This all sounds rather reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain’s Spanish policy.”

“Intervening by means of non-intervention? No, I intend something very different from that. The bolshevik standpoint is just that a nation is entitled to preserve its oligarchical system, if it has one, or any other of its traditional institutions which we may happen to think pernicious. And certainly no outsider has any right to break an established peace by destroying such systems or institutions by force. But that is no reason why socialists should not agitate against pernicious institutions and against inexpedient national demands. Indeed, it is their duty to agitate in these ways, and to try to influence the will of a nation so that it may order its affairs after the fashion which best suits the interests of the majority.”

“And I suppose that once again you want me to identify the majority with the working class?”

“Naturally. Industrial workers and farm workers together do comprise the greater part of all societies so far known to history, do they not? So it comes to this. National demands are not normally to be denied or forcibly resisted; but they are actively supported by communists only when they tell in favour of the plain folk, and when geographical conditions permit of their effective realisation. When this is not the case, they are combated by party persuasion, publicity, and propaganda. In this I am simply making a judgment about the relation between the principle of national self-determination and the principle of democracy, or, as I called it just now, working-class supremacy. You may think the judgment inappropriate, but you cannot, I believe, call it self-contradictory. If you find it paradoxical, I suggest that that is because, like so many middle-class Englishmen, you are unable to make due allowance for the effect of class-stratification on the social iii field. Of course, what I have been saying would scarcely apply in a war situation. In war it may be essential to over-ride the principle of self-determination in order to prevent a country from going over to the enemy. The recent joint activities of your country and mine in Persia are a case in point with which I am sure you will sympathise.”

“Well, all right,” said Midhurst a little testily, “let that pass. You’ve given us the four main anti-colonial principles of Lenin and Stalin. We should like to hear something about the forms they assume in practice. In what institutions have they been embodied?”

## X

“It would be a long job to answer that fully,” Vova replied. “Our soviet institutions are profusely multiform. But I can take, say, the village soviet, and tell you what it is and what it does. I choose the village soviet, because its place in our system corresponds with the place of the native council in Rhodesia and that of the N.A. in Tanganyika, Or would you rather—?”

“No, please do as you suggest.”

“Very well, Our village soviet is a council of deputies elected every three years by *all* residents or occupiers over eighteen years of age. So wide is the franchise that voters do not even have to be citizens of the U.S.S.R. The soviet is composed of one member for each 100 of the population, subject to a minimum of three members. A further one-third of the number so arrived at are elected at the same time as substitutes or alternates for the full members. Now, in spite of the great difference in its constitution the village soviet does, as I say, resemble your N.C.s and N.A.s in some respects. It is, for example, a primary organ of local government; its responsibility is confined to the village, and inside that area it sees to the carrying out of instructions and laws issued by other government organs superior to it, whether of district, or province, or federated republic, or the whole federal union. Like your N.A.s, it has judicial functions and powers. It is not obliged to exercise them, but it may, if it likes, set up village courts to try petty offences and civil disputes as to property or conditions of employment. In the economic sphere it is charged with keeping an eye on the collective farms, on the state manufacturing concerns and trading departments, and on the consumers’ co-operatives in its area,”

“Rather like the relation between the Chagga N.A. and the K.N.C.U.?” queried Midhurst.

“Yes, in some ways,” Vova agreed, “though I hope the consequences are seldom as unfortunate.”

“What exactly do you mean by ‘keeping an eye on’?”

“Oh,” said Vova, “I am thinking chiefly of powers of inspection and audit, and, in the case of the co-ops, of attempts to keep them up to the mark in stocking the kind of goods the villagers want.”

“And how much real initiative rests with the village soviet?”

“A good deal. In fact it is here that it differs most from the N.A. Within its own area it is omniscient, in the sense that it need not seek the approval of any higher authority before taking action, nor is its action restricted to any specific list of powers made over to it. It can, of course, issue decrees of its own which have the force of law, and it can impose penalties and fines. Moreover, its concern, as distinct from its jurisdiction, is by no means confined to the village area. It is not merely permitted but urgently requested to inform itself about and to take an active interest in the affairs of district, province, republic, Soviet Union, and international world. It often passes resolutions and recommendations on such matters and sends them forward to higher authority where, if enough of them are received to indicate a general consensus, they undoubtedly play a part in the formulation of policy.”

“Well,” Midhurst remarked, “if every village has so large a capacity as that, how do you provide for nation-wide consistency and continuity of public policy?”

“In a great variety of ways,” Vova answered, “Nothing is *ultra vires*, as an English lawyer might say, for a village soviet; but it remains, of course, a subordinate organ in the mechanism of government. In all the hierarchy of soviets from the village to the central parliament of the U.S.S.R. our principle always is that the soviets at each rung of the ladder have full authority

over all below them and are fully subject to all above them. As the village soviet stands at the lowest rung, any of its activities may be disallowed by every superior authority. What the whole thing boils down to is this—that it must not contravene or obstruct any operative policy or known decision or current directive of the soviets above it. Within these limits it is left-free to make and to correct its own mistakes, to follow the devices and desires of its own heart, and, as you English are fond of putting it, to work out its own salvation. The great thing is that it does not have to apply for anybody's sanction before making a start.”

“Yes,” said Midhurst, “but a mere power of disallowance in the hands of higher authority is surely hardly enough to keep a village soviet in line with national policy and in touch with higher standards of efficiency than its own.”

“No, indeed,” Vova replied, “Of the other means employed I should say the most important are the plan, the party, and the forces. I will not weary you with details of how our State Planning Commission operates. I know that many foreign experts who have worked in the U.S.S.R. dislike Gosplan and everything about it. This is specially so when they lack all grasp of the problems that socialism attempts to solve. Littlepage<sup>1</sup> speaks of the plan as though it were nothing but bureaucratic fussing designed to dry up all enterprise in a desert of red tape. We, on the other hand, regard it as the heart of our whole economic life. Not the least of its advantages is this, that the continuous discussion from top to bottom and bottom to top of the plan's requirements spreads throughout the population an intimate sense of association in a vast co-ordinated nationwide constructive endeavour. I have often heard your politicians cry ‘If only we could harness to the work of peaceful building the unity and intensity of effort that people are so ready to give in order to destroy their enemies in war.’ Well, the measurement and publicity which accompany the carrying out of the plan really do enable us to generate throughout the soviet world a creative enthusiasm comparable in strength and scope with the devotion with which men will defend their country against a foreign foe. Among us therefore there exists a feeling of comradeship between local soviets and the central authorities to which your N.A.s and colonial governments are strangers—a sense of being engaged, jointly and at full stretch, upon a common task.”

## XI

“Is it the communist party, do you say, that creates this sense?”

“I think, it helps to create it,” said Vova. “At any rate the party, unitary, disciplined, ubiquitous, is in a unique position to play upon it. In no corner of the country, and at no moment from one year's end to another, does it fail to guide, to stimulate, to persuade, or at need to coerce. I dare say you think of the party as a dominant clique that exists to monopolise the plums and the spoils of office; many of your countrymen take this view. If so, you merely add one more to the toll of your errors where communism is concerned. Actually the party is an organisation of special service troops trained to carry out certain particular tasks of engineering in the social field. It is a non-hereditary aristocracy of political labour, chosen purely on merit from every race and culture in the Union and including local representatives from every village as well as from every factory. It is a unifying influence of the first importance. Without it our socialist society would resemble not an army on the march, but random pedestrian traffic jostling to and fro in a street.”

“And where does the Red Army come in?”

“It comes in because service in it supports and reinforces the unifying influence of the party. Every year the new age-groups are conscripted, and every year in peace-time hundreds of thou-

---

<sup>1</sup> See J. Littlepage and D. Bess: *In Search of Soviet Gold*.



sands of men, having served for two years or more, are released to return to their homes and to civil life. During the whole of their service these men have all been through an educational course in geography and history, economics, political grammar, and music. They have also undergone a great deal of the technical or vocational training which mechanised armies have to offer in astonishing variety. Since the revolution, each village-soviet area between the Baltic and the Pacific must have received on the average nearly a hundred of these returned ex-soldiers. Young men in the early twenties, with their cultural roots still deep in village life but modernised in outlook by stricter training, wider reading, and more varied experience than their fellow-villagers, they make up a powerful missionary body, a continuing and constantly renewed leaven that transforms what Lenin used to call the idiocy of village life.”

“Rather like the influence of our native mine-boys, when they go back to their tribal areas after a spell of work underground,” suggested Ivor.

“Well,” replied Vova with hesitation, “of course the method is similar—an infiltration of modern influences into the backward countryside, a diffusion of culture with migrant villagers themselves serving as carriers. But there surely the resemblance ends. Your mine-boys carry back with them nothing— but disease, a little loose cash, and a few half-baked and entirely haphazard notions about the white man’s world, and usually about its seamiest sides—notions which no one has attempted to make plain to them and which in any case they are incapable of relating to the tribal order.”

“And what do your Red Army men take home?”

“First a clear conception of national unity, of the communist reading of life, and of the need of breaking down the barriers, and eventually removing the distinction, between town and country, industry and agriculture, workers and peasants. Secondly a great deal of factual material, carefully selected as appropriate to their needs both as soldiers and as prospective leaders of village life. Since this material is methodically presented to them by instructors trained to expound it in a simple and interesting fashion, it is usually remembered and seen to be significant. And so the young soldiers bring about genuine stirrings of new thought in the once-deaf villages of steppe and forest, and are bearers of real good tidings, which fit in intelligibly with other aspects of the cultural revolution that are crowding in from other sources, such as the school, the theatre, the film, and the whole business of the collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation.”

## XII

Vova’s discursive tendency was always a worry to Midhurst, and I could see he felt that these lateral extensions of the argument had been followed up far enough. “Could we get back for a moment to the village soviet itself?” he suggested. “I should be interested to hear how it goes into action in its executive, its administrative, capacity.”

“I am sorry,” said Vova. “I fear I have been wandering again. Let me see. Yes.... Well, the soviet, once elected, appoints its chairman and its executive committee. The duties of these officers are primarily to maintain law and order, to enforce the judgments of village courts, to protect public property, and to look after the streets, highways, sanitation, and kindred matters. The soviet can, of course, charge them with any other functions that it may wish to see undertaken on its behalf.

“The executive are chosen in rotation from a panel for a term of two or three months. The panel may include not only the members of the soviet itself but any man under fifty, and any woman under forty-five, who are on the voters’ roll. They may be paid for their term of office,

but-more often simply take time off from their normal jobs without loss of pay.

“Besides its executive committee the soviet sets up a number of other committees to take charge of the several departments of local administration, for example, agriculture, women’s work and interests, education, cultural developments, medical and health services, finance, trade and co-ops, and so on. Every effort is made to associate a large proportion of village residents with the work of these committees, and the committee members, whether they are elected members of the soviet or not, themselves do for nothing many of the jobs which in Britain or Rhodesia would be done by paid employees.”

“What sort of jobs do you mean?” asked Ivor.

“Oh, medical officer of health, sanitary inspector, school attendance officer, village policeman—things of that kind.”

“You mentioned women,” Ivor went on. “Do they take much part in these affairs?”

“The proportion of women elected to village soviets (and other kinds of soviet too, for that matter) is increasing all the time. Over the whole country the average is now more than 25 per cent. You frequently find women serving as chairmen of their soviet.”

“And how about members of the party?”

“Do you mean how many of them are on village soviets?”

“Yes.”

“The ratio is about a fifth. There are roughly a million and a quarter people elected to village soviets all over the Union, and of them some quarter of a million are members of the communist party. In the urban soviets the ratio is higher, about a half.”

“I can see,” Midhurst joined in, “that in a sense the village soviet is the basis of your democracy. I mean, in it every soviet citizen exercises direct political and administrative responsibility. What I’m not clear about is how far his rights and duties extend beyond this primary level.”

“I can illustrate that,” answered Vova, “by going back to our old friend Ugeorge. If Rhodesia were part of the U.S.S.R., Ugeorge would find that there were three levels in the soviet hierarchy above his village. There would be a Matabeleland soviet, a Rhodesian soviet, and the all-Union soviet in Moscow.”

“So he would vote not only at elections to his village soviet, but at district, republic, and all-Union elections as well?”

“Certainly. And since the all-Union soviet consists of two chambers, he would help to choose his representatives in both. In other words, at an all-Union election, besides voting for a deputy in the Soviet of the Union, he would also vote for twenty-five representatives of his republic (Rhodesia) in the Soviet of Nationalities,”

“A busy little citizen,” smiled Midhurst.

“Yes. Until a few years ago the post-primary soviets were all based on indirect election. But the 1936 constitution changed that, and now the direct method of election is followed for every grade of soviet.”

“I suppose the spread of literacy made the change possible?”

“Among other things, yes,” Vova agreed. “Well, there you are. That is how we try to combine national unity and centralised power on the one hand with universal popular participation and local autonomy and initiative on the other. No one is better aware than we Marxists how far we come short of full democracy. But social justice, individual freedom, and an equal apportionment of power and opportunity are not easy things to win, even where there are no interested obstructionists blocking the way. People have to be trained up to them; and it is this necessary training that we seek to give.

“We acknowledge our present shortfall quite frankly when we describe our system as the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rather, to use a phrase that accords better with the present relationship of class forces in the U.S.S.R., as state guidance of society by the workers and peasants. At the same time we claim to have approached a good deal closer to a true democracy than the British or the Americans, or indeed any other people that have existed in the six thousand years since the invention of civilisation broke the social unity of the clan, and split men into classes. For we have overcome the fatal and fundamental cleavage of mankind into owners and dispossessed, and the leadership of our society quite genuinely is exerted in the name and the interest of the majority—the mass of working people who keep the wheels of the social order moving. Among yourselves that material division of classes persists in very blatant forms, and the bosses of finance and industry enjoy a dictatorship as wide in authority as it is narrowly selfish in aim. This dictatorship you often like to deny, but seldom bother to disguise. Its abolition you quaintly hold to be undemocratic.”

### XIII

“I could comment extensively on that,” said Midhurst, “but on the whole I won’t—just now. I’ll start a different hare instead. The practical administrator, whenever he is told that this or that reform is needed, always flies straight to one crucial point—‘Show me how it’s to be paid for.’ Now all you’ve been telling us about the widespread activities of the village soviet sounds splendid, Mr. Korolenko. But such heroic labours cost money. Where does it come from? How does a village soviet, or any higher authority in what we would call a native area, acquire the funds needed for providing schools for the whole school-age population, for example? There must be some other source than the villagers’ pockets, mustn’t there? I know that in Tanganyika we couldn’t possibly make the native population pay for a system of universal education. There just isn’t the taxable capacity in them. I dare say Jones will confirm that that goes for Rhodesia too.”

“Perfectly true,” agreed Ivor.

“Ah, yes,” said Vova reflectively, “the money. That is important, is it not? The three Ms, men, materials, and money—they are all important. But here we strike another basic difference between us. You and I make divergent estimates of their relative importance. You begin by saying ‘What will the job cost? We can do nothing until we know we have sufficient funds to carry it out.’”

“Well, we find that if we buy a lot of things we can’t pay for, we get into trouble. Don’t you?”

“*We*,” Vova went on, ignoring the interruption, “start from the other end. Our first question is ‘Are the necessary men and materials available? If they are not, all the money in the world will not help. If they are, it merely remains to bring them together at the right place and the right time. Financial transactions are often a convenient way of doing this; but they are not the only way. If we use the financial method, and of course we normally do, there is no separate problem of raising money to pay for the job. With us the job itself raises the money. The work men do creates the wealth that money simply measures. The operative decision is the allocation of the appropriate materials and the appropriate labour to a specified task.”

“There you go again, Mr. Korolenko,” sighed Midhurst. “Another of your juggling paradoxes. You’ll never persuade me that money doesn’t count.”

“Of course it counts, Mr. Midhurst. That is why we call them counting houses. I was simply suggesting that money cannot do more than count.”

Midhurst winced. "The paradox was bad enough. Must you cap it with a pun?"

"Let me make amends by assuring you that we do make financial arrangements—quite careful ones. True, the village soviet is not limited by statute, as small local authorities often are elsewhere, either to a specified total expenditure or to specified sources of revenue. But it must prepare a budget of local receipts and expenditure in prescribed form, and submit it to the district soviet for approval and for inclusion in the district budget. So in practice higher authority can cancel specific items of expenditure which a village may propose to incur. On the other hand, if the village wishes to increase its expenditure at its own cost, it is normally free to do so by adding a surtax to one or more of the taxes raised in its area by the higher authorities. Once the budget figures are settled, they may not be departed from without express authorisation, which, I may add, is not readily forthcoming."

"Now you're talking a language I can understand," said Midhurst, much encouraged. "Tell us a little about the sources of a village soviet's income."

"Well, they differ somewhat in different republics. But in most parts of the country they would include first of all the yield from village public property and enterprises. Next, a share of the taxes and dues collected within the village area; under this heading would come the agricultural tax, which is a proportion, fixed in advance, of the normal harvest: not less than 20 per cent of the agricultural tax is assigned to the village. And finally the self-assessments, as we call them, imposed by the village soviet itself."

"I see. By the way,, what exactly did you mean when you said the village budget was *included* in the district budget?"

"Our method is this. The district authorities, having received the several budgets of the village soviets within their territory, proceed to draw up their own budget. This they do by incorporating the estimates of all the villages, and placing alongside them any revenue which they expect to receive direct from other sources, and any expenditure which they propose to incur on their own account. In the same way, the district budgets are incorporated in those of the appropriate constituent republics, having arrived via the budgets of intermediate authorities (provinces, autonomous areas, autonomous republics), wherever such intermediate authorities exist; and the republics tack on their own revenue and expenditure. In point of fact, these tackings-on, at any rate until the republic level is reached, are the less important part of the business; the budget of each superior authority consists in the main of what one may call a group-statement of the finances of all the authorities subordinate to it. I do not mean that every single item of every village budget is repeated in the district budget, but the position in each village is shown there under pretty detailed heads. The culmination of the whole process is the incorporation of the republic budgets in the unified state budget of the U.S.S.R."

"The gentle art of passing the buck," Midhurst murmured. "So in the end the Union has to hold all the babies?"

"That is perhaps even truer than you think," answered Vova. "For though, roughly speaking, local authorities keep a large part of what they collect, collections by no means cover requirements, so they all remain largely dependent on grants from above."

"What happens, then, is that local budgets normally show a deficit; the deficits are all passed on up to the all-Union treasury; which then has to produce out of a hat a big enough rabbit to restore the balance all along the line. Have I got it?"

Vova nodded. "You may think the system cumbersome," he said, "but we have found that it is in fact the simplest way of carrying out our vast equalisation scheme. By making all the localities financially dependent on the centre, we can vary the subventions made to them in such a way

that the more backward areas receive more per head of population than the more developed. We thus bring about a rapid levelling-up of standards of living throughout the whole Union. At the same time there is no intention of keeping any republic, or indeed any local authority, on too tight a financial rein. The communist party, in drafting the 1924 constitution of the U.S.S.R., stipulated that every constituent republic should be guaranteed financial and budgetary rights liberal enough to enable it to show its own administrative, cultural, and economic initiative. That policy has been consistently followed ever since.”

“Admirable,” boomed Midhurst. “But you don’t tell us where the all-balancing rabbit comes from.”

“It comes from what you would call the profits of industry. It represents the difference between the cost price and the selling price of all commodities sold. The U.S.S.R. exchequer depends on the budgets of the republics for only a small proportion of its resources. There flows into it also the net accumulation (i.e. profits less allowance for amortisation of capital and all renewals and replacements) of the state-owned mines, oilfields, farms, factories, and trading enterprises throughout the country. These revenues amount in the aggregate to many times the total receipts from taxation. In fact, they represent 85 per cent of all public revenue. A great part of these profits are indeed collected by means of what we call the turnover tax. But it is hardly a tax in your sense of the term. It is really just the outer framework of the reckoning which has to go on between the exchequer and the various state undertakings with regard to the disposal of their surplus.

“1 sec,” said Midhurst. “These profits all come in to Moscow for redistribution to the localities not on the principle of equal division, but on one which aims at bringing about regional economic equality as quickly as possible. The U.S.S.R. budget is the reservoir, and the budgets of the authorities lower in the soviet hierarchy provide the reticulation. This means, I take it, that the U.S.S.R. budget is employed to direct capital investment to those regions which for historical and cultural reasons have suffered most from shortage of it in the past?”

“Yes. But the budget is concerned only with the financial aspect, which, as I was suggesting, is really secondary. The primary task is performed not by the financial plan, which merely expresses the production plan in money terms, but by the production plan itself, which decides what resources are to be developed within each area and makes the allocations of labour and materials for the purpose.”

#### XIV

“All right: I’ll concede you that point,” Midhurst laughed. “Now let’s look ahead a bit. The time will come, won’t it, when the backward areas which are now getting preferential treatment in the matter of capital supply, will have caught up with the rest of the country? What is to happen then? I suppose you could *either* stick to the policy of financial centralisation, while substituting equal sharing for the present system of preference: for the grounds on which preference is now justified will then have lapsed, won’t they? *Or* you could put through some scheme of regional devolution of financial responsibility. That presumably would mean devolving part of the work of planning too. Have you any idea which line is to be followed?”

“We are quite clear about that,” Vova replied. “We shall widen the financial autonomy of local authorities. From the earliest days of the revolution we have sought to realise the principle, so dear to your own Colonial Office, of covering local expenditure from local resources. But to apply such a principle indiscriminately over a country so unevenly developed as the U.S.S.R. of

twenty years ago would merely have meant condemning the backward areas to permanent backwardness.”

“As the C.O. policy has in fact done?”

“You may say that, if you like. For me it is more seemly to say ‘As Tsarist policy once did.’ That is why we from the first gave the backward areas special assistance from federal funds. The basis of the five-year plans has been the even spreading of industrialisation and mechanisation, in order that all parts of the country and all racial groups in the population might enjoy equal shares in the productivity of the whole. No doubt at the outset of the planning era that involved a high degree of financial centralisation. But for a number of years now we have been moving steadily in the other direction. The tendency has become very marked for republic and local budgets to rely more and more on resources accumulated within their own borders, and less and less on grants from U.S.S.R. funds. This growing reliance is, of course, a function of the spread of heavy industry over the whole country, followed by the development of local light industries.”

“I imagine this financial decentralisation doesn’t happen in one fell swoop. What sort of stages is it to follow?”

“It is fairly clear, I think, that there will be three main stages. In the first, control of agriculture will be regionalised; in the second, that of light industry; and in the third, that of heavy industry. The first stage has already been carried a long way. Agriculture is largely regionalised both in its administrative and its financial aspects; and local authorities, as I told you, have long been accustomed to keep much of the proceeds of the agricultural tax that they collect. We have recently taken a far-reaching step in the same direction in the field of light industry. The time for dealing with heavy industry on similar lines is not yet, but there is no reason to think that it is not on the way.”

“What was the new departure in light industry?”

“At the beginning of 1941 a decree was issued abolishing the centralised planning of the production and distribution of locally produced consumption goods. From January of that year local authorities took over the whole work of planning the output of such goods, and the whole management of local industries engaged in making them. They were empowered to dispose of the entire output from local raw materials, and half the output from state-supplied ‘non-deficit’ raw materials; and they were charged with fixing prices and trade rebates and allowances. Profits earned were to remain in their hands and were to be used by them for expanding local light industry and for housing and general welfare schemes in the neighbourhood.”

“Well now, gentlemen,” Ivor interposed, “I hate to break up the party. But I’m responsible, you know, for getting you all back to town in time for seven o’clock dinner. It’s now nearly five, and we ought to be making a move.”

“I won’t hold you up more than a minute or two, Mr. Jones,” said Midhurst, “but may I shoot just one last question at Mr. Korolenko? I want to ask him if he has any data which would help us to compare British dependencies in Africa with, say, the Central Asian republics, in point of capital investment. If I remember rightly, Hailey says that investment in both Rhodesias together works out at just under £40 per head of total population. In British East Africa it averages about £8, and in British West Africa less than £5.”

“Do you know the corresponding figure for Britain itself?” Vova asked.

“About £300, I believe.”

“There you are,” was Vova’s comment. “And if you work out Rhodesian investment per head of the *white* population only, you would get a figure of over £1,500.”

“Why should one work it out in relation to the whites only?”

“Well, it is fairly clear from what Mr. Jones was telling us earlier that capital improvements in Rhodesia have been intended to benefit the white man and not the black, and that the negative side of this aim has been remarkably successful. Still, I agree that figures per head of the white population do not really show the true position, for they ignore another important group of beneficiaries, the absentee shareholders who live in London, Paris, New York, and such like places, and who are, apart from their coupon-clipping, entirely functionless so far as the Rhodesian economy is concerned.”

“I still don’t quite see the relevance of...”

“My point is simply that investment per head of population is an unsatisfactory way of comparing the effective social improvements that capital development has made in British Africa and Soviet Central Asia respectively. And the reason is that, while in the U.S.S.R. the term ‘head of population’ in this context can be given a fairly uniform meaning, with you it masks the vital difference between white heads and black heads, and ignores another equally important factor, namely the continuous rake-off taken by overseas owners of capital.

“However, there are two things we can say. One is that, though the U.S.S.R. is no doubt even now on the average more heavily capitalised west of the Urals than east of them, the range of difference is nothing like so wide as the £300-£5 that you spoke of for Britain and West Africa. And we have seen that as between Soviet Europe and Soviet Asia things are tending strongly towards equalisation. The second point is that the cost of building the original Turksib railway (exclusive, that is to say, of recent extensions) was equivalent in English money to about £17½ millions, or about £1 per head of the total population of the five Central Asian republics. From that starting-point you can perhaps build up in your mind a very rough picture of the investment position there, if you recall also the expansion of communications by road, air, and telegraph, the electrification and irrigation schemes, the cost of agricultural mechanisation, the development of coal fields such as Karaganda and of oilfields round the Caspian and in Uzbekistan, the construction of great combines such as Chirchikstroi, and all the new factories and workshops which constitute light industry.”

“Yes,” said Midhurst meditatively, as he embarked on a rapid bout of mental arithmetic. “Yes... Ah well, I suppose you’re right in saying that any comparison involving exact measurement is out of the question. And there we had better leave the subject; partly because with our present resources we can’t carry it much further, and partly because Jones is fixing us with a baleful glare. If we keep him waiting any longer, he may do something violent.”

## XV

All our rambling talk had sent the sun a long way down the sky. It now stared at us across the western end of the lake with an eye hardly less glittering than Ivor’s, and made a track of red fire on the water. The tame but sanguine ostrich kept up its food-gathering activities in the garden with a patience that I had previously observed in fishermen alone. It made me go a little Wordsworthian to see a living creature so impervious to disenchantment. Perhaps for this reason, perhaps for reasons of their own, the others too fell silent as we climbed again into the car, and drove back at high speed through the coloured air to Bulawayo.

Our spirits did not droop for long. That night we were Ivor’s guests at a house dinner in the Bulawayo club. The guest of honour was the Chief Justice of the country, who had only lately been appointed. He and Ivor were old friends, and Midhurst, as a fellow-lawyer working in colonial Africa, was also well acquainted with him. The occasion proved to be informal and highly

convivial. Some of the more enterprising spirits began singing songs with the fish, so that by the time the port came round things were going with quite a swing.

Vova, who learned more of white Rhodesia in these few hours than he could have gathered in a month of scouring the country, started rather stiffly, and took a little while to get his bearings. Indeed, to begin with I found it queer myself to watch the elders of Bulawayo going on like sub-alterns at a regimental guest-night, or undergraduates at a college smoker.

“Another example of the charming immaturity of the British Empire?” I whispered to him, as the final chord of “Land of our Fathers,” noisily rendered for Ivor’s benefit, died away.

He smiled. “Chronologically speaking it is four hundred years old. But its mental age seems steady round about twenty. Does that indicate an I.Q. of 5?”

In spite of this early aloofness, the exhilaration of the scene was soon winning its way into our systems, as the wine warmed our blood. The Chief Justice made a speech with a few mild witticisms at which we all laughed immoderately. He happened to be Scottish by derivation, and when at the climax of the evening a handsome stranger marched into the room, clad in a Black Watch kilt and white spats and playing a reel on the bagpipes, the uproar and the enthusiasm were indescribable.

Ivor, carried away, slapped Vova on the shoulder. “Eh, ye’ll no’ have hairrd the paypes played before this, Mr. Korolenko?” he asked in a bogus Glasgow accent, with free use of the glottal stop and much rolling of r’s.

“No, never.”

“Is it no’ the bonny music they make?”

Vova leaned towards him. “I can say this to you, Mr. Jones, since in ordinary life you are a Welshman. I realise now how profound was the comment of the old lady in the story.”

“What story was that?” Ivor queried a little thickly.

“It is only by the mercy of God that they do not smell as well,” Vova quoted.

Amid thunderous applause the piper bowed his way out. The diners, too, soon rose, and adjourned to the lounge. As we passed down the corridor which linked the two rooms, Vova let off an oath in Russian. With a surprising knowledge of Anglo-Indian terminology he added: “The poor bloody punkah-waliah,”

There, in a little kind of servery to our left, was a young full-blooded Matabele brave sitting on the floor, tugging rhythmically away at a piece of rope that dangled from the ceiling as though he were ringing a soundless church bell. The rope was in fact used to operate some flapping fans in the dining-room we had just left, and this burly African had no doubt been ministering to our comfort thus for the last three hours.

Vova turned to me. “Behold,” he said, with a bitterness of scorn I am unable to reproduce, “behold the symbol of white supremacy, and the divine right of the British commercial classes to enjoy a high standard of living based on cheap coloured labour, Why in God’s name cannot they put in an electric fan?”



## CHAPTER IV

### DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY'S RESERVES

#### I

The following evening Vova and I were at our next port of call—the Victoria Falls. Rather to my surprise, for I recalled how willingly he had forgone the scenic intoxicants of the Cape peninsula, Vova took to the Falls like a duck to the water. It may have been that the pattern of river and veld evoked some fond Russian associations in his mind. Certainly Father Zambesi is a noble stream. Handsome and sleek he looks as he slides between his vivid banks, the one big streak of beauty in a waste of wearisome bush that stretches from Mafeking to Broken Hill.

Vova took a special delight in the fine contours of the gorge below the Falls, in the cliff faces, the palm groves, the luxuriant jungle-effect of the rain forest, the flowers, anti the bright air studded with the flashing wings of birds, butterflies, and dragonflies; even, too, in terrene things like snakes, and little blue land-crabs, and the half-tame baboons that wander about the hotel grounds. Under these influences his mind shed care and put on happiness, simple and direct. Beneath the crust of the social investigator appeared glimpses of the poet and the friend.

I had written ahead to several people in Livingstone, making appointments for Vova to see them. One of them, Geoffrey Stewart, was actually waiting to greet us when we reached the Falls Hotel from Bulawayo at about eleven o'clock at night. So exacting is the impulse of the white man to show hospitality to travellers of his own race. Stewart was in charge of an organisation known as the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, which studies the history, customs, and culture of the peoples of British Central Africa. He had with him another intelligent young man who was stationed in that part of Rhodesia as a Government Labour Officer. But fourteen hours in the train had left me so weary, languid, sore-distressed, and dirty that my wants were focused on the narrow points of drink, bath, and bed. As Stewart and his companion seemed to stand between me and at least the two last, I could not help feeling that bed would have been a better place for them too. Beneath the usual outward civilities I was ungratefully muttering to myself:

In the late evening they are out of place,  
And infinitely irrelevant at dawn.

At what inconvenience to themselves they had put in this polite appearance I neither knew nor cared.

The situation affected Vova in a different and more gracious way. He was charmed that anyone should have the kindness to motor five or six miles at such a time, for the sake of welcoming a couple of unknown strangers to Northern Rhodesia. His release from the train put him in tearing spirits, and, ordering sandwiches and beer, he insisted on sitting down, all unwashed from the journey, to engage our new acquaintances in four hours' animated conversation. When at last his fuel began to run low and we were able to retire for the brief remainder of the night, he had a clear picture in his mind of native life and labour in Barotseland and the country between Livingstone and the Kafue river. I consoled myself for my lost sleep with the reflection that he obviously found a congenial spirit in Stewart, who therefore promised well as a substitute for Midhurst in Vova's somewhat argumentative life. Midhurst we were to see no more, as from Bulawayo he had made tracks for Beira, where he hoped to pick up a boat for Dar-es-salaam. So it struck me as a useful offer of Stewart's to come with us to Broken Hill and show us round there, when we had had enough of Livingstone.

In the few days we were at the Falls Vova spent every spare hour by the water's edge. An ancient would have said that the river-god held him in thrall. He seemed to be seized, like a boy, with a passion to discover everything that went on beside or beneath the Zambesi. I remember the excited interest with which he witnessed an encounter between a long green snake and a chameleon. He spoke of it for days afterwards as a major event, and it evidently held some special significance for him, though I could not guess what.

We had spent a morning of amazing peace on a rock by what is locally known as the Boiling Pot—a great vortex in the rapids at the base of the cataract. On the way back to lunch at the hotel we were scrambling up the cliff of the gorge through a palm grove, when we came upon the two creatures in the middle of the stony track. The snake darted its head at the chameleon twice in quick succession, then withdrew a little and shot out a black forked tongue, as though licking its chops. The chameleon showed no presence of mind, and made no active response; he just stood, I suppose in the paralysis of fear, taking what was coining to him. We could not, of course, tell whether he had already been wounded before our arrival on the scene.

At any rate, his flanks were of an orange colour when we first saw him, the legs and the ridge of the back a greyish purple. Vova brought his camera stealthily up to within some six feet of the battle in the hope of taking a snapshot, but the snake slid off and swarmed up a tree when it caught sight of him. The chameleon started walking groggily away, but after a few yards stopped, trembling and puffing himself out with enormous slow breaths. The orange tint left him, and he quickly became grey all over. After a couple of minutes he developed a list to port, sinking fast; in three minutes more, he fell over on his side and lay still in a patch of fierce sunlight that streamed down in a funnel through a gap in the trees. Up at the hotel they told us, I don't know how accurately, that the snake would come back and eat the corpse.

The Zambesi country is hot. It seemed impossible that day to take a dozen steps without shedding a pint of rascal sweat. Vova and I were not in training for this kind of thing, and our morning's expedition had run off all our surplus energy. The afternoon, we felt, called for rest and reflection, so we repaired to the open-air swimming-bath in the hotel grounds, and lay dozing or chatting on the close-cropped lawn that surrounded it. Every half-hour or so we bestirred ourselves enough to swim across the bath before resuming our rest and reflection on the other side.

## II

Here I lay half asleep and at peace with all the world, when Vova's disturbing voice broke in. "You know, John," he said, "I am quite worried about this funny old empire of yours. It looks pretty dead to me."

"Well, what are you grumbling at?" I laughed. "Are you short of sprigs of yew to strew on the hearse? A sound anti-imperialist ought to cry 'Good riddance,' and rejoice."

"Ah, you do not understand. It is true that in future the sun will have less difficulty in setting on the British Empire than it has had in the past. For my part I welcome that. Easing the strain on the sun may mean that some who have been clamouring for a place in it, will get their needs attended to. For instance, if India and China move out of the shade, the total of human happiness will be multiplied several times over. But that is not what I meant. I meant that in these African colonies your power cable is cut in several places. The juice just does not get through. The thing is dead."

"When you put your mind to it, Vova dear, you simply romp home with every prize for ob-

security that was ever offered.”

“You yourself, John, are not much below championship class when it comes to slowness in the uptake. I see I shall have to help you over the stile by telling you a story.”

I gave a defensive grunt, but Vova swept forward.

“It is the story of Bobokalan. Thinking of poor Ugeorge has put me in mind of it. What horrifies me in Ugeorge’s case is not so much that he should be working at a level of virtual serfdom in an hotel run by Europeans solely for Europeans. That no doubt is bad enough, from a democratic standpoint. But hotel waiters render a valuable service to users of hotels, and under proper conditions their work is esteemed and rewarded accordingly. It is not inherently unworthy of an adult personality and a competent citizen. No, the really horrifying thing about Ugeorge is that he is socially prohibited from ever rising above the lowest rung of the ladder in the catering industry (or any other industry, for that matter), and that his case is typical in the sense that similar prohibitions apply to all his compatriots in Southern Africa.

“Now, old Bobokalan was a share-cropper of Khodjent in the Tadjik country. He worked some irrigated cotton land belonging to one of the local Beys, for whom, as custom required, he toiled without pay until his father’s debts were cleared. When at last this burden was discharged, Bobokalan was a middle-aged man of forty-four. At forty-five he married, borrowing the bride-price from the same Bey. In return for this accommodation he pledged a further twenty years of unpaid labour. At fifty-five he died, without ever having been quit of debt for as much as twelve months on end. In all his two score years and fifteen he went barefoot, and he enjoyed perhaps a few dozen square meals. In the ten years of his married life, however, he managed to beget four sons.

“These sons I met when I first went to Tadjikstan in 1926, the eldest being then twenty-five and the youngest about seventeen. Spasmodic civil war had been going on round them for several years, but they were all still working for various. Beys. The eldest, like his father before him, was working off the paternal debts with his own unpaid labour. The other three sweated from dawn to dusk in the cotton fields for a few roubles a month.

“Ten years later I paid a second visit to Khodjent, which by this time had been re-christened Leninabad, and saw these four young men again. What do you think had happened to them? The first was water-engineer to a group of millionaire collective farms, an important post in a part of the world where most crops are grown under irrigation.<sup>1</sup> The second was chairman of a big collective farm called the ‘Comintern.’ The third was vice-chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Tadjik Soviet Socialist Republic—Deputy Prime Minister of the country at the age of thirty. And the fourth was leader of the foremost field team of the ‘Comintern’ collective. This farm started life in 1931 by earning a net income of less than 100,000 roubles; the corresponding figure for the 1936 harvest was over 31 millions.”

“And what had become of the Bey?” I asked.

Vova seemed to think this was rather a trivial inquiry. “Oh” he said, “like most of his kidney, he had bolted in order to carry on the anti-soviet offensive from the relative safety of Afghanistan and Persia.”

He dismissed the Bey with a shrug, and returned to his theme “They were a good lot of fellows, those Comintern Farmers/” he went on in a tone of happy reminiscence. “I spent a day with them, and they took me on a grand tour of the whole estate. For transport we used the farm motor truck of which everybody was inordinately proud because it had been presented by the Moscow Commissariat of Agriculture for the best all-round farming achievement in northern Tadjikstan. I

---

<sup>1</sup> A millionaire farm is one whose net income exceeds a million roubles a year.

remember how in the cool of the evening we sat in a band-carved arbour in the flower garden, enjoying the freshness of the pond and discussing all we had seen and done—the new dwelling houses, the cleanly kept barns, the hundreds of cows, calves, sheep, and lambs which the members of the collective had bought out of their earnings as their personal property, the lessons we had listened to in the school, the little farm hospital with its four beds, the power house, the telephone exchange, the radio centre, and the steam mill. And of course the new *chaikhana*; it was still only half built, but they already felt proud and excited about it.”

“What on earth is a *chaikhana*?”

“Well, the word means tea-house literally. I suppose you would translate it by club or community centre. It is the focus of the social and cultural life of the collective.”

### III

“What other contrasts with Rhodesia stick in your mind, Vova?”

“I think chiefly of the incredible difference of atmosphere, of mental climate. Everywhere in Tadjikistan there are schools—not only the usual seven-year schools for children, but literacy schools for adults, professional schools, technical schools, agricultural schools, state tractor schools (these, by the way, were just announcing in 1936 the enrolment of *women* in the courses for tractor drivers, mechanics, and chauffeurs). Everyone is crazy to acquire new skills, to realise hitherto undeveloped powers. Just about a quarter of the whole population is on the roll of some educational institution or other. As much as five years before the war started, there were in this ‘backward’ area scores of trained parachute jumpers, and hundreds of glider pilots, among what you would call the natives. The Tadjik schools and institutes, the central air club, the children’s technological centre, are turning the new generation into anything and everything from machine designers to professional musicians. I was introduced to a girl of fifteen who had built a model radio-controlled armoured car.”

“Do you really feel that is a suitable preoccupation for the adolescent female?”

“Why not? Are not armoured cars also a part of life and reality?”

“Some of us think of them rather as symbols of death and illusion.”

“Even when civilisation can be preserved by their means alone? However, I was using that case, not to illustrate soviet educational values, but merely to show how fully our native peoples share in the work of the vanguard. They are not, like yours in the British Empire, forgotten, ignored, or consigned to a sub-adult level.”

“Well, it all sounds very noble, as you put it, Vova— almost inhumanly so. Your account would have a more lifelike ring if you included some stories about things going wrong sometimes. There must be a seamy side, I imagine, to all this rapid growth. Some waste products? Some scallywags? Even party members don’t always behave like Marxist plaster-saints? Or do they?”

“Oh, John, how hard it is to keep the right balance. Our blunders and follies and failures are always to the fore in my own mind, and the last thing I want to do is to conceal them from you, or to speak as if they do not exist. And I do not think you can really accuse me of representing our revolution as a clockwork affair in which every piece slides smoothly into position when the Marxist button is pressed. All the same, you are right in suggesting that one tends to overdo the light and underdo the shade. I suppose that is because when we talk like this one has to leave out something, and what gets left out is what our multifarious enemies are for ever overemphasising. Besides, our successes truly are much more significant than our failures.”

“I’m not going to let you off with generalities like that. You’ve been telling me some of the best things that can be said about Tadjikstan. Now I want to hear some of the worst, so as to bring the whole into perspective.”

“Very well, then. Imagine yourself in Stalinabad, say a dozen years ago, in 1930. In many ways the scene resembles one of those mushroom mining towns that used to spring up overnight in goldrush days in America. The nearest African parallels would be Kimberley in the ‘seventies or Johannesburg in the early ‘nineties. Fantastic defects of organisation, tremendous shortage of skilled labour, everyone in a mad feverish hurry. Swarms of foreigners all over the place, many of them rogues—and by foreigners I mean non-Tadjiks from distant parts of the USSR. Every year since 1925 the population has doubled. The little market village of Tsarist times, which remained a market village without a single European building until 1925, has been laid out anew as a large modern town; but under the young plane trees of the still unbuilt boulevards, thousands of people camp out in ramshackle shelters tacked together out of packing-cases and kerosene tins. The usual troubles of sanitation and water supply; typhus and diphtheria much in evidence; high death-rate; standards of seamliness and promptitude in the disposal of the dead appreciably below those of Kensal Green.

“Human life goes on at two levels, one dominated by the legacy of the past, the other reaching out with energy and passion to a new order still just beyond grasp, but already well within view. Evidence of the first is the leper-settlement not yet moved from the outskirts; the pervasive effects of alcohol and syphilis; the frequent murders, by Moslem enthusiasts, of women who throw off the veil and tear down the curtain behind which tradition seeks to segregate them from life; the refusal of many among the older men to have any dealings whatever with unbelievers; and so on. That was 1930.”

“Do you know, Vova, that helps quite a lot. I get the feel of Tadjik life more intimately now you tell me something about the kind of soil out of which the millionaire farms, the glider pilots, and the parachute jumpers have grown. Against the background of squalor, drink, disease, and the bigotry of Islam, I grasp more sharply what Pilniak means in that book you lent me, when he says that, of all the places he had seen or known or heard of, the Stalinabad of 1930 held out most hope to the builders of new worlds. I sense the drive, the initiative, the will to work of the pioneers, the proletarian inventors, who brought your soviet Atlantis into being there. I can share in a way their desperation, their haste, their sacrifice, their hope, and their triumph.”

#### IV

“Yes,” he said, “for those who have eyes to see it displays the sacrament of the revolution in all its miraculous power.

“As though our very blood long breathless lain  
Had tasted of the breath of God again.”

That is why I called Central Asia alive and Southern Africa dead. I think you see well enough the difference between them, John.”

“At least I understand what you take to be the difference, Vova.”

“Well—forgive me if I tread on delicate ground here—do you and your colleagues in the Colonial Office never try to account for it, or to discover how far its explanation may have relevance to your own colonial arrangements?”

“What a question to ask—after all I’ve told you about the Colonial Office too! My colleagues have plenty of underlying emotional grounds for shutting out any form of soviet experience,

from their field of vision. Even if they hadn't, their minds are not adapted to entertaining notions half as radical as those you are suggesting. Obviously they are aware that all is not well in British colonies; within their accustomed range of ideas they are extremely intelligent men. But if you set up an emotional resistance in them, and then try dragging them by main force outside that accustomed range, they merely get fussed and startled and angry, and their mental age drops with a bump to the level of the junior school. Hence when they begin hunting for remedies for colonial troubles, their thoughts naturally proceed along such lines as the improvement of N.A.s and of the administrative and technical services in the colonies, possibly the gradual admission of native personnel to those services, the protection of native labour, the formation of tame trade unions, the expansion of health services and education, and matters of that kind. But you are telling me things that would make their hair stand on end. What was that metaphor you used just now? Something to do with electricity?"

"The power cable?"

"That's it. You said that in the British colonies our power cable was cut. Which seems to mean that, even if we had a colonial policy, we have no machinery in working order to carry it out. And that in turn involves a wholesale condemnation of our entire structure of colonial government. Well, you can't expect civil servants to listen attentively to such talk as that. Their primary job is to operate such machinery as their bosses, the politicians, provide."

"John, I will not allow you to get away with that last remark. The idea that permanent officials are the meek 'executants of a policy imposed on them from without by the political heads is surely a very ancient fallacy. You know as well as I do that officials are often in a better position than Cabinet ministers to initiate policy, and that if you and your colleagues really wanted to overhaul the machinery by which the colonies are run, quite effective methods are open to you of browbeating the politicians into giving you what you want."

This was one of the few topics on which my knowledge was indeed more adequate than Vova's. I made no reply, but gave him what I hoped was an enigmatic smile.

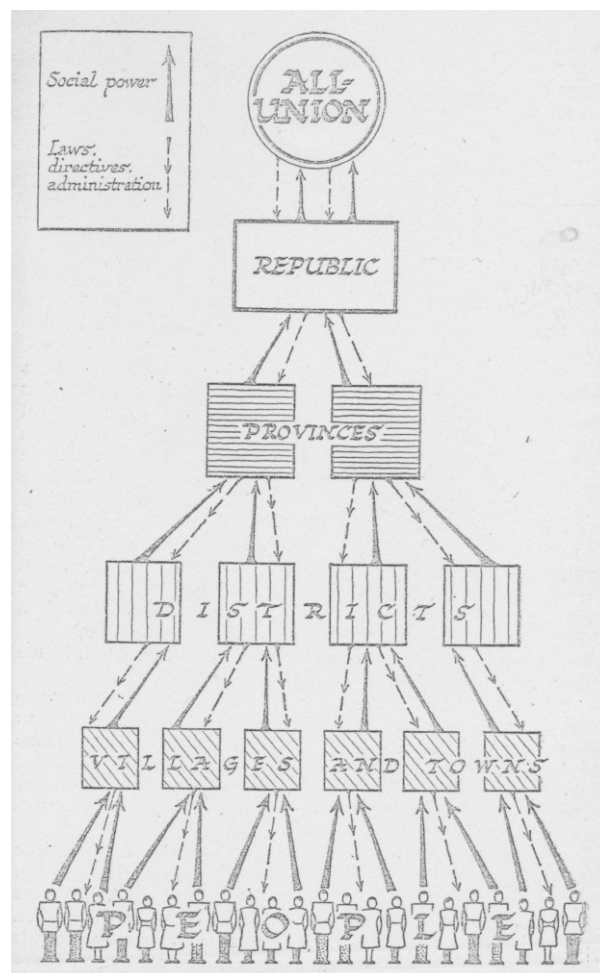
"No," he went on, "you must not be evasive here. It is perhaps the most crucial point of all. I think it was the Webbs who first likened our soviet system of democratic centralism to the generation and distribution of electric power. We generate the social power needed for government in the numberless meetings of electors, producers, consumers, and party members. These meetings, which are respectively the primary organs of political democracy, of the trade union movement, of the co-operative movement, and of the profession of leadership, together form the foundation of our constitutional structure. In them the turbines of discussion and popular need create power which is transmitted to the higher organs, and which drives, as it passes, the machinery of government in town and village, and at the levels of district, province, and republic. Here is the first feature, the prime characteristic, of soviet democracy—an upward stream of power continuously generated by mass discussion in multiform mass organisation. All grown men and women take part in the discussion and contribute to the stream in three distinct capacities, which together cover all the basic aspects of man's associated life."

"Is this your familiar trinity of citizen, producer, and consumer once again?" I asked.

"It is," Vova answered; "and I recur to it in order to emphasise anew the fundamental inadequacy in modern conditions of any supposedly democratic system that concerns itself with political representation alone. And do not forget that our trinity is, more strictly, a quaternity, for the communist party and the youth movement it directs are also democratically organised, so that the profession of leadership properly forms a fourth strand in our power cable."

“I see. Well, go on about the upward stream.”

“The next point about the upward stream is that when it reaches the level of the Supreme Soviet, it becomes converted there into a downward stream – a stream of laws, directives, and administrative orders binding on all grades of the hierarchy below. Nothing unusual, of course, in the radiation of orders outwards from the centre; there are few modern groupings in which that does not happen. The distinctive thing about our system is that the upward flow of power and the downward flow of authority are in reciprocal interaction all the time, and intimately condition each other’s character. The power-circuit being complete, both are indeed no more than separately analysable aspects of a single process; and each level in the hierarchy always has direct organic links with those above and those below it.”



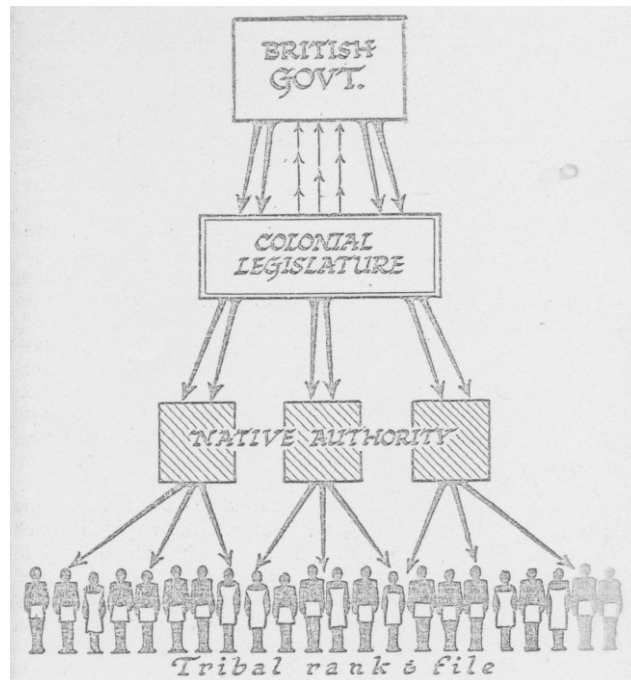
THE POWER CABLE: DEMOCRACY

“Aren’t you rather exaggerating the difference of principle between your arrangements and ours? After all, our N.A.s stand in a simple and direct relation with the district officer, and through him with the colonial government. The colonial government in turn is directly linked with the Colonial Office in London, and the Colonial Office is organically related to Parliament and the electorate.”

“My poor John, you miss an incredible number of points when you say that. You seem to think you have shown that the native population in a British dependency forms part of the same power-circuit as the Colonial Office. Actually you have merely established that, by a British legal fiction, the ultimate rulers of a dependency are the British electorate (who, as it happens, do not in any degree whatever share their responsibility with native peoples). My whole argument is, to quote *The Times* once more, that your system of colonial rule has no roots in the life of the native rank and file; that the resources of social energy available to you for the purpose either of construction or defence are consequently small; and that, such as they are, they move in a downward authoritarian flow from the top. You have no flow of power at all in the reverse direction, from the bottom upwards.”

“I know,” I said; “I’ve heard all that, if you’ll allow me to say so, almost *ad nauseam*. You don’t seem to realise that our N.A.s are based expressly on the tribal structure, and that the tribe is the way in which the African rank and file are organised. Tribal life *is* the life of the people, and the N.A.s have their roots in it. How could we have got closer to the people than that?”

“Again, John, I think you misread the real situation. The N.A.s, so far from linking British authority organically with the African people, in fact serve to insulate it from them. And the reason is that the N.A.s are in the main bureaucratic bodies. Oh, I know that in some places the people have certain rights against them; I do not forget what Midhurst told us on board ship about Donald Cameron and his efforts to keep alive any traditional democratic safeguards. But broadly speaking N.A.s are neither elective nor in any other sense popular in character; they are not responsible to the people, or even responsive to movements of opinion among the people. From Midhurst’s account of the Chagga business we may surely conclude that as long as an N.A. satisfies the colonial government, it remains secure from popular disapproval. To the soviet observer it is as plain as a pikestaff that the last quarter to which the British look for the driving power required for managing African affairs is the social energy of the African people. If this were not true, you would never have ignored the women as you have, or picked on an obviously moribund institution like the tribe as the basis of local administration.”



THE POWER CABLE: BUREAUCRACY



“I don’t quite follow that.”

“Well, as long ago as the ‘sixties of last century Marx was telling us that no democratic movement could succeed which did not from the start include the emancipation of women. We have never forgotten that; and in remaking our society for its contest with capitalism and fascism, we have sought to profit by the earlier mistakes of the Creator, and have given the first and best of our attention, not to Adam but to Eve. Your thrifty Victorians used to say that if you look after the pence, the pounds will look after themselves. In the same sort of way, from the standpoint of social vitality, we argue that if you provide for the full health and development of women and their children, nothing much can go wrong with your men. The free and equal status of our women has more than doubled our reserves of social energy. But you have simply left the women of Africa to stew in their old tribal juice. A little laundry-work and a good deal of prostitution and illicit beer-brewing. Would it be fair to say that these are the only new openings that fifty years of British rule have introduced?”

“I should call that a wild generalisation.”

“What beautiful officialese you speak, John. Of course my remark oversimplifies, I agree. But you know damned well that it is on the target all right. British achievements in Africa in the way of maternity and child welfare work, and in the education of girls, are meagre in the extreme; to say nothing of the political and economic emancipation of women, for with that you have not even made a start.”

## VI

He paused, apparently to see if I was going to comment on this. But I held my tongue, and he rushed on: “Then, on top of the woman question, there is the great tribal mystery. With one hand you rest the business end of your administrative machine on the tribe: with the other, you set going an industrial revolution which, having rendered tribal organisation irrelevant to the conditions of production, is rapidly pulling it to bits. This is a variant of the blunder committed by the architects of the Versailles peace in 1919 and the years that followed. The economic anarchy in which they left Europe was fatal to the political institutions they set up. To-day in Africa your economic conception and your administrative conception negate each other with the same astonishing precision. What is the advantage of this? Penelope, when she followed a similar policy of unpicking by night the needlework she had done during the day, was playing for time and holding at arm’s length a pack of unwelcome suitors. In modelling your action on hers, are you also moved by her reasons—the suitors in your case being those educated and detribalised Africans who are already so considerately offering to relieve you of your white man’s burden.”

“Too subtle, Vova. In accounting for British behaviour the simplest explanation is usually the best; and it is always safe to assume that we have no long-term policy at all. In this case I suggest that our rulers just don’t agree with you that tribal life and industrialisation are incompatible.”

“Then they must be pretty weak at weighing evidence and estimating trends. You said just now that tribal life is the life of the people. That was possibly true once. But it has only a slight admixture of truth now, and there is every ground for supposing that it will become progressively less true in future. I am sure you will admit that even to-day many Africans live quite outside the tribal order, and that a much larger group has only intermittent contact with it. With every growth of industrial development both groups increase, alike in numbers and in proportion to the whole native population.”

“Yes, there’s no disputing that,” I said.

“Well, when you relate that tendency to the condition of the general world economy, it can surely have only one conclusion. However, to return to the main issue. I contend that your power-cable, as I called it, is severed in two places at least, one below the N.A. and one above it. In the soviet system the N.A. would be directly chosen by universal suffrage of the people living in the area; and the colonial legislature would be directly representative either of the N.A.s themselves or of the adult population as a whole. The power-circuit, up to the level of the colonial government, would therefore be unbroken. Your system is very different. On the one hand, the composition of the colonial legislature is altogether unconnected either with the N.A.s or with the native population in general and, on the other, the N.A.s are themselves unrepresentative of the tribal rank and file. In other words, your official influence does not attempt to reach below the N.A. and make direct contact with the African people. The colonial government and its agents nowhere stand in organic relation with them. The men who have direct relations with rank-and-file Africans are mine-managers, traders, settlers, and missionaries—all of them normally either indifferent to official policy, or opposed to it, or scrambling and log-rolling to control it in their sectional interest. The upshot is that the native people are passengers in the social process that carries them along, instead of being actors who propel and direct it, who give themselves to it, fulfilling themselves in it, and drawing strength from it. Government to them is an external force, alien and aloof, to which the appropriate reaction may be submission, protest, evasion, or resistance, according to circumstances. It is never felt to be a part of themselves, giving body to their self-regarding impulses, stimulating the free play of their energies. It is an inhibiting influence...

“All right, all right, Vova. Ease up a minute, or you’ll burst your boiler. All I can say in answer to the torrent of your indictment is ‘So what?’ Assume everything you have said to be true. Why can’t we still go our different ways, you yours and we ours? You remember Ivor asking why you mind so much about these things. I’m almost driven to repeat the question. But, quite seriously, is it an aesthetic preference for socialism that impels you to these outbursts?”

## VII

“Why do I mind these things?” he echoed. “I suppose that is a polite way of saying Why do I *not* mind my own business? I assure you, John, it is care for my own business that makes me mind about the condition of the native people in British Africa. Socialism, which is merely a synonym for genuine democracy, is not an aesthetic preference of mine or anyone else’s; it is a practical necessity if fascism is to be beaten. That is my entire case. I am interested in African affairs because I see that the democratic cause is only too likely to go under unless we muster, mobilise, and deploy the so-called subject peoples of the world under its flag. This is a long-term job. You do not imagine that the defeat of the Nazis will mean the end of fascism, do you? The fascists of the United States and the British Commonwealth of Nations will remain, strongly entrenched and strongly armed, very cunning and very unscrupulous, made the more formidable by the lessons they will have learned from the rise and fall of Hitler, their true nature the more effectively disguised because they will be able to pose as the St. Georges who slew the Nazi dragon. It is for the struggle against them that we need to be planning now. In British Africa we have 50 million potential allies. We dare not dispense with their help,”

“But unfortunately Africa is still run by non-socialist Britons.”

“And is therefore no concern of a communist from the land of the soviets? No, John, the situation is too desperate for that old gag to wash. I appeal over the head of your narrow legalism

to the requirements of the world. You do the same when you mean business. If critics point out, as sometimes happens, that your colonial trusteeship might be more equitably founded if it were not self-conferred, your stock answer is that the backwardness of Africans cannot be allowed to cut off the rest of the world from Africa's natural resources. Hence you speak of your dual mandate. How does Lugard put it? The tropics are the heritage of mankind, I think he says, and the races which inhabit them have no right to deny their bounties to those who need them. The controlling powers in the tropics have two kinds of responsibility: they are trustees to civilisation for the adequate development of tropical resources, and trustees for the welfare of the native races living in the tropics. Well, two can play at that dual mandate game. I say that British political illiteracy cannot be allowed to obstruct the advance of the democratic movement in Africa, or anywhere else for that matter."

"Good, Vova. Very enterprising of you. So democracy joins peace and freedom in the ranks of the old indivisibles. By the way, why do you call the British politically illiterate?"

"Because all your ideas about the nature of society are hopelessly antiquated and unscientific."

"By Jove, that's just too bad," I said. "Tell me more."

"Well, in the first place your notion of society is derived from a theory of personality. This is the worst possible starting-point, because it turns the whole problem upside down."

"You mean that personality cannot really be accounted for at all, except in terms of a theory of society?"

"Exactly. And the ironic thing is that your view of personality, which insists so dogmatically on human freedom, the infinite value of the individual, and all the rest of it, involves a purely mechanistic view of society. You think of a social order as a piece of machinery which works well or ill according to the quality of the beliefs and desires of the individual citizens. Wars, for example, come because men have forgotten God."

"That's not my opinion."

"Not your personal opinion, perhaps. But is it not characteristic of your society, widely held and authoritatively proclaimed in church and state? It underlies that quaintest of all features in your social anthropology, the national day of prayer. I really think that if there is any single point on which Britons everywhere can be said to agree, it is just this. That the quality and design of social machinery does not greatly matter, provided you have decent chaps to work it; and if you have not got the decent chaps, the best machinery in the world will be of little avail. Hence your inveterate tendency to conceive of every movement of reform as a process of education—of educating people to be decent in this way or that."

"Surely it's quite a sensible approach,"

"No. Education can be immensely valuable in consolidating social change, but it has hardly any power to initiate it."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because the limits within which an educational system can run counter to prevailing orthodoxies are extremely narrow. The only exceptions relate to minorities so obviously ineffective that no one bothers to suppress them. You see, your view, by which I mean the typically British view, this mechanist and atomist view that we are talking about—it rests on the assumption that the action of the whole is to be explained by the working of the parts, and that the action of the whole can therefore be changed only through changes in the working of the parts. My contention is that this misconceives the entire relation between society and individual. That relation is not one of dependence of whole on parts. To call it mutual interdependence between parts and whole

would be nearer the mark, but it is probably better not to talk of whole and parts at all.”

“Throw me a lifebelt, Vova dear. I’m out of my depth, and I can’t swim in this sort of stuff.”

“Well, what I am trying to say is that a competent science of society has to begin by laying about it pretty ruthlessly with Occam’s razor, and discarding a number of unnecessary hypotheses about the human individual which have only survived in our thinking by sheer inertia. In fact, they only found a place there in the first instance because religion once thought them useful for justifying God’s ways to man. But it is a mistake to suppose that ideas which long ago served that purpose of religion’s are also valid for observational science.”

“Well, use old Occam’s razor. When you’ve slashed around with it to your heart’s content, how much is left standing?”

## VIII

“About this much. At any given moment a human individual is moving towards an assignable goal at an assignable speed. Human behaviour may be defined as just such movement. What the razor has chopped away is the postulate that an individual can determine, entirely for himself and as it were out of his own private resources, either the goal he seeks or the energy with which he seeks it. The individual no longer appears as a self-substantial entity which combines with other such entities to build up a whole called society; nor does social organisation present itself as something, superimposed, in a more or less arbitrary fashion, on private life.”

“But wait a moment. If social theory doesn’t start with the individual and the associations between individuals, where does it start? Are you going to tell me it starts with the group— that the group is prior to the individual, and that the individual is a differentiation within the group?”

“You are getting much warmer now, John. Human personality is surely not some kind of immortal essence that travels from the eternity before birth, through earthly life, and out into the eternity after death, serenely preserving a recognisable identity through all orders of existence. Personality is something that is constructed out of the social continuum by a process of individuation, rather as a ripple arises on the surface of a pond.”

“Then you do argue that the group is the basic conception of social science?”

“Not quite. I should rather say that the basic conception is the social field. This serves for social science much the same purpose as the gravitational field serves for physics. The social order or situation is treated as a psychological field of force, and the individual is seen as a singularity, a place of singular character, within that field. Call him a point-region, if you like. In the social field behaviour follows lines of field force whose direction and magnitude vary with variations in the structure of the field. Such behaviour, like any movement in modern kinetics, is thus defined by a vector— a directed magnitude—which represents the potential at a given point-instant and which is determined by the field structure. An electric charge derives its potential from an electrical system or field in which there are necessarily other potentials. So too with human behaviour; force and direction are functionally related to the social setting. The value of a vector depends both on its position in the field, and on the field’s general character.”

“But if you reduce human beings to point-regions and directed magnitudes, what becomes of free will, purpose, value, and all that sort of thing?”

“Really, John, some of your red herrings are superbly ancient and fishlike. The problem of free will, if there is such a problem, has no bearing whatever on what I am talking about. Your five o’clock fairies from city offices who travel back to their dormitory suburbs at the end of the day’s work are quite free to stay in town and go to the flicks, if they like. Every evening no doubt

some of them do so. But that does not mean that traffic-pressure on the passenger transport services fluctuates incalculably from day to day. Individual caprice co-exists with a constant pattern of traffic-pressure set up by the group. Again, in the U.S.S.R. Gosplan estimates the total increase in population, and allows statistically for changes in the location of the population, without having to tell every individual when he shall marry or where he shall live or what job he shall do. State planning is quite compatible with personal freedom of choice as regards domicile, vocation, and sex activity. Anyone who supposes that the Plan requires the regimentation of individuals fails to distinguish between an atomic isolate and a statistical isolate.”

“Well, have it your own way, Vova. Let’s assume that your infallibility is positively papal. But, even so, what does all this mean? My mind’s beginning to flounder again.”

“It means that the goals towards which a person strives, his motives and attitudes, and therefore his overt behaviour, are largely determined by the structure of the social field. This being so, the working of a society cannot be explained merely in terms of the working of the individuals who, as we uncritically say, compose it. Part does *not* act on part to form the whole. Nor is there any such thing as purely local determination.”

“Honestly, old boy, if you’re going on in this strain, I may as well pick up, as the golfers say. It sounds very learned, and for all I know it may be true, but is it important?”

“It is of crucial importance.”

“Oh lord. Why?”

“Because it carries this consequence—that if you wish to alter the movements of individuals in a social field, you can only do so, statistically speaking, by manipulating the field itself, i.e. by changing in some suitable fashion the organisation of the society they live in. In other words, social reform is the *cause* of changes in men’s beliefs and desires, not their effect.<sup>2</sup> Decent chaps are produced by decent social institutions and in no other way. People who want workers to be able to carry wage-demands against their employers organise them into trade unions. The world is involved in this war, not because men forgot God or because an insufficient number of individuals were devoted to peace, but because your society was (and is) constructed in such a way that the glittering prizes of life could be won only through conflict. If national policies were determined by popular aversion to war, peace would have been utterly secure throughout the last twenty-five years. The crash came because the nations of the world had no institutional provision for making the requirements of the rank and file effective. With the partial exception of my own, no country was a true community, or had any adequate conception of what social coherence and co-operative order are. All were mere population centres enslaved either to a fragment of themselves or to outside powers.”

## IX

“Do you know, Vova, I believe I’m beginning to get some glimmering of what you’re driv-

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. changes noted in the mentality of Russian peasants after collectivisation had been working for a year or two. “Very striking tendencies can be observed in the buying activities of kolkhos peasants. None of them would think of buying a horse. He has no right to buy a horse. Here is a real farmer. But he would no more think of buying a plough than a factory working man would think of saving up to buy a turbine. The Russian peasant, in other words, can spend a decreasing amount on the acquisition of capital. He will use his money instead to eat more, clothe himself better, and live more comfortably. This is another agent, Russians say, in undermining the capitalistic instincts of the mujik. I wish I could convey the momentousness of such psychological changes. They amount to a national mental revolution.” (Louis Fischer: *The Evolution of Collectivisation*. September 1933. Quoted by S. & B. Webb, *Soviet Communism*, p. 276.)

ing at.”

“Three rousing cheers.”

“Aren’t you asking me to abandon the old liberal and Christian belief that the worth of a group depends on the personal qualities of its members? You’re saying that the regeneration of society does *not* begin with the regeneration of the individual; but that, on the contrary, institutional changes must be the first step. Once they have been appropriately made and the new social setting furnished, a nobler type of manhood will be evolved.”

“You are coming along nicely, now, John. In fact, you seem to have grasped my immediate point—which, however repugnant it may be to the English Church or the English State, is after all a truism of modern psychology. Societies differ enormously in the dominant incentives that their members respond to. But such differences between societies are not due to differences between any inborn propensities or personal qualities of their members. They directly express differences in patterns of culture and of socially approved behaviour, or, to go back to our previous term, differences of structure in the social field. But do you see the significance of this for democracy?”

“Not very clearly, I’m afraid.”

“Well, take a look at the fierce economic blizzards which in times of so-called peace hit your capitalist world so shrewdly every few years. These world-slumps do not correspond to fluctuations in the human needs of the vast populations affected by them; they reflect a falling-off of what the economists call effective demand. The problem of abolishing the trade cycle is the problem of transforming human needs into effective demand—that is to say, making a planned distribution of purchasing power adequate to absorb whatever output the productive equipment is capable of. Do you quarrel with that?”

“Not at the moment.”

“Good. Now the problem of democracy is closely analogous. It is to make a planned distribution of political and economic power, such that the needs of the poor and the weak and the dispossessed are rendered articulate and effective. This involves devising institutions which will carry an uninterrupted current through from the humblest strata of society to the highest organs of government and back again. Government then becomes the business of responding sensitively and rapidly to the needs of the mass of the people, altering the social field so as to permit of their satisfaction, and giving instructions about how popular activity should be channelled in order that that satisfaction may be realised.”

“That’s all very well, Vova. But why should the aspirations of relatively ignorant \_\_\_”

“I did not say aspirations. I said needs. What you want and what you need are not always the same thing, you know. Any doctor will tell you that.”

“All right then, needs. Why should the needs of relatively ignorant and uncultivated masses furnish the content of national policy more happily than the ideas and ideals of a well-informed, refined, and educated minority, with all the advantages of special training and traditional competence in handling public affairs?”

“Ah, I was expecting that. I remember the great J. M. Keynes once asking the same question with direct reference to the U.S.S.R. ‘How can I adopt a creed,’ he said, ‘which, preferring the mud to the fish, exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia who, with whatever faults, are the quality in life and surely carry the seeds of all human advancement?’ I find the snobbery and the cheap spiritual pride of that formulation remarkably offensive. It is typical of the liberal mind—forever spouting claptrap about human brotherhood, spiritual values, and the pricelessness of personality, but on every practical issue treating persons who

live on three quid a week as mud. Brotherhood—and fishiness —presumably begin at about the £1,000 a year mark. However, Keynes well illustrates the falsity of rating social groups in terms of the personal qualities of their members. Such an approach could only be made by idle and careless gardeners who have never taken the trouble to learn the habits of growth and the methods of flowering of human societies.. It is about as sensible as pruning a rosebush by cutting out all the new growth in order to give the old wood its best chance.”

## X

“You can snort at Keynes,” I said, “and at his mud and his fish and his badly pruned roses as much as you like. But you aren’t answering his point—or mine. Do you seriously want to maintain that the working class represents the highest cultural level to be found in our society? If so, I suppose African tribespeople would be higher still? It’s not unreasonable to believe in education and to cherish a genuine faith in the humanities, is it? Surely people who follow the educational process furthest in their own lives and are nourished with most care on humane studies are in some sense better people. Better than they would otherwise have been, and better than others who have undergone less thorough cultivation. I don’t mean morally better. But they do surely become in a special degree the embodiment of cultural values that we rate highly and are right to rate highly. It’s simply a matter of diet—just as a child who always gets a scientifically balanced ration embodies the values of health more fully than one reared on white bread and cheap margarine.”

“Dear old John, you go on saying that kind of thing because you *will* think of what Keynes calls the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia as merely a collection of individuals, and not as a specialised organ of the social body. You see them as a kind of club, a selected re-union of the best people, having no particular axe to grind, and for gathering just for the pleasure of one another’s company. They consist of gentlefolk, and they include your own friends. But unfortunately they are much more than this. Collectively they comprise the ruling oligarchy which has dominated the social life and directed the public affairs of your country since the middle of last century. That oligarchy has been for some three generations a fully developed social form. As an organ, it is mature, full-grown, and for that reason incapable of further growth, empty of unrealised possibilities. But its *realised* possibilities are plainly inadequate to the world crisis in which you have been floundering for forty years. Time and again it has been tested for social function and found wanting. It may have been effectively adapted to its original use, but it has outlived that use and become a fatal encumbrance.”

“So we should take the secateurs to it, and just sit back and watch the proletarian blossoms forming on the new wood?”

“You shall have your little joke, John, bless you; but you can hardly deny that if Britain is to get out of this appalling mess, new social potentialities will have to be found somewhere, and brought into action.”

“You’re right enough about that.”

“Well, then, for any competent social gardener, for anyone who has a scientific grasp of what the social process is, the conclusion sticks out a mile. If you want new social possibilities in a crisis of civilisation, it is among the untried class in society that you must look for them—among the class whose free growth and full development have hitherto been checked by society’s customary structure. You may find the look of the individuals there somewhat distasteful; you may have a poor opinion of their personal capacities; you may regard them as unsuitable candidates

for power and responsibility, And, just because you have been brought up that way, you may think exactly the opposite of the old class, Keynes's bourgeoisie, to which you belong and which your friends adorn. But the personal qualities of individuals are in such a context of quite secondary importance. What matters supremely is the potentiality of the untried group as a source of new social forms and specialisations, and of untapped reserves of social energy, which may reinvigorate and impart a higher, closer, intenser fellowship to all man's associated life."

"Ah," I said, "I see we are back again at Sovietism and its saving secret. You're going to repeat that, in order to actualise these new potentialities, men must be democratically organised not merely as citizens, but as producers and consumers as well."

Vova laughed. "Yes," he said, "that is rather my King Charles's head, is it not? But I think what I have just been saying does emphasise from a fresh angle this really significant point. If we speak of releasing new social energies by, say, the emancipation of workers as a class or of women as a sex, we must mean something more than the formal removal of old restraints and disabilities. It is essential also to provide positive opportunities, to confer new powers, to extend the range of self-imposed duties. Every single citizen must be made to feel that the community calls urgently for his help—that some contribution which he is capable of making is indispensable to the welfare of the whole. And of course the institutional apparatus has to be furnished so that he can make that contribution in the most straightforward and efficient way. That is the real importance in my country of the consumers' co-operatives, and of the various producers' organisations, such as trade unions, incops, and collective farms. The multiformity of soviet democracy is not haphazard. It is far from being a medley of otiose alternatives and superfluous duplications. It is all expressly designed as a guarantee against leaks and stoppages in the flow of social energy."

## XI

"You know, Vova," I said, "I'm prepared to admit you've got hold of something here, and I dare say you're justified in jeering at Keynes. It *is* a bit Victorian to talk of the bourgeoisie as the quality. But it seems to me that you're simply making the opposite mistake to his. Aren't you sentimentalising about the working class and claiming a sort of natural superiority for it, just as he does for his bourgeois?"

"You can sustain that charge only if you reject my image of the bourgeois as the old wood which has flowered and cannot flower again, and of the workers as the growing point of the whole society. Of course, I agree one does meet certain types of left-winger who are ludicrously sentimental about the proletariat. They talk as though the workers were a kind of reach-me-down messiah who will automatically redeem the world if the world will only love and believe in them enough. I have often heard that theme developed in socialist perorations, and I expect you have too."

"Yes; and what bunk it all is."

"It is a distortion, certainly. But I think there is something real at the back of it. You have opened up a large question, John, and the complete answer to it would take a lot of finding. Meanwhile one cannot ignore the experience of Lenin, and for that matter of Stalin too. It is material evidence."

"What experience do you mean?"

"Well, Lenin, you will agree, had the least superstitious of minds. But he held an almost mystical faith in the simple hearts of working men and in the shaping power of their rough hands."



Contact with the masses! .The phrase runs, like a theme-tune, through the drama of his whole life. When he had worked himself to complete exhaustion in that first winter of the revolution, he would at times go out from his Smolny headquarters to some factory or some great meeting just to draw new strength from the touch, the breath, the life of the humble folk who keep the wheels of human society moving. One does not readily think of Stalin as a poet, but I have noticed that on his rare flights of fancy he usually takes off from similar attitudes and feelings.<sup>3</sup> Even your own Winston Churchill, though he hardly knows what the working class is and has always regarded it as a means, not an end—even Churchill has spoken of the refreshment he feels at quitting Downing Street for a while to visit the shipyards or the war factories and to watch the workers working. And all manner of men are affected, often very strongly, in kindred ways.”

“Does all that show anything more than that illusions manage to find a lodging still in the most positivistic kind of minds? Idealist chinks remain even in the cynic’s armour.”

“You cannot laugh Lenin off that way. He had no illusions about the workers. He was fully aware that they, along with the rest of twentieth century capitalist society, were in a sense the products of cultural decay. He frequently complained that the ignorance, the prejudices, the superstitions, the mental inertia of tens of millions of people were a fearful deadweight for any social engineer to have to shift. But in spite of all this, when one tries to sum up his attitude, the terms that force themselves upon the mind are religious terms. He baptised himself in the common people as though they were life-giving waters charged with spiritual force and grace. ‘I can do all things through them who strengthen me,’ he said, not in words, it is true, but in all his policies and acts.”

“Hitler, too, is said to have developed a useful technique of thinking with the blood of the *Volksgenossen*,” I said,

“You are right, John. Like sexual love, or any other great type of emotional experience, this thing is obviously capable of shocking perversions. But the perversions themselves imply that a wholesome norm is somewhere discoverable. Anyway, all I am arguing at the moment is that the bourgeoisie inspires the same kind of feeling in no one, and that there are good reasons why the working class should occupy a special position in this respect.”

## XII

He paused; then rose, plunged across the bath, turned in the water, and began lazily swimming back towards me. “Hi, Vova,” I shouted, “where have we got to? You can’t leave the whole argument in the air.”

He stood up in the shallow water, hoisted himself out by the rail, and came over to sprawl, dripping, on the grass beside me.

“Tell me, my friend,” he said very seriously, as he shook the water out of his hair. “On June 22nd, 1941, how long did you think the Soviet Union would last against the German attack?” I held my peace. “Six weeks? A couple of months? That was the forecast of your military experts, was it not?”

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the famous passage: “It may be taken as a rule that, so long as Bolsheviks keep contact with the broad masses of the people, they will be invincible. And contrariwise it is sufficient for Bolsheviks to break away from the masses, and lose contact with them, it is sufficient for them to become covered with bureaucratic rust, for them to lose all their strength and to be converted into nothingness. . . . This is what it means—not only to teach the masses, but also to learn from them. . . . I think that Bolsheviks remind us of Antaeus, the hero of Greek mythology. Like Antaeus, they are strong in keeping contact with their mother, with the masses, who bore them, fed them, and educated them.”

“You know well,” I said, “that the whole world stands amazed that a country, which a dozen years ago was hardly industrialised at all, should have fought the most tremendous war machine of all time as your people have. History has no marvel to show like it.”

“Then listen, John, to this. It is the tapping of the stored but previously unused energies of many millions of common, undistinguished, and rather uncultured men and women which is the secret of the powers that have astonished you. Here, and here alone, are the springs of the creative resource, the plastic stress, the agile adaptability, the massive enthusiasm, the blend of youth and insight in leadership, the heroism of self-sacrifice, the dynamism of achievement, above all the toughness of social solidarity, which all men in all lands have now learned to distinguish by the term *soviet*. Some of you in England like to think that we are Russians fighting for our hearths and our homes. That is indeed a part of the truth, though not the most important part. The most important part, much less welcome, I fear, to you, is that we are communists fighting for our soviet system. We are democrats first and patriots second. At the same time we are the most complete patriots in the world, because we are the most complete democrats; our patriotism is felt with fewest mental reservations because our democracy is organised with fewest material restrictions.”

“Dr. Johnson was fond of insisting that critical remarks are not easily understood without examples. Will you illustrate, please?”

“By all means,” said Vova. “Look at that wretched business, which your people handled with such extreme unintelligence, of Nehru in India, Our generation has seen, and will see, no more steadfast and courageous champion of the democratic principle than he. But the war, as you British managed it, put him in an intolerable dilemma. How could he fight wholeheartedly as a vassal of the British in defence of the British state system which denied democracy to his country? Or consider the French. The French people, when the war began, took one long look at their leaders and said; ‘Better not to fight at all than to fight so corrupt and fascist-minded a gang as these.’ And even in your own England one can hardly fail to overhear, as it were, many of the best workers arguing with themselves: ‘We must go all out, or everywhere in the world democracy will go under. But can we go all out so long as we are ruled by many of the very men who helped to destroy democracy in Spain, France, and Czechoslovakia?’”

“And what of the U.S.S.R.?”

“It is in my country alone that the democratic forces are not hampered by doubts and misgivings such as these. Everywhere else they still sail at no more than half-speed. The war will not be won, nor a peace-system built, unless we can drive forward in line full steam ahead. Success in war and peace alike now depends on our all combing the whole world for social energy, as we each comb our own country for manpower. One important source of such energy lies in the millions of tropical Africa. They are part of democracy’s reserves and we must swear them in under her banner. If we do not call them to our colours, the fascists will call them to theirs. But before Africans can be expected to answer the call in the sense we wish, large changes need to be made in their social field-structure. Soviet experience displays one way in which the necessary changes can be made. If you have a better way, say quickly what it is, and use it. You have been much too late much too often. Do not loiter now or you will alienate your-friends and extend one more encouragement to our enemies.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” I replied meekly.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MACHINERY OF POPULAR SELF-GOVERNMENT

Wherever Vova went, and whenever he spoke of the multiform democracy of soviet communism (which was extremely often), he continually found himself involved in long explanations about the working of soviet trade unions and co-operatives and such like institutions. He was amazed (though I was not) to encounter quite so copious a lack of knowledge. We came across bitter anti-soviet feeling among Europeans in Africa, but not one of its exponents could have passed the simplest test on the working of the soviet system. The most ferocious of them were completely stumped when asked to say what a soviet was. Only once in our whole African tour did we meet with an intelligent grasp of the main lines of political and economic organisation in the U.S.S.R., and that was shown by two negroes who visited us at Accra in the Gold Coast.

One day, while we were still at the Falls, I suggested to Vova, more by way of a joke than anything else, that it might save him trouble if he armed himself with a memorandum on the subject and on its profound contrast with the British colonial system, so that he could just hand a copy of it to anyone who started on the usual round of queries. To my surprise, instead of laughing, he jumped at the idea, pulled out his note-book, and began jotting some points down. A day or two later he produced a neat typescript summarising the things he found himself most frequently having to say to the people with whom he conversed. The document forms an essential part of the record of his mission, and as the subject-matter follows naturally on the talk I have just reported, I give it here.

### CERTAIN ASPECTS OF SOVIET DEMOCRACY

#### I. THE TRADE UNIONS

Nothing lights up the contrast between sovietism and the British colonial system in sharper relief than the position and function of trade unions. It is not merely that unions in British dependencies are mere organs for what is euphemistically termed the maintenance of peaceful relations in employment; while in the U.S.S.R. they are organs of social construction of the widest scope. It is also that the former are conceived in terms of Tory paternalism, the latter in those of democratic responsibility. This is, indeed, the key difference between British and soviet institutions in general, and does not hold merely of trade unions.

In the U.S.S.R. every considerable factory, workshop, mine, or state farm is the centre of what one may call a settlement, including schools, nursery schools; crèches, hospitals, clubs, theatres, parks, housing estates, public kitchens, planned by the workers themselves in their capacity of trade union members, built by themselves, staffed and administered by themselves.

Set alongside this the outlook of Lord Hailey on African trade unionism—Lord Hailey whom we may, I suppose, regard as the mouthpiece of enlightened British officialdom. “Natives,” he says, “are to a great extent debarred from forming unions to protect their interests, and legislation makes it an offence for contract natives to strike or to withhold their services without giving notice of the termination of their contracts. It may be questioned whether African workers are in general sufficiently advanced -in capacity for organisation to form effective trade unions, or whether, *in territories for which the state has assumed a full responsibility for their working conditions, such unions can serve any useful purpose.* Experience has shown, however, that

some collective means for the ventilation of grievances which may otherwise remain unknown to the authorities until disorders break out, is desirable” (*African Survey*, p. 698).

Of this passage perhaps the most remarkable features are (1) that trade unions are thought of as superfluous if conditions of employment are settled by a colonial government in which Africans have no part or representation, and (2) that colonial governments are thought of as so aloof from the life of the people as to be unable to detect grievances among African workers by any signs less obtrusive than popular violence or organised remonstrance.

#### *The Position in British Colonies*

Trade unions were illegal throughout most of the British colonial empire until 1936 or thereabouts. In much of British Africa they were illegal still when Hailey was writing in 1938. The Gold Coast, a relatively advanced colony, enacted no Trade Union law until 1941; other dependencies are even to-day without one. But there has been a shift in Colonial Office policy, which is now stated to be “the provision of adequate legal facilities for trade union development.”

At the beginning of 1942 there were 160 trade unions registered under colonial laws. Most of them were very small and very, weak, and it is doubtful whether their total membership was as much as 100,000 or 1/600 of the population of this colonial empire. In the U.S.S.R. the trade union membership is 1/7 of the total population. The difference in scale itself implies differences in quality. It should, however, be added that the number of British colonial unions now seems to be increasing fairly steadily.

The British Government’s notion of what constitutes adequate legal provision for trade union development in the dependencies is presumably indicated by the trade union laws which have actually been passed. The clearest of such indications are:

(1) The compulsory registration of trade unions. For this all colonial trade union laws provide. Its main practical effects are:

(a) That combinations of workers are brought under government control (those of employers normally being left free of it).

(b) That the official power to refuse registration is sometimes used to settle what workers may combine and what workers may not (e.g. in Mauritius persons employed in farming other than sugar-growing, or in domestic service, or in the public service, or in religious educational institutions not in receipt of state aid, may not form or belong to any trade union).

(c) That the official power to refuse or withdraw registration is sometimes used to settle what objects a union shall pursue, and to exclude such objects as education, social services, and political activity (e.g. in Mauritius a registered trade union was struck off the roll, because it had “illegally” spent part of its funds on sending a representative to Britain).

(d) That any activities, however lawful in themselves, of associations which are refused registration as trade unions, tend to be treated as illegal (e.g. in the Malayan law a prospective union which unsuccessfully applies for registration and does not at once dissolve, is an unlawful association, whether or not it engages in any activity, and even if any activity it does engage in be such as the law would normally allow).

(2) Trade union rights which are customary and legal in Britain, such as that of peaceful picketing and the guarantee of unions and their officials against actions of tort, are either not recognised in colonial legislation, or recognised in forms which make the rights almost impossible to exercise in practice.

(3) There is a strong tendency to treat Government Labour Officers as substitutes for trade union organisation.

(4) Although social insurance hardly exists in any British dependency, official thinking

avoids the idea that trade unions might be used in developing it. In some territories the idea is formally outlawed,

The above points bear out from yet another angle what I have frequently emphasised before, namely the strange inability of British colonial policy to conceive of any possible connection between popular initiative and social construction. Clearly trade unions are at present an insignificant factor in colonial life, whether one looks to their membership, their performance, or their opportunities. Officially, they seem to be viewed as a minor means, among other more important ones, of protecting workers from the crudest forms of employers' exploitation. They are evidently to be kept under the strict control of colonial governments in which their members have no representation, and prevented from forming the germ of any genuine democratic movement that might eventually stake out claims to political and economic power.

### *The Soviet T.U.s*

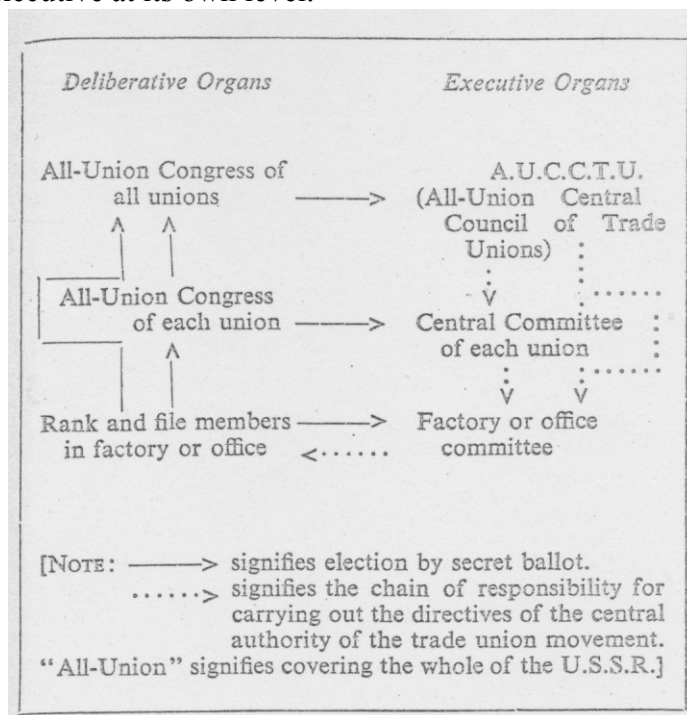
The number of trade unions in the U.S.S.R. is, oddly enough, almost the same as in the British colonies in 1942—164 to be exact. Their membership, however, is nearly 300 times as large, or in round figures 26 millions. The difference between soviet and colonial trade unions in range of responsibility is equally emphatic.

In British colonies, as in Britain itself, trade unions are organised on a craft or occupational basis. What union a man joins is determined by the kind of job he does. In any one industrial establishment, therefore, the staff is apt to be split up among a number of different unions; for example, in a newspaper office the linotype operators will belong to a printers' union and the reporters to a journalists' union. In the U.S.S.R. the principle of organisation is different. There the industrial establishment, as a working whole, is taken as the unit, and a single union receives as members all who work in it, the administrative and technical staff, the clerical and accounting staff, the foremen, the craftsmen, the labourers, the cleaners, the caterers, cooks, and waitresses of the factory canteen, the doctors and nurses of the factory hospital. The only employed persons not admitted to trade union membership are those who personally possess the right to engage or dismiss. Thus the entire personnel of a tractor factory, let us say will (apart from the management), belong to the engineers' union, no matter what his or her special function may be. A consequence of this arrangement is that when a worker moves from one type of enterprise to another, he also transfers from one union to another, even if he plies the same trade in both cases, e.g. that of an electrician.

Moreover, as a general rule there will be only one union throughout the whole length and breadth of the U.S.S.R. for the personnel of every establishment producing the same commodity or service. There are no local unions; although it sometimes happens that the larger unions, when they become unwieldy as nation-wide organisations, subdivide on a regional basis. Thus the coal miners' federation has grouped itself into three independent parts, one for the Donets basin, one for the central coalfields, and one for the eastern.

The 164 unions, or industrial federations, embodying the principle of nation-wide organisation by whole establishments, cover all employees of the state, the local authorities, the trusts, and the consumers' co-operatives, whether they are engaged in mining or agriculture, in manufacture, in transport, in distribution, or in providing administrative and cultural services. Broadly speaking, the only workers (as distinct from managers) ineligible for trade union membership are those who, being organised in associations of owner-producers, are not employed under any form of contract of service, in other words, members of producers' co-operative societies of various kinds, the most important being the collective farms.

The democratic power cable operates within the trade union movement in the same way as in the political structure of the soviets. The various grades in the hierarchy are shown in the following diagram, which indicates how each grade is joined by organic elective links both to the grade above it, and to the executive at its own level.



Let us follow the path of this continuous current of social energy, first from the bottom upwards through the deliberative grades and then down again through the descending levels of executive authority.

### *The Upward Stream*

The general function of the deliberative organs is to unite the membership of each union, to concentrate its influence, and to secure the convergence of the 164 separate influences at the point of the A.U.C.C.T.U.—the point at which the effective government of the trade union movement is exercised. Along this ascending series of organs flow the views, the needs, the passion for production of the millions of workers in the factories and the offices, the state farms, and the transport systems of the whole country.

In every establishment the personnel arrange themselves in relatively small groups engaged on a common job. These groups may be particular shifts, gangs, or “brigades” to use a common soviet term, or workers in a particular shop or department. Each group meets periodically for discussion of trade union matters, and twice yearly for the election of its own conveners and organisers, and of delegates to the factory or office committee. At these elections, as indeed at all other trade union elections, every union member over eighteen may vote. The Webbs calculated that in 1935 some five million of these ordinary members’ meetings are held every year; so broad was the popular democratic basis of the movement. The number of meetings to-day is no doubt much greater.

Every two years elections are held for the All-Union Congress of each trade union. The Congress, which is in effect a biennial delegate conference representing all establishments composing the union concerned, meets for a few days to discuss and take decisions on matters of general

policy, and to elect a standing central committee by which the day-to-day administration of the union is conducted. It also elects certain delegates to the highest of the deliberative organs, the joint Congress which represents all the 164 unions and their combined membership throughout the U.S.S.R.

This supreme body, the All-Union Congress of all unions, also meets every other year. In it the individual unions are represented according to their size. At the Tenth Congress in 1937 the basis was one delegate for every 15,000 members. Election is partly direct and partly indirect. Any establishment with a trade union membership of 15,000 (or whatever the basic number for the given year may be) elects its own delegate or delegates by direct election in the factory or office. The remaining representation to which the union as a whole is entitled is chosen (again by secret ballot) at the unions' All-Union Congress.

The All-Union Congress of all unions, as the supreme deliberative assembly of soviet trade unionism as a whole, reviews the work of its Executive Committee, the A.U.C.C.T.U. which exercises the powers of the Congress, and conducts the affairs of the movement, in the interval between Congress sessions. The Congress also takes general decisions about the policy and organization of the movement. It is by no means a mere round-table conference of the headquarters officials of the 164 unions. Consisting of two thousand delegates, of whom two-thirds are men and women of many nationalities from state farms and industrial or cultural enterprises situated deep in the provinces, it forms a genuine and lively forum of popular discussion, and its deliverances are of great importance and influence in determining the movement's broad lines of advance.

At this Congress is elected the A.U.C.C.T.U., the central executive in which each of the 164 unions is represented. The A.U.C.C.T.U. is the final point to which is led the social energy first released in the millions of rank-and-file meetings that are held each year all over the country. It is also the point at which this upward stream of power is converted into the downward stream of authority embodying the instructions received and given by the various grades of executive organs.

### *The Downward Stream*

The A.U.C.C.T.U., together with the appropriate government department, takes charge of labour and social legislation, the working out of norms and directives for collective agreements,<sup>1</sup> for measures of safety and hygiene in workshops, and so on. It also issues instructions for schemes of social insurance and for the cultural work of the movement.

It supervises the work of each of the 164 unions, and sees that all enactments and directions dealing with conditions of employment, with arrangements for safety and health in the factories, and with social insurance, are properly carried out.

It is thus the co-ordinating, supervising, and directing authority for all the activities of all trade unions.

There are no republic or district councils, subordinate to A.U.C.C.T.U. and intermediate be-

---

<sup>1</sup> The collective agreement is an elaborate treaty entered into in March of each year between the management and the factory or office committee in every establishment. It lays down in detail their mutual obligations for carrying out the industrial and financial plan. "In capitalist countries," observed N. Shvernik in a speech to the 9th All-Union Congress, "collective agreements are the armistice terms of the two hostile forces of employers and employed. Such an agreement among soviet workers is a promise they make to themselves and their fellows to fulfil certain self-determined conditions." The proportion of workers who attend the meetings called to discuss the drafts of new collective agreements is frequently very high—90 per cent or more. These meetings draw in the bulk of the workers to play a conscious and active part in the whole economic running of the country. They are real organs of workers' democracy in an industrial system operated by and for the workers.

tween it and the individual unions. Thus the A.U.C.C.T.U. is in direct and continuous touch with the central committees of the unions and with the factory committees.

The central committees of the unions are genuinely autonomous bodies, in the sense of being independent alike of the government and of the management. Autonomy, however, does not imply isolation. Apart from their double accountability to the A.U.C.C.T.U. and to their own membership, they are integral parts of the whole soviet system, carefully geared to the other parts. In the broadest terms their function may be described as the maintenance of the means of production. More specifically, they have the responsibility:

(1) Of co-operating with the management in all problems of production and labour organisation in their industries and establishments. They devise measures of socialist competition, develop the Stakhanovite movement, train shock brigades, and by every means increase output per head, improve quality, and reduce costs, so far as these things can be done by the organisation of labour.

(2) Of fixing and adjusting wages for the various grades of labour, and of incorporating such wage settlements in the annual collective agreements.

(3) Of organising safety and hygiene measures, and of setting up an inspectorate to see that they are properly carried out. More than a quarter of a million inspectors are engaged in this work—about one to every 100 trade union members.

(4) Of operating the greater part of the whole social insurance machinery, and of looking after the personal welfare of members and their families. (Health and medical services are run by the Commissariat of Health, and old age pensions by the Commissariat for Social Assistance.)

(5) Of raising the cultural level of members and their families.

The last two headings cover a very wide range of provision, e.g.:

*Insurance Benefits.* Sickness, accident, funeral, maternity and child welfare, mutual aid loans, legal advice, sanatoria and rest homes.<sup>2</sup>

*Educational.* Nursery schools, crèches, pioneer camps, schools, adult education, libraries, publications, discussion groups to develop the organising and political activity of members.

*Recreation and Entertainment.* Theatres and cinemas, social clubs, sports clubs and stadiums, physical culture, games, etc.

The list is not exhaustive; but it is enough to show that, besides social insurance in the strict sense, the trade union movement runs most of the organised sport of the country, and has large commitments in the fields of education and entertainment.

We come now to the factory and office committees. Normally there is one such committee to each establishment. As further evidence of the wide democratic foundation on which soviet trade unionism rests, it may be noted that some 4,000,000 people, or about 15 per cent of the entire trade union membership of the country, are actively engaged at any one time on the work of these factory committees and their various sub-committees. As elections to factory committees are held twice a year, there is thus a fairly rapid circulation of activity and responsibility among the membership, even though it no doubt remains true that some people are re-elected at consecutive elections and others do not get elected at all.

The scope of a factory committee's duties is admirably sketched by the Webbs, when they say that "it undertakes, as regards all those employed in the factory, office or institution, the detailed administration of the various branches of social insurance; the arrangements for sending

---

<sup>2</sup> Critics of the U.S.S.R. frequently suggest that this rest-home business is largely eye-wash, and that few workers ever see the inside of one. In point of fact, even as long ago as 1936, more than 16 million workers visited the sanatoria and rest-homes in the health resorts, and the week-end and day rest-homes.



workers to convalescent or holiday homes; the management of the factory club, the factory canteen or dining-rooms, and any factory cultural undertakings, and even the allocation among the workers of theatre and concert tickets placed at their disposal. For any or all of these duties separate commissions may be appointed, on which trade union members not elected to the factory committee may be asked to serve. The officers and presidium of the committee are in constant relations with the management of the factory, office, or institute, over which they have no actual control, but which must always inform the factory committee of proposed changes, discuss with them any of the workers' grievances, hear their suggestions, and generally consult with them as to the possibility of increasing the output, lessening waste, and diminishing cost. It is the factory committee which organises shock brigades, and, on behalf of the workers, enters into 'socialist competition' with other factories, offices or institutions, as to which can achieve the most during a given period."<sup>3</sup>

#### *How Rates of Pay are Fixed*

Settling a national scale of wages rates is a complicated business in any country, and not less so in the U.S.S.R. than elsewhere. The soviet method illustrates very well the working of the trade union hierarchy and the relation of its various levels to one another.

In the early months of each year basic time-rates for each grade of labour are exhaustively discussed by representatives of the A.U.C.C.T.U. and the Central Committees of the 164 unions on the one hand, and representatives of the soviet government, the state planning commission, and the managements of the various trusts and public utilities on the other. These time-rates are agreed upon as part of a much wider agreement about the apportionment of the whole net product of soviet industry.

Before any national scale of wages can be drawn up, Gosplan, the trade unions, the managements, and the government between them have to decide what allocation of the country's total resources is to be made under many other headings, of which the following are a representative sample.

(a) Maintenance, replacement and expansion of the industrial plant.

(b) Overhead costs of running the country, e.g. the cost of government departments, national defence, and the administration of justice.

(c) Scientific research and exploration

(d) Social services and insurance.

(e) Reduction or increase in holidays and length of working day for the industrial army.

When all such items have been given monetary values for the year and their total set against the monetary value of the total resources available during the same period, the balance represents the amount apportionable as personal wages to all workers in industry. The co-efficient of increase in standard time-rates over the previous year can then be found by dividing this balance by the total number of workers. According to League of Nations figures the annual sum paid out in personal wages rose by 350 per cent between 1929 and 1938. Nor did the rise cease then; but the League of Nations died, and ceased recording it.

The next stage is the detailed sharing-out of the total fund thus allocated to personal wages. This difficult and invidious task is in the first instance undertaken jointly by the A.U.C.C.T.U. and the Central Committees of the 164 unions. Their findings, however, are not imposed on the rank and file undiscussed, and are seldom accepted by their unmodified. Briefly, the central authorities work to a list of categories on the following lines:

---

<sup>3</sup> S. and B. Webb: *Soviet Communism*, pp. 182-3.

- (1) Apprentices and trainees.
- (2) Non-material workers (clerks, gatekeepers, etc.).
- (3) Technicians and administrative staff.
- (4) The main body of manual workers, divided into six or eight or sometimes more grades, according to the industrial processes involved. In these grades a descending order of skill corresponds to a descending order of remuneration.

(N.B. Any worker can move into any grade for which he is competent to do the work.)

For each category and each grade an hourly wage rate is fixed. These hourly rates are discussed by the rank-and-file workers at the meetings they hold in their own factories at the times when the draft collective agreement is submitted to them. The rates, when eventually settled, are incorporated in that agreement.

Finally time-rates have to be translated into piece-rates applying to each particular job in each particular establishment. This part of the process is carried out by the factory committees in negotiation with the managements of the establishment in which they work.

For every type of job performed in the given factory a normal quota of output per hour is worked out by consultation between those who actually perform the job and the factory committee and the factory management. The piece-rate for the job is then arrived at by dividing the hourly rate by the output quota. For example, if the time-rate is 3 roubles an hour and the output quota is 6 units, the piece-rate is half a rouble. The factory committees frequently appoint specially trained officials of their own to undertake the work of piece-rate fixing, and to conduct the relevant negotiations with the management.

We may note, as a peculiarity of soviet methods, that a worker who produces more than the normal output quota gets an increase, not merely in earnings, but in the piece-rate itself. To extend the illustration given above, while a worker producing 6 units an hour would earn 3 roubles, one who produced 8 units an hour would earn not 4 roubles but 4½; in other words, the seventh and eighth units would be paid for at three-quarters of a rouble each, in place of the half-rouble paid for the first six units.

### *Equal Pay for Equal Work*

One further point, which is very relevant in the colonial context. The principle of equal pay for equal work applies over the whole of the U.S.S.R. When the Central Committee of a union agrees to certain basic time-rates, those rates apply to the appropriate categories throughout the entire membership, regardless of age, sex, or skin-colour. In the building industry there are six categories of labour. A worker in category 3 will be on the same basic time-rate whether man, woman, or juvenile, and whether he or she is a Russian living in Smolensk or a Tadjik living in Stalinabad. This statement needs to be qualified by saying that certain minor variations are sometimes introduced by the trade unions themselves to reflect some significant difference in local conditions. But you will not meet in the U.S.S.R. with the argument that an Asiatic should be paid less than a European because the former "has a lower standard of life."

We know that this deceptive phrase can mean either that the Asiatic wants less or that he needs less. It is true that when an Asiatic brought up in the environment of a simple material culture is confronted with the products of a complex one, it takes him a little time to learn to want them. There is a lag while he is finding out about the things which he would be able to buy if he had more money. When he has found out, he wants more money just like anybody else.

As to needs, the essential human needs are the same in every part of the globe. All men need the same proteins, fats, and starches for their nourishment; they need fuel for cooking; they need

fresh air and wholesome water and soap; they need shelter from the elements and protection from disease. In the tropics, no doubt there is little call to spend money on keeping warm, unless one happens to be living at a high altitude. Equally in northern latitudes one avoids the trouble and expense of keeping cool. In general, if a change of climate involves a saving of living costs in one direction, it is apt to lead to an increase of them in another, so that the account gets evened out, much as it does as between winter and summer in the same climate. In fact we should think it about as reasonable to pay a Tadjik less than a Russian for the same work, as we should to pay either of them less in summer than in winter.

Thus we escape the difficulties connected with “unfair competition” between high-paid and low-paid labour. The relatively high average standard of living among British workers is maintained in part by the low average standards among workers in raw material producing countries, especially the British colonies. Mass poverty in Ceylon and the West Indies is, in one aspect, just a function of the cheap tea, and cheap sugar, and cheap bananas enjoyed by British consumers. That is one reason why British people are on the whole so complacent about their imperialism. On the other hand, the huge disorganised army of low-paid colonial labour at the same time acts as a threat to the higher standards in Britain, as for example Lancashire textile workers have good reason to know. Nor are such effects confined to Britain. Unemployed copper miners in the United States, accustomed to a wage of £1 a day when in work, have often asked with a groan how any copper mine in any civilised country can keep in production, so long as wages in the mines of Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo average 9d a day. In the U.S.S.R. the universalism of our trade unions (among other factors) has raised us clear of such doubtful blessings and such undoubted curses alike.

### *Democracy in Industry*

The features of soviet trade unionism to which I would invite attention as contrasting most sharply with the trade unionism of British colonies are the following. They emphasise what people in the U.S.S.R. understand by the term democracy.

(1) Though membership is purely voluntary 85 per cent of eligible workers are members of trade unions. About 5 million such workers (many of them seasonal) out of a total of 31 millions employed in industry, are for one reason or another unorganised.

(2) Vast numbers take part in the meetings of the primary organs—frequently over 90 per cent of the membership.

(3) Elections of delegates and officials are not valid unless two-thirds of the trade union members employed in the establishment record a vote.

(4) All delegates and officials are answerable to the members who elect them, and are liable to be recalled and unseated if they fail to carry out the wishes of those members. The demand for such a new election has to be supported by one-third of the electing body, or to be made officially by a higher trade union body.

(5) At least one-sixth of the whole membership are at any one moment taking part, on a voluntary basis, in the actual administrative work of the movement. As the tours of duty are fairly short (on the average perhaps six months to a year), this means that few members indeed are not “activists” during an appreciable part of their working lives. Here is the democracy that participates, as distinct from that which merely acquiesces—altogether a higher form of association,

(6) The movement as a whole has a vast range of responsibility; nothing less, in fact, than the maintenance of the means of production (outside agriculture) for the whole of soviet society. In the supreme economic task of allocating to this purpose or to that the entire resources of the

country, the trade unions take part, as co-equals of the soviet government and the state planning commission.

(7) Of the 31 million industrial workers, 45 per cent are women. Women comprise approximately the same percentage of the trade union membership.

I am not so foolish as to expect that industrial democracy of this type should be accepted as a model in any part of the British Empire. But I do suggest that it has a certain interest and even relevance for British Africa, if only because it has been successful in transforming large numbers of primitive peasants into an efficient industrial army. Between the census of 1926 and that of 1939 the urban population of the U.S.S.R. rose from 26 millions to 56 millions. At least 20 millions of this increase represent recruits to soviet industry from rural districts. Littlepage<sup>4</sup> describes how in 1923 the gold trust had so few engineers and managers at its disposal that some mines were obliged to struggle along without a single person of mining experience or proper technical training. In the years following, thousands of students were put through simple engineering courses and given a brief practical training in some of the better-organised mining enterprises. By 1933 there were enough of them dotted about the whole area covered by the gold trust to furnish "some organised sensible direction in all goldfields." Simultaneously thousands of ex-farmers were taught the rudiments of mining processes. Hundreds of them were selected as foremen and instructors, and distributed among the mines, where they too played an important part in raising the level of industrial education and technical competence. Such in essence were the methods employed in all industries with all types of "native" labour, so that by 1937 the cautious Littlepage was able to record the general judgment that "fairly strong foundations have been laid for almost all large industries."

Of this immense and various educational activity a leading share was taken by the trade unions.

## II. THE COLLECTIVE FARMS

The same vital democracy informing the whole system of production is at work in the collective farms as in the trade unions. Our collective farm experience is even more in point for British Africa, in as much as the great bulk of the African population lives by agriculture, and in as much as the collective farm is the most elementary of the many schools of democracy which sovietism has devised.

Collectivisation in the U.S.S.R. means that some 20 million peasant holdings have been merged to form about a quarter of a million collective farms. There is no part of the country, however primitive, to which these farms do not extend. They cover 75 millions of population, and 90 per cent of the total sown area. Some 10 per cent of that area belongs to the state farms: only .7 per cent is still worked by individual peasants.

There is no need here to discuss why the soviets undertook the supremely difficult and arduous task of collectivising agriculture. It is enough to mention that if agriculture had not been re-organised in such a way as to maintain the output of farm produce while greatly reducing the proportion of farm workers, the plans for industrialisation could never have been carried out. It is the human labour, released from the countryside by the development of mechanised farming on a vast scale, which has migrated to the towns to man the new industrial plants. If this migration had not taken place, there could have been no economic foundation for the military defence of the country. And if the U.S.S.R. had been undefended, the defeat of the United Nations would

---

<sup>4</sup> *In Search of Soviet Gold*, p. 116.

have been rapid and complete. It is therefore not fantastic to reckon the collectivisation of soviet agriculture among the main decisive factors in the downfall of Hitlerism.

### *The Basis of Association*

The collective farm, as usually organised in the U.S.S.R., is a compromise institution, standing midway between socialism and individualism. All the property of which its members make use is not owned by them in common; on the other hand, the collective is much more than a co-operative grouping of private owners. It is a pooling of some, but not all, of the resources of the members in labour and capital, which they make in order to share in partnership an increasing output.

(a) *The land.* Stalin's model constitution for collective farms defines the position thus: "The land possessed by the collective, like all other land in the U.S.S.R., is the general property of the state and the nation. In accordance with the laws of the workers' and peasants' state it is hereby given to the collective to use for an indefinite period, i.e. perpetually. The land cannot be sold nor can it be let to tenants by the collective."

(b) *Other capital.* The big machinery, such as tractors, many-furrow ploughs, harvester-combines, and plate harrows is owned not by the collective, but by the machine and tractor stations which have been set up in every district and which serve a whole group of collectives each. The M.T.S. undertake to work the fields of the collectives with this heavy machinery in return for a remuneration in agricultural products, which is fixed in advance and paid after the harvest.

Smaller machinery, such as light drills, harrows, scufflers, horse-ploughs, together with the farm buildings and some livestock, form the property of the collective farm as such.

(c) *Personal property.* Each peasant retains for his personal use his house, a plot of land (usually about an acre), a cow or two, a few sheep and pigs, and as many poultry, rabbits, bees, etc., as he has room for. The produce of this personal husbandry as well as his personal share of the collective produce, he can sell in the market, as he likes.

### *Self-government in the Collective*

Collective farms vary greatly in size, according to local conditions. In 1937 the average size was 80 households, farming 1,600 hectares, of which about 500 hectares were sown to crops. The basis of administration in these little communities, as in the village soviets and the trade unions, is the general meeting of all the members over 18. Such general meetings are held at frequent intervals throughout the year. Perhaps the most important of their recurrent tasks are:

(1) To elect annually a chairman and board of management, who are responsible to the general meeting for the detailed running of the farm.

(2) After hearing recommendations from the board, to group the members into gangs and assign to each gang its specific tasks, in such a way that the entire work of the farm is adequately provided for. These allocations are not made haphazard, but with an eye to the division of labour best calculated to increase the yield of all types of produce. Thus the tractor driver, the cattle-herd, the milker, become specialists and experts and achieve performances far beyond the capacity of a general farm labourer who is required to take a turn at all jobs.

(3) At the end of each season to settle the disposal of the surplus earned by the collective, after all advances to members have been covered and all payments to the government made. Shall a new barn or a silo be built? Or a cash bonus distributed to members? A crèche or a clinic set up? A reading room and library, a club house, or a cinema? Such questions are all debated and decided by the general meeting of members without liability to review by any other authority,

and subject only to the ruling that all such expenditure must be within the collective itself. No proposal can be carried except by a clear majority of a meeting at which at least two-thirds of the whole membership record their votes.

(4) To fix the labour units and norms by means of which all work is assessed. The norm for any job corresponds to the average performance of a conscientious and competent worker at that job. Every job has its norm, but the normal output in each job does not necessarily make the same score in terms of labour units. Some jobs carry a higher value in labour units than others, according to their nature and the qualifications required for their performance. A tractor driver, for instance, may be able to score 2½ “labour-days” in 10 hours, while an old man, no longer on full work, who watches the orchard, may take several days to score one “labour-day.”

Thus at the end of the year two workers who have both fulfilled the norms for their particular jobs will not necessarily have the same number of labour units to their credit. The difference in such a case represents the difference in “social value” attached to the jobs in question by the general meeting of members of the collective in their wisdom. In this way the general meeting determines the ratio in which the net yield of all farming operations is to be divided among members.

### *The Collective and the Plan*

The peasants, like all other producers in the U.S.S.R., have their connections with the Plan. No doubt the planning of agriculture is on the whole a looser and less elaborate process than the planning of industry. Nevertheless it is a process which affects farm life in a number of important ways.

Some phases of agricultural output are directly included in the Plan. Examples are the delivery-quotas which each farm has to turn in to the state-collecting agencies. Then there is the output of tractors, and of a number of special crops, such as cotton and flax. Gosplan may also call, say, for a 2 per cent increase of grain output in certain regions, indicating at the same time in some detail suitable ways and means, and allowing also for the effect on other forms of farm output. Then the collective farms affected have to decide in their members’ meetings how the general directive is to be applied to their own case, and by what concrete steps they will expand or rearrange their fields, or vary their methods of cultivation, in order to secure the results required. In connection with purposes like these, as also for the discussion of the broad needs of the peasantry, representatives of the collective farms frequently have occasion to confer in the Kremlin with leaders of the soviet government and the communist party. The farmers thus have a lively awareness that they themselves help to settle many problems of government in preparation for nation-wide schemes; schemes which they not only carry out as orders from above, but also help to formulate as projects from below.

For the most part, however, the democratic schooling of the peasantry is concerned with material that falls outside the scope of the central Plan. Naturally it begins at home, with each collective drawing up its own farm-plan. The general meeting goes into committee with the agronomer from the machine tractor station, with representatives of the Commissariat of Agriculture, perhaps with those of the village soviet too. Together they all conduct an informal census of the number of households and of people to be taken into account, of the number of horses, tractors, implements, etc., available, of the area and type of land to be worked, and of the present consequences of past crop rotations. On the basis of such data the farm plan sets out to meet the food and fodder needs of the local community and to produce specified quantities of the various marketable crops recommended by the Commissariat of Agriculture as suited to local conditions.

### *The Collective and Science*

Such are the ways in which each collective farmer takes his share of responsibility for the decisions of policy that most nearly concern his productive life. Such are the ways in which he comes to realise that he is not a servant working to the orders of a master whose interests are often antagonistic to his own, but an equal member of an association designed to embody his interests and those of others identically placed with himself. And he sees that on all the bodies that are entitled to give him orders he himself is represented, and that sovietism is continually developing the representative system in new ways, with a view to making him realty, so far as is humanly possible, the captain of his soul.

Concurrently with this scientific attack on the central problem of democracy, and as a coherent and organised part of the attack, there grows the close connection between the scientific worker and the farm. Mechanisation and research are the points at which the connection makes itself most explicitly felt. The mechanisation of agriculture has transformed the downtrodden *mujik* of Russian tradition and the share-cropping serf of central Asian tradition, to both of whom the possession of a horse was the pinnacle of ambition, from untutored and dependent spirits into upstanding democratic and co-operative men of business and technicians, who drive tractor aggregates, maintain and operate harvester-combines and threshing machines, organise the cultivation of thousands of acres, and administer budgets of millions of roubles.

Scientific research and the farmers are able to meet and to understand one another, because there is an agronome with some technical training on every farm; because many farms have a laboratory where experiments in seed selection, dates of sowing, and manures are conducted; and because many farmers again keep up a regular correspondence with prominent scientists, send their most talented sons and daughters to the universities, build their own schools, hospitals, clinics, and establish their own considerable libraries.

Men and women who live their lives under conditions like these are guided by a much stronger and deeper scientific influence than farmers in any European country. They acquire an experimental attitude, and they approach every traditional element not with the assertion "This we must cherish and preserve as the wisdom of the giants of old," but with the question "How can this be improved, developed, reconciled with our positive knowledge?" They are no longer peasants in the old sense, the sense extolled by Hitler, Petain, and the Roman Catholic Church, They are not ultimate atoms of individualistic greed, whose acre and cow make them for ever impervious to the blandishments of socialism, the polar opposites of the propertyless wage-slaves of industry, the eternal dupes of peers and priests. The collective farms are agro-cities in the making, and their members are the forerunners of the free proletariat of those cities, the predestined partners and unbreakable allies of the trade unions which control the industrial machine.

How far the permeation of soviet agriculture by technical and scientific workers has been carried may be indicated by a few figures.

In 1937, seven years after the beginning of the drive for collectivisation, the collectivised structure as a whole included over 2 million administrative workers, technical experts, and machine operators, made up as follows:

#### *Administrative workers*

Farm presidents	236,528
Deputy presidents	147,861
Presidents of inspection commissions	232,421
Book-keepers and accountants	248,390

---

	865,200
<i>Technical workers:</i>	
Managers of communal stock farms	181,483
Stock brigadiers	68,335
Veterinary surgeons and assistants ..	52,547
Agricultural specialists	16,113
	318,478
<i>Machine operators</i>	
Tractor brigadiers	95,832
Tractor drivers	685,016
Combine drivers	82,413
Drivers	56,079
Mechanics	29,779
Threshing machine operators	40,343
Flax pulling machine operators	4,340
	903,802
Total	2,087,480

### *Social Security on the Farms*

Since members of collective farms are not, as such, members of trade unions, they do not benefit by the elaborate system of social services administered under the auspices of the A.U.C.C.T.U. They therefore make arrangements of their own for the health and the economic security of their members. The basis of these arrangements is extremely simple, and consists in allowing those who cannot work to receive their share of the joint produce of the farm just as though they could and did. The maintenance of orphans, the sick, the aged, of women during maternity, and of anyone injured in an accident, is provided for in this way.

For old people for whom the main work of the collective has become too heavy, a hostel is often prepared in the village, with a garden and a small farm of its own: this gives them a little light and congenial occupation from which they can supplement their share of the collective earnings. Provision for sickness normally includes a clinic for the visiting doctor, and a small hospital, with perhaps half a dozen beds, in charge of a trained nurse. The cost of all medical treatment is met by the collective and not by individual members. For young children there is almost invariably a crèche, and parents commonly receive a supplementary allowance in respect of each child under working age.

Broadly speaking, social insurance is provided by spreading every kind of risk over the whole collective, with important help at various points from a number of government departments whose policy, energetically pursued, is to raise social provision in the country districts to the same level as in the towns. Each collective decides for itself, in the general meeting of its members, what precise forms social provision shall take, and in what order the various forms shall be developed.

### *The Dead Hand of the Party?*

Some of our candid friends abroad, who dwell with relish on the themes of the “red imperialism of the Kremlin” and “the betrayal of the revolution by the U.S.S.R.,” prefer to paint our collective farmers as a resentful swarm of tortured slaves groaning under the tyranny of brutal and



power-drunk Communazis.

I should be the last to underestimate the influence of the communist party in any field of soviet life. It is not, however, the case that the bolsheviks run the collective farms to suit their own purposes and in violation of those of the farmers. Pervasive as their energy is, it is different in kind from direct control. It has to be, as the following figures will make clear.

In March 1940, at a time when the all-Union total of party members and candidates was nearly 4 million, the number of members and candidates working on collective farms was 343,000 or an average of 1.45 per farm.

In the U.S.S.R. as a whole there were some 20,000 primary organisations of the party in the collectives—less than one to every ten farms.

### III. THE CONSUMERS' CO-OPERATIVES

Yet another of the democratic forms characteristic of sovietism has a special relevance to African conditions. This is the consumers' co-operative movement, which in the rural districts is mainly responsible for retail trade, and which forms an indispensable third partner to the village soviet and the collective farm. The village co-op shop is as familiar and universal in the soviet countryside as the trader's store is in native Africa.

It is the soviet achievement, not paralleled, I think, in any other country, to have made retail distribution a genuine school of democracy for the most primitive citizens.

The basic function of retail trade organisations in rural Africa and in the country districts of the U.S.S.R. is much the same. It is (*a*) to distribute to the rural population consumption goods manufactured in the towns, and (*b*) to assist in the collection of agricultural produce and raw materials needed for the subsistence of the urban population.

This function does not, of course, cover the whole retail field. There are also exchanges of locally produced goods among the rural population. Often, too, the farmer is in a position to act as tradesman on his own account in some neighbouring urban centre. For both these purposes the bazaar or the organised fair exists, and is a common feature of the countryside, or at least of particular market-centres, in Africa and the U.S.S.R., alike. The U.S.S.R., however, limits such free markets to direct dealings between producers and consumers, and insists on the exclusion of re-graters (as medieval England called them), or speculators (as they are known to soviet law).

The bazaar, and other forms of open market where producer and consumer meet in person and haggle until mutually acceptable terms are reached, have a great and growing importance in the soviet economy. They have long received every encouragement from the soviet authorities, subject only to the proviso that their development shall not involve any revival of the private capitalist "sector" in the circulation of commodities. (Private capitalism in this context means hiring wage-labour in order to make a profit out of its product, and buying goods in order to resell at a profit.) But our concern here is not with bazaars. It is rather with the large-scale impersonal exchanges between town and country which are mediated in Africa by the "kafir-truck store" and in the U.S.S.R. by the village co-op.

#### *Retail Trade in Rural Africa*

The back-veld storekeeper engaged in native trade in Africa is, typically, not an African. He is a European, an Indian, an Arab, a Greek, or a Syrian. The backbone of his business consists in buying cash crops, livestock or products from natives and in selling to natives a fairly wide range of the shoddier types of factory-made goods. He is sometimes a direct agent of the wholesalers

who supply him and to whom he delivers his local purchases; he is almost always financially dependent on them.

His further activities include the purchase of grain from natives, and its re-sale to the same natives a few months later at an enhanced price. Much of his trading is done on credit, the security consisting either of cattle or the bond of some third party. Over much of Africa, especially south of the equator, the European storekeeper in tribal areas also acts as a recruiter of native labour for the copper and gold mines, receiving for his services a capitation fee that varies with the length of the labour-contract into which the recruits enter.

Almost all these practices would be regarded, and treated, as felonious in the U.S.S.R. Even in British Africa probably few people consider them socially desirable. Clearly they are in the main survivals of a system of *laissez faire* too indolent to forestall their emergence. They invite, and receive, many kinds of abuse. We may take an illustration from the Gold Coast. An African witness before the Cocoa Commission of 1938 emphasised the following points:

(a) The big European importers in West Africa have long been parties to a Merchandise Agreement, by which they fix the prices of such staple imports as bread, flour, sugar, and rice. The African farmer, however, is at the mercy of the big European exporters in regard to the price of his own product. The big European exporters are the big European importers acting in another capacity.

(b) When the world price of native produce rises (e.g. cocoa, palm oil, ground nuts), the importers and their retail agents up and down the country increase correspondingly the price of various staple imports most in demand. The increase is made irrespective of any movement in the cost price of the staples concerned. Thus the African farmer, who spends most of his earnings on imported goods, is deprived of the benefit of any rise in the price of his product.

(c) The European wholesalers, acting in concert with the chain of retail agents dependent on them, manage in this way to control both the prices of African produce and the prices of the imported trade goods on which African producers subsist. The farmer's labour power is converted into a commodity, and the farmer himself is reduced to full economic dependence on these large-scale European private interests.

No doubt the West African case has special features of its own. But certainly applicable to the African scene in general is the broad pattern in which Africans receive too little for what they sell and give too much for what they buy. If matters were not arranged thus, the keeper of a small store in a native area could never maintain a European standard of living by dealing in kafil truck; nor could his wholesaling principals make those higher profits which colonial trade and investment are expected to yield, as compared with similar activities in the home country.

### *Democratising Trade*

However, the purpose of this note is not to dwell on the presence of European sharp practice, but rather to emphasise the absence of African democracy. Let us see how the consumers' co-operative movement has been used in the U.S.S.R. to furnish a democratic, or partially democratic, solution to a similar problem. For, though the co-ops are at present an integral part of the soviet system, we should not assume that they are necessarily a permanent part of it. On the contrary it is probable that the co-operative movement's task is-to contribute to the completion and the perfecting of soviet communism, and in particular to undertake special intensive work in rural areas, but eventually to yield place to more fully developed socialist forms,

However that may be, the present structure of internal trade is broadly as follows. First there are the shops and department stores run by the Commissariat for Domestic Trade, and by the

various production trusts; secondly, the vast consumers' co-operative system itself; thirdly the shops run by the producers' co-operatives and associations of handicraftsmen; and finally the bazaars and markets at which collective farm produce, and that of the relatively few remaining individualist peasants, is sold. Mention should also be made of the important arrangements by which collective farm produce is sold direct to the state, or to co-operative wholesale buying organisations, or to particular factories and establishments.

By a decree of September 1935 a re-division of functions took place as between the state retail organisations on the one hand and the co-operative movement on the other. In brief, trading in the towns was thenceforward confined to the former, while the co-operative supply system was concentrated on the small country towns and villages.

Before this arrangement came into force, soviet trading had taken place under emergency conditions, and many articles had been subject to a rationing scheme. The 1935 decree was part of a wide movement of reform, marking the end of rationing and heralding an era of relative plenty under the second five-year plan. The rural consumer was to have a voice in selecting the stock-in-trade of his own co-op, such as had been impossible when even necessities were in short supply. Whereas in the period of shortage and general belt-tightening during the first five-year plan the country population had virtually had to take whatever it was given by the central distributing organs, the primary co-ops were from 1935 onwards urged to exercise increased control over their own commercial transactions and finance. The levels in the co-operative hierarchy above the primary societies were to plan and co-ordinate, but not to exert arbitrary authority.

Thus the village co-ops are run on the same democratic lines as the soviets, the trade unions, and the collective farms. The machinery is indeed so similar that it would be tedious to describe it here in detail. Enough to say that the pyramid of co-operative organisation is based on the general meetings of the members of the local societies—societies of which in the whole country there are over 40,000, comprising a total membership of 37 millions. All members have a direct voice in choosing the officers of their own primary society at elections by secret ballot, at which a minimum percentage of members must vote. Delegates to the higher levels in the hierarchy are chosen by indirect election. The All-Union Congress of Consumers' Co-operatives is attended by delegates in the proportion of one to every 75,000 members of primary societies.

Soviet co-ops differ in the following ways from those with which British people are normally familiar:

(1) They are closely articulated with the whole soviet economy and the whole soviet political system. For example, it is the conscious aim of a village co-op to assist the work of the local collective farm as actively as possible. During sowing, reaping, and threshing, stalls are opened in the fields, so that farmers of both sexes can do their shopping at their point of work, without having to make a long trek to the village.

(2) The co-ops therefore do not suffer from the hostile environment which monopoly capitalism provides for them in Britain. A consequence is that their internal organisation is more effectively democratic.

(3) The soviet co-operative system, like every form of economic activity in the U.S.S.R., is conceived as a social service, rather than as a means of differential advantage for its members. Hence there is no "divi" on purchases, and no interest on share capital. The effort is wholly towards keeping prices low, and surpluses are deliberately avoided. A decision of Centrosoyus (the all-union headquarters of the movement) limits the normal profit of a village co-op to 1½ or 2 per cent. A profit, when made, is not distributed, but is applied to some public purpose of use to members and approved by them.

(4) In accordance with the above principle the prices of goods sold in co-op shops are fixed by Gosplan and Centrosoyus in consultation. No credit is given in co-op shops.

### *The Co-op as Middleman*

Like the back-veld storekeeper in Africa, the village co-op in the U.S.S.R. is not concerned merely with selling goods; it plays a minor but considerable part in the collection of agricultural produce from the farms and its transfer to the urban centres. Most of such collections take the form either of statutory deliveries from the collective farms to the state-collecting organisations, or of direct government purchases from the farms, or of sales by the farms (or by individual farmers) on the open market. There is, however, a fourth method, known as the method of “decentralised collections.” Organisations which make use of this method may be certain departments of the Commissariats of Domestic Trade or of Food Industries which require foodstuffs for processing or canning; or they may be local restaurants, hospitals, and state shops which require supplies of perishable foodstuffs for immediate local consumption. These decentralised collections are nowadays made mainly through the village co-ops, whose function in this respect corresponds fairly closely to that of the capitalist middleman—an intermediary between the large-scale buyer and a number of scattered sellers. They serve, in fact, as the local agents of the co-operative wholesale buying organisations.

Here is another vital link between the co-ops and the collective farms. The farmers use the co-ops in this way to dispose of the balance of their marketable surplus, after they have met the requirements of the government and made what sales they can on the open market. The farmer, however, pays no charge for the service. For what he sells he receives the whole of an officially fixed price. The village co-op, on its side, receives fixed scales of payment to cover the costs of collection, storage, sorting and grading, etc., plus half the profit realised by the regional collecting office when the goods are sold. The co-op members and the collective farmers are, in the main, the same people, differently organised indeed for different purposes, but always exercising a measure of democratic control over their own collective activities, whether as producers, or as sellers, or as consumers.

These arrangements preclude such exploitation of the agriculturalist as was complained of in the West African example mentioned above.

It is true that critics who are swayed by a powerful hatred of the U.S.S.R. often allege that the collective farmer is, or has been, exploited by or on behalf of the worker in urban industry. In support of the charge they cite such facts as that in 1934, when the rural population formed 70 per cent of the total population, only 30 per cent of the output of factory-made consumption goods was allocated to rural districts. Much might be said in reply. But it is enough to emphasise (a) that 70 per cent of the total harvest was then and is normally consumed by the rural population; (b) that the allocation of factory-made goods as between town and country is made as part of a national policy designed, over a term of years, to abolish inequalities in the standard of living—a national policy, moreover, in the formulation of which collective farmers actively participate through the soviets, the farm organisations, the co-ops, and the organs of the communist party.

The West African producer of export crops, on the other hand, is confronted with a policy framed by private monopolists in their private interests. While its detailed terms are stubbornly kept secret from him by the monopolists, they are at the same time enforced against him by a government which is in no sense either representative of him or responsible to him.

### *No Consumers' Co-ops in British Africa*

Why should not a consumers' co-operative movement solve the problems of distribution in rural Africa, as it has gone far to solve them in the rural districts of the U.S.S.R.? In principle no reason whatever. But in practice many obstacles exist.

The position of co-operation in Africa is curious. All the passages in Hailey which refer to it are uneasy and constrained. To begin with, although some courageous but small-scale attempts have been made to build up consumers' co-ops in South Africa, no consumers' movement exists in the tropical dependencies. What goes by 'the name of co-operation in tropical Africa is certain organisations of producers which are mainly concerned with marketing, credit, and thrift. These have a limited usefulness as doing something to weaken the control of the middleman and the money-lender over the agricultural producer. The middleman and the money-lender, we may note in passing, are frequently the same person. In Eastern and Central Africa he would normally be either a European or an Indian or an Arab; in the western dependencies either an African or some type of non-European permanently settled in Africa. Whatever his race may be, as a rule he is the agent of a European firm, and as a rule his activities are financed with the aid, direct or indirect, of British banks. All these interests are no doubt the devoted enemies of any native co-operative movement.

Naturally such producers' societies as do exist have little bearing on the problems of internal trade that we discussed in connection with the U.S.S.R. The key to those problems belongs to the consumers' societies. Nor indeed can the producers' societies, as Hailey feels obliged to admit, be described as genuinely co-operative in the sense of being voluntary and self-managing. We have seen what happened to the K.N.P.A. in Tanganyika. And in general the organisations of native producers are official in character and directed by European civil servants as part of their duties under the colonial governments.

The rigid official control of native producers' societies also points to the chief reason for the non-emergence of a consumers' co-operative movement. This reason is the fear in the mind of officialdom lest such a movement should undermine the whole policy of indirect rule based on the artificial buttressing of tribal institutions. Hailey deals with the issue with typically British evasiveness (p. 1482). "There are some," he says, "who, while acknowledging the advantages which may be expected from the extension of the movement, have hesitated to support it, on the ground that the existence of the co-operative society may be incompatible with the position accorded to native authorities under the system of indirect rule. It is felt that such societies represent groups of persons united by common interests and loyalties not shared by the rest of the community, so that their existence may tend to loosen those tribal bonds on the maintenance of which the evolutionary development of native societies depends.... There is, of course, the possibility that, *representing as it probably would the more progressive elements of the tribe*, the co-operative society might become a focus of opposition to traditional authority, and recent experience in Tanganyika shows that there is a real risk of conflict." (The reference is to the Chagga business.)

Those who have been trained in the soul-searing trade of interpreting diplomatic language will readily see that this statement has a simple equivalent in plain English; namely that the so-called policy of indirect rule inevitably implies a resolve on the part of British officials to foster the authoritarian and traditional elements in African life at the expense of the progressive and democratic elements.

## IV. THE LAW COURTS

Most British people would consider the judicial system even less promising than retail distribution as a field for democratic experiment. The soviet order has, however, worked out various ways of establishing organic links between the courts and the people.

The problem to be solved can best be stated by describing how justice is administered in British Africa. Civil disputes between Africans in the tribal areas are normally heard in the first instance by native courts; that is to say, by N.A.s acting in their judicial capacity. Some minor criminal cases are also tried by these courts. But again only in the first instance. The work of native courts is subject to close review by the European District Officer. According to Hailey, it is in this administrative supervision that there lies "admittedly the main guarantee of the quality of justice" which native courts dispense.

Serious criminal cases involving Africans, and cases of every kind which involve non-Africans, fall outside the jurisdiction of native courts, and are tried by European magistrates. In all except the highest branches of the colonial judicial system, administrative officers, usually men without special legal training, do the bulk of the judicial work. True, there has been in recent years some tendency to separate administrative from judicial functions, and to entrust the judicial to "professional" magistrates. But the judicial posts have in most cases been filled by officers drawn from the administrative service. The practical changes brought about by the trend of policy in favour of extending "professional" justice have therefore been slight so far.

Speaking broadly, one man is still in the position, over most of British Africa, of being the prosecutor, counsel for defence, jury, and judge, as well as chief constable responsible for the order and welfare of his district. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the "statutory" courts, as they are called, fail to make on Africans any powerful impression of their value as sources of justice. Nor is it surprising either that pressure is often brought to bear on administrative officers acting as magistrates not to give decisions or pass sentences or even make observations from the bench that may be found politically inconvenient by the governor or his advisers. Since prospects of promotion depend on confidential personal reports from the governor to the Colonial Office, it takes a strong man to resist such pressure.

### *Elected Judges and Assessors*

Compare all this with the soviet arrangements. The soviet order begins by brushing aside most of the categories and classifications of the British system. It does not distinguish two different types of soviet citizen, one "native" and the other non-"native"; it makes no distinction between civil and criminal courts, and very little between procedure in civil and criminal cases. It differs from the British system also in applying the principle of the election of judges.

Justice is administered (*a*) by the courts of first instance, the district and provincial courts, (*b*) by the Supreme Courts of the constituent republics, and (*c*) by the highest judicial organ, the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. There are also certain special courts which for present purposes we can ignore.

The courts under (*b*) and (*c*) are elected by the Supreme Soviet for a period of five years. The courts under (*a*) are elected directly by the citizens of the district, on the basis of universal and equal franchise, for a period of three years.

The elective character of the courts, however, is not the only means to popular participation in the administration of justice. In the courts of first instance the professional judge is assisted by two lay judges, or people's assessors, who have equal rights and equal responsibilities with the professional judge himself. They have power to outvote him on the bench on questions of law as

well as on questions of fact. The power is probably little used, and in practice the people's assessors fulfil much the same function as a British jury.

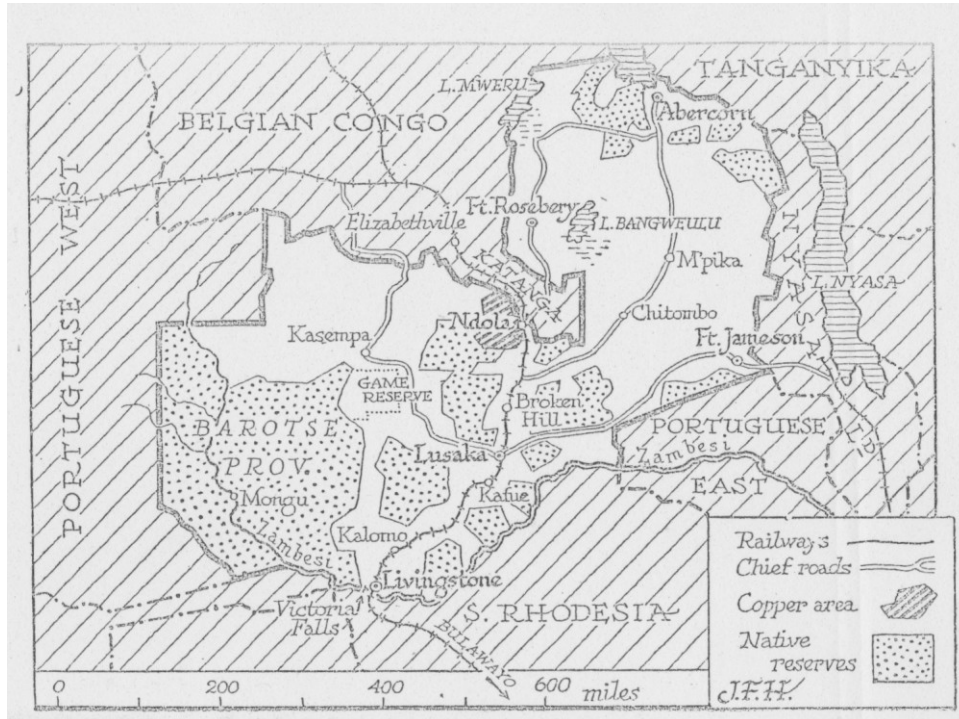
They are drawn for a week or so at a time from a panel of persons elected by the factory committees, the troops of the Red Army, and the village soviets. Lists of candidates for the panels are displayed in the workers' clubs and in the 'factories, etc., in order that any citizen may, if he wishes, exercise his rights of raising objection to any name before the election committee.

In this way judges are continuously reminded that the "King" for whom they act is not any central authority but the sovereign people themselves. At the same time it is borne in upon the people that theirs is the ultimate responsibility for the quality of justice dispensed. And finally the presence of popular representatives on the bench furnishes a guarantee that the justice dispensed will, year in and year out, tally pretty closely with the community's sense of what is fair.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONTEXT OF NATIVE LABOUR

#### I



NORTHERN RHODESIA

When we left the Falls, Geoffrey Stewart took us straight to Broken Hill—a typical township which epitomises in its own person the relations between European industrialism and African culture in the present phase of their contact. Geoffrey was anxious to show Vova round, both for this reason and because, having just completed a social survey of the place, he was well primed with accurate information about it.

Broken Hill, like Caesar's Gaul, is divided into three parts. There the resemblance ends; for the parts consist of a mine, a railway depot, and a general town comprising the shops, the Government and professional offices, the European residential area, and a so-called "location" for natives. Thus Broken Hill is not a unified municipality. The mine and the railway each build their own houses for most of their own employees, and in these "camps" or housing estates they maintain their own roads, water and sanitary services. The general town outside the mine and railway camps is administered by a Management Board of seven members, of whom three are appointed by the Government, and four elected by the ratepayers. There is no representation of Africans.

The railway reached Broken Hill as long ago as 1906. Mining began in the same year, at first chiefly for lead; in recent years the output of zinc and vanadium has predominated. During the thirty-six years of its life it has become also a market for the neighbouring countryside, and to some extent a commercial and administrative centre. By 1940 the population had risen to some 1,600 Europeans and 15,000 Africans, together with a small group of Indians and a few half-



castes. Many of the Europeans and some ten per cent of the Africans profess the Christian faith; the Indians are Hindus.

The Europeans constitute a ruling caste, enjoying a monopoly of authority and of the work that requires most skill and carries most pay. The Indians are engaged mainly in retail trade, with the African population for their customers. The Africans are employed as mine and railway-workers, as house-servants, and in menial capacities in shops and offices. A small group of them, three hundred or so, are self-employed.

Of the 15,000 Africans resident in 1940, 7,500 were men, 3,500 were women, and 4,000 were children under 15, Eighty-six per cent of the men were gainfully occupied, and 14 per cent were visitors or unemployed. There was little in the way of regular employment for the women. The average cash wage of Africans was 17s. 6d. a month, or £10 10s. a year. The custom was (and is) for African wage-earners to be given free rations and free quarters as well; and the value of these items is normally taken to be about equivalent to the cash wage.

These bare facts quickly came to light as Geoffrey conducted us round the native compounds run by the mine, the railway, and the town, poorly planned, down-at-heel clusters of tiny, one-roomed, floorless shacks, huddled together in incredible drabness on ground as naked and treeless as a barrack-square. The water-supply was one stand-pipe to every so many houses; and there was a communal latrine every so many hundred yards.

We also made a tour of the five-acre plots which the mine offers to its native workers in the hope of attracting a stable and semi-permanent labour force. There were 750 of these mine plots occupied by an African population of over 5,000. The Government, too, was running a similar scheme, comprising 170 plots and a population of 1,300. Here we were more favourably impressed than by the wretched compounds and locations. Africans living on the plots build two or more thatched huts in the native style, in place of the single-roomed wood and iron shacks of the compounds, and they grow supplies of vegetables and corn as well. It was a relief to learn that not far short of half the African population of Broken Hill benefited from the five-acre plot schemes.

Vova spent two very full days inspecting everything there was to be seen in the town and its neighbourhood, interviewing officials, talking casually with Africans, storing up facts in his mind. The connection between facts, the interpretation of facts—these seemed to have no interest for him during this time. His concern was just to amass factual material, without regard to quality or relevance. Then, on the third day, it was as though he suddenly said to himself: “Now we must start arranging all this in some sort of pattern.” No more silent absorption of what others told him. He turned instead a drumfire of questions on everyone within range—and in particular on Geoffrey. The work of appraisal began.

## II

“Those figures you gave us, Mr. Stewart,” he said, as we drank our mid-morning tea on the hotel stoop, “seem to show an odd distribution of population for a town that is nearly forty years old. Out of 15,000 Africans, I think you said, half are men, less than a quarter are women, and rather more than a quarter are children under fifteen, in fact, the total of women and children together just about equals the men. Am I right?”

Geoffrey nodded. “Well,” Vova went on, “that looks like a very unstable situation. Why is a normal balance so slow in asserting itself?”

“Broken Hill’s career has been pretty chequered all round, you know,” was Geoffrey’s reply.

“It took the town twenty-five years, 1905-1930, to climb up to the 10,000 mark, and there was a bad set-back in consequence of the 1914-18 war. In 1930 came the world slump, and the number of Africans then fell to about 5,000. In the seven years between 1933 and 1940 it increased steadily to 15,000, and is probably a thousand or two more to-day. But 1940 is the last year for which we have precise figures.”

“I see,” said Vova. “Then does that imply that the African men are just migrant labourers, and the women and children just casual camp-followers, as it were? I mean, do the men flit to and fro between the town and their tribal villages throughout their early working lives, and finally retire to tribal seclusion in middle age?”

“I dare say that was the typical experience until the great slump. But only about one-fifth are migrant labourers in your sense to-day. Seventy per cent now consist of men who have spent more than two-thirds of their time in town since they first left their tribal homes. Typically, labour is no longer migrant; it has become really urbanised, but on what one may call a temporary basis. The normal thing is for men to come to town from the tribal areas during their sixteenth year, and to stay in urban employment for anything up to twenty years, with only occasional and short holidays at home with the tribespeople. At present most of them go back to the tribe permanently when they reach middle age. But some do not. And it is hard to say what the fashion is likely to be in the future. It depends on changes in the structure of world economy. Meanwhile, one can say that the old labour migration is disappearing, temporary urbanisation is the rule, and permanent urbanisation, in the shape of Africans who are town-born and town-bred and have no tribal home, is setting in.”

“Then I take it that the African men in Broken Hill are in the main both able-bodied and young, and that more than half of them are unmarried?”

“Yes.”

“Have you ever tried to work out how big the African population of the town would be, if these young able-bodied workers had brought with them a proportionate sample of the old and infirm, and of women and children—proportionate, I mean, to the distribution by sex and age that is normal in the tribal areas.”

“Yes, I have,” Geoffrey answered. “The calculation shows that it would be nearly trebled. About 40,000, to be exact, as compared with the present 15,000.”

“So industrialisation here means that the rural areas are at once denuded of able-bodied young men, and left overloaded with old people, women and children?”

“Yes.”

“Obviously,” went on Vova, “in the early days of mining development the young and able-bodied would be the first of the tribespeople to be drawn into the town. But what I do not understand is why, after thirty-six years, they have still not been followed by a roughly proportionate number of the general population.”

“You’ll find the answer partly in the wage policy and the homing policy which have been followed by employers of African labour. The big employers in Broken-Hill, the mine and the railway, are not merely employers; they exercise various functions of local and central government. Or to put the same thing in another way, the employee’s remuneration is not simply a cash wage; it is also a complicated system of payment in kind. The employers provide the worker with lodging, rations, and a patch of ground for a kitchen garden; also with part rations for his wife, if he is married. They police their housing estates and their industrial property. In addition to roads, water-supply, and sanitary services, they put up buildings for clinics, for Christian worship, for schooling, and for a market. They even maintain African football teams, and give cer-

tain other small subsidies to the entertainment of Africans.”

“And the point of all this, I suppose, is to ensure an adequate supply of labour and to reduce wastage of personnel?”

“Quite, it encourages married men to offer themselves for employment, and to bring their wives with them. Married workers who have their wives with them settle down to the job more contentedly and for longer and less interrupted periods. So from the mine’s standpoint they mean mere efficiency and smaller labour-turnover. If the wives stayed in the country, and the married workers were therefore continually returning to it, both the quantity and the quality of the labour force available in the town at any given moment would be much reduced.”

“The proportion of married workers is as low as it is mainly because of the age-distribution of the labour force as a whole?”

“Yes. Well over 40 per cent of the town labourers are youths in their late teens or early twenties. The majority of men over twenty have their wives with them.”

“What it comes to, then, is that wives normally follow the worker to town, but fiancées, parents, and other relatives do not? Why only wives? Is there no employment of native women in domestic service?”

“Very little. It’s a peculiarity of Africa that almost all the housework is still done by men servants. The reason why only wives come is that the others can’t be either housed or fed in the town. There is no housing accommodation available for them, and no particular inducement for European enterprise, public or private, to put it up: as for African enterprise, it has no inducement either, except family piety, and its resources would not run to anything beyond a grass hut: only the holders of five-acre plots have anywhere to put even these. The older people have no savings which they could apply to their own keep; and the labour market offers little in the way of light work by which they could earn it. The wages of the young married worker barely suffice to feed and clothe his wife and children. They leave nothing over for provision against his own old age, let alone for the support of the previous generation.”

### III

“So that,” said Vova, “is what things look like if we view them from the town end. What is the picture if we view them from the village end?”

“From that angle,” Geoffrey answered, “the trouble is that the industrial revolution, which draws the young men away to town, has not been balanced by an agricultural revolution enabling the remaining tribespeople to maintain the food supply. In N. Rhodesia as a whole, 110,000 able-bodied men, including 80 per cent of the men between 15 and 35, have been taken off agricultural work. Thus food-production is now mainly in the hands of women and the middle-aged and elderly men.”

“And does that upset the working of the traditional agriculture?”

“Yes. The tribal technique of food-growing, as practised over most of N. Rhodesia, involves the heavy work of cutting down trees, and burning them to form a seed-bed of the ash. All this presupposes the availability of a more or less normal complement of able-bodied men. Women haven’t the strength for such work, and in any case are fully occupied with other duties. Consequently, female labour can be substituted for male in the tribal economy only to a limited extent.”

“Then the position is that about four-fifths of the whole African population, including all the aged and infirm and most of the children, have to feed themselves, with only one-fifth of the

young men under 35 to help them?"

"That's it," Geoffrey replied. "And they can't do it. Hence increasing hunger. The population has to adjust. Hence infant mortality of at least 50 per cent."

"A Malthusian situation neatly, and I suppose unwittingly, engineered by Anglo-American capital?"

"Oh, they're unwitting enough in one sense. As long as their mines run smoothly, they take no interest in remote unplanned effects of their policies."

"Well, given this mining development, how can the rural problem be solved?"

"In one way only. By mechanisation, and by scientific methods of farming and of labour organisation."

"Why is that solution not adopted?"

"Because it would require a complete re-financing of agriculture and much new capital investment in it. African agriculture, mind you. What capitalist is going to invest in agriculture in tribal areas where the land is not in individual ownership and can't be pledged to money-lenders? Besides that, another prerequisite of agricultural development is a profitable market for produce. Such a market doesn't exist."

"Do you mean the rural population will not be in a position to feed itself until it has to feed others as well?"

"It sounds silly, I know. But that is what it comes to. No radical reconstruction of African farming is possible, while it remains on a subsistence basis. That is another way of saying that the problem is to incorporate it into an economic system based on commodity exchange—which implies both a marketable surplus and a market to absorb it."

"Well, you have some sort of urban market in Rhodesia. How does the present population of the towns get fed?"

"By a few white settlers, who occupy land specially favoured in the matter of transport facilities, and who work it with unskilled African labour at low wages—considerably lower than those paid by mine and railway in the town."

"The urban market for agricultural products would, we agreed, be much larger if the urban workers were accompanied to town by a proportion of the general population corresponding to their own numbers?"

"Yes," Geoffrey answered. "Over the whole of N. Rhodesia the urban population would then comprise some 600,000 Africans of all ages, instead of the present group of 200,000 with its special composition in point of age and sex."

"And you think this difference of 400,000 mouths would be sufficient to set the agricultural revolution in motion?"

"It would provide the conditions for it, anyway; 400,000 is a very big figure in the N. Rhodesian context—nearly one-third of the whole population."

"All right," said Vova. "Let us imagine these 600,000 Africans to be living in the towns and having to buy their food. Might not the white man collar that market as he has collared so many others? Might not such a position lead just as easily to a further influx of white settlers as to a revolution in native agriculture?"

"Undoubtedly that danger would need guarding against. But it is worth pointing out perhaps that if new settlers came, they wouldn't be able to follow the old settler methods. They wouldn't be able to farm with a low co-efficient of mechanisation and a high co-efficient of unskilled labour. The extension of that sort of farming is strictly limited by the supply of able-bodied male African labour. Since the towns already employ four-fifths of the young men under 35, N. Rho-

desia is close to saturation point, so far as the absorption of white settlers of the traditional type is concerned. If the country were to take many more of them, their new demand for native labour would force wages up, and European farmers in the whole of this part of Africa would soon find themselves obliged to re-organise on a basis of extensive mechanisation and a small quantity of relatively costly labour. Also, as the towns would need increasing quantities of trade goods to exchange against deliveries of agricultural goods from the countryside, they would soon be led to discover that, in many cases, manufacturing them on the spot would be cheaper than importing them. Secondary industry would get a foothold, in its turn extending the demand for labour and reinforcing the rising tendency of wages. This would alarm the mines. Altogether I have a feeling that in such circumstances white settlement might not seem a very alluring proposition to any of the main interests likely to be concerned.”

“I dare say there is something in that: though I think that the mines and others might be equally alarmed at any real development of African agriculture. That, too, would have the effect of limiting the supply of low-paid African labour.”

“I quite agree,” said Geoffrey. “Whichever way things go, there’ll be opposition from the mines. And that means from Anglo-American capital as a whole. Yet things can hardly continue indefinitely as they are.”

“No. So on your reading the sequence of events seems to be this. Mining development, combined with railway construction, gives rise to the town. With the emergence of the town come differential levels of wealth, easily set up because the tribal economy is already so poor. Very low urban wages are then enough to attract more men from the country than the labour market normally needs. There is really a dual force at work: the attraction of urban wages and the propulsion of rural poverty. The duality suffices to keep wages low. This is shown by the fact that the great increase in industrial employment during the last ten years has occurred with only a slight rise in wage-rates. Only the younger men, therefore, with some of their closest relatives can be supported in town, and this restriction of the urban population means in turn the absence of a market for rural produce large enough to break the vicious circle.”

“That about sums it up. My one amendment would be to read descending spiral for your word circle. First a semi-primitive peasant agriculture, giving a bare subsistence: next, cheap unskilled urban labour: then disproportion between the rural population and the urban population; and finally a loss of balance in the peasant agriculture, which leaves it even more inadequate than it was to start with. Those are the interlocking functions that have got N. Rhodesia into its mess. It won’t get out again until a stable industrial population confronts and balances a stable agricultural population, so that a rational system of exchange between town and country can be built up. The difficulty is that the vicious functions interlock so well that they can’t be altered singly; if one is to change, all must change together. In practice that means that change can’t be initiated locally. As I put it in an essay I once wrote, the lack of balance will persist, so long as world economy is directed rather to the production of producers’ goods, high dividends, and guns than to that of consumers’ goods, high wages and butter.”<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

Vova listened attentively to this thesis, and was plainly delighted at Geoffrey’s connecting the particular troubles of N. Rhodesia with the inner nature of the vast complex of capitalism itself. It was amusing to watch him silently registering Geoffrey as one of the few intelligent Eng-

---

<sup>1</sup> Godfrey Wilson, *op. cit.*. Part I, p. 54.

lishmen he had met on our trip. His enthusiasm swept them both off on a long and rather technical discussion in economics, which it would be inappropriate to set down in detail here. But I feel bound to attempt a short summary.

The view in which my two companions seemed to concur, and which indeed they seem to regard as orthodox, was this. The squalor and want of the Rhodesian countryside and the social tension of the Rhodesian towns arise immediately from the outstripping of all other forms of economic development by mining. The concentration on mining in N. Rhodesia is itself merely one instance among many of a disproportion habitual in the world economy at large—an economy of which N. Rhodesia is just a small outlying sector. This general and habitual disproportion is the tendency to overdevelop heavy industry, and thus to pile up producers' goods to the neglect of the production of consumers' goods.

If one traces the causal sequence further back, it appears that the chronic endeavour to buy new capital goods at a faster rate than the economic system can assimilate them must characterise any social order in which much larger incomes are distributed as rents, profits, and other gains arising from the ownership of capital goods than can be earned as work-income based on the amount and the kind of work done. And in such an order there is an inherent tendency for savings to outrun investment, as well as for investment, expressed in productive capacity, to outrun consuming power. For people who can afford to do so not only invest (i.e. buy capital goods) whenever a favourable opportunity offers; they also try to save in money when a favourable opportunity for saving in real terms (i.e. for investment) does not offer. When *investment* prospects are uninviting, that is to say, they still try to enrich themselves by amassing claims on the community, without proceeding to the construction of physical property of lasting value. This is over-saving, and it entails that less money is spent than is needed to buy the whole of the output of which the economy is capable.

The trade cycle of alternating slump and boom is thus seen as a function of the maldistribution of national income in the great industrial communities—a distribution that allots too small a share to worker-consumers who use it almost wholly on current demand for commodities, and too large a share to property-owners who try to save too much of it, and who treat the investment of their savings as a matter of personal caprice.

The threat of slump, and of a condition in which effective demand lags permanently behind the possibilities of supply can be avoided, temporarily at least, by some national economies, if they contrive a large territorial expansion of the market open to their products. But it stands to reason that, in a world where distance means as little as it does to-day, this remedy can be applied only to a few nations. The whole territory of the globe gets earmarked to one nation or another long before the imperialist aspirations of all nations are fulfilled. The once-sedate and dignified expansionism turns into a catch-as-catch-can, devil-take-the-hindmost scramble, less and less compatible with international peace. As the proportion of backward undeveloped countries to advanced industrial countries shrinks, the latter split into two hostile groups, the haves and the have-nots, the fat and the lean, each group baring its fangs against the other. No longer is the choice for any of them between slump and empire; it is now between slump and war. For the fat cry "What we have we hold," and the lean yell back "To-morrow shall the whole world be ours." Then war it is. Twice in five-and-twenty years it has happened so on a world-wide scale.

War has its own special form of balance between productive capacity and consuming power, and undoubtedly provides an elderly capitalism with an equilibrium that it finds great difficulty in attaining in any other way. It thus has a motive for war that a genuinely democratic order would not have. From this point Geoffrey and Vova were led to consider how far the capitalists

were likely to seek relief from their troubles by way of the perpetuation of war. In war the capitalist machine runs much more smoothly than in peace. In war government outlay on armaments is at its highest; and that is the only form of government outlay which is entirely unobjectionable to the all-powerful monopolists. War provides full employment for capital and labour alike. True, this involves some instability in the relations between labour and capital. The mobility and the efficiency of labour are normally secured by means of the threat of destitution through unemployment, so that a condition of full employment certainly brings with it the problem of how labour discipline is to be maintained, when fear of the sack can no longer be used as an instrument of policy. The answer is found partly in the sentiment of national unity which it is so easy to maintain in all but the final stages of a war; and partly in the special war-time powers of state-coercion which the employer is able to invoke.

Nor is it employers and owners only who find themselves comfortably placed in war-time. Owing to the poor quality of the peace-time existence purveyed in an age of cultural collapse, there are large masses of small men and their families who actually find themselves living lives of altogether richer content and fuller meaning in war than they have ever known in peace. There is little reason for thinking that a policy of perpetual war need be an unpopular policy, in the sense of being unwelcome to all and sundry outside an interested minority. In Britain, indeed, a certain moral prejudice still survives against taking war as a permanent basis of social life. But that prejudice once existed equally strongly in Germany and Italy. Propaganda on an adequate scale could soon make it appear old-fashioned in Britain also. A country that could, for example, swallow the camel of the Munich agreement with only the most decorous of hiccoughs would scarcely strain at the gnat of an enduring and suitably soft-pedalled war.

Obviously, however, there are other possibilities also, and on the whole my friends thought it likely that full employment would be sought by other means than permanent war. It therefore seemed legitimate to forecast a post-war policy. They agreed, too, that the features of the world economy that lead to slump, empire-building, and war are the same features that lead to the sort of social disharmony we had just been examining under the microscope, as it were, in Broken Hill. In their view, N. Rhodesia's hope of social betterment was intimately bound up with the particular changes in world economy to be introduced as a means to full employment after the war.

## V

Vova was inclined to be sceptical about the intention and the power of capitalism to carry through a full employment policy. Large-scale unemployment, he urged, is necessary to capitalism both in order to preserve the stability of money and in order to give the employer authority over his employees. Geoffrey, on the other hand, considered this rather too theoretical a view. "I feel pretty sure," he said, "that a real effort will be made to secure the continuous and more or less unrestricted use of productive capacity. They wouldn't be making all this song and dance about freedom from want, otherwise. It's not that they are more sensitive to human suffering than their predecessors. But they are considerably more scared of the political effects of mass-unemployment on a war-exasperated world. They realise that they'll be judged by their success in furnishing social security, and they're wide enough awake to see that social security can't be had without full employment, or something pretty near it. So they're quite prepared to do a deal with the trade unions on the lines of 'We'll see your members are safe and comfortable, provided you renounce all claim to responsibility and power in industry or politics.' That, indeed, is their

one hope of maintaining their own position. From our standpoint, of course, the trouble is that full employment can be reached by two different roads. Or three, if you include permanent war; but we've ruled that out provisionally, haven't we?"

"Yes. Call it two roads, for the present. You mean that they both lead to the single economic result of full employment, but that each involves quite different social consequences?"

"That's just it. The problem is to ensure that no savings shall be left uninvested. In principle you can do this either by stimulating the consumption of consumers' goods at the expense of saving, or by stimulating investment so that it absorbs all that the people who can save wish to save."

"In other words," Vova put in, "expenditure by the rich can create employment just as well as expenditure by the poor. But the one increases the share of national income that goes to rent, profit, and interest; and the other increases the share that goes to wages. The one increases the power of property, the other the power of labour. Here is the class war being waged under our very noses. The eternal squabble over the division of the product of industry, inevitable as long as your society is divided into appropriators on the one hand and producers on the other. You will never cut clear of the tangle until you plan investment, and distribute the rest of the national income, not in accordance with property claims at all, but solely in accordance with the kind and the amount of work done."

"Perhaps not," replied Geoffrey patiently, and went back to the point. "The immediate question, however, is whether, in the post-war social situation of the United States and Britain, the rulers are likelier to subsidise consumption by reducing saving, or to encourage saving by subsidising investment."

"And what do you think is the answer?"

"Well, there's plenty of evidence that the choice has already been made, and that the chosen alternative is the second. It's safe to say that the policy won't be changed unless the rulers are."

"A world fit for investors to thrive in, eh? Is that the new and better world peace is to bring? It sounds rather a homoeopathic remedy, if an overdose of capital accumulation is what has brought you to your present pass."

"Oh well, you know the argument. As long as savings are used to pay workers to produce capital goods, over-saving in the injurious sense can't occur. It's only when consumer markets, at home and abroad, fail to keep up with the increase of producing power—when, that is to say, some of the current savings can't find a profitable investment—that slump, mass-unemployment, empire-building, and war fly in at the window. If investment were to continue at a regular rate without undue regard to profitability, these disagreeable visitors, we are assured, could be kept out of the home."

"So the full employment policy is to be built on the hope that your capitalists will interest themselves in unprofitable investment?"

"You underestimate the ingenuity of our rulers," was Geoffrey's reply. "No, their notion is that the field of investment should be divided into two sectors, one profitable, and the other unprofitable. To sink money in the first is to be the privilege of the private investor; to sink it in the second is to be the duty of the state."

"Very neat," said Vova, "And what other duties are being wished on the state?"

"The state is to provide the private investor with (*a*) facilities for cheap borrowing, (*b*) opportunities for high yields on investment, and (*c*) freedom from risk. When even this encouragement is insufficient to keep private investment steady at high levels, the state must stand by to take up the slack and set to work the resources that private enterprise is too dainty to use. But the stipula-



tion is that government outlay is to be applied only to harmless lines—harmless, that is, from the standpoint of competing with private enterprise.”<sup>2</sup>

“What lines are harmless in that sense?”

“Oh, things which yield no direct material profit—things like public buildings, roads, bridges, slum clearance, afforestation, and so on.”

“I think I follow. Every effort is to be made to equate private investment with total savings. At the same time, the government is to be kept at the ready in order to provide such balancing demand as might be needed to give full employment, in the event of the private investor stalling. Such balancing demand, however, must be furnished only by means of investment that brings in no profit. The essence of the plan, in fact, is to solve the unemployment problem and iron out the trade cycle, while leaving the main mechanisms of the profit system undisturbed and strengthening the claims of property relatively to those of work done.”

“Exactly,” Geoffrey replied. “What is vital for them is to step up the accumulation of real capital, without bringing any productive property into public ownership, and without reducing present inequalities in the distribution of national income. If they can make certain of doing that, I fancy we shall find them extremely conciliatory on other matters.”

“They could well afford to be. But can they make certain of doing that?”

## VI

“Well, I expect my answer to that question would be much the same as yours,” Geoffrey hinted. “But the significant thing is that they don’t seem to have any great confidence in their scheme themselves. At any rate, they don’t disguise their view that international trade has still to be thought of primarily in terms of competition. That clearly implies a belief that the world’s power to produce is likely to remain greater than its power to consume.”

“They probably see that the disparity will be even greater after the war than it was before it; for the war has given an immense impetus to industrial development all over the world. The copper in which your Rhodesia is so much interested is an obvious case in point. You tell me that things have been speeded up a good deal on the copper belt. Add what is happening there to what they are doing in the U.S.A., in Chile, and in Canada, and you will find that the war has doubled the world’s capacity for producing copper. Remembering the competition from aluminium and other materials in which there will also be a vastly increased productive capacity, I think it will not be easy to find peace-time markets either for all the copper or for all the aluminium. Disposing of these competing surpluses is going to give your rugged individualists a whole series of wicked headaches. Do you fancy the prospects of a world increase in consumption sufficient not only to make up the pre-war consumption-deficiency, but also to balance the war-time expansion of productive capacity? I certainly do not, unless...”

“Ah, if your ‘unless’ comes off, the entire world-picture will be altered. Meanwhile, I agree with you, there is no final way out for them by simply returning to their own vomit as they propose. Indeed, it’s pretty clear that their full employment scheme, combined with their scheme for corporative ‘self-government’ in industry, is calculated to reduce the influence of consumer needs on production to a minimum.”

---

<sup>2</sup> Such, stripped of their make-up, were the main points in a scheme for post-war Full Employment, which was announced, to an accompaniment of martial music, in the *Economist* during October, 1942. The scheme was presented as embodying the current state of informed opinion on the subject, and as displaying the measure of agreement attained. See *Economist* (1942) October 3, 10, 17, November 28, and (1943) January 2.

“What do you mean by corporative self-government in industry?”

“I mean the form of industrial organisation advocated, for instance, by the F.B.I. and the Chambers of Commerce in their reports on post-war reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> The capitalists of each industry are to form themselves into a monopolistic group on the lines of a bigger and better Trade Association. Firms already in business in each type of industry will be compelled to join the appropriate Trade Association, and the emergence of new firms will be strictly controlled. Each Association is to plan policy for its own industry. The several Associations will, it is proposed, federate into a General Council of industry, which should guide government economic policy, ‘with the approval of Parliament.’”

“That rather elegantly provides the essentials of a fascist system,” remarked Vova. “Suppose you are right. Suppose the brave new world is built, first, on full employment by way of subsidised investment, and, second, on a corporative structure of industry—what would be the consequences for N. Rhodesia then?”

“Well,” said Geoffrey slowly, “if we assume that the U.S.A. goes pretty much the same way as Britain, I should expect something like this. The dominance of monopoly economics in the world economy would entail the continuance of restrictionism, and its growth into new forms. Monopoly may talk about the full employment of resources; it is constitutionally incapable of securing it. Moreover, even when it concerns itself with the question *whether* all resources are to be used, it is obliged to ignore the question *how* they are to be used. The qualitative aspect of the problem of supply—are we to build palaces before providing decent housing conditions?—the relative priority of luxuries and necessities—pubs, ante-natal clinics, cinemas, or communal restaurants?—about such matters a council of private monopolies, each of which is out after the same shilling in your pocket and mine, has nothing coherent to say. If you let it allot resources as between different uses, the allotment will be haphazard and arbitrary, with the needs of the consumer ranking last in the order of consideration. Again, the economics of private monopoly are always and everywhere associated with fascist politics.

“Putting all these factors together, I should judge that the lopsidedness of our Rhodesian economy will remain, and probably be accentuated, while its natural tendency to seek a new balance at a new level will be forcibly arrested. There will be little or no shift from the existing concentration on heavy industry. This means an equilibrium of slavery for N. Rhodesia. Instead of resolving the present social tensions and disharmonies, a world economy structured on lines of corporative monopoly would hold them constant by force. African labour would occupy the same sort of position as Polish labour during war-time in Nazi Germany. The spontaneous circulation of population between town and country, indeed between town and town as well, would be just prohibited. The required degree and kind of labour mobility would be maintained directly and officially by orders from above. For the tribespeople this would probably involve, among other things, gradual extinction, or at least the shrinkage of the reproduction rate, for a longer or shorter period, below the level needed for replacement.”

## VII

“I wish you joy of the worm, Mr. Stewart,” was Vova’s comment on this. Then he went on: “What you say makes me wonder for the thousandth time when your people will think it worth while to study our system of planning, which is designed to avoid, and does in fact avoid, pre-

---

<sup>3</sup> Federation of British Industries, Report on Reconstruction, 1942. Association of British Chambers of Commerce, Report on Post-War Industrial Reconstruction, 1942.

cisely these troubles.”

“Well, let’s hear how you set about it. I’m not altogether clear on that myself.”

“Of course,” Vova answered, “we had to begin by sealing ourselves off from a world economy which behaves in the disastrous ways you have been describing, and which might easily pass on its infection to us. So we made the whole business of foreign trade a direct responsibility of the state. The shipowners and the shippers, the marine insurance interests, the finance houses and the banks—all their work was taken over by state agencies. We also put a strict embargo on all export or import of soviet currency. We had to prevent a flight of capital, and in particular to cut out the economic disturbance caused by sudden international movements of short-term funds. You have a name for them. Hot money, is it not?”

“That’s the term, I believe,” said Geoffrey. “So these two measures—exchange control and control of foreign trade—gave you the advantage of a private world economy of your own, as one might say. And you could sit down and start planning in a rational fashion. But surely you were lucky. You had a sixth of the world to work in, and that vast territory included practically all the natural resources that the heart of a modern industrialist could desire. We in Rhodesia can’t do that. We’ve got a little copper, a lot of tsetse fly, and plenty of third-rate farming country. How can we seal ourselves off from the world on that?”

“Indeed you cannot. And I should be the last to advise you to try. You cannot get outside what you have been calling the world economy. Nor can you long survive inside it, as it now stands.”

“What then?”

“Why, you will have to rebuild it. It is a big job, I know. You will need strong allies, if you are to carry it through. But you are no weaker now than the bolsheviks were when they began on their job. They needed strong allies too. Where did they find them? Among impoverished peasants and those whom you call natives. Not among men of wealth, power, or renown. Has not the time come for you also to consider who are really your friends, and who are really your enemies, in this world?”

“H’m,” said Geoffrey reflectively.

“Well, to return to the Plan. Once the sealing-off has set up the conditions for planning, the basic thing the planners have to do is this. They have to settle the division of the national income as between capital investment and current consumption, and ensure that the total effective demand of the population shall be adequate to take up the goods and services which are to be provided for current consumption. In other words, they have to split up the entire net product of the nation’s industry into three distinct shares thus:

- (1) For maintenance, replacement, and extension of the total plant and equipment with which the total labour force is to work.
- (2) For provision of all governmental, cultural, and welfare services.
- (3) The remainder. This, together with the sums earmarked for wages under (1) and (2), forms the wage fund available for distribution to the labour force.”

“I see. And the plan, I suppose, fixes the prices of goods and services?”

“Yes.”

“And once they are fixed, the wage fund is equated with the total exchange value of the output, measured in terms of those prices?”

“Roughly speaking, yes. A complication arises because the wage-fund is mainly used for consumption and not all goods are consumable. I shall come back to that in a moment. But at any rate you are right in thinking that the labour force, its output, its wages, and its purchases are all,

as it were, geared together, so that the whole economy moves forward steadily as a co-ordinated unit, instead of piecemeal and by fits and starts.”

“It seems to me,” Geoffrey ruminated, “that in a certain sense capital accumulation has been just as dominant in your economy as in ours. I mean, the capital construction plan is bound to have pre-eminence over the consumption plan and the social services plan, and to determine, within broad limits no doubt, the actual output programmes of the various branches of non-capital production. In a sense, too, you have obviously been heavily over-investing and painfully underconsuming, just as we in the world economy have. Yet the results in your case have been very different, and not nearly so undesirable.”

“There are good reasons for that,” Vova replied. “Remember, although it is true that re-armament involved us in more investment and less consumption than we should have liked, we have never *over-saved*. Nor are property-incomes, with us, the lodestar by reference to which production and investment are regulated, for property-incomes do not exist among us. And since this is so, a high rate of investment does not involve a shift in the distribution of the national income unfavourable to work-incomes.”

“No, I see that. But your rate of investment is high enough to involve a demand for more consumption goods than are available at the planned prices. In a free market this would drive up prices, and give rise to an inflationary situation. What *does* happen in your system when target increases in total money-income are not matched by any corresponding increase in consumable goods?”

“Well, there are certain sections of the market that are relatively uncontrolled—the bazaars and the collective farm markets, for example. Here the impact of surplus spending power does have the effect of forcing prices up. Our wage-differentials would never have operated as incentives to increased output, if we had not provided some opportunities of spending extra earnings. But in the controlled markets there can, of course, be no such effect. In them our main instrument for keeping inflationary tendencies within bounds is the turnover tax.”

“How do you mean?”

“Our method is this. There is a difference between the planned prices of finished consumption goods and their retail selling prices. The planned price is made up of wages, cost of materials, and depreciation. On top of these and of the planned costs of distribution, the retail price includes the turnover tax. The tax in its incidence discriminates against luxuries and in favour of necessities, but it is so adjusted that its total yield shall correspond to the total of incomes earned in the production of non-consumable goods and social and cultural services. If it were not for this arrangement, the wages of workers engaged in producing consumption goods, plus the wages incorporated in the cost of materials and depreciation attendant on such production, would be sufficient to take up the whole output of such goods. The tax is just our way of skimming off enough of the population’s earnings to keep a balance between the sums actually available for spending and the planned output of consumption goods and social and cultural services.”

There was a pause. After a while Geoffrey said; “You know, Mr. Korolenko, when we talk together like this, I see clearly enough what changes are needed in Rhodesia, and indeed in the general economic structure of which Rhodesia is only a rather insignificant part. But how, how in the name of all that’s holy, does one set about effecting them?”

Vova smiled. “Perhaps,” he replied, “if we were to talk together like this more often, I could throw some light on that question too. It is one that bolsheviks have specialised in.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE COLOUR BAR

Going from Broken Hill to Ndola is rather like going from Bolton, Bury, or Oldham to the new centres of industry in the neighbourhood of Harrow and Wembley. The copper belt, of which Ndola is the administrative centre, is consciously bright and up-to-the-minute; as a design for industrial living it has evidently benefited from the best professional advice and learned from everybody else's mistakes. Broken Hill is by contrast the elderly pioneer, from whose mistakes (one hopes) everybody else has learned.

In point of time the copper belt is almost an exact contemporary of the soviet five-year plans. Construction was in full swing by 1930, and production began at the end of the following year. For Vova, therefore, the days we spent at Ndola were perhaps the most interesting of our whole trip. He was able to make many direct comparisons with the constructional achievements of Central Asia. From the standpoint of this record, however, the time was given mainly to confirming and filling in with fresh detail the outlines of a picture that had been building itself up in Vova's mind ever since Bulawayo.

In their technical aspect the copper mines impressed Vova greatly. He had never before seen the flotation process of recovering the copper-bearing particles from the crushed ore, and it fascinated him. So also did the virtually complete mechanization of every process between the loading of the skip at the bottom of the shaft and the flow of molten copper from the smelter.

He admired, too, the external aspect of the newly built mining towns that lie dotted about in a fan-shaped zone between the south-west and the north-west of Ndola. But here he was quick to detect the unadvertised contrasts. He would look silently at the big hotels and offices, the beauty parlours and the swimming baths (Europeans Only), as we drove past them on the tarmac boulevards in a stream of the latest-model American cars. Then suddenly he would turn to me and say: "There are nearly 6,000 African children of school age on the copper belt, John. Do you know how many of them are on the school rolls?"

I shook my head. "About 2,300," he said. "Here is a country that produces over £13 millions' worth of copper every year. It cannot afford to build schools for as many as half its children. But resources are easily found, it seems, for manicure establishments, beer-halls, and American limousines. What sort of scale of values is this? I suppose it is what your people mean by Christian civilisation. Or is it just rugged individualism?"

That is the kind of gibe that Vova is continually making during our time in the copper country. He finds the colour bar hitting him in the eye at every turn, jarring his nerves, torturing him even. He is immensely struck by the steep grading of the benefits that spring from the wealth won by the producers of copper—a grading which gives the handsomest rewards of all to absentee financiers who contrived to get in on the ground floor when the mining companies were being floated. Next, at a long interval behind such big noises, come the junior, the secondary, the non-commissioned plutocracy. These are the resident Europeans, who live well enough, if vulgarly and emptily, in their trim townships and their comfortable mosquito-proof bungalows, surrounded by green lawns and gay beds of flowers, and tended by neat uniformed African men-servants. And then at the base of the pyramid, the thousands upon thousands of native miners and shop-hands, who draw from the pool of locally won wealth 1s. for every £1 drawn by the resident Europeans, and every £10 drawn by the absentee financiers.

In the mine compounds the standards of diet and sanitation are adequate, and care is taken by

the mineowners to see that the human machinery is kept in as good working order as the non-human. But the cultural provision can be summed up in the words beer-hall, dance-hall, and football field. And African workers who, not being mine-employees, have to put up in the town locations and the contractors' camps, live a very down-at-heel life by comparison.

It was in the copper belt towns that the British authorities forbade Vova to meet any Africans whatever, even one at a time for private conversation. He was, however, allowed to meet a group of European miners and even to address them, though not at a public meeting. And, very unexpectedly, the colour bar was the subject on which the men asked him to speak. This suited Vova. His mind had been on little else for many days. The speech he made embodies a fairly considered view of one of the thorniest of African problems, so I include it here in full.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, "I have undertaken to do a bold thing this evening. My subject is high explosive, I know; and, although it is at the invitation of your own officials that I deal with it, I shall have to tread warily indeed, if I am to avoid blowing the whole meeting up sky-high.

"So I begin by assuring you that I am not here to scold or to preach. I am no missionary come to reprove you for moral backsliding, to recall you to your Christian duty to the black brethren, and to threaten you with God's eternal wrath if you turn a deaf ear to my words. It is simply that, since we bolsheviks have had to tackle problems of our own which are in essence the same as what you call the native problem here, and since we have made some headway with some of them, I thought it might interest you to hear how we have managed. Certainly if I were one of yourselves, such an account would interest me.

"When I suggest that we of the Soviet Union are familiar with your colour problems here, I have two things chiefly in mind. I mean, first, that when the Soviet Government took over the Tsar's colonies, most of the urban industrial workers in them were Great-Russians as we call them—white men from European Russia. In an area such as Turkestan, for example, these white men formed an immigrant group of foreign specialists, sharply marked off from the native population by language, culture, skin-colour and technical skill. I mean, second, that besides mere difference there was also inequality. The Great-Russian culture and standard of living were in a quite genuine and scientifically defensible sense more advanced than those of the Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Tadjiks, and the rest.

"Thus it came about that our white men, as they lived and worked among the dark-skinned peoples of Turkestan, soon took to thinking of the culture they had brought with them as a talisman entitling them to superior rights. They were indeed types of a more advanced civilisation. And from recognising this it was an easy step to a doctrine of Great-Russian paramountcy—the principle that in the event of a clash between the interests of their group and those of the natives, theirs should be preferred. An even shorter step carried them on to thinking that where two cultures, a higher and a lower, exist side by side, there is a certain folly in deliberately encouraging the survival of the lower. This view in its turn readily develops into the ultimate conviction that the lower may *contaminate* the higher, drag it down, dilute or hybridise its virtues, so that a positive duty devolves upon the higher to ensure that the lower shall not survive.

"This is what we, in our jargon, call Great-Russian chauvinism. Your name for it is the spirit of White Rhodesia. It sums up what you mean when you say that you have come here to help make Northern Rhodesia a white man's country.

"Now both in your case and ours those who identify themselves with this spirit aim at something much more idealistic than the mere pushing of their own selfish interests. They really do seek to protect against an insidious danger the superior values which their own type of culture

embodies; and they really do believe that they would betray those values if they acted in any other way. In some people the attitude expresses itself in religious terms. Then they deny that they are after material advantages at all, and insist rather that they are bearing witness to the God who is immanent in them. That is how the whole situation feels from the inside as it were.

“To anyone who looks at it from the outside, however, its most conspicuous feature is that the white man expects the native to accept the difficulty and discomfort of adjusting to the differences of language, culture, and modes of life. It is the native who has to abandon his tribal way of living, to migrate to the towns, to pick up some kind of pidgin English (even kitchen-kafir resembles English more closely than it resembles any native language), to learn to do domestic chores according (more or less) to European custom, and in general to do all the rough work for which the white man’s convenience calls. There follows a measure of political unification in which the native’s country is brought under the white man’s flag, the white man takes over the work of administration and all responsibility for policy, press, schools, propaganda, public services, and so on. Equality of rights as between white and native is not so much destroyed as thrust out of mind.

“Your present situation here in Northern Rhodesia, then, is in these ways pretty much what we had to cope with in Turkestan and the other colonial possessions of the Tsar at the time of the revolution. But there were other factors in our situation which do not exist in yours. We were fresh from the spectacle of all that race-prejudice, Russification, and the steam-rolling of the backward peoples had done to ruin the Tsars. This impressed us greatly, both because the spectacle was itself impressive and because we in the party had deliberately played on colonial resentment at the Tsarist policy of Russification, in order to bring the colonial peoples over to the revolutionary side. It is hardly too much to say that the revolution succeeded because the colonies, and the non-Russian minorities generally, threw in their lot with it.

“Again, there was with us an acute, an appalling, shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Here our problem was the exact opposite of yours. You have fewer skilled posts than men capable of filling them.

“And lastly we had two institutions of the highest importance—the soviet state itself was founded on them—in which every kind of discrimination on grounds of colour, race, nationality, or culture was rigidly prohibited. These were the communist party and the trade unions. In my country both are in their whole conception international and inter-racial organisations.

“These three factors made it both possible and necessary that our approach to the native question should differ widely from yours. In what exactly does this difference consist?

“From your standpoint the crux of the matter is that Africans in industry are beginning to infiltrate into the semi-skilled and even the skilled sectors of the employment field. In mining, some of them have qualified for, and been issued with, blasting certificates; others handle pneumatic drills, work electric hauling gear, or assist in shaft-sinking; others again drive lorries or are put in charge of trucks. Such people are a small minority, of course; but there are enough of them to make you feel uneasy for the future, and embarrassed when they challenge Europeans to work a test shift against them, so as to show who really produces the copper. You are worried, too, because semi-skilled natives are now to have their status guaranteed, even when they move from one mine to another. That has been brought about partly by the strikes and riots of 1940, and partly by the relative scarcity of mine labour in war-time. But it looks unpleasantly like official recognition of natives as semi-skilled labour, and augurs, you may feel, none too well for the future of the colour bar.

“Your rejoinder to all this is to press harder than ever for confining Africans arbitrarily to un-

skilled work. You seize on the colour line and try to force it to coincide with the line that divides unskilled work from skilled. Skilled work then is thought of as the white man's monopoly. The badge of colour sharply marks off the white group from the black, and gives each a consciousness of unity based on rivalry with the other. It also serves to make the passage of individuals from one to the other practically impossible. Seen in this perspective, a skilled job appears as a kind of economic "hedgehog" to be made impregnable with minefields and barbed-wire entanglements in the interests of its occupant of the moment. A morbid tension is set up between white-skilled and black-unskilled. The former fear the latter as comprising many potentially skilled but actually frustrated workers; the latter hate the former as causing the frustration and denying the skill its exercise. Consequently the industrial colour bar has to be supplemented by a complicated system of native disabilities in the civil and political spheres, in education, public health, the enjoyment of public utilities, and so on.

"But what else can we do? What would you do yourself? you may ask. Given the conditions, I agree, you can do nothing else. In your position, I make no doubt, I should do as you are doing. And if you urge that what you are doing is preferable to any alternative, I am not concerned to contradict you. But note how I qualify this remark. I say 'Given the conditions.' The important point seems to me to be what are the conditions, and can they, or can they not, be modified?

"I can answer that question for you by showing how we in the U.S.S.R. have taken an entirely different attitude to skilled jobs. For us the most valuable thing in the world is, and always has been, a skilled worker. Productive technique is the key to human advance in every field, including that which you call spiritual and we know by the more accurate name of cultural. We therefore strain every nerve to maximise and universalise skill. Our whole system is designed to create unbounded opportunity for everybody, so that attainment may be limited by biological factors alone; and even against these human skill, in the form of medicine and hygiene, wages increasingly effective war. A social order that is not always pushing forward the frontiers of technical accomplishment, and making all its members masters of the utmost skill they are capable of, seems to us little better than a madhouse. The continuous upgrading of all workers to ever higher levels of skill is the main arterial road leading to a prosperous and cultivated community. That is why we take such pains to ensure that any worker shall be able at any time to enter any grade for which he can competently perform the work.

"Our people, I assure you, are just as much in earnest about this as you are about the ideal of a White Rhodesia. They press their policy of maximising skill with the same passionate intensity with which you defend your privileges under the colour bar. If they did not do so, they would feel that they were placing themselves in the same camp as those capitalist restrictionists who for many years have bedevilled the world by creating poverty in order to maintain their own profits. Your restriction experts have smooth-sounding names for their diabolical dodges, I know—'rationalisation,' 'avoiding an unsaleable surplus,' 'restoring confidence to business,' 'planning output,' 'balancing production with consumption,' 'meeting effective demand,' and all the rest of it. But such terms merely paraphrase and disguise the fact that capitalist enterprise as a whole has failed to relate itself to the needs of the people.

"In a world of whose inhabitants thousands of millions are underfed and undersupplied, the men of business have refused to produce as much as they could have produced to relieve the shortage. They have manufactured bottlenecks, held up the development of raw material sources, locked inventions away in cold-storage, put 'redundant plant' out of commission, destroyed crops, limited acreage, reduced and restricted output. And they have done this quite simply because they were afraid that their private profits would dwindle if they did not. This is what I



mean by organising poverty for their own gain.

“Such things have the same effect on a communist as Blake’s robin redbreast had on heaven. You, it seems, are willing to take less harsh a view of them. Believe me, gentlemen, I know how hard it is for you to understand us—much harder than it is for us to understand you. For after all we have been in your position, and lived through it, and come out on the other side; you have not yet risen to ours. You marvel at our fierce struggles that cost so much in human suffering, and bring in as yet so small a yield in human well-being. Likely enough, you think of us as unscrupulous fanatics who just hurl frantic dogmas into the air. We, on our part, marvel at the passivity with which you sit down before insufferable evils.

“But I can give you the key to the understanding of communists. They are men who have seen poverty and who feel what they see. In them pity and anger meet, and fuse into the energy of the artist and the builder. Not pity and anger at their own poverty: that they bear cheerfully if they must, and even embrace if the public interest requires. But the blind, irredeemable, primary poverty of the poor and the oppressed. You think us bitter. You are wrong. In us, as in your Christ, compassion has the vehemence, the driving power of wrath—that is all. We hold that to tolerate poverty is a crime. But to contrive it, to bring it wilfully into being, to use means to spread it—and to do that for the simple sordid end of private gain! Why, this is the most appalling blasphemy against the human spirit that it is possible to conceive.

This is the very top,

The height, the crest, the crest unto the crest  
Of murder’s arms....

All murders past do stand excused in this.

“Of such a crime, of such a sin, capitalist restrictionism has been increasingly guilty for more than a generation. For it, it may not be atoning, but it is at least paying the penalty, in the present war. With the same sin and crime—must I say it?—your colour bar ideal, the banner of your White Rhodesia is stained. I have told you how intimately we can sympathise with you in that ideal, sharing the complex emotional quality of your experience, and knowing that in your place we should do as you do. But that intimate sympathy cannot blind us to the fact that the colour bar is restrictionism applied to skill, just as scrapping ‘redundant’ plant is restrictionism applied to output. Both create poverty for the many in order to entrench privilege and profit for the few.

“Thus the communist who comes among you is in something of a quandary. He may know exactly what you mean when you speak of protecting civilised standards from black barbarism. He may applaud your instinct as entirely sound when you resolve that contact with a less advanced culture shall not be permitted to adulterate the special values of your own. He may, in a word, love the sinner as dearly as you please. But he is still obliged to hate the sin. He is obliged to recognise that the colour bar is a sin, because it increases poverty instead of abating it. I beg you to remember that the bolsheviks of every land are pledged never to rest until they have stabbed poverty to the heart even in the remotest corners of the globe. For they know that only over the dead body of poverty can tolerance and freedom, wisdom, and justice, and comradeship enter into possession of the world.

“You also, I dare say, place the highest value on these qualities. But I think it likely that you mistake them for personal qualities which any man can win for himself by his own moral struggle or by adopting a right attitude to God. The bolshevik understands them to be group-qualities which can only be realised as attributes of a particular pattern of social and economic organisation.

“Some of you gentlemen may be thinking that I draw too sharp a contrast between your out-

look and ours on the question of skilled work. The colour bar no doubt has its restrictive aspect, you may say, but broadly it is evidence of an attitude that sets just as high a value on industrial skill as communism does. Yes. But you look on skill as a kind of museum piece, a priceless art treasure, which has to be wrapped up in cotton wool, and given elaborate protection against theft and damage. We look on it as a crop whose yield per acre has to be raised and which has to be sown on an increasing acreage. Because you will not *share* your skill with Africans, and as it were spread it out over them, you are driven into a series of contradictions which really make nonsense of your whole position. For example the colour bar forces you to maintain that the gravest of all threats to European civilisation arises when Africans make an advance in European civilisation. This is not merely silly in itself, but it evokes ominous echoes from history. Civilisations have often collapsed because the top-dogs would not share their advantages with the bottom-dogs. This is the typical bosses' blunder, and you, who are workers and ought to have the outlook of workers, are committing it. If you hang on long enough, you will probably have the usual bosses' success in pulling down the structure you claim to be propping up.

"That, I fear, may seem to introduce the scolding note which I promised to avoid. But I think you know that the real target I strike at is not yourselves, but the conditions of the general economy you have to live in. I am not concerned at all to fix blame on persons. I am just trying to explain, to myself as well as to you, how it happens that you are driven into rivalry and enmity with your African fellow-workers, while we Russians have on the whole avoided a similar relation with the people of, say, Turkmenia or Uzbekistan.

"To say that your trouble is caused by the colour bar would be a very muddled answer. Of course there will be racial tension, of course Africans will feel puzzled and resentful, if not full of a bitter rage, when they find how seldom white people treat them with any courtesy or respect, when they find every door or economic advancement slammed in their faces, when they find that for every £1 you draw in wages they can only earn about 1s. No need to run through the catalogue of their grievances: you know it all. The point is that the colour bar is not a cause of racial tension, it is an accompaniment, a manifestation of it. When we have said that the colour bar gives rise to such and such feelings among Africans, we are still left with the main problem unsolved. The main problem is why is a colour bar set up at all?

"There are, I suggest, two reasons: one, that Africans are teachable, the other, that you and they jointly inhabit a world that suffers from a surplus of skill. Let me explain.

"I have heard some among you, as you look to your defences against black barbarism, mutter that Africans are incapable of civilisation. If this were true, however, you plainly would not fear their competition, any more than you fear that of the herds of cattle which also enjoy membership of your economy. The truth, I think, is exactly the opposite, namely that Africans are too capable of civilisation for your liking. What upsets you is not their low educability, but the speed with which even the most primitive of them learn to do semi-skilled and even skilled work, without any of the formal training which most of you, I suppose, will have had. Africans are indeed your potential rivals. What is more, the qualities that make them so make them equally your potential partners. This latter thought seldom eaters your heads, and finds a chilly welcome when it does.

"Whether Africans in practice turn out as partners or rivals is determined by certain general surrounding conditions, at which I now ask you to look for a few moments.

"During the twenty years just ended Northern Rhodesia has been gradually co-opted a member of a world-wide society. When the curtain was rung down on the last world war, this country of yours still consisted of clusters of primitive tribal communities, which were almost entirely

self-sufficient. Today the quality of livelihood for all its inhabitants depends on economic conditions in Europe, America, and Asia; and some of the inhabitants of those continents in turn depend in essential ways on Northern Rhodesian labour and materials. The pace and the course of your country's development is settled by world wars on battlefields anywhere between the Volga and New Guinea, Malaya and Morocco—battlefields over which the shooting would soon die down, if it were not for the copper you are producing here.

“You yourselves, gentlemen, are important instruments of this change—this drawing of Rhodesia into a world-wide circle of economic co-operation and conflict. You have come here to seek copper, and as the agents of a world economy which cannot fulfil its purposes without adequate supplies of that metal. Your coming has entailed a rapid growth—anyone but a Russian would say a spectacular growth—of the mining industry. But it has not set up any corresponding revolution in local agriculture or in local manufacture.

“The native as a miner is a unit in a fully modernised enterprise that uses the most up-to-date technical and organisational methods; as a farmer he is almost exactly where he has been any time these last three hundred years—no machinery, no applied science, no market, and a rudimentary division of labour. True, a small number of European farmers have come along, in effect, though not historically, as your camp-followers. But their own agricultural technique is not by modern standards very advanced, and they do not operate on a large enough scale to influence African agriculture very significantly. As for manufacturing industry, we may say that it does not yet exist here,

“The consequence is that large numbers of Africans can be attracted to work in the mines at wages which, by world standards, are extremely low. You see, there are no counter-attractions, either to lure them into other forms of wage-earning or to induce them to stay at home. There are no openings for them in secondary or tertiary industries, because there are no such industries except on the smallest scale. And the yield of their own traditional, primitive agriculture is so low that even the 15s. a month, which they get on your mines for surface work, or the 25s. a month they get for underground work, is by comparison a glittering prize.<sup>1</sup>

“If secondary industry had developed step by step with mining, and were now creating wealth of the same order of magnitude as your present copper-production, two things would have happened. A large new field of employment, both skilled and unskilled, would have opened up: and the need for marketing the locally manufactured goods would have given the African population an importance as consumers, over and above the importance as cheap producers which is all they now possess. And since no one can be much of a consumer so long as he remains a low-paid producer, the general tendency would have been to make the mines pay more for their native labour.

“A similar argument applies in respect of agriculture too. If the last fifteen years had seen developments of crop-production in the tribal areas in any way comparable with mining development on the copper-belt the supply of cheap industrial labour would have failed. The great demand for industrial labour that mining development set up has in practice entailed only a slight increase in wages. This would have been impossible if native agriculture had not remained primitive, and the rural areas therefore poor relatively to the industrial areas.

“As things are, however, mining has sprung up as a lopsided growth, unmatched by balancing developments in other fields. Hence the ease with which the supply of cheap mine-labour can be maintained. It is the abundance of this supply that keeps the proportion of skilled workers to

---

<sup>1</sup> The reader is reminded again that these are the cash wages. The mines also provide rations for native workers. The value of the ration is reckoned to be about £1 a head a month.

unskilled workers low. In such a situation the fortunate few who land the skilled jobs are obliged to guard them with extreme jealousy. For they know that among their much more numerous unskilled colleagues there lies latent a larger or smaller measure of potential skill. If this were ever allowed scope for exercise, they themselves would be prised out of their positions of privilege, and relegated to a lower level of social power and economic well-being,

“The bar which prevents this happening is a *colour* bar only by accident. In essence it is a bar against all skilled workmanship in excess of the quantity that the existing structure of industry can conveniently use. The colour factor is significant merely because it intensifies the explosive emotions with which the situation is charged. So when you revile black barbarism, it seems probable that you are generally deceiving yourselves! The real object of your dislike is *any* threat to your exceptionally comfortable livelihood by untrained competitors who are able and willing to undercut you. You fasten on the African’s skin-colour as a kind of scapegoat for your own feelings of fear and guilt, much as the Nazis use the Jews.

“Objectively, then, the colour bar is one symptom among others of what I call an unbalanced economy—in the case of Rhodesia an economy that concentrates on mining development, to the neglect of development in agriculture, manufacture, public utilities, and the cultural field. But this lopsidedness in the economy of Rhodesia is itself only a reflection, a function, of a similar lopsidedness in your world economy as a whole.

“Your world economy is founded on private enterprise; and the mark of private enterprise in this specialised sense is that its behaviour is always directed towards one incentive, namely profit. Profit is another word with a specialised meaning. It does not denote material or pecuniary advantage in general; all economic systems aim at that. Profit is net yield on investment; and the profit motive is the drive to maximise this yield.

“Profit being something that cannot be made without capital, an economic system which aims at maximising profit is committed to the accumulation of capital. Business men are no doubt blind in many ways, but they are quite capable of perceiving that, if you want more golden eggs, it is a sound plan to enlarge the number of geese that may lay them. Now in modern conditions the big masses of capital go to the construction of heavy industry—the types of enterprise that produce the materials and plant needed for armaments, fuel and power, building, transport, communications, and all kinds of power-driven machinery. Thus the basing of world economy on private enterprise working for profit entails the gearing of all its functions to the needs of capital accumulation and heavy industry. The consumer, the small agriculturalist, the retail trader, indeed all interests except those of large-scale producers controlling massive capital resources, suffer from a relative neglect.

“In Rhodesia this shows itself as the contrast between advanced mining and primitive agriculture that I have been talking about. Over the world society as a whole it appears as a general disproportion between the piling up of capital on the one hand and the distribution of goods for personal consumption on the other. If you take the wealth represented by all such goods, and then add to it the wealth represented by the replacement and extension of capital equipment, you will find that the aggregate over any given period falls far short of exhausting the total productivity of industry. The difference consists of idle plant, unemployed labour, unsaleable goods, uninvested savings. Your world economy has discovered no way of taking up this slack except war and preparations for war. War is the last market of a moribund capitalism. In the present structure of that economy, if world peace had been preserved in 1939, industry would now be bankrupt over all the world outside the U.S.S.R. In the present structure of that economy, industry outside the U.S.S.R. will sink into bankruptcy when world peace is restored.

“So it is that your branch problems link up with the problems of the world stem. The bias of world economy towards heavy industry implies a corresponding neglect of agriculture and secondary industry. The relative underdevelopment of these means that heavy industry can everywhere call on a plentiful supply of cheap labour—cheap in the sense that its wages are determined not by the value of its output, but by the low productivity characteristic of the alternative occupations open to it. In so far as the plentiful supply of cheap labour comprises people who, with proper training and encouragement, are capable of doing more highly skilled work, to that extent world economy fails to make use of the human skill available. This method of perpetuating poverty is yet one more aspect of the inveterate restrictionism of a declining economic system. The world economy behaves in these ways as a necessary consequence of its own unbalanced character—of the tilt it gives to saving relatively to consumption. The over-accumulation of savings awaiting investment is itself necessitated by the dominance of the profit motive. The consequent lopsidedness gives rise in Rhodesia to the colour bar and problems of migrant labour, in Europe to mass unemployment and war.

“The colour bar, then, is a social phenomenon that springs from certain quite definite social conditions. The essential ones are that Africans should be so constituted as to be capable of acquiring, industrial skill, and that industry should be so organised as to be incapable of using all the skill on offer. I call these conditions essential because, when they are both present the colour bar appears, and when either of them is absent, the colour bar does not appear.

“You do everything in your power to make that bar fully effective; we do everything in ours to make its emergence impossible. The difference between us is not that Russians are individually more faithful to the golden rule than Rhodesians; it is simply that in your case both the conditions required for the establishment of the bar are present, while in our case only one of them is. We have no colour bar because we live our lives in an economic order which permits, and indeed stimulates, us to use all the human skill actually or potentially available. If you were similarly situated, you would be just as anti-colour-bar as we are. This is another way of saying that the golden rule is workable in some social systems, but not in others. The Christian duty is not to prate of how desirable it is that men should follow that rule; it is to construct, on scientific principles, a social system in which it is possible for them to do so. We are trying to construct such a system; you are content to rub along in one of the opposite kind.

“It follows that, while you protect your own distinctive culture by segregating it, by insulating yourselves as far as possible from native influences, we endeavour to raise the cultural condition of our more primitive peoples up to the level of our more advanced, at the same time as the entire mass moves forward. You go your ways proudly chanting what seems to us the rather dismal ditty:

‘East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall’ meet.’

Ours is the contrary ideal of a universal culture shareable, and increasingly shared, by all peoples whatever their present cultural condition; a universal culture in which the socialist content shall be developed, supplemented, diversified, and enriched by assuming many different forms and modes of expression, corresponding to the differences of language, manners, and customs among our various ethnic groups; a universal culture which shall be an endless series of native variations, interpretations, and extensions of the central socialist theme or reading of life.

“The October revolution, so Stalin can claim, dealt the legend of racial inequality, and the luxury of racial prejudice, a mortal blow, for ‘it has shown in practice that the liberated non-European nations, once having been drawn into the channel of soviet development, are no less capable than the European nations of promoting a truly progressive culture and civilisation.’ And

one of his commentators, noting how the dying agonies of capitalism are everywhere accompanied by racial animosities of unheard-of fury, has added: 'The contrast is so sharp that if race antagonism should reappear in the U.S.S.R., we should know that socialism had failed there.' By socialism the writer means what I mean by a balanced economy—one that avoids the lopsidedness inseparable from any system whose driving force is the maximising of profit.

"I know that many of the measures we have taken in the field of native policy can hardly commend themselves to your judgment. Rather are they likely to shock and horrify you, so flat is their denial of your customary notions. For example, all industrial enterprises in our Central Asian republics are obliged to observe the rule that at least half the personnel employed in all grades, including the highest, and on the side of management as well as of production, shall consist of natives. How would you like that? Naturally the rule involved some inefficiency in the early years. If efficiency had been our sole aim, we should no doubt have done better to import fully-trained staffs from Great Russia. But three considerations counted decisively against that way of handling the matter. We were short of skill in Great Russia too, and anxious not to draw off from there any more trained men than we had to: we wanted to develop new skill in the native areas at the quickest possible rate: and we were determined that no ill-judged influx of other racial types into these areas should ever be allowed to reduce the native people to outcasts in their own land—as it has, shall we say, in many parts of Africa, particularly those south of the Zambesi.

"There are other things also that you will not approve. I have mentioned our trade unions, of which natives are full and equal members, which insist on equal pay for equal work, and which are no respecters of persons, sex, race, or skin-colour. The same may be said of the communist party itself, which provides our organised leadership not merely in politics, but in every sector of the entire socialist order. Without the native members of the party, the revolution could not have extended to the colonial territories, nor could socialism have consolidated itself there.

"Or again, take the question of those mixed marriages that arouse high feeling among you. For us they raise no problem and cause no friction. If, as often happens, a Russian woman cares to take an Asiatic husband, she is not ostracised, her man is not lynched, and the marriage goes on its way unpestered by racial or religious prejudice. Yet again, in the courts of law, the white man soon finds there are no race-privileged verdicts to be had. In trains, post offices, parks, cinemas, cafes, and so on, there is no trace of the Jim Crow business to which you attach so much importance. Indeed, to put the whole matter in a nutshell, it does not pay to be a Great Russian in our native territories, in any of the senses in which it pays to be a European in British Africa: equally, the *cost* of being a native is negligible. Substantially the equal rights in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life, which Article 123 of our 1936 Constitution prescribes, have been realised.

"And there, gentlemen, it will perhaps be well if I leave the subject. I fear I have tried your patience in carrying it so far, and I am grateful for the forbearance with which you have heard me out. Why, you may ask me, have I allowed myself to go through with an exposition of which a great deal must be distasteful to you? The reason is not, I assure you, simple bad manners. Nor is it any hope that these words of mine may persuade you to follow in our soviet footsteps. I believe, indeed, that you will eventually follow in them—not because of anything I have said, or omitted to say, but because they really do blaze the trail to a solution of your problem. No, I have spoken thus frankly to you, because I wanted you to see the colour bar no longer as a gallant attempt on your own part to preserve an oasis of civilisation in the depths of a desert of barbarism, but rather as an integral feature of a world-wide system that *creates* poverty, and therefore low-

ers cultural standards, not in Africa or among Africans alone, but in every country and among all peoples, except one. The fascism we are all fighting is an extreme product of that system, and it exemplifies the principle of racialism in an extreme form.

“The system as a whole is now heeling over so badly that it can hardly stay as it is. It must either right itself or capsize. It only keeps going with its present list because the war, the last expanding market for capitalism, is absorbing vast masses of products that would otherwise be un-saleable. When the war stops, what is to happen? There is no sign that those who direct investment and heavy industry have any notion of how to avoid the old pre-war chaos, except by the methods of fascism, which we are now submitting to ordeal by battle and of whose failure our coming victory will be the proof.

“Much as your attachment to the colour bar may predispose you in favour of the restrictionism of which it is an aspect, I do not believe that the values you rank highest in your heart of hearts are really the values of fascism, nor do I believe that you are really willing to march out to meet the problems of the post-war world as obedient little musket-bearers in the army of pro-fascist finance and heavy industry. And if one thing is more certain than another, it is that these interests will remain fascist in sympathy as long as they remain private in ownership and control.”

## CHAPTER VIII

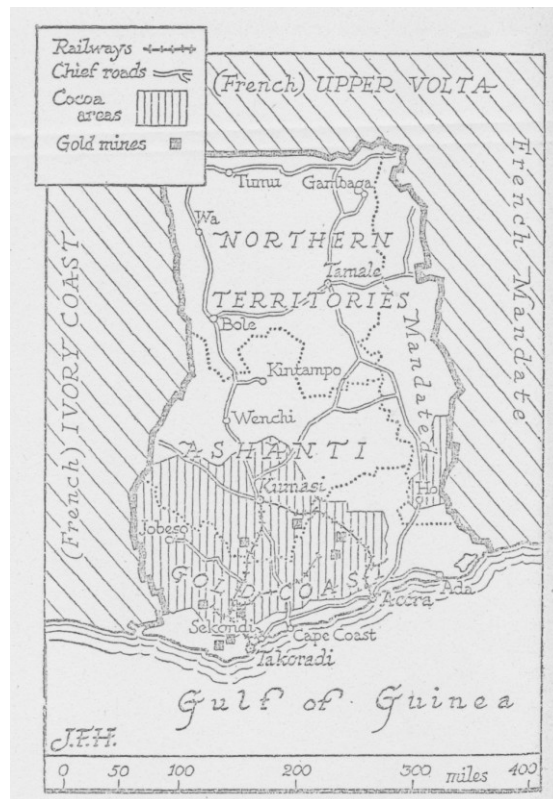
### PUBLIC HEALTH AND POPULAR ENLIGHTENMENT

On leaving the copper belt, we made the long flight to Accra in the Gold Coast—well over 3,000 miles by the route we were obliged to take.

How tedious air travel can be! We landed, of course, several times in Belgian and French territory, and once in Nigeria. But our stay in any single place was not long enough to give us the feel of it, or to arouse much interest in it. And these places have heat; a heat that pulls you unceremoniously to pieces, resolves you into your component parts, and is eternally leaving you with the bother of re-assembling them. The only stopping-points of which I have any clear recollection are Duala and Lagos.

For the rest, there is a kind of nightmare everlastingness in my mind of the vast featureless stretches of the mud-coloured continent. Up in the air there is no sense of speed. Hour after hour one watches the landscape monotonously unfold itself, looking as though it were made of sandbags. Variety comes mainly as ink-splodges of forest or jungle spilt on the dun ground. Occasionally a metallic gleam in the distance takes gradual shape as a wide river dotted with islands.

Then the pilot, to amuse us, comes down to tree-top level for some sight-seeing. Perhaps the roar of the engines will stampede a herd of zebra and wildebeeste clustered by the water's edge; perhaps we may catch a glimpse of a forest-clearing and the galvanised iron roofs of some little riverside trading station, with its wooden landing stage and the bee-hive native huts—sometimes even a craft moored alongside and a string of naked black stevedores circulating like an endless belt, in up one gangway and out down another, as they load their cotton or their ground-nuts.



THE GOLD COAST



But these are trifling compensations. It was with unfeigned relief that at length we climbed out of the machine at Accra, and found ourselves being swiftly driven from the airfield towards the town. A quarter of an hour later we pulled up in one of its sandy squares, and stepped out as it were into the arms of a company of the Gold Coast Regiment, who stood there on parade, looking smart and soldierly in khaki shorts and tunic, with comic little pill-box hats perched jauntily on the side of their fuzzy skulls.

“Good God,” said Vova in alarm, “have they turned out the King’s guard for us?”

“I doubt if they esteem us quite as highly as all that,” I reassured him. And we soon discovered that what had called forth this military display was the final day of a Baby Show week, at which the Governor’s wife was presenting the prizes before a distinguished gathering.

We entered the Town Hall, where the Show was being held, just in time to hear her ladyship’s speech. From this it appeared that during the previous year the sister-in-charge of Infant Welfare Clinics and her staff had paid nearly 10,000 visits to babies, giving special attention to the motherless and the sick. In consequence there had been a gratifying improvement in infant health. Much more; however, remained to do, for mortality was still over twice the English rate.

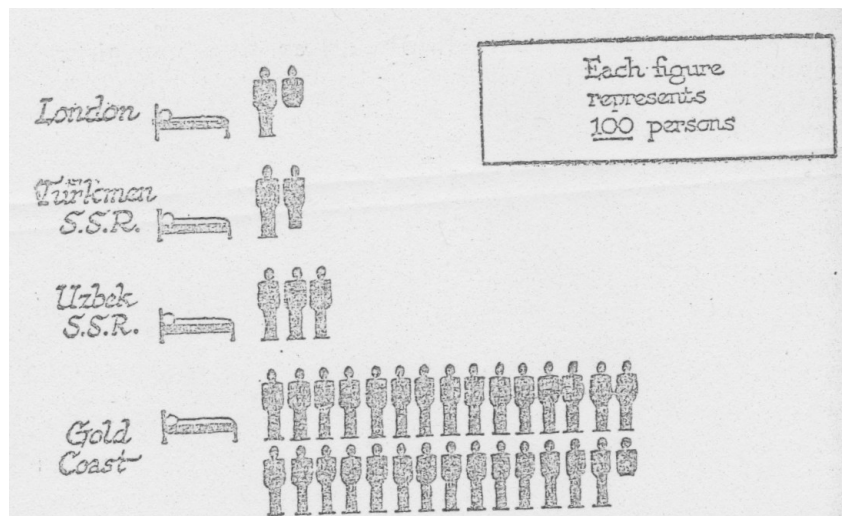
Under this stimulus Vova proceeded to devote most of our remaining time in Africa to finding out what health provision and educational provision was in fact made by the British authorities, and how this compared with the corresponding provision in Soviet Central Asia. Most of his innumerable conversations with officials and with Africans were given to this topic. His inquiries covered the Northern Rhodesia we had just left, as well as the Gold Coast we had just reached.

The following statement I have pieced together from his conclusions as they emerged from a hundred different talks with all manner of men and women, and from a number of mornings spent in consulting blue books in government offices.

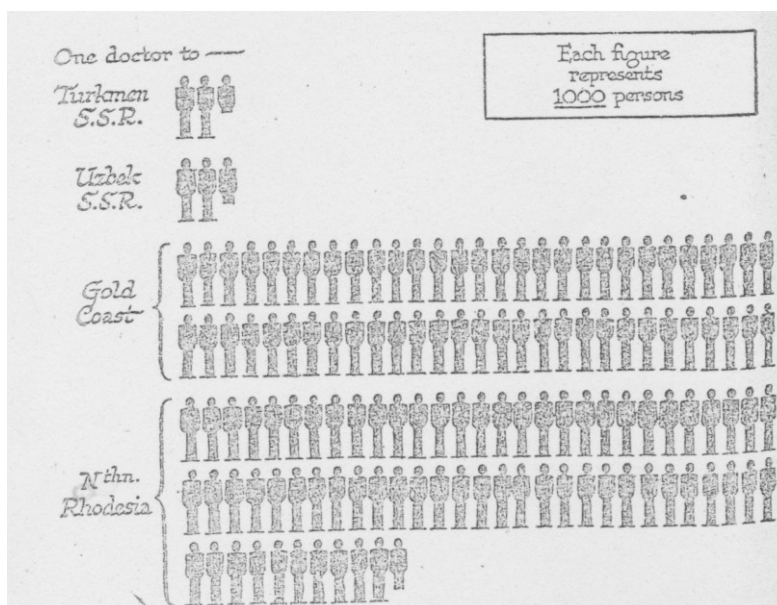
### I. HEALTH PROVISION

*Ratio of hospital beds and cots to total population (1937).*

London	1/145
Turkmen S.S.R.	1/191
Uzbek S.S.R.	1/262
Gold Coast	1/2,950



RATIO OF HOSPITAL BEDS AND COTS TO TOTAL POPULATION



RATIO OF DOCTORS TO POPULATION

*Ratio of doctors to total population (1937).*

Turkmen S.S.R.	1/2,607	
Uzbek S.S.R.	1/2,875	
Gold Coast	1/58,290	
N Rhodesia	1/68,900	
U.S.S.R. (1941)	1/1,300	(or 1/450 if “medical assistants” as well as “physicians” are taken into account: see below—p. 204).

*Medical Services*

<i>Gold Coast (1938)</i>		<i>Uzbek S.S.R. (1937)</i>	
Area (sq. miles)	91,843	( <i>Excluding Kara-Kalpak A. R.</i> )	
Population	3,614,000	Area (sq. miles)	64,000
No. of doctors	62	Population	6,282,000
No. of native assistants	512	No. of doctors.	2,185
No. of places at which Government provides medical aid for natives:		No. of maternity and infant welfare centres	155
33 general hospitals	1,100	No. of maternity beds in hospitals	1,252
10 special hospitals	beds	No. of places in permanent crèches	22,737
2 mission hospitals	and		
28 village dispensaries	125 cots		
<i>N. Rhodesia (1938)</i>		<i>Turkmen S.S.R. (1937)</i>	
Area (sq. miles)	290,323	Area (sq. miles)	188,609
Population	1,378,000	Population	1,253,985
No. of doctors	20	No. of doctors.	481
No. of native orderlies	150	No. of maternity and infant welfare centres	62
No. of places at which Govt. provides, or assists missions to provide, medical aid for natives	70	No. of maternity beds in hospitals	325 <sup>1</sup>
No. of in-patients treated per year	18,000	No. of places in permanent crèches	6,239
Practically no maternity or child welfare work			

<sup>1</sup> (Or 1 for every 3,858 of population. The corresponding figure for Britain is 1 for every 4,500 of population approx.)

<i>N. Rhodesia (1938)</i>	<i>Turkmen S.S.R. (1937)</i>	
The copper mines maintain their own hospitals and health services. Native mineworkers number some 26,000	No. of kindergartens and nurseries	480
	No. of playgrounds	1,881

Compared with the 70 medical aid posts for natives in N, Rhodesia, the Turkmen villages alone (i.e. apart from the urban provision) are provided with 1.043 medical and clinical units.

There are, moreover, 52,500 Turkmen children in kindergartens, nurseries, and playgrounds. In other words, about a quarter of all children up to eight years of age are cared for in these ways—with an average of 22 children per institution. At eight years, elementary education in the formal sense becomes compulsory and universal.

The contrast is striking between this position and that in N. Rhodesia, which the Pim report, sums up as “practically no maternity or child welfare work.” Leaving on one side the question of the quality of soviet health services, it is clear enough that the soviet authorities have approached much nearer than the British to solving the problem of their distribution.

In the soviet republics the opportunity of benefiting from whatever provision exists is approximately the same for all. In British dependencies there is a scheme of priority determining preferential treatment for particular groups in the following order: (1) Europeans in towns; (2) Europeans in rural areas; (3) Africans in towns and on mines; (4) the largest group of all, Africans in rural areas, who receive no effective provision.

There is also a marked difference of strategic conception. The British, convinced that their total provision must remain gravely defective for as long as any administrator can foresee, concentrate on curative work, as in general hospitals and hospitals for particular diseases. The soviets, planning for a complete and universal health provision in the near future, concentrate during the deficiency period on preventive and constructive measures, such as maternity and child welfare schemes.

The degree of over-all success with which their efforts are meeting can be indicated in this way:

*Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births):*

Tsarist Empire (1913)	Britain (1891)	(1931)	British India (1935)	U.S.S.R. (1935)	Soviet Ukraine (1935)
300	143	63	164	77	62
<i>Death Rate (per 1,000 population)</i>				(1937)	
30.2	20	13	33	16.3	

Vova was given to laying great stress on this difference between British and soviet strategy in matters of public health. British policy, at any rate in the colonial areas, is directed to curing patients and limiting the incidence of disease. It does not get far towards realising either aim, he would add. But what impressed him was not so much our failure to reach our objectives, or the low level of energy at which we pursued them, as the restricted character of the objectives themselves.

The soviet people are not merely curbing disease; they are mending the human race on scientific principles. That is the perspective in which they view the problems of public health. “Man, after centuries a poor image of what he might be, has to be remade, and a new civilisation established.” All conditions, therefore, which are prejudicial to health have to be abolished. The health

service must cover for every individual the whole span of life. Boundaries of age or sex, race or religion, nationality, social rank, or occupation must all be ignored, and the health service, so universalised, must be used to clear a passage to the upper reaches of civilisation which mankind has hitherto left unexplored.

Hence Article 120 of the constitution of the U.S.S.R., which incorporates these ideas into the organic law of soviet society. It enacts that all soviet citizens have the right to free medical care, and to maintenance in the event of sickness, old age, or loss of capacity to work.

Administratively this guarantee is implemented in the following ways:

(1) The Public Health Commissariat of the U.S.S.R., in co-operation with the corresponding Departments in the constituent republics, undertakes everything, both in what we should call preventive medicine and in what we should call curative medicine, that has a connection with the health of the citizen from the hour of his conception to the hour of his death. This responsibility extends even to such matters as the manufacture of all drugs, and medical and surgical apparatus, appliances, and instruments. The Commissariats of Health are largely staffed by eminent medical practitioners and scientists.

(2) All medical workers, all workers, that is to say, who take part in providing any aspect of the health service in this wide sense, are employed and paid by the state.

(3) All workers are required by law to be medically examined at regular intervals—usually every six months, in some cases once a year, and as often as once a month in occupations specially likely to be injurious to health.

(4) Every soviet citizen has a medical history sheet which gives details of ailments, diagnosis, and treatment.

(5) In the Plan, under the head “Public Health Protection,” every institution engaged in the health service throughout the U.S.S.R. receives from the state everything required for its work and progress, up to the limit of the capacity of the country as a whole to furnish it.

(6) As always in the U.S.S.R., the organisational units affected by the health plan play their full part in formulating it.

Soviet practice has discarded as out of date the notion that the basic unit in the public health system is the individual doctor. The basic unit is the health protection station in factory, mine, office, or farm. The doctors and nurses in these stations, working with the factory committee of the trade union concerned (or in the collective farms with the board of management), exercise control over the surroundings and the working conditions from the standpoint of sanitation and hygiene. They supervise safety measures and provide against accidents and occupational disease. They arrange for the inspection of food served in the canteens and restaurants. They take steps to prevent the outbreak of epidemics, and are responsible for the health education of the workers. They medically examine all the workers periodically, and they treat the slighter cases of illness or accident. When necessary, they recommend workers for the special diet restaurants, or for places in the health resorts, holiday homes, and sanatoria.

Patients who need more elaborate or specialised treatment than the health protection station can offer are passed on to a polyclinic or hospital. A polyclinic combines a general practitioner service with a specialist service. It is a central institution in the sense that it draws its patients from all the health protection stations within a given area. It provides a complete medical service for out-patients; hospital cases it transfers in its turn direct to general or special hospitals as required. In the larger polyclinics the equipment includes X-ray, massage, and electrical departments, surgical outpatient theatres, ear, nose and throat rooms, dental rooms, a gymnasium, and a day nursery for children.

Vova's hearers were usually prepared to accept this sort of account as possibly accurate in relation to Moscow, for example, and even to other advanced urban centres. But they challenged him with varying degrees of offensiveness (for any suggestion that soviet conditions might be better in general than those of the colony they were serving in had an unsettling effect on their tempers) to affirm that it applied to country districts, and in particular to country districts in Central Asia.

He was always at his most urbane on such occasions, freely admitting that the quality of the health service differs a good deal in different parts of the U.S.S.R. It is still possible, he agreed, to find areas so remote that medical facilities are entirely lacking, particularly among people in the wastes of northern Siberia who get their living by trapping, fishing, or other means that necessitate a semi-nomadic way of life. In such regions an area as large as Franco may contain no more than 5,000 inhabitants. In general, of course, it is more difficult to maintain high standards in the back veld than in the towns. This is as true of the U.S.S.R. as of Africa.

In many country districts there is still a shortage of various drugs, of instruments such as hypodermic syringes, and so on. More important, there is still a shortage of trained medical personnel. It is not always easy to induce young doctors, town-bred and town-trained, to migrate to the newly developing regions in distant parts of the great land-mass of the U.S.S.R. Sometimes they fight shy of such an uprooting of themselves for purely selfish reasons. At others they take the plunge from a sense of public duty, only to discover that local organisations have made little effort to provide suitable living conditions for them, so that on their arrival at the back of beyond neither lodgings nor a comradely welcome are ready for them.

The soviet health authorities have attempted to surmount the difficulty in two ways. One is by offering special inducements to doctors to take up work in remote areas—a free house, a free car, longer holidays on full pay (up to six weeks annually), and every three years a refresher course of study on full pay with all expenses met. The other is by speeding up the training of “native” doctors who will normally prefer to practise among their own communities.

In following the second method the soviets have availed themselves of the pre-revolutionary custom of training two grades of medical practitioner. The higher grade—the physician—is a university graduate, who does ten years at school (8-18), followed by a five years' degree course in medicine. The lower grade—the medical assistant—does a seven-year school course (8-15), followed by three years of medical training. Assistants, as the name implies, are intended primarily to assist the physicians in a subordinate capacity. But in rural areas they are frequently placed in independent charge.

In 1914 the Tsarist empire boasted some 20,000 physicians and some 30,030 medical assistants. The U.S.S.R. in 1940 had 120,000 of the former and about a quarter of a million of the latter. The increased output of medical assistants is due in a large measure to the many medical schools which have been set up in Soviet Asia in the attempt to solve speedily the health problems of the ex-colonial region. One consequence of this policy is that by 1941 85 per cent of the villages throughout the U.S.S.R. were reported to be equipped with doctors at medical stations or with dispensaries visited periodically by doctors—using the term doctor to cover both physician and medical assistant.

When asked for figures relating specifically to one of the Central Asian republics, and indicating the real distribution of medical services there, particularly in the rural districts, Vova's usual reply was to point to the Turkmen S.S.R. There, he said, in 1938 there were 1,043 medical and clinical units in the villages alone. As the republic contained 1,684 collective farms and 29 state farms, there was on the average one medical unit to every 1.6 farms. In Turkmen conditions

that means, very roughly, that each medical unit in the rural districts serves from six to seven hundred people.

## 2. CULTURAL AGENCIES

In discussing the soviet health service with British colonial officials, Vova often seemed to be forced on to the defensive. This was not because he had not a perfectly creditable story to tell; on the contrary. Nor was it because he himself was in the least disposed to take avoiding action. The reason was simply that the British thought his story too creditable to be credible. Vova found himself up against a wall of blank, and not always polite, scepticism.

By way of reprisal he was fond of introducing the topic of what he called cultural agencies. The facts he brought forward under this head may be summarised as follows:

1936	<i>Books Published</i>		<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Theatres</i>	<i>Cinemas</i>
	<i>Titles</i>	<i>Copies (millions)</i>			
Tadjik S.S.R.	269	2.9	58	6	68
Turkmen S.S.R.	251	2.2	60	8	218
Uzbek S.S.R.	1,213	11.2	222	37	564
Kazakh S.S.R.	415	5.3	342	26	900
Kirghiz S.S.R.	164	1.1	53	5	211

Books and newspapers in the table mean those published in the vernacular. Theatres mean professional theatres conducted in the vernacular (in Central Asia large numbers of amateur groups are also actively at work). By January 1941 the number of professional vernacular theatres in the five republics had reached a total of 103. There were also 37 professional theatres performing in Russian.<sup>1</sup>

Broadcasting programmes are made accessible to all through public loud-speakers.

Vova's approach to all this question was to emphasise the urgency of the need for adult education. Liquidating illiteracy was all very well, but of itself it produced no important results. It was a hard task in all conscience, and it called for great devotion from those whose job it was to carry it through. But, strategically considered, it is no more than a preliminary to the education of the newly literate people. The complementary task is to introduce these literates to the scientific world view—to the reading of life which is grounded on positive knowledge. They have to be brought to an adequate comprehension of the whole functioning of society. They must have a good working idea of the entire organisation of production and distribution in their country, and of the social and cultural consequences of that organisation. In a word, they must grasp the social process as a whole and know how it works. Responsible citizenship is impossible for anyone who lacks this understanding. The main arterial roads leading to it are books, the press, the films, the radio, and the stage—supplemented by study and discussion circles, correspondence courses, evening classes, and the like.

Vova derived plenty of fun from harassing his questioners with counter-questions about the existing cultural provision for Africans in the tropical dependencies. He soon had them on the run, and, as he knew his Hailey a good deal better than they knew theirs, it was a simple matter for him to intensify their discomfiture.

In British tropical Africa, he would remind them if they tried to make out a more favourable case, vernacular press, broadcasting, and the cinema “scarcely exist” (*African Survey*, p. 1292).

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Macleod gives a good account of one aspect of this cultural revolution as it actually took place in the Central Asian republics. He deals specifically with the development of an indigenous drama. (See *The New Soviet Theatre*, Allen & Unwin, 1943, especially Ch. 4.)

“To most of the cultivators and pastoralists the cinema and similar devices represent an alien and unfamiliar world” (p. 1110). The vernacular theatre is entirely unknown.

“The Bible, the most widely read book in Africa, already exists in about 240 languages, but school books are still poorly represented in many language areas, and for post-school reading the provision is poorer still. There appears to be an unsatisfied demand for simple books on health, and for explanation of government and its agencies” (pp. 1294-5).

As might be expected with so low a literacy rate, the provision of libraries in tropical Africa is very scanty. The West Coast is, on the whole, better off than other parts in this respect. But the Gambia—the oldest British settlement in Africa— has no single college, club, or institute where books may be consulted or borrowed, and no shop where they can be bought. Sierra Leone has some nine libraries, four of them belonging to schools and colleges, two being tiny public libraries in the capital, and three being even tinier village libraries in the neighbouring countryside. The twenty millions or so of Nigeria’s population appear to be served by about ten places where there are smaller or larger collections of books, and some of these represent faint foreshadowings of municipal libraries. In the Gold Coast, on the other hand, there are no municipal libraries. Four colleges have libraries which are considered worthy of individual mention—Achimota, Wesley College, the Roman Catholic Seminary, and the Government Technical School.

Looking at the West Coast as a whole, we may well be exaggerating if we reckon a couple of dozen institutions as properly to be dignified by the name of library. The population of the territories in question amounts to some 26 millions.

In the five Central Asian republics, with their 17 millions of population, there were 7,407 libraries in 1941. As early as 1938 the annual circulation of books in the public libraries of the Turkmen S.S.R. alone was three million, two and a half million being in the Turkmen language.

As for newspapers, the *African Survey* mentions one government newspaper published in the vernacular in N. Rhodesia, two in Tanganyika, and one in Kenya, which last ceased publication some years ago “for financial reasons.” In the rest of East and Central Africa native journals are mainly missionary publications.

In West Africa a number of native-owned papers exist, but they are published in English.

It can be said, that there is virtually no *free* vernacular press in British Africa. By free is meant published by Africans for Africans independently of European supervision or control.

There remains the cinema. There is little in the way of cultural or entertainment films for Africans. In this field the main British effort has been aimed at protecting the African public from contamination by the ordinary commercial films of the Hollywood type, which Europeans flock to see. The colour bar again.

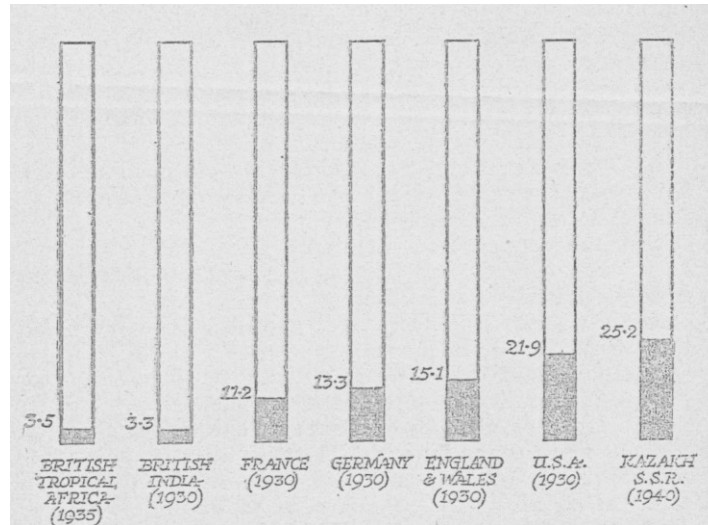
However, “considerable use of the cinema for educational and instructional purposes has been made through the local enterprise of administrative, educational, and technical departments” in British dependencies (*African Survey*, p. 1302). The requirements of war propaganda also have led to the creation of a special department of the Colonial Office for the making of films for Africans, and some good work— though as yet on a small scale—has been done.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL PROVISION •

*Percentage of population undergoing organised instruction in schools  
and other educational institutions.*

		<i>per cent</i>
British tropical Africa	1935	3.5
British India	1930	3.3

France	“	11.2
Germany	“	13.3
England and Wales	“	15.3
U.S.A.	“	21.9-
Kazakh S.S.R.	1940	25.2
U.S.S.R.	“	28.0



PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION UNDERGOING ORGANISED INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

Such is the general setting. Detailed inquiries about the Gold Coast and N. Rhodesia produced this additional information:

*Gold Coast* (1938).

No. of children of school age	600,000
No. of children on school rolls:	
(a) Primary	90,000
(b) Secondary	<u>1,000</u>
	91,000

Only 25 per cent of school-goers are girls.

Only one school-age child in seven receives any schooling.

In the northern territories the total school attendance is 1,000 out of a school-age population of 200,000.

The Director of Education states (1937-8 Report): "It is very probable that by the end of the century universal literacy for all the children of school age will be in sight."

*N. Rhodesia* (1938).

No. of children of school age	250,000
No. of children on school rolls	116,000

Of the latter all but 5,000 are in kindergarten classes.

Government and missions together employ 2,500 teachers. Of these 101 are Europeans: only 665 of the others are regarded as in any sense trained teachers.

The above data suggest a literacy rate of about 2 per cent.

It is understood that a small-scale experiment with compulsory education is to be made, and



that regulations applying to certain age-groups within the copper belt area are now (1943) being brought into force.

In the whole of British tropical Africa, with its population of over 40 millions, there are only some 60 secondary schools, and not a single university. Eighty per cent of the Africans who attend school rise no higher than Standard I. Less than 1 per cent proceed beyond Standard VI.

What, by way of contrast, is the position in Central Asia? Take the Kirghiz S.S.R. in 1936 (population 1½ million). There were then 1,500 elementary schools (8-12 years), 147 intermediate schools (12-15 years), 20 higher schools (15-18 years), and a university.

Or, as illustrating the rate of progress under the first and second 5-year plans (1929-38), consider these changes in the Turkmen S.S.R. The 10-year period saw the number of schools rise from 170 to 1,442, the number of teachers rise from 549 to 6,342, and the number of scholars from some unrecorded figure to 203,100. Thus by 1939 the pupils actually attending schools formed one-sixth of the whole population; and on the average there was one teacher to every 32 pupils.

The pace and the extent to which literacy has been developed is shown by these figures:

	<i>Percentage of Literates</i>		
	<i>Among Men</i>	<i>Among Women</i>	<i>Among Both Sexes</i>
1913	1.5	20.0	0.7
1926	16.5	7.0	12.1
1936	73.3	60.6	67.0
1940	81.0	72.0	76.5

By 1941 practically everybody, except very old people and children of pre-school age, could read and write. Creating a literate population proved approximately a 15-year task.

A point on which Vova was always, and quite rightly, being questioned was: How far does effective educational provision in the ex-colonies differ from that in the most advanced parts of the U.S.S.R.? Here is the sort of answer he habitually gave.

Apart from technical, higher, and adult education, the general soviet scheme falls under three main heads:

(a) The pre-school age. Crèches, playgrounds, nursery schools, kindergartens, etc. 0 to 8 years.

(b) The seven-year school. 8 to 15 years.

(c) The ten-year school. 8 to 18 years.

Of these three types of institution, the first group are not compulsory and not free. They are, however, extensively used. In 1941 there were some 4 million places in crèches: here children up to the age of three are cared for. Nursery schools and kindergartens accommodate children between the ages of 3 and 8, and in 1941 provided 4 million and 1½ million places respectively. These figures compare with a total of 3½ million for the whole 0-8 age group in the U.S.S.R. The charges made for the services rendered by crèches and infant schools vary with the parents' income, but are never more than a third and often as little as a tenth of the cost of looking after the child.

At 8 years of age, education becomes compulsory, free, and universal. Compulsion of this kind was introduced by stages. At first it covered the four years of elementary school from 8 to 12; then also three years of intermediate secondary school up to 15; the third five-year plan provided for the extension of compulsion to the age-group 15-18 in the cities by 1942; and the same treatment was no doubt to have been applied to the country districts as soon as possible thereaf-

ter.

The final aim has thus been to give all children four years of elementary schooling, and six years of secondary schooling, the whole process to be completed by the age of 18. But for the present war, the only part of the scheme which would not have been carried into effect by 1942 is compulsory secondary education between the ages of 15 and 18 in rural areas. The war, however, has forced the soviet authorities not merely to postpone that extension in rural areas, but also to abandon it in the cities. In its place has been set up, as a war-time emergency measure, a system of industrial, railway, and factory schools, giving two-year courses which start at 14+ in the case of industrial and railway schools, and six-month courses which start at 16+ in the case of factory schools.

The consequence is that, apart from this war-time technical training, compulsory education is at the moment confined to the 8-15 stage in the country and in the towns alike. It is, however, to all intents and purposes universal; it can be said that practically every village now has its seven-year school. In the Turkmen S.S.R., for example, the official records for 1939 show that the four-year school (8-12) was then already universal, and that the seven-year school had been introduced in twelve districts, as well as in the towns. At the rate of progress that was being achieved under the third five-year plan, it is probable that the seven-year school was established throughout Turkmenia by 1941.

Higher education had also developed at the same time. By 1939 there were 5 institutions of university standing, 33 technical colleges, and 18 scientific and research institutes in this "largely desert" republic of a million and a quarter inhabitants. Some idea of the difference that a few years can make in the U.S.S.R. may be gathered by comparing these figures with those given above for Kirghizia in 1936.

Vova would sum up the contrast between the soviet arrangements and the British colonial arrangements by saying:

(1) That soviet provision is universal and tremendous efforts have been and are being made to render it equal. British colonial provision is fragmentary, and extremely unequal as between white and black, boys and girls, town and country.

(2) That soviet education is free for all (with certain war-time exceptions mentioned below). The normal British practice in Africa is to charge fees for all types of schooling for natives.

(3) That the soviet republics not only have all the school-age population in school, but also have in educational establishments of various kinds large numbers of people, of both sexes, who have passed the school age. In the Central Asian republics something like a quarter of the entire population is undergoing organised instruction of one sort or another. This figure is nearly twice as high as the corresponding figure for Britain, and many times as high as that for any part of the dependent empire.

(4) That soviet provision is much more even in quality than the British. The soviet best in Central Asia may or may not be so good as Achimota in the Gold Coast. But the soviet worst is nothing like so bad as the weaker kinds of "bush school" in British Africa.

(5) That the soviet republics carry the whole school population forward into genuine post-primary education of some kind. In British dependencies the mass of the school population does not master even the three R's.

#### IV. MISAPPREHENSIONS

Two other matters connected with soviet education often cropped up in Vova's talks, and had

a way of making him rather indignant, because, so he said, his critics misrepresented the facts.

Education was frequently said to be no longer free in the U.S.S.R., and the remark was sometimes so phrased as to suggest that education has become a privilege from which the lower income groups are debarred. "Shades of Capitalist Britain" was a jeering comment Vova more than once had to listen to with what patience he could muster.

The facts, he would insist with some warmth, are these. A soviet decree of October 1940 requires payment of fees, varying between 150 and 200 roubles a year, in the three top classes of secondary schools (i.e. in the last three years of the ten-year school), and in institutions of higher education. The same decree revises the system of awarding scholarships. These are now given only to those who gain a mark of "excellent" in two-thirds of their subjects, and "good" in the remainder.

It is thus true to say that education from the nursery school to the university is not free for all. What is free is the seven-year school course, and the courses in the trade and factory schools.

The main reasons which decided the soviet authorities in favour of the change are understood to be four:

(1) After, the fall of France labour discipline and labour supply were placed on a war footing. The trade and factory schools were set up in order to ensure adequate reserves of high-grade skilled workers during the war in which the U.S.S.R. was then obviously about to become involved. At the same time, fees were introduced in high schools and universities, the intention being to assist the diversion of pupils not of scholarship standard away from the universities and into the trade and factory schools instead.

(2) It was desired to raise the standards for students receiving higher education. The requirement as to fees would limit those who were not strongly drawn to it, while the provision as to scholarships would ensure that nobody having the requisite capacity and attainments need be excluded from it.

(3) It was felt that, in the world conditions of the time, candidates for higher education should give evidence not merely of capacity to profit by it, but also of determination to do so.

(4) Over the previous ten or twelve years the level of material welfare among the workers—their real income—had appreciably risen. It was therefore thought socially more appropriate that higher education (from the nature of the case a minority advantage while the war lasted) should be paid for at least in part by those who directly benefit by it, and not wholly by the general body of the public.

Neither the intention nor the effect of the decree was that families with low incomes should be educationally penalised. The decisive consideration was that the older system of free higher education had produced an output adequate in quantity, but not altogether so in quality. And this position was looked at in the light of the world war, which had then been in progress for more than a year.

The other point about which Vova was frequently pestered was the introduction, into Central Asia and certain other parts of the U.S.S.R., of the Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet and script. In reply Vova asked his critics to view the matter from the standpoint of one of the republics he had been discussing, for instance, Kirghizia—though any of the others would serve as well.

Before soviet influences began to operate strongly among them, the Kirghiz people were in the main nomadic shepherds and cattle breeders living in patriarchal groups. By origin they are a Turkic-speaking Iranian people, and Moslem culture has been traditional, though as some authorities say superficial, among them.

The soviets set up the system of universal compulsory education we have described. There

are now schools all over the republic, and the literacy campaign is as well advanced in Kirghizia as in the rest of Central Asia.

In order to secure these results a first step was to reduce the Kirghiz language to written form. The Latin alphabet and the Latin script were accordingly introduced, and it was from this base that the attack on illiteracy was delivered and carried through.

In 1939, by which time the liquidation of illiteracy was reasonably complete, there began a general change-over from the Latin to the Russian script in Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and the Volga-Ural region. In Georgia and Armenia the traditional native scripts were retained.

Enemies of the U.S.S.R., Vova maintained, have seized on this change with an almost blood-thirsty relish. It has been waved aloft as yet one more example of Red imperialism, and as a cynical reversion to the Russianising policy of the Tsars. It is gleefully greeted as evidence that the Kremlin, having been forced to abandon its dreams of world conquest, had by 1939 already become so scared of being conquered itself that it closed its frontiers even to alphabets, if they happened to be in common use among foreigners. Such readiness for drastic reversal of policy is hailed as a sign that the soviets may soon dispense with communism equally abruptly. There is actually a passage in Bates's book (pp. 159-60) in which charges of this kind are made. Vova believed this to be the source on which many of his Gold Coast antagonists were drawing.

The true account of the matter, he insisted, is different. The Latin script was originally chosen because it was held to be the easiest to learn. Paramount importance was attached to the quickest possible liquidation of illiteracy, and ease of learning was therefore a factor which carried high priority, outweighing many disadvantages. This applied with special force since many of the prospective learners were adults. Had the soviet authorities had the normal school population alone in mind, they might well have adopted the Cyrillic script from the beginning.

All along it was realised that the Russian alphabet was superior to the Latin for general use among non-Russian peoples within the U.S.S.R., and that therefore the time would come when it would be necessary to change over from the Latin to the Russian. But it was decided to make the change only when something like universal literacy had been achieved. In all the circumstances it was thought better to take two bites at the cherry, for while to learn the Cyrillic script would present no great difficulty to people who had already mastered the Latin, to plunge those to whom writing of any kind was foreign straight into the Cyrillic might have lengthened the whole campaign by years.

As to the charge of Great-Russian chauvinism it is enough to point out that what are in question are alphabets, not languages. The local languages continue everywhere to be encouraged as wholeheartedly as before.

The considerations which seem to have weighed most in the minds of the soviet authorities who resolved on the change are

(1) The 24 letters of the Latin alphabet cannot represent the wide range of sounds in eastern languages. The Russian alphabet is better placed for this purpose, since it contains 32 letters. Even to the Russian extra letters have to be added for the languages of the eastern peoples—41 letters are found necessary for Bashkirian, 38 for Uzbek, and so on.

(2) There is an increasing permeation of soviet national speech by Russian words and by international words which first reach the various soviet peoples through the Russian. In 1923 the Uzbek language, for example, contained barely 2 per cent of such words, while 37 per cent were borrowed from Arabic-Persian, By 1940, 15 per cent of the spoken words were of Russian or international origin, and only 25 per cent originated in Arabic-Persian.

One object of the change of script is to facilitate this permeation into every corner of the

U.S.S.R. The hypothesis that it aims at insulating the soviet people from international influences is thus the exact contrary of the truth.

(3) In handling vast masses of troops from all over the U.S.S.R. in a world war, a general knowledge of the Russian language in the Red Army and Navy is a real strategic convenience. As the imminence of a world war became more obvious this consideration increased in weight. Hence the wider adoption of the Cyrillic script has been accompanied by an increased emphasis on the teaching of Russian as a second language in non-Russian schools.

## CHAPTER IX

### VOVA SUMS UP

#### I

The Kru boys sang and laughed, as they forced the little surf-boat up and down across the league-long, lemon-coloured rollers that undulate heavily over the African shelf, and then crash in thunderous spray against the Gold Coast. Our ship lay half a mile out to sea, and these gay negroes, superbly dashing in scarlet jerseys and scarlet tasselled caps, plied their broad flat paddles towards her with a will, as though there could be no jollier occupation in the world than ferrying enervated Europeans out of Africa. When we reached the ship's side, they popped us into the mammy-chair like a couple of sacks of cocoa beans, and let off a loud cheer as we were hoisted into the air above their heads and swung aboard.

That afternoon we steamed west towards the Atlantic on the long voyage home.

For some days I left Vova to himself, not pressing him to talk. I wanted to know what he made of the whole trip. But I knew also that he would want to tell me. I was content to wait.

Sure enough it came—the third day out. There were a few preliminary fumbblings before the main outpouring began, the asides of a man thinking aloud as he sorts out his ideas. For instance, he would mutter: “The historical approach—that is the trouble. These people are all historians. Not a scientist among them.”

In such cases a little patience and a timely question or two would usually elicit what he meant. After a good deal of jig-saw puzzling I managed to make out that the cryptic antithesis between history and science was a form of mental shorthand which signified to Vova something like this.

His problem was to account for the fact that the British in Africa, as elsewhere, could cheerfully accept as tolerable, and even creditable, social conditions which to Vova's sovietised way of thinking seemed to cry aloud for prompt and drastic surgery. Conservative complacency versus revolutionary impatience! To him such shadowy generalisations appeared empty phrases. How does it come about that two equally kindly and sensitive people, who moreover agree about the facts of a given situation, can yet differ entirely in their valuation of the facts? That is the question. He would recur again and again to a talk we had had with the compound manager on the Roan Antelope Copper Mine at Luanshya. “The happiness and general contentment of the native is necessary to the progress and efficiency of mining operations,” that gentleman had said; and Vova fully agreed with him. Then the manager went on “The native is an integral part of the machinery, and needs just as much thought and care as the most valuable parts of our machinery in the plant”; and Vova went white with rage, as though the man had struck him in the face.

Or he would quote a remark of Margery Perham's in one of her books, where she says that, before being able to say whether or not Africans are racially inferior to Europeans, we must “wait until the negro has been placed in really good conditions under the influence of civilisation for at least five hundred years.”

In general, Vova was highly scornful of all attempts to vindicate the African *status quo* by misleading analogies, irrelevant comparisons, and appeals to abstract universal concepts. I must admit that our travels had shown such attempts to be extremely common among apologists of the British colonial system. Many otherwise intelligent people appeared to suppose that criticisms of British shortcomings could be effectively disposed of by saying: “Well, at any rate our record is

no worse than the French (or the Belgian), (or the Portuguese)”; or “Why, a hundred years ago things were just as bad in England”; or “You should remember that the heart of man is desperately wicked, and be content if our record shows even a little gold among the dross”; or “It took us 500 years (or 1,000 years), (or 2,000 years) to achieve democracy; why should you expect Africans to reach the goal more rapidly?”

## II

All such arguments, Vova complained, sought to predict the future behaviour of one functional system in one set of conditions by analogy with the past behaviour of different functional systems in different sets of conditions. This he called an abuse of the historical method, and totally at variance with the methods of science. Social achievement in Africa to-day ought to be appraised not according to standards derived from social achievements elsewhere in the past, but according to standards drawn from detailed study of the present structure and energies of the African functional system, and the concrete conditions within which it operates. Such study alone can reveal the determinate possibilities which the system, as an ongoing process, contains.

History, indeed, cannot predict. Science can; but only by extrapolation in accordance with an ascertained rule. For example an excited atom gives out energy in packets, as one might say, of a certain size. It thus produces sharp spectral lines. Scientific theory, in explaining how this happens, further makes it possible to predict spectra which have not been observed, and to find them. Similarly in the social sphere, the general laws which a functional system embodies can be ascertained by analysing its present features in all their dynamic detail; and from those general laws can be predicted the possible ways in which the system might complete its own self-development. Those determinate possibilities provide the yardstick for measuring the extent to which the *status quo* represents success or failure.

Vova's main charge against the British was that they never even try to mark down the general laws actually observable in the African functional complex. Instead, they lazily fall back on various abstract concepts falsely assumed to be applicable to all societies at all times or to “human nature” as such. These concepts they illegitimately call on history to justify.

The Roan Antelope compound manager dealt with his African mine workers on lines of animal husbandry, as though they were a special kind of cattle. Why? Clearly, Vova answered, because he looked at them historically in their capacity of hewers of wood and drawers of water, and not scientifically from the standpoint of their real potentialities. His angle of vision took in merely what they had been, and entirely ignored what they might become.

Margery Perham and her 500 years! No one with a scientific grasp of the mechanisms of cultural transmission could possibly have made that remark of hers. Presumably she is able to make it only because her mind habitually works from the major premise that in human affairs what has happened in the past is a reliable guide to what is likely to happen in the future. With the qualification “in the same conditions” this would no doubt be true. But in fact the conditions never are the same. The Perham premise either ignores this or includes a tacit assumption that, while the broad conditions in which social behaviour takes place may vary within certain limits at different historical epochs, the limits are not wide enough to permit of significant variations in the gross overall behaviour of large human masses such as racial groups.

Again, this might be approximately true if the main limiting factors were biological and geographical. But to-day the biological and geographical factors are in an important sense subordinate to the social factor. Human societies can now construct the field in which their members

live and move, and thus remake the nature of man. This discovery—its importance can hardly be exaggerated—has only been made, or at least only verified, since 1917. It means that the social and political standards of the past are largely irrelevant in forecasting the future.

If you construct a social field after the Nazi pattern, you can tell the working class, as Hitler does, that they are nothing except as servants of the nation or the race, and they will behave as though what you say is true, “The working masses want only bread and circuses, they have no understanding of any kind of ideal.” The remark is Hitler’s own. Therefore they will torture Jews, make superhuman efforts to destroy their class-ally, the soviet state, and shrink from no barbarity in trampling all Europe underfoot, just as they are told. Being nothing, believing themselves nothing, they give themselves willingly to the revolution of nihilism, deifying death.

On the other hand, if you design your social field on the soviet model, and tell the working class that they alone can save the world, the result is a whole people consumed, as no people in history have ever been consumed before, with a passion to learn and to understand, to produce, to build, and to create—that passion to raise humanity to higher reaches of life and to make life everywhere more abundant, which distinguishes the soviet people from all others, and which is common to all soviet people, whatever their cultural traditions and earlier historical experience may have been.

This is the sense in which biological factors in human behaviour are subordinate to social factors. The soviet authorities claim that the increase in their population of some 24 millions between 1926 and 1938 is due, not to deliberate population policy aimed at raising the birth-rate, but to the provision of large-scale social services, especially for maternity and child welfare, and to the abolition of unemployment. In Britain, on the other hand, the key to a “successful” career for children of the middle class is a public school and university education; for those of the lower middle class the key is the secondary school and perhaps the provincial university. There is thus a strong tendency for parents in all these classes to limit their families in order to be able to concentrate their resources on one child. In the U.S.S.R. the equality of educational and economic opportunity robs such a motive of its applicability. Moreover, soviet social provision in general has contrived to reconcile the emancipation of women with motherhood.

### III

Such, as far as I could gather, was the line of thought in Vova’s mind whenever he let fly about the British and their “historian’s standpoint.” He felt that standpoint to be disastrous in practice because it led them to tolerate a whole range of social conditions in Africa (and of course elsewhere) which a scientific outlook would unhesitatingly condemn.

I let him ramble on in that strain for the first two days at sea. Then I began to steer him gently towards what I really wanted to hear—his summing-up of our whole trip. Obviously he had been greatly attracted by the African people. The glimpses he had caught of them at their daily tasks in their own homeland fascinated him and impressed him with a strong sense of the cultural unity underlying their surface differences.

The third night out we were sitting on the boat deck under a queer orange-coloured moon. The sea was dead calm; even the air seemed heavy and slack; there was no sound except the throb of the ship’s engines, and the hiss of the furrowed waters as her bows thrust them aside in a creamy phosphorescence.

“My stars,” Vova burst out suddenly after a long silence, “if we could have fifteen years in Africa, what a country we would make of it.”



This was the chance I had been waiting for. “Who are ‘we’?” I asked, leading him on. “Just you and I?”

“No, not you and I, John. The soviet government and the communist party.”

“And what would you and your friends do with Africa?”

“We would make it one of the leading strongholds of the democratic spirit, and the active, living headquarters of the whole negro race.”

“Sounds like a revised version of Marcus Garvey to me,” I said. “Africa for democracy and the Africans, what? And all in a mere decade and a half. Soviet tempo with a vengeance. Rather disrespectful to Miss Perham. Anyway, how would you set about it?”

“We begin,” Vova replied, “with an administrative regrouping of all the tropical African territories. No one can do much while Africa is broken up into separate administrations whose boundaries have no relevance to the life of the people concerned. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that every international and every inter-colonial frontier in Africa violates a tribal or ethnical or economic grouping to some extent or other. I am thinking of situations such as that of the Ma-sai tribe, which is cut into two fragments by the Kenya-Tanganyika border. Or the old Anglo-German border between the Gold Coast and Togoland, which cut through tribes for the whole of its length, leaving villages on one side and farm lands on the other.”

“Yes,” I said, “that sort of anomaly is typical of the African scene everywhere.”

“Now I assume,” Vova went on, “that democratic freedom for Africa in the political and economic spheres can only develop fully in some federal union of autonomous regions. By the way it is important to remember—what some of your leftish enthusiasts are apt to forget—that federation comes after autonomy, not before it. The immediate question therefore is what is the most appropriate composition of the regions that are to exercise autonomy. In the present state of knowledge no one can be very confident about the answer, but my guess is that such regions would seldom coincide with any of your existing dependencies.”

“I dare say you’re right. Then Item One on your list of reforms is a general revision of colonial frontiers by an expert commission in the light of ethnological, cultural, and economic considerations—this revision to pave the way for the cultural autonomy of the new scientifically demarcated regions. And regard would also be had, would it, to, the principle of self-determination?”

“Why, certainly. I imagine the commission would be composed of representative Africans, who would only call in outside advice if they felt they needed it.”

“And if they disagree among themselves?”

“Well, then they would have to go to arbitration.”

“All right. And this cultural autonomy—I use the term in your technical soviet sense—is itself the basis on which the higher levels of self-government are built, levels attainable only through membership of an inclusive federation?”

“That is about it,” he agreed.

“Then so much for Item One. What is your Item Two?” “Item Two is the evolutionary introduction of the soviet system into the autonomous regions.”

“Indeed? And how many years of chaos and civil war do you reckon that will entail?”

“I said evolutionary, John—not revolutionary.”

“Oh, that’s rather a new emphasis for a bolshevik, isn’t it? In any case, Africans may not want to evolve towards sovietism. They may kick hard against it. What then?”

“Why should they kick against it? Have they not every right to despise an order that makes so little constructive contribution to their social problems as yours does?”

“Dislike of our system—if it exists (and what evidence have you for that?)—is hardly the same thing as desire for yours.”

“John, dear. Do not be over-anxious to score debating points; it makes you miss the important ones. You are forgetting that the people who kick against sovietisation are not the mass of peasants and proletarians, but a small bunch of landlords, industrialists, and bankers at what you count as the top of your inverted social scale. You are so accustomed to thinking of these exploiters as the mouthpieces of ‘public opinion,’ and you have been so successful in diddling the electorate into following their lead, that it comes as a great shock to you to find that workers sometimes hold views of their own. When they do, the views are generally the exact opposite of those of bankers, industrialists, and landlords.”

“All right, all right, Vova, I don’t want to quarrel with you.”

“And another point,” he went on, a little mollified. “You *will* think of revolutions as bloody and violent operations. But that is only so when the material strength of the revolutionary groups and the reactionary groups is evenly matched. Thanks to the support given by the British and their allies to our reactionaries between 1917 and 1921, the two sides were pretty evenly matched in my country, and we all went through hell before the revolution came out on top. When, however, the Baltic States of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania joined the U.S.S.R. in 1940, the main changes required for the socialist revolution in them were carried out in a month or two, not only without resistance but without serious friction. We obtained quite readily the co-operation of the populations affected. There were two reasons for this. One, that the common people, the gagged masses whom you invariably forget, *wanted* closer union with us; and the other that, owing to the existence of the Red Army, the preponderance of material power was so great on the revolutionary side that the Baltic reactionaries saw it was no use to show fight. The slogan of your parlour pinks ‘Let’s have a *nice* revolution’ is perfectly feasible, provided the revolutionaries have all the tanks, all the guns, and all the aircraft.”

#### IV

“Very well,” I said, “we’ll assume that you are similarly placed in Africa, and are proceeding smoothly with your nice evolutionary revolution. What does that mean in terms of concrete measures?”

“Speaking very broadly, it means Lenin’s New Economic Policy (N.E.P.)—the policy we followed in the U.S.S.R. from 1923-25 to save sovietism and to set up a half-way house to a fully planned economy.”

“Can you be a little more specific?”

“I can if you want me to. Translate N.E.P. into terms applicable to Africa and you get some such result as this. We should nationalise overseas trade, banks, transport, land, and the large industrial concerns. If the former owners and their managers were prepared to work with us-, we should on occasion appoint them to be directors of the establishments that had been theirs. There would be a distribution of land to landless peasants, and a re-financing of agriculture. An immediate start would be made with agricultural mechanisation; small machine tractor stations, etc., would be set up in every district. A number of collective farms would be organised, but collectivisation would not be pressed in the early stages. Collectivisation releases a lot of agricultural labour, and we should not want the release to occur until new manufacturing industries were ready to absorb it.”

“And how about the white settlers?”

“There would be plenty of jobs for them much more interesting and remunerative than struggling to keep too big a farm going on too little capital. Most of them, I imagine, would go into the new industries or the machine tractor stations. However, if they wanted to keep their farms, they could do so—but we should not allow individual farms to be more than, say, 100 acres in size, or farmers to employ anyone except members of their own family. Farmers, of course, would not be able to sell or lease their land or to pledge it as security for loans. There would be nothing to prevent settlers from forming collective farms; but neither such collectives nor their members would have any claim to land which they were unable to use for approved farming purposes.”

“Well, well. It would be fun to hear some of the Kenya nobility on that. But let it pass. Complete the picture—briefly please!”

“All new development of natural resources, industries, and public utilities would, naturally, be undertaken by African public enterprise, not by European private enterprise. But many existing businesses, especially in distribution, would carry on much as before. The big change here would be that such businesses would be subject to the state monopoly of external trade, and to a gradually imposed policy of concentrating all internal trade in consumers’ co-operatives. So long as the transition to the full soviet system was deferred, owners of house property, for example, would probably still be permitted to charge rents, and all manner of business and professional services would be privately rendered as before. That is about all, I think.”

“It’s certainly plenty to be going on with,” I said. “Have you any winged word on the subject of education?”

“Need I say that all forms of social service would be developed as rapidly as possible on the usual soviet lines? Education, while conforming to the principles of cultural autonomy, would also be permeated with the spirit of science, and would set itself to familiarise the whole population with the truths and the attitudes of science. As you are fond of putting it, education would be kept in line with communist ideology. We prefer to say that it would be given a scientific foundation. Communism, after all, is simply the application of science to social affairs.”

“Would the missionaries leap for joy about that, do you think?”

“The missionaries will have to face a good many things they may not like, including freedom of anti-religious propaganda. As to their future part in education, I am not prepared to guess how that might turn out. The answer depends mainly on African public feeling towards missions and their activities. It is pretty safe to predict that the missions would cease to receive financial assistance from the state.”

“Well, Vova, we know now what you would like to do with Africa, if you had the chance. But of course you won’t get the chance. The British are quite capable of seeing to that.”

“No, we shall not get the chance. And even if we had it, we should not be able to make use of it. We shall be much too busy elsewhere. But if Africa is to develop as a home of free democratic peoples, someone will have to do the kind of things I have been speaking of. They will probably get done by the C.P.T.A.”

“What on earth is that?”

“The Communist Party of Tropical Africa.”

“Is there such a thing?”

“Not as far as I know. But there will be. I think you people do not realise what a tremendous world-force the communist party is going to be when this war is over.”

“Does that mean that you write off the British effort in Africa as altogether valueless?”

“Oh, no. That way of putting it is much too extreme. But honestly, John, I am discouraged by what I have seen—apprehensive even. In a way, there is so much good will, so much unselfish endeavour. And yet, and yet.... What comes of it? Mostly it goes to waste because of your blank incomprehension of the issue.”

“Mine?”

“You know what I mean. The white people who rule Africa. Why, not one man jack among them in the whole continent, or in your Colonial Office either, sees that the colonial problem is simply an aspect of the problem of the defence of democracy—or rather, of how to mount democracy’s counter-offensive against fascism. Colonial freedom is the second front which the democratic principle will have to open throughout the world, if it is to save itself. Democracy will outlive the totalitarian challenge only if it can itself offer prompt, radical, and constructive innovations. I see no sign that those who hold the reins in British Africa are either prepared for anything of the kind, or in command of means to execute it, if they were. Do you know what has constantly been in my mind in all the many conversations I have had with your very gentlemanly officials?”

“I’ve no idea,” I smiled.

“It is a passage from one of Lytton Strachey’s essays where he speaks of Madame du Defand and her circle. The polished people who gathered in her polished drawing-room, he says, for all their brightness had the hand of death upon them. The future lay elsewhere; what survived there was simply the past, fashionable indeed, elaborate, even gay, but still irrevocably the past. I wish I could remember his actual words. How does it go? ‘A process of disintegration had begun among their most intimate beliefs and feelings; the whole firm framework of society—of life itself—the hard, dark, narrow, antiquated structure of their existence, had become a faded, shadowy thing.’ That is pretty much how your proconsuls and their womenfolk impress me. In Africa at least the lamp of their dominion still rides high. But it grows cloudy and dim. It no longer has any clear conviction about what it is there for.”

“Vova, why do I always want to laugh when you prophesy doom to everyone who doesn’t see eye to eye with you in politics?”

Brushing my flippancy aside, he pressed menacingly on. “You people,” he said, “still think that you can compromise with fascism. Oh, I do not say that you will rat in the fight against Hitler, though among you too lurks many a would-be Petain and Laval. It is blindness, not treachery, that I accuse you of. You still believe that fascism can be reduced to manageable forms. The smell of this sin of yours has stifled the world. This sin of yours has spoiled the sweet world’s taste for uncounted millions who writhe in agony in every land. China, Ethiopia, Spain, Czechoslovakia. I cannot understand why those names do not drive crazy with bitter shame all grown men and women in your precious Commonwealth of Nations. They would do so except that even now you have no grasp of what they mean.”

“For God’s sake, Vova, why go muck-raking over all that again?”

“It is muck you do not like having your nose rubbed in, is it not? But your insinuation that it all belongs to the past will not wash, friend John.”

“Must I go on assuring you that appeasement and isolationism, the whole spirit of Munich, have really disappeared in Britain?”

“They have gone to earth, yes. But they remain as powerful underlying tendencies. That is

clear from the obvious fact that your ruling groups have no notion why they are in the war. It is queer enough to be in it at all, but to be in it on the same side as the soviet people and the Chinese makes no sense whatever.”

“Vova, I tell you Chamberlainism is dead. It’s as damned as you like, but it’s dead too.”

“If you really think that, John, you are in for a whole series of rude awakenings. I tell you that your present rulers entirely mistake the significance of the war, and in doing so they evince the same confusion of mind as Chamberlain evinced in an earlier period. You people thought then that Japan would learn to eat quietly and temperately out of your hand, if you flung Manchuria to her. The burnt offering of Ethiopia was going to turn Mussolini into a gentleman and a friend. When Hitler told you the Sudetenland was his last claim to territory, you swallowed the lie with gusto and relief, in spite of all our warnings. But fascism grows by what it feeds on. The taste of Manchuria so whetted Japan’s appetite that she began to clamour for all China. Ethiopia was just *hors d’oeuvre* for Mussolini; you had to feed Spain to him as a second course. Hardly had Hitler roped the Czechs into his fold than he embarked on the conquest of the world. And now after these agonising lessons, you still suppose that, once the Nazis are beaten, fascism will have been disposed of, and so far as Anglo-African relations are concerned your ancient system of plutocracy will quietly resume its sway. A little window-dressing, perhaps, in the way of popular consultation, but substantially the same alignment of forces. You gravitate to this attitude because you are half-fascist yourselves; because you just do not see what the distinction between fascism and democracy is; and because you are uncertain which of them you prefer.”

## VI

“Now steady on, Vova. Simmer down for a moment, and tell me quite quietly why you say that kind of thing. I resent your calling Britain a semi-fascist country. On what evidence do you base such a charge?”

“You seem to think I am talking mildly, John. But you are mistaken. I will give you two items of evidence, with pleasure. First, there is the group of reports by prominent business organisations on post-war reconstruction that Geoffrey Stewart told us about at Broken Hill.<sup>1</sup> Even friendly critics have been struck by the tone of pessimism which pervades them all. To the *Economist*, I remember, they seemed to paint ‘a Britain brooding like an aged miser in the twilight over a dwindling treasure.’ What impresses me personally is their intellectual and emotional confusion. In words they cry out for a new world of freedom and expansion, but their concrete proposals for attaining it aim simply at entrenching a corporative system of monopoly, a system of self-government and self-sufficiency of vested interests. Each industry is to plan for itself by means of a trade association of owners and employers; external trade is to be regulated by a council representing merchant and industrial capital; the economic policy of the state is to be inspired and guided by a federation of employers’ trade associations. You would hardly call the *Economist* unsympathetic to the claims of big business in general, but it made some pretty severe comments on these ideas. They are the expressions of men who have thrown up the sponge, and

---

<sup>1</sup> See above, Ch. VI, p. 173. The reference is to the following documents:

(a) *Reconstruction* (Federation of British Industries, May 1942).

(b) *Post-War Trade* (National Union of Manufacturers, May 1942).

(c) *Post-War Industrial Reconstruction* (Association of Chambers of Commerce, May 1942).

(d) *General Principles of a Post-War Economy* (London Chamber of Commerce, May 1942.)

(e) *Post-War Economy: A Statement of Principles* (Federation of Master Cotton-Spinners’ Associations, April 1942).

who wish merely to salvage from the world's wreck the controls and restraints by which particular groups of producers enjoy particular advantages. They are part and parcel of the same tired, disillusioned, frustrated attitude which in a long series of other countries has been the harbinger of fascism. These are not my criticisms, but the *Economist's*. Do they not strike you as being much in point?"

"But these big business interests are not England."

"Indeed, they are not. But at present they control England. They controlled it throughout the Baldwin-Chamberlain era. From among them will be drawn your Quislings and Laval's, if circumstances ever bring such utensils out of the cupboards where they are kept. And, unfortunately, the British people have a long-standing habit of submitting without complaint, or at least without resistance, to their control."

"Well, have it your own way, Vova. Let's get on to your second piece of evidence."

"The second piece is another 'reconstruction' report—this time dealing with education.<sup>2</sup> The authors are again your ruling class, now however wearing the uniform of the Tory party. Toryism usually finds it prudent not to declare its intellectual foundations; it prefers to assume them in silence, and to rely on the vast resources of popular apathy to keep them concealed from the scrutiny they can so ill bear. But here for once it attempts to state with candour both what it is minded to demand or to expect of the post-war world, and why. About half the report is given to insisting on the urgent need for state-induced religion as an antitoxin to bolshevism. It is a naive return to Platonism in education. The political uses of religion are blatantly paraded and emphasised. Religion, in this Tory-managed world, is to become explicitly an instrument of state policy. It is to mean thinking up divine sanctions for fictions which big business considers expedient and edifying for the lower orders. One of its main functions will be to administer to the young through the schools a continual overdose of piety, obscurantism, and awe of the powers that be."

"That's a very old game, Vova. Why should it prove more successful after the war than before it?"

"I cannot predict what success it may have, but evidently the Tories mean to carry out a much more complete mobilisation of religion in defence of social privilege than your country has known for many generations."

"And do you call that fascism?"

"At least it bears a strong resemblance to the fascism of Dollfuss, Franco and Petain. However, the fascist tendency comes out even more clearly in another part of the report. This second passage severely censures the notion that the healthy and happy life of the whole man, body, mind, and spirit, is a suitable objective of the educational process. Rather, it is urged, must the young be trained for 'disease, disablement, pain, death; inherited defects; limited capacities; misfortune, unhappiness, and a sense of guilt or sin.'"

"And what reasons do they give in favour of this 'realistic' approach? I'm sure realistic is the word they would use to describe it."

"Simply that all those forms of wretchedness are a necessary part of every man's life. Here, surely, we are listening to men who despair of any genuine social reconstruction. Theirs are the authentic accents of the counter-revolution. Here is the same disgust at civilisation, the same bitter disillusionment, the same glorification of toughness and brutality, which strewed Hitler's path to power. You could hardly have a plainer forecast of the Christian fascism, the boiled-shirt, school-tie fascism, which your monopolists have in store for Britain, if they get their way. Churchill rallies the nation with the offer of blood and tears while the war lasts. These men offer noth-

---

<sup>2</sup> *Education Aims* (Conservative and Unionist Party, September 1942).

ing but blood and tears for ever. They are weary of the sun, and their minds are full of scorpions, like Macbeth's—and for much the same reasons.”

“I must say their attitude seems to present a number of pathological features.”

## VII

“Well, there you are, John. Put those big business reports and Tory education report alongside one another—read the whole lot together, as it were—and you will see that they all express a common mentality. That mentality shows many of the ordinary symptoms of fascism. Hence I say that your country is half-fascist already, and is likely to complete the transition to fascism when the war ends, unless the people at large thrust the old ruling groups aside and take over the reins themselves. For my own part, I have never understood why Britain is ranked as a democracy at all. Naturally I see the propaganda value of the democratic cry—the people's war and all that—especially since Roosevelt took it up. China, Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Britain, U.S.S.R.—we are all honorary democracies now. It is laughable.”

“Of course the term has no constitutional significance at all, when it's used as loosely as that.”

“Of course not. A democracy then is simply a synonym for ‘one of the anti-Axis nations.’ But has the term any more precise meaning when applied to your country by itself?”

“Obviously it has.”

“Then what are the factors which constitute Britain a democracy?”

“Well, all our main organs of government, local and national, are elective. The franchise is about as wide as it can go.

“And yet the mass of people are shut out from sharing in the process of government, except vaguely on polling-day when everything possible is done to pull the political wool over their eyes.”

“We have a free press...”

“Or rather a privately owned press, which prints government hand-outs by way of news and the prejudices of a few millionaires by way of interpretation.”

“I wish you wouldn't keep interrupting, Vova. Then there's *habeas corpus*...”

“*Habeas cadaver* would be nearer the mark, wouldn't it? At least, every *corpus* must be careful not to have a mind of its own or to harbour any independent spirit. The legal meaning of sedition is now so wide in Britain that it covers practically any activity which is unwelcome to the 1922 Committee.”

“Look here, Vova, this is really too much. Please let me finish. It's true that the electorate only comes into the picture directly once every four or five years. But all the time every government department displays a wholesome fear of parliamentary criticism, and the government as a whole usually finds it prudent to respond to major movements of public opinion.”

“Public opinion! Why *will* you use these loose and misleading terms? What you mean by public opinion is logrolling by pressure-groups, is it not? And the line actually taken by a government is the mathematical resultant of the converging impacts of the strongest of such groups? I dare say that that is a fairly accurate account of governmental behaviour. But what has it got to do with democracy? Assume that the Federation of British Industries represents 100,000 voters; and assume, further, that the Peace Pledge Union speaks for an equal number. Would you argue that the log-rolling of both bodies is likely to be equally effective?”

“If you're going on like this,” I said rather stiffly, “I don't see much good in trying to....”

“Poor John, I am sorry. I am being maddening, I know. But it makes me wild to hear you trotting out these ancient platitudes about your free-institutions as though they embodied some important truth. If the names of Beaverbrook, Astor, Camrose, Kemsley, Rothermere, suggest what you understand by a free press, if the House of Lords and the interlocking directorates of the great monopoly combines represent what you understand by political and industrial democracy, then I have nothing more to say, except that your language seems to me misapplied. What, on that view, would fascism be?”

“Surely fascism is defined as a system where institutions are *not* free: where, for example, governing bodies are not elected, where all the press is wholly under official control, where there is no *habeas corpus*, no freedom of speech or association or assembly, where the liberties of individuals are not protected by the law, where the government is not responsive to public sentiment publicly expressed, and so on.”

“Will you not include an admixture of morbid brutality among the ingredients of fascism?”

“By all means. I don’t claim my catalogue to be complete.”

“Well, John, I agree that you have listed some of the main points of difference between a dictatorship and a relatively libertarian or *laissez-faire* type of system. I agree, too, that your British system is relatively libertarian when compared with that of Nazi Germany or fascist Italy. But a relatively libertarian system is not necessarily a democracy; it is quite compatible with oligarchical institutions. And it seems clear that British institutions are properly described as oligarchical and plutocratic. Why are you so reluctant to take the term democracy in its plain meaning?”

“I didn’t know I was. What do you call the plain meaning of democracy?”

“Oh; come, what has happened to that expensive classical education of yours? What can democracy mean but the power of the people? You cannot improve on the definition that Lincoln gave—government of the people by the people for the people. The democratic social process involves the continuous re-building of society in the interests of the unprivileged and of their widening freedom and responsibility. Moreover, in any kind of democratic organisation, every person who has to carry out a scheme of work on orders from above must also have taken part in formulating it as a project from below. That is the test of democracy, the token that distinguishes it from all other kinds of social arrangement. Such, at least, is the test that we apply in my country, and I challenge you to suggest another as simple, or as comprehensive, or as fair.”

“And what, on that view, is fascism? There’s your own question thrown back at you.”

“It is an easy one. The answer is given us by no less an authority than Hermann Göring. An institution or organisation is fascist in character, he says, when authority is exercised only from above downwards, and when the higher ranks are in no sense answerable to the lower. ‘Each leader has authority, and he issues his orders to officials and followers below him; but he is responsible only to his superiors.’ And surely Goring is right, John, is he not? The essential distinction is exactly that. In a democracy the leaders are always the delegates of the led, accountable to them, and liable to recall by them. In a fascist order the leaders are just superior officers who exact obedience from their subordinates without owing them any reciprocal duty.”

## VIII

“Well, Vova, it’s very civil of you to go to all this trouble in putting me wise about the nature of democracy. But—I’m always having to say this to you—haven’t we wandered rather a long way from the African question?”

“It is time to draw the moral for Africa of what we have been saying. Thank you for the re-



minder. But our talk has not strayed. I have been deliberately clearing the ground for one vital point. I said long ago that I was apprehensive about the outlook for these tropical dependencies. Now you see why. On our soviet criterion of democracy, how does your colonial system come out?"

"Naturally its display of democratic features is limited. But that is inevitable in any kind of colonial system, on your view. A colony is by definition under alien rule. So if, with you, we identify democracy with popular self-government, we are bound to find any dependency undemocratic. But that need not mean that it is not moving in the direction of democratic self-rule—and doing so as rapidly as all the surrounding conditions admit."

"Bromide, my dear old John, pure bromide! Of course, it would be silly to look for fully developed forms of self-government in a colony. My intention was to take altogether a wider view, and see the position in Britain and the position in tropical Africa in their mutual relationships."

"Well?"

"Well, take Britain first and test it for democratic symptoms, using the soviet test. What kind of mark would it earn? Parliament and the elected organs of local government might scrape through, though we know their claims are largely bogus. No one, I mean, argues that they express the needs, or even the opinions, of the rank and file of Britain—still less does Parliament express those of Britain and the dependent Empire combined. And what of finance, industry, mining, distribution, the public utilities, and the social services? Some of the public utilities are municipalised, and thus give a positive, if faint, reaction to the democratic test."

"Then there are the trade unions."

"The unions? Yes. They have a democratic base. And they form a partially democratic element within the industrial system. But they do not run industry, or even get representation on the management of industry. Nor do they operate the schemes of social insurance."

"And the co-ops? I suppose you'll write them off too."

"The co-ops are very important, as a spontaneously democratic sector of the trade front. Together with the trade unions they form the main hope of democracy in Britain. But, though their trade turnover is large, and though their interests extend into various branches of production and even into finance, it cannot be said that they much affect the general character of financial, industrial, or trading organisation throughout the country. Outside their own membership their influence is small. And that is about the measure of it, John."

"The measure of what?"

"Of British democracy. Apart from the reservations we have noted, the great bulk of your institutions, especially the all-important economic ones, are authoritarian in structure. There are plenty of democratically minded people among you; but they do not rule your country. Your institutions effectively exclude them from the political and economic power to which, by their numbers, they are entitled. On the other hand, those who do rule your country are deeply tinged with the ideology and the emotional attitudes of fascism. And the oligarchical character of your financial, industrial, and trading institutions makes it easy for them to translate that ideology and those attitudes into action."

"Aren't you ever going to get on to Africa? I'm extraordinarily tired of all..."

"When we look at Africa, even the slight traces of democracy that we noticed in the home country fade out of view. Neither colonial governments nor N.A.s are responsible to any electorate (the fiction of control by Parliament at Westminster really will not wash); and there are no consumers' co-ops and no trade unions worth speaking of. Not only is there no responsibility to the African rank and file in any department of life; there is no conception that the rank and file

have any contribution to make to any part of the social process, except in so far as they follow the guidance of the white man.”

“You always seem to suggest that there is something sinister about that, as though it were due to British ill-will or negligence. But I tell you it is inevitable when an advanced culture and a backward culture come into intimate contact.”

“John, I can torpedo that argument once for all, I hope, by recalling what you know to be true, that these *inevitable* things do not happen in Soviet Central Asia. But that you, and no doubt many others like you, should make this mistake about British Africa is no trivial thing. It renders you particularly prone to fall into the ancient Platonic fallacy.”

“You seem very down on poor Plato. How has he gone astray now?”

“I am thinking of his views on government by an elite of experts, and I am appalled to realise how easy it is for you to come to share them. So long as you hold the opinions about culture-contact that you have just expressed, you are almost bound to feel that in Africa at any rate ‘whatever is best administered is best.’ Nobody could call you fascist by nature, but these opinions will make your approach to the African problem a purely authoritarian one. I bet you believe you could solve that problem by filling every vacancy in the colonial service with philosopher-kings.”

“Well, so I do, more or less; and I don’t mind admitting it. Surely, Vova, you agree that the procedures of modern government and modern business are expert procedures, in the sense that they need people with highly specialised training and experience to carry them through successfully?”

“I do indeed.”

“Then isn’t Plato right in thinking it essential that the most capable and most honest persons should be put in charge?!”

“That would be very desirable certainly. But what Plato forgets is that it is even more essential that they should be put in charge by the rank and file.”

“Why do you say that? Provided the most capable and most honest *are* in charge, how can it matter how they get there?”

“Ah well, John, that question is best answered by another. How are you going to decide who the most capable and most honest men are? If everybody genuinely agreed who they were, that would be equivalent to a free vote of 100 per cent in favour of the persons concerned—democracy in its purest form. I am simply suggesting that we should keep as close to that ideal as we can; for unfortunately people, when they try to rank others in an order of honesty, get widely different results.”

“You’re missing my point, Vova—or dodging it. You want to associate the rank and file with the work of political and economic planning, and you want them to choose the right people to carry out the right plan.”

“Exactly.”

“Well, my point is that this is probably not best done simply by counting heads. You say that people disagree as to who are the right men, and what is the right plan. Yes. But it doesn’t follow that opinions on all such issues are of equal value, or of no value at all. While there is no such thing as absolute certainty in this field, some people undoubtedly know better than others. What are those who know best to do? Are they not obliged to decide between putting the right plan through by compulsion or accepting an inferior substitute in the name of popular choice? I’m arguing that the enforcement of the right plan by experts is preferable to the endorsement of the wrong plan by the man in the street, who knows little, and very likely cares little, about the is-

sues involved.”

## IX

“John, those remarks are so incredibly British that they sound almost like a burlesque of yourself. You begin with the assumption that the man in the street can always be relied on to make the wrong choice, if he is free to do so; and you therefore conclude that there are only two reasonable ways of handling him—by force or by fraud. So you never get even as far as considering the real problem, which is under what conditions he can learn to make the right choice. You are like Voltaire’s Diogenes, who cried, you remember, ‘There is no viler profession than the government of nations. He who dreams that he can lead a great crowd of fools without a great store of knavery is a fool himself.’”

“And he’s not so far out either.”

“What an unflinching realist you are, John, You have no idea what fun it is watching you get tough-minded. But do not forget the great principle of social affairs that another of Voltaire’s characters also recalls to us—the principle that a response corresponds in quality with the stimulus that evokes it. ‘If men were told the truth, might not they believe it? If the opportunity of virtue and wisdom is never to be offered them, how can we be sure that they would not be willing to take it?’ Once more you make your old blunder of ignoring soviet experience. We have invented the great intra-organic persuader.”

“What on earth are you talking about?”

“It is a gadget for directing the interest of the masses towards the problems which are of basic importance in the life of the community, for linking these problems up with personal needs that they are keenly aware of in their daily lives, for explaining to them in simple terms the general principles which experts apply in seeking to solve the problems, and the main grounds for and against various alternative solutions that may be proposed. The man in the street is by no means the fool you suppose, John. Tell him what the point is, why it is considered practically important, and what are the likely consequences of dealing with it in this way or in that—and you will find that he reaches much the same decision about it as anyone else who has learned to think scientifically. You should make a study of the attitude of the mass of soviet people to such things as the Plan, the anti-abortion bill, or the conquest of the Arctic. You would not have to complain either of apathy, or of ignorance, or of folly.”

“Well, out with it, Vova. What is this marvellous instrument of popular enlightenment and persuasion?”

“We call it the communist party.”

## CHAPTER X

### LEADERSHIP

#### I

On board ship, especially when the ship is crowded, talk is always apt to be desultory and rambling. There are so many interruptions, so many minor nautical happenings to watch, so many people to pass the time of day with. It was the best part of a week before Vova came back to the topic which he clearly considered of the first importance and which to me at that time seemed merely rather puzzling.

Then one evening, as we sat in a corner of the smoke-room, he suddenly began again. "You know, John, it would not surprise me if in the end Lenin should be known to history less as the leader of the bolshevik revolution than as the inventor and founder of the communist party."

"Do you mean," I asked, "that the party is somehow greater than the revolution?"

"Not quite that," he replied. "Not at least if by the revolution you understand the entire development of the socialist way of life. Taken in that sense the revolution is the whole, and the party simply a part. No, I mean rather that, while the revolution in some form or another would have happened without Lenin, the party is in a special sense his own, conceived and created by himself. And a very great invention it is; a real landmark in human history, of significance as immense and universal in the field of social life as wireless telegraphy is in that of electrical engineering."

"You claim all that for a political party?"

"Ob, party is just a label; it happens to have got stuck on to us by historical accident. But we bear no resemblance to what you mean by a political party. We are not the organised expression of some sectional interest in society, nor are we designed to cherish and defend one group and to hurt and grieve the other groups and interests of which society consists. That is perhaps what political parties in Britain are and have been. But the communist party represents the whole of soviet society and is drawn from all interests which make that society up."

"Sounds like a Gallup poll sample."

"In a way, yes. Certainly, it is much more than a random cross-section. It is a scientific sample. But it differs from the Gallup sample in representing not the *normal* or the *modal*, but the *best* in each walk of life. The individuals chosen to form the sample have been rigorously tested for certain qualities regarded as specially valuable in carrying out the immediate and the long-term tasks which the given society, in its given time and place and material circumstances, has set itself. The party thus exhibits in concrete form the reconciliation of the principle of democracy with the principle of aristocracy. It secures the coincidence of the popular and the best, so squaring the circle which has stood to be squared since politics began. It is, in principle, the final factor required for solving the democratic problem—the other factors being the self-governing organs of man as producer, consumer, and citizen, about which I have spoken so much at every stage of our trip."

"Splendid, Vova. What a naughty world it is not to have greeted this great discovery with more enthusiasm. We in Britain, in our simple way, have seen your party in rather a different light. It has looked to us more like a machine for the prompt disabling of opposition to official policies among the population at large. We think of your party members as official agents stationed at key-points throughout the country and the social hierarchy for the purpose of engineer-

ing the acquiescence of the rank and file in what the government has done or proposes to do.”

“How true it is, John, that a man imputes himself. You say these things because you cannot imagine social control operating except by force or fraud from above. The upward flow of power, taking shape as popular *self*-control, remains as inconceivable to you as does the people’s ability to apprehend truth. But believe me, your censure of us is a merciless criticism of the defects of your own outlook.”

“Well, correct me if I’m wrong.”

“I think the real picture is this. The problem of democracy is, first, to develop the maximum resources of social energy, and then to canalise that energy in a particular way. The maximum can only be reached if the contributions of *every* man, woman, and child are tapped. This entails a constructive public health service that recognises no limits of age, sex, colour, or nationality. It is time you Westerners, with your mass unemployment and your mass malnutrition, learned that democracy cannot be built on a foundation of degenerating physique. Next, the primary energy of physical health has to be transformed into the creative energy of satisfactory psychological adjustment.”

“I suppose you’ve got a neat little recipe for that transformation too.”

Vova ignored the interruption and sailed on. “This stage communism reaches by way of proletarian supremacy, which alone of all political and social devices known, or seen, or heard of, can give to the great majority masses of the unprivileged a sense of vast restraints removed and of vast opportunities provided. Then the energy-flow must be channelled so that it pumps itself upwards, and directed so that it moves by the quickest route, without undue haste and without avoidable delay, to the right goals. This great task of social engineering, which has been tackled nowhere but in the U.S.S.R., is in principle solved by the soviet institutions which you and I have many times discussed. When you have the maximum of social energy in systematic unobstructed movement upward from the bottom of the social pyramid, through the organs of government and economic life, towards social objectives which are generally agreed to be the best, then you have a democratic regime in working order.”

## II

“I could say a lot in answer to that, Vova. But I’m going to quarrel with one point only. You talk of democracy moving towards the right goals, the best objectives, and so on. Terms which express values generally beg questions, and I think you’re begging the question here. What is a right goal? Is it one the people want? Or one their rulers think they ought to have? Or one that the strongest pressure-groups and power-aggregates happen for their own reasons to prefer? If the first, mayn’t the people want the wrong thing sometimes? In which case popular choice can’t be identified with rightness. If the second or the third, what ground is there for calling it democracy?”

“Well, John, you have a right goal in raising this point, and I am glad you have done so. There is really no short answer to it, but here is the best I can give you in a small parcel. There is nothing subjective about rightness in the meaning I am giving to the term. A goal is right not because anyone, or even everyone, thinks it so, but because it has been found to be so by the usual methods of scientific inquiry. I am not, of course, claiming that science has some special inside knowledge of moral absolutes. In my view, there are no moral absolutes. But there is a sense in which science can claim knowledge of how men should behave and of what their ideals should be.”

“I don’t much like these mystical personifications of yours. What do you mean by science? I know what a scientist is. But science...? It very nearly has a capital S, as you use it. Is it something a scientist does, or something he thinks?”

“By science I mean any men or women, past, present, or to come, who were, are, or will be competent practitioners of scientific method. The personification is convenient and not misleading, so with your permission I shall continue to employ it.”

“Very well,” I said; “as long as we both attach the same meaning to it.”

“Then, to resume,” Vova went on; “science’s knowledge of good and evil is of course provisional and relative. Like all knowledge, it is derived from sense-perception: first, as being ultimately based on tissue-demands of the organism, on feelings of pleasure and pain, well-being and discomfort; and second, in the sense that the whole record of universal evolution, and particularly of the growth of human culture, provides an orientation for human conduct. In other words, science’s ideas about what is valuable are drawn from its observation of the nature and behaviour of things. It has no difficulty in deciding whether a given change, seen in its real context, is towards degeneration or towards development. Scientific standards of value are embodied in development; they are given by the observed process of evolutionary advance. The course of man’s ascent from the animals and the historical growth of human personality afford a pole, a touchstone of advance and retreat, by reference to which science can find and keep its bearings in the world of purpose.”

“I seem to have read something like that in one of Benjamin Farrington’s hooks, where he argues, with Epicurus if I remember rightly, that ethics and politics are branches of natural philosophy—man-made rules for behaviour, he calls them, derived from experience and due to be altered whenever increased knowledge of nature should teach man better ways of being at ease in mind and body.”

“I did not realise that I had Epicurus and your Professor Farrington on my side. But that quotation states my position admirably. Now the point, John, is this. In our soviet order science fulfils a purposes which in your country it cannot fulfil—an ethical purpose. We look to science continuously to repair, improve, and remake every single aspect of soviet life. With you science, like religion, has to be ‘pure’. You must have noticed how vexed your reactionaries become when any parson or scientist says anything critical about your social system; he is at once accused of trespassing in the field of politics and economics, about which he knows nothing and which he is quaintly invited to regard as the private property of certain people who are not scientists or parsons. The reason for this is, of course, that, if science and religion were to turn their attention seriously, and as it were professionally, to your social institutions, many of those institutions would soon be seen to stand utterly condemned by the evolutionary and the Christian standard alike.”

“And looking at the other side of the medal,” I said, “don’t we see that, if scientists and priests may not meddle in politics, politicians are equally fenced off from scientific, or divine truth?”

“We do, indeed.” was Vova’s answer. “They are therefore obliged to fall back on the edifying fictions, the royal, golden, noble, and medicinal lies, as recommended by Plato. In this way truth becomes the prerogative of a small clique of relatively educated people, who are restrained from giving it any practical application outside a special and limited field. And falsehood is then naturally regarded as the fitting provender for the man in the street. In the U.S.S.R., on the contrary, science is a social activity, a function of our society as a whole. Its purpose is likewise social, and that purpose can only be fulfilled if science breaks down all barriers between theory and

practice, publishes its truths, and itself stays open and true—by which I mean verifiable in the common experience of every man. Those who rely on science to determine the social purpose, as our soviet system does, cannot possibly have one doctrine for the rulers and another for the ruled. The findings and the valuations of science are the same for all who adhere to its proper method.”

### III

“I understand, Vova. You want me to see the communist party as the great *vulgarisateur*, in the best sense of the word, of scientific knowledge and scientific attitudes. It introduces, explains, and popularises the social proscriptions of science by continuous educational work among the masses, and by inducing the masses to participate responsibly in the political activities which those prescriptions call for.”

“Just so,” he replied. “Of course, I do not expect you to feel any sympathy with the party’s aims. I am merely asking you to consider its organisation as a social mechanism of a special kind. I suggest that some such mechanism is essential to the development of any fully democratic system, and particularly to the transformation of colonial status into democratic responsibility. If that transformation is really the British aim in tropical Africa, you will find, I believe, that it cannot be carried out without social machinery of the same general type as has enabled us to carry out our soviet aims in Central Asia. How do you think we managed to win Central Asia over to the revolution?”

“By sending troops to eject the Emir of Bokhara and his supporters, I suppose.”

“That would not have got us very far by itself. No. What we had to do was to train dependable Marxist cadres<sup>1</sup> from among the local people, cadres who, besides being natives themselves, were also connected with the broad masses of the native population. In the first days of the revolution, while this process of training was still incomplete, the Russian communist party often did the manoeuvring in Central Asia off its own bat, assuming responsibility for policy over the heads of the local party organisations and drawing all native groups that were in any way reliable into the general work of soviet construction. But this phase was a brief one. The moment your wars of intervention against bolshevism stopped or even a little earlier, KUTV was founded, and by the middle of 1923, Stalin was already laying it down that the work of soviet construction had henceforward to be taken over by the local party organisations in the ex-colonies themselves. They can do it, he said, and they must do it, remembering that this is the best way of converting the Marxist cadres from among the local people into a genuine mass party capable of leading the majority of the local population. Since 1923 the great creative effort of Soviet Central Asia has been carried out progressively, and with ever increasing efficiency, by what you would call ‘the native’ himself.”

“Under the leadership of the local organisations of the party?”

“Certainly. And do not forget that those organisations consist predominantly of ‘native’ personnel. This native initiative has the same kind of psychological effect as our workshop democracy has in the field of industry. It is a most powerful incentive to conscientious and imaginative work. It generates the feeling in the rank and file that they have not merely a nominal duty but the actual power to mould their own future.”

“What was that word you mentioned a moment ago, Vova? KUTV?”

“Yes, KUTV. It was founded in 1921.”

“I’m afraid I’ve no notion what you are talking about.”

---

<sup>1</sup> A cadre is a permanent skeleton staff, forming a nucleus for expansion at need.

“I am sorry. KUTV is our portmanteau word for The Communist University of the Labouring East.”

“I don’t know that that makes me much wiser.”

“Tut, tut, John. And you call yourself a student of imperial affairs. KUTV has trained more than one of the leaders of the liberationist movement in British India, I can assure you. We have had a few promising students from British Africa too. And I hope we shall get more of them after this war is over.”

“Now stop jeering, Vova, and tell me what this precious University is or was, and what it did or does.”

“Well, it was founded, as you might gather from its name, to train those Marxist cadres I was speaking of for work in the ex-colonies of Turkestan and the east.”

“And where was it founded?”

“In Moscow.”

“Did you bring natives from Central Asia all the way to the capital for this training?”

“We did.”

“How did you select them?”

“Well, the only formal requirements for admission were membership of the party and an adequate standard of education. But we tried to pick the ablest and most talented young people for KUTV. You see, they were to become cultural and social workers of a highly responsible grade—teachers, journalists, organisers of collective farms, co-operative societies, trade unions, and so on.”

“If that was the sort of output you wanted from KUTV, on what principles did the U.S.S.R. authorities formulate their policy for Soviet Asia? What, I mean, were the *Priority A* tasks which they urged your party activists to tackle there, at the time when your victorious revolution was first able to give serious attention to the colonial problem?”

“Well, I began to be officially interested in this subject in the early twenties, and if I remember rightly, the immediate job confronting us in Turkestan, for example, was then defined somehow like this:

“(1) To create industrial centres as bases for rallying the peasants around the working class.

“(2) To advance agriculture, which in Central Asian conditions meant first of all irrigation.

“(3) To develop co-operative organisation among the peasants and handicraftsmen, as the most effective way of bringing the local soviet republics into the general system of soviet economic development.

“(4) To bring the local soviets into organic touch with the masses, to plant their roots deep in the life of the native peoples, and to make them predominantly native in composition.

“(5) To develop native culture: to build up a widespread system of courses and schools both for general education and for vocational and technical training (all teaching to be done in the native languages), with a view to the rapid output of efficient soviet, party, trade union, and economic cadres from among the native peoples.”

“And the men on the spot who were to carry this ambitious programme through—you say they were natives drawn from humble social grades in what had been the most backward regions of the Tsar’s empire?”

“Yes—after 1923 the cadres were almost entirely composed of natives, many of them women, but not natives in isolation, left to their own devices on their own resources. All the time they had the full support and encouragement of the central government and the central organs of the party in Moscow—authorities who were determined to raise cultural and economic condi-



tions in the backward regions to a level with those of the rest of the country in the shortest possible time, and who were ready to provide all the financial and technical assistance needed for the purpose.”

#### IV

“Then tell me, Vova, what sort of academic courses KUTV provided for the humble natives who were to remake human life in Asia? In England we talk about education for citizenship; some of us even talk about education for democracy; but I’ve never heard education for social reconstruction so much as mentioned. I should like to know what curriculum your people thought suitable for such an objective.”

“The usual course was a three-year course, and it was based, as all soviet education and indeed all soviet life are based, on science. You should remember, by the way, that every KUTV student was the ablest young person we could manage to lay hands on in his or her district, after a pretty thorough search; and also that KUTV students were normally some years older than most university undergraduates. Their average age was in fact 25-27. Anyway, in their first year they took such subjects as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, Russian, and their own native language. To these were added, in the second and third years, various social and historical subjects, including the philosophy of society known as Marxism. A third range of subjects dealt with the processes and organisation of production, and covered general questions of agronomy, cattle-breeding, the mechanisation of agriculture, the development of industry, and so on—the prime aim being to give the student a grasp of the social process as a whole, and of the means by which it may be controlled.”

“I see. That’s interesting. And what, on the average, was the student population of KUTV?”

“Somewhere about a thousand.”

“And are Asiatic students admitted to other universities besides KUTV?”

“Why, yes. Nowadays, of course, the Central Asian republics all have their own universities. But even in the early days before these local universities existed, all institutes of university standing in Moscow had a considerable percentage of students from the east. That is still true today, and true of many other Russian cities besides Moscow. You must not think of, KUTV as a sort of Jim Crow university, an academic ghetto for orientals.”

“Then how did the KUTV students live? Weren’t they socially or residentially segregated at all?”

“Now what are you trying to get at, John? Are you hoping to unearth some hidden colour-bar or something? If so, you are barking up the wrong tree. There is no social segregation of Asiatic students, and since the revolution there never has been. They mix in complete freedom and equality with all other students and all other members of the entire community. Residentially they are segregated in just the same sense and to just the same extent as university students normally are. As members of a particular institution (for example, KUTV), they have their own hostels and convalescent homes, newspapers and magazines, libraries and picture galleries, theatres and restaurants, societies and clubs for music and dancing—just as students of all soviet universities do. That is all.”

“All right, Vova; don’t be angry with me. Give me an idea how KUTV students came out in the way of finance.”

“Well, in the first place they were all given state scholarships. Then in the university hostels lodging was free. Food had to be paid for. All other necessities too were supplied at cost price.

There was a special children's home where the children of married students could be accommodated at a small charge. Those are the main points, I think."

"Thank you. Well, Vova, your KUTV certainly stands out as a remarkable institution. And you think we ought to set up something of the kind in London for training the leadership of the new Africa?"

"Oh, I would hardly suggest that, John. In the hands of your Colonial Office such a scheme would dwindle to just another school for the sons of chiefs. I am not telling you how to surmount your troubles in Africa, but simply how we surmounted ours in Asia. I know your authorities have immensely powerful emotional grounds for refusing to learn anything from soviet experience. This trip of ours has at least taught me that."

"No, but seriously, Vova. Your argument is, isn't it, that the British are without anything that can properly be called a colonial policy, and that, even if they had one, they are without the means of carrying it into effect. If by colonial policy you mean a plan for rebuilding every phase of colonial life from the foundations up, with a view to ending colonial status itself, then you are right enough; Britain has no colonial policy, Churchill declared not long since that he did not assume the premiership in order to preside over the disintegration of the British Empire. I can't see any of his likely successors differing from him there."

"John, the alternatives you present are really wickedly false. There is no question of disintegration. Are the peoples of Turkestan to-day more, or less, closely integrated with the rest of my country than their fathers were in Tsarist times? You know the answer. There is simply no comparison. The soviet people are a single, solid, united league of nations; the Tsar's Asiatic colonies were a loose, sprawling aggregation of territories, hardly at all organic to each other or to European Russia. The Tsar's Empire has indeed been transformed, but its component parts, so far from disintegrating, have become far more intimately and vitally knit together into a unified whole than ever before in Russia's long history. This is what democracy has done for them."

"Perhaps Churchill doesn't welcome the prospect of a similar transformation for the British Empire," I said mildly.

"I think you are right," he replied. "Churchill and his friends probably identify imperial disintegration with any advance of the dependent peoples towards popular responsibility. But even if British authorities with a genuine democratic purpose were one day to assume office, could they realise that purpose with the instruments afforded by your present colonial set-up?"

"Why not?"

"Why not!" he echoed. "You have only to glance at the list of such instruments to see the answer to that. The white settlers, the resident white employees of European business firms, the officials of the colonial service, the missionaries, and the chiefs. Your central authorities have no one but the members of these groups to work through. Downing Street may lay down a policy, but the extent to which it gets carried into effect is the resultant of the actions and interactions of these five groups in the developing conditions of African social and economic life. Those developing conditions are in turn largely determined by the insistent, over-all, impersonal pressure of the world economy, or international big business, or whatever you like to call it. Now consider this from the standpoint of those who make declarations of colonial policy at Westminster. Can they control the world economy so that it furthers their plans, or at least is prevented from wrecking them? Can they even co-ordinate the activities of the five groups on the spot? Those groups all have quite distinct aims, and they frequently pull against each other. What is more, none of them feels any close concern for African democracy, and three of them—the settlers, the business men, and the chiefs—have a vested interest in securing its defeat. Indeed, if Downing Street

wanted to unite all five groups in furious opposition to itself, all it need do would be to propose some step which might constitute a real advance towards a democratic Africa.”

“My dear Vova, what has come over you? Your normal complaint is that British imperial policy is only too successful in regulating the world’s business to suit its own selfish purposes. Open or veiled imperial preference, the whole structure of the Ottawa agreements, the building up of a sterling currency area, the complex measures by which the British, as producers of industrial goods, contrive to keep the terms of trade semi-permanently turned against the producers of foodstuffs and raw materials? Aren’t all those things forms of control over world economy?”

“Surely not. True, they may have disastrous long-range effects on it. But in themselves they are merely attempts by particular interests to secure a privileged status in particular markets, regardless of any remoter consequences. They are forms of insurance against possible effects of a world economy which, like the weather, is regarded as inherently uncontrollable.”

“And what,” I went on, “is all this about the recalcitrance of the five groups, as you call them? Colonial governments work with them quite happily for the most part, and are quite capable of coercing them, if necessary. What more do you want? In education we collaborate with the missions; in mining or overseas trade with the business men; and in agricultural policy with the settlers.”

## VI

“Oh, yes?” Vova broke in sceptically. “And what do you do when missions of different denominations queer the whole educational pitch by stealing one another’s pupils? When a mission fights the business men over their treatment of African mine labour, or the settler party over the confiscation of tribal land? Or when white men in Kenya, let us say, unconstitutionally refuse to accept the passage of an officially sponsored income-tax bill? No, John. You know as well as I do that the fact of the matter is this. In your colonies things go smoothly enough when official views are acceptable to all the groups of white men; when the white groups differ among themselves, what prevails is not the official view, but that of the white group which can roll the heaviest log. As for coercion, it comes out promptly, I admit, in case of native disturbances or Indian demonstrations, but when have you used it against Europeans? ‘The white man on the spot has always got us beat’ might almost be called the motto of your Colonial Office. Do you want to deny that?”

While I was still thinking out a soft answer to turn away this wrathful question, Vova charged impetuously ahead. “You see,” he urged, “British authority has no way of inducing these groups to act in concert for the realisation of any single consistent policy. That is why I say that even if it had a policy, it could not carry it out; and even if it had a policy and *could* carry it out, that policy could not tend towards African democracy. At least you will admit, John, that when we tackled our colonial problem, we at once saw and acted on two things which the British have not even begun to appreciate.”

“What things do you mean?”

“First, that social reconstruction in the colonies could be carried out not by foreign settlers or business men, not by foreign officials or priests, not even by tribal chiefs, but only by the rank and file of the colonial people, under a leadership drawn democratically from among themselves. Second, that the leadership must therefore be (a) native, (b) proletarian or peasant, and (c) composed of men of the people who must remain men of the people: their selection for leadership must not involve their isolation from the masses. Hence our unswerving insistence that more

than half the members of the communist party must always consist of men and women who share the daily tasks of the rank and file at the bench, in the mine, or on the farm.”

“And you’ll go on, I take it, to claim that you were able to carry out a coherent colonial (or rather anti-colonial) policy, because the leaders in Moscow and the leaders in the colonies all had the same class-status and the same class-interests, and were all members of the same disciplined international party organisation, bound by the same rules and pledged to the same programme.”

“Bravo, John. I could hardly have put it better myself. You now have before you the decisive factor which is missing from your present colonial set-up—a disciplined organisation based on the fullest internal democracy, which includes members from the metropolitan country and the colonial countries alike, treats them all with complete equality, renounces every trace of colour-bar, and works under strict self-imposed discipline towards agreed ends. You may not relish our communist ends. But whatever ends you British choose for yourselves in the sphere of empire, you will not advance far towards them while your approach to the colonial people remains condescending, paternal, or compassionate. Without equal comradeship little indeed can be done. To get it you need to scrap your proconsular top-hamper, turn over the administrative machinery to the natives, and work directly with them towards an agreed programme, by means of cadres recruited from the native masses and carefully trained to carry out the specific ends decided upon.”

“Is that all?” I asked a little faintly.

“No,” laughed Vova. “But it is enough to go on with. I have been talking all this time about political democracy. The more fundamental point that political democracy is only achievable as a function or consequence of economic democracy I will not embark on. You would never understand it. Or rather, if you did understand it, you would be a communist, and there would be no need for me to explain any of these matters to you.”

“Well, tell me at least what you mean by economic democracy.”

“I will give you Engels’ definition: ‘The organisation of production on the basis of free and equal association of the producers.’ This control of production by the workers involves as a prerequisite the social ownership of productive property, and as a consequence their control of all the daily conditions of life. Once the workers acquire this possession, I can assure you, John, that they prize it as highly as life itself. Indeed, it is more than mere life, for it enables them to modify and develop life in ways which they think desirable. It is the key to all the higher reaches of human freedom. You profess surprise and admiration at the way in which the soviet people defend it. Believe me, the wonder would have been if they had not defended it so.”

“Change the record, Vova, would you mind? That one is becoming rather wearisome.”

“You are a rude devil, John. It is lucky that I am the best-tempered of men.”

## VII

He fell silent; then rose, and stood in the open doorway, looking out over the still surface of the sea and the moon-track shimmering on it. For a moment I thought his feelings were really hurt. But slowly he turned and faced me again. I was almost startled by the change in his expression. Gone was the normal Vova, sharp, humorous, and combative. In his place was a being who stared at me with a kind of tender sternness, like a visitor from another world. In sympathy with my mortal wretchedness and yet knowing it well deserved, he seemed to offer to show me the eternal roots of misery and joy. Into my mind flashed the scene of Dante’s first meeting with Vergil; of Vergil issuing the inexorable command, “Thou must take another road.”

The She-Wolf that entangles and slays all who would ascend the mountain by the path on

which she stands entered the picture too, masquerading in surrealist symbolism as a decaying social order, the shabby-genteel empire of a senile Britain, learning nothing, abandoning nothing except under pressure of military defeat. And at her heels the swift and strong Greyhound, obscurely identified with Vova's democracy, which shall clear the earth of her, and chase her into Hell, from which envy first let her loose. So vivid was the momentary gleam that the lines of Dante's poem came to me:

"Art thou then that Vergil, and that fountain which pours abroad so rich a stream of speech?" I answered him, with bashful front. "May the long zeal avail me, and the great love, that made me search thy volume."

And he replied: "Why climb you not the delectable mountain, whence grows the beginning of all joy? Poor John, dear friend, in the land and the time you live in the querulous tone of old age deepens to the tragic; youth's confident cries are either struck dumb or become hysterical and shrill; the spirits of old and young alike shrivel under a sense of ruin without name or measure, foreboding the annihilation of worlds.

"For thirty years and more your civilisation has seethed with passions whose ferocity few of your ancestors could have understood. They have been expressed in unspeakable orgies of hate and vengeance between nations and classes alike. All social life, public and private, has been poisoned. Vileness and envy, malice and falsehood have smothered and undone whatever was clean or noble. Blood and filth have weathered the very features of mankind, until their human shape is discernible only from one angle or from two.

"To select and train men and women to lead humanity out of so deep a cultural collapse is the heaviest of tasks, and the one to which communism addresses itself. Such training can be neither given nor received except within a disciplined and dedicated order. It calls for a specific blend of sensibility and of insensibility in teacher and in taught—a blend found seldom among conformists and the respectable, often among pioneers and the despised and rejected of men. Whoever undergoes this training must be tough-minded, in the sense that his approach will not be that of a disenchanted dreamer stunned by the blast of exploded myths or half-buried under the debris of shattered ideals. The shores of his mortality will not be overborne by the immense seas of trouble that rush upon us. He will keep his composure in the presence of crime and calamity which with fatal pomp transport his world thither where more calamity and more crime attend it. He will do this without seeking refuge in any private garden to rejoice that he neither lives nor dies with the multitude. And he will not forget that truth has a quiet breast.

"Yet I have more. He will be tender-minded too—imaginative enough to feel in the silence of his own blood, and with the sharpest stab of personal suffering, the fearful pain which, because of your civilisation's crisis, human beings superfluously undergo at every moment of every day in every part of the world. With unflinching resolve he will refuse to install mechanisms in his mind for making-believe that the horrors are not horrible. His compassion will have the vehemence of wrath, just as his composure will be empty of complacency.

"Still in the end he must be able to swing the wheel full circle, round to tough-mindedness again. As first he banished fear, so now will he banish pity, lest it grow by what it feeds on, and come to crave for suffering over which to pour itself out. He will seize the truth your English poet sang in a moment of dialectical illumination:

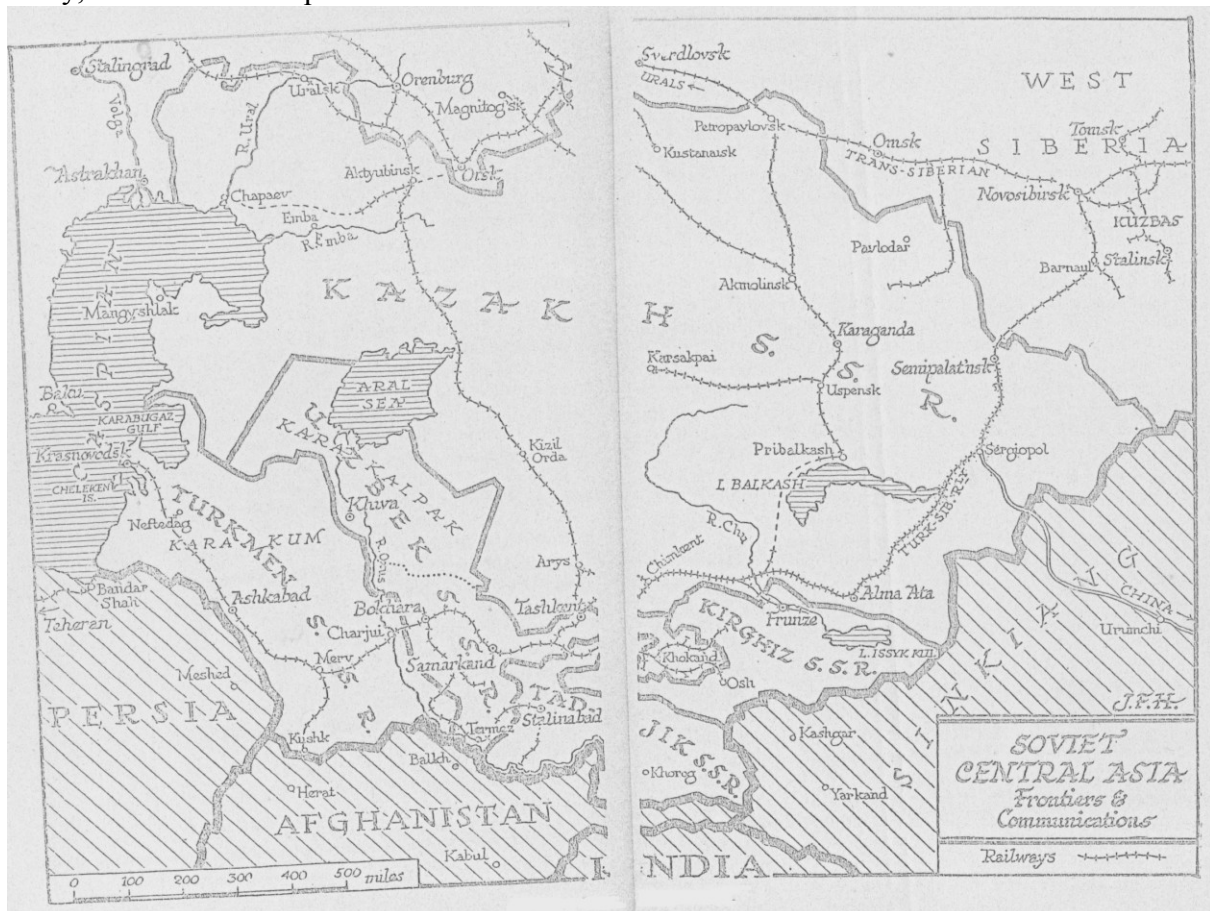
Pity would be no more  
If we did not make somebody poor;  
And Mercy no more could be

If all were as happy as we.

And Misery's increase  
Is Mercy, Pity, Peace.

“Even pity has to be overcome and absorbed by the creative impulses of desire and joy—forced to feed them and not itself. In that subsumption it is changed from a wedge driven into the mind and splitting it in anguish. It becomes instead a pulse in the eternal delight of energy and action.

“As in nature, so in human societies, there is at all times a certain balance between life and death. An epoch of fading and decay is also one of the coming to birth of new things. Men who adapt the life of the people to the claims of a social order striving to emerge from gathering chaos, striving to realise a human design new to history—such men secure the release of untapped stores of social energy which can re-invigorate and impart a higher, closer, intenser fellowship to all man's associated life. Such men lead and inspire and raise up the multitudinous victims of privilege; but they are also in a special sense their children, their nurslings, and their pupils. So it happened in Cromwell's time; so in the France of 1789; so too in the Soviet Union in your day and mine. And so it can happen again in Britain and the colonies, making a living commonwealth of your ramshackle empire, if men enough and women enough read their situation truly, and act on its requirements.”



SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

## APPENDIX

### THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

In Soviet Central Asia political boundaries and constitutional status alike have undergone various changes since the revolution. The region now consists of five Federal republics, the Tadjik S.S.R., the Turkmen S.S.R., the Uzbek S.S.R., the Kazakh S.S.R., and the Kirghiz S.S.R. Between the census of 1926 and that of 1939 their population rose from 14 millions to 17 millions. Of the three millions increase, two are in the towns and one in the country.

I lack space for a particular account of each of the five republics. But since they form one region, being linked together in some measure of geographic and economic unity; since their inhabitants are culturally akin; and since in all of them soviet development has in broad outline followed a similar course, a possible method of putting the reader in possession of the essential minimum of information about them is to offer a fairly detailed sketch of one of them, while adding a brief factual sketch of the others.

In following this method, I have chosen the Tadjik S.S.R. for the more detailed treatment—partly because, being the smallest of the five, it lends itself to brevity, and partly because, as E. S. Bates points out, it is “strategical in a special sense.” The special strategic quality derives from its geographical position. Although many parts of Tadjikstan have until recently been extremely inaccessible, a number of trade routes traditionally and naturally intersect within its borders. “It is consequently the meeting-place of many people. Tibet, China, India, Central Asia, Afghanistan find common ground there.... In so far as a policy is successful in that area, a greater diversity of people hear of it, and feel it, than is likely to happen elsewhere. The nearness of Tadjikstan to India lends special point to this. Soviet Tadjik literature concerns itself particularly with Indian grievances.”<sup>1</sup> The Soviet-Afghan border, moreover, not being ethnographically determined, cuts the Tadjik people in two, and, as it happens, leaves the greater part of them on the Afghan side. The Tadjiks of Afghanistan are naturally well informed about what goes on among their soviet kindred, and are quick to draw comparisons between their own conditions and those which communism affords.

#### I. TADJIK S.S.R.

##### AREA

The Tadjik Republic is 56,500 square miles in area, or about the same size as Britain.

##### GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

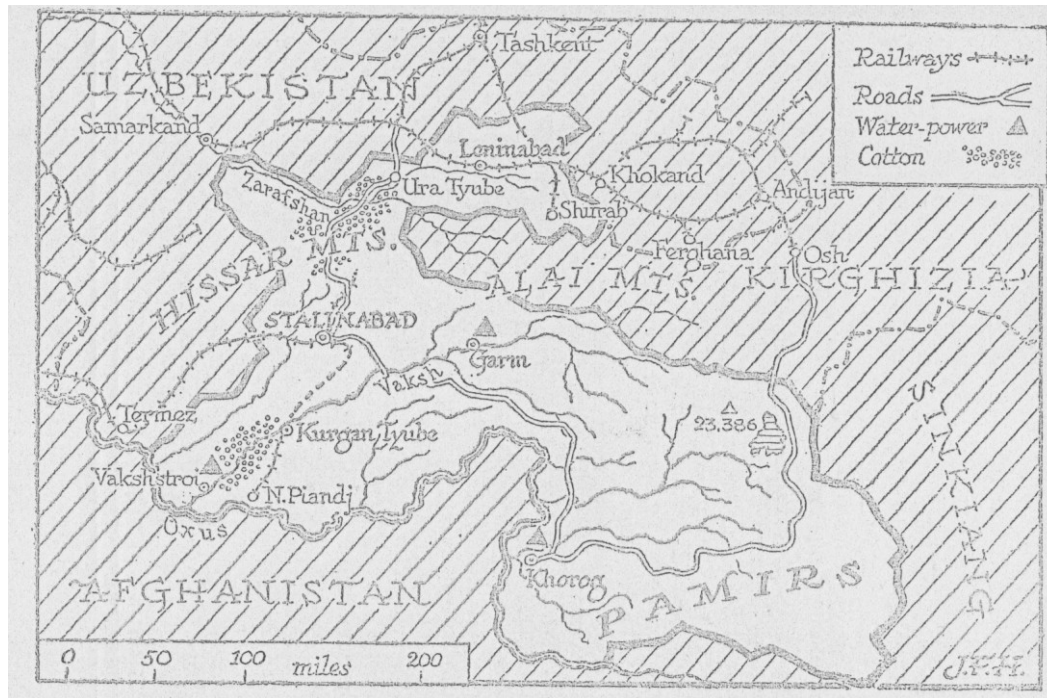
It is a very irregular wedge of territory, bounded on the west by the Uzbek S.S.R., on the north by the Uzbek and Kirghiz S.S.R., on the east by the Sinkiang province of China, and on the south by Afghanistan and India.

The great Hissar range, rising to over 12,000 feet, cuts east and west across the republic and divides the northern districts from the southern.

---

<sup>1</sup> E. S. Bates: *Soviet Asia*, p. 106.

## TADJIKSTAN



In the south-east corner rises up the tremendous massif of the Pamirs. Most of this part of the country lies between 12,000 and 18,000 feet above sea-level, with peaks running up to 24,000. For a walking tour among these heights the late Marquess Curzon was at the outset of his career awarded the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society; and he afterwards wrote of them, with that pomp in which even thus early he specialised: "Here nature seems to exert her supreme energy, and in one chord to exhaust almost every note in her vast and majestic diapason of sound. She shows herself in the same moment tender and savage, radiant and appalling, the relentless spirit that hovers above the ice towers and the gentle patroness of the field and orchard, the tutelary deity of the haunts of men."

The south-west region consists of a series of valleys running north and south. Along them rush rivers that, rising in the Hissar range north of Stalinabad, eventually join the Oxus which forms the boundary between Tadjikistan and Afghanistan.

The northern districts lie above the bar formed by the Hissar range. Here the course of the rivers is northward and westward. The main urban centre is Leninabad (formerly Khodjent).

The great variations of altitude throughout the country are matched by equally great variations in climatic conditions, which in fact range from the sub-tropical to the arctic. Some of the high mountain districts, for example, grow fresh vegetables from seed raised and acclimatised to arctic temperatures at Khibini in the Kola peninsula between Murmansk and the White Sea. The contrasts are well summed up by Bates when he remarks that in Tadjikistan "terrific torrents rush down from the highest mountains in the world on to a plain lying in the same latitude as Sicily.... The country's ways and climate resemble, in succession, those of Egypt, Tibet, and Moscow; it is the world's greatest staircase, rising abruptly from lowlands which raise silk and cotton and supply much of the dried fruit which the Union consumes to summits which form part of what we know as the Roof of the World. The lowlands are tropical: in the higher ground they estimate the mildness or severity of the winter by the number of persons frozen to death in their beds."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 106.



## POPULATION

According to the 1939 census, the republic has 1,485,091 inhabitants, of whom 1,233,209 live in rural areas and 251,882 in the towns. The capital, Stalinabad (formerly Dushambe), has a population of about 82,000. The other chief towns are Leninabad, Kurgan-Tyube, Garm, and Khorog. Some 26,000 persons are classified as industrial workers. Members and candidates of the Tadjik Communist party numbered 12,250 in 1941.

## PRE-REVOLUTION CONDITIONS

Social conditions in 1917 were typical of the sleeping East. The country was Moslem in religion and culture. The various exponents and adepts of the faith—mullahs, imams, sufis, and the rest—were an important group, functionless economically, but socially powerful by reason of the ignorance and incredulity of the people.

The other ruling groups were the landlords (usually-moneylenders as well), and the officials, among whom not only the land, but what in Central Asia is equally important, the water, was parcelled out in private ownership. The land was worked mainly by impoverished, debt-ridden, illiterate ex-peasants, without land or cattle of their own, as share-croppers for the Beys.

The social pyramid was crowned by a native prince, the Emir, by whom, under the suzerainty of the Tsar, the country was administered.

Apart from its primitive agriculture and a few handicraft industries, it was undeveloped. There were mule-tracks, but no roads, and no railways. Even wheeled vehicles were unknown. There was no electric power or light, no mineral development, no factories with power machinery.

## THE REVOLUTION

The Revolution did not establish itself more easily in Central Asia than elsewhere in the U.S.S.R. Up to 1926 Tadjikistan suffered just as badly as the rest of the country from civil war. The Bolshevik uprising of October 1917 was followed, though at a certain remove, by insurrection among the Central Asian peasants and agricultural labourers. The palace of the ruler of ancient Bokhara, the Emir Mir Alim Said Bakhadur Khan, was burned down, and the Emir fled the country in 1920, leaving Ibrahim Bek as his regent.

Ibrahim's policy was to rally Tadjikistan to the counterrevolution on a basis of Russophobia. The Tadjik peasants had good reason to remember the Russian soldiers of the White Tsar, and to dread their remembrance. The Emir of Bokhara had called them in during the peasant revolts in Garm and Karategin before the war. They came with fire and sword, burning villages, destroying crops, reckless of native life and limb. Ibrahim sent the willing mullahs to the minaret-tops to shout that the Russians were coming from the north to plunder and to rape.

He was a fighter too. He and his basmatchis (armed bands) flung themselves with vigour on the small and isolated Red Army detachments. A long struggle began—Ibrahim nursing the flame of his holy war against the infidel who came to cast out and defile all that was best in Moslem culture, the bolsheviks relying in the main on the propaganda effect of their material construction. They took the land away from the Beys and turned it over to the poor peasants; they led new water to the fields, blasting hills and building dams; they brought machines from the factories of the Ukraine; they introduced new strains of more productive, disease-resistant seed; they started on huge schemes of electrification.

Yet as late as 1926 the soviet power was far from firmly grounded. Ibrahim and his bas-

matchi were still actively carrying out the exhortations, which he himself had given in a letter intercepted by the bolsheviks during the previous year, “to wreak Mussulman vengeance on every village that has betrayed our cause. Wherever you find peasants who utter the words *shuro-khtikummat* (Soviet Government) and lend it assistance, slay them to a man and destroy their hearths and homes. Let it be an example to all who renounce the *shariat* (religious law) and the law of our lord the Emir.”

In countering these measures, the bolsheviks’ great difficulty was not so much their local military weakness (though this was conspicuous and keenly felt) as the lack of politically educated natives. According to the 1926 census, the whole strength of the communist party in Tadjikstan at that time was as follows:

	<i>Members</i>	<i>Candidates</i>
Total	394	401
Of which, Tadjiks	135	193
Of which, Russians	125	76

Politically speaking, it devolved on these 795 persons to neutralise the fanatical appeals of the traditional leaders of the country to the most deep-seated religious and cultural prejudices of the people. Only 328 of them were themselves of the people, able to speak their language in the full sense and to get the feel of their minds. They were working in terrain where communications were more impossibly difficult than in almost any other part of the globe. They had nothing to help them, except the very real hardships and injustices from which the Tadjik poor had long suffered, and the equally real material benefits which the bolshevik technicians were now introducing.

The turning-point came in 1926. By that year the constructive aspect of the revolution was becoming plainly visible. This made it difficult for Ibrahim to represent the revolutionary movement any longer as purely nihilistic. The old men began to steal out to their sons in the mountains and bring them news of the astonishing improvements going forward in their native villages. Detachments of Red partisans, formed among the people themselves, were beginning to make the lives of the basmatchi perilous and burdensome. The villages spasmodically rose up against Ibrahim. In this year he followed his lord the Emir and fled into Afghanistan.

From then onwards the position rapidly and radically changed. In the fifteen years before the U.S.S.R. entered the present war the soviets have gained much ground politically, socially, and economically. The policy of ambitious expansion in cotton-growing has been an outstanding success. Industry and mineral wealth have been developed on a great scale for so small a population. The nomads have been largely settled on the land. The country has been politically educated by intensive propaganda and party work. The ranks of the local communist party have expanded correspondingly, and in them the proportion of Russians has been correspondingly reduced. The total of party members and candidates (probationary, non-voting members) grew from the 795 of 1926 to 12,250 in 1941. Native names now form the large majority in the lists of both government and party officials. This statement holds for all the Central Asian republics.

Though 1926 may be thought of as the turning-point in the contest between the traditional Moslem system and the revolutionary order, it was not until 1931 that Ibrahim Bek shot his bolt. For five years he had been waiting and watching across the border in Afghanistan for his chance. At last, for fear of missing that chance for ever, he could wait no longer. In April he led his basmatchi bands over the frontier again. But he was already too late, There rose to meet him not

only units of the Red Army. Peasants young and old, armed with sticks and mattocks, axes and spades, set out to repel one whom they had come to look on as an invader. Mounted commandos from the collective farms of hill and valley went on trek to hunt down the old wolf.

Harassed on all sides by these motley enemies, Ibrahim made his way to Koktash, hoping to find refuge on what had been his family estate. His party reached the river Kafirnigan just before dawn. On pain of death they forced the ferryman to punt them over. But Ibrahim's family estate was by now a collective farm. The pious soviet chronicler records, with a blend of glee, melodrama, and poetic justice, how the collective farm ferryman, laughing inwardly, carried Ibrahim on his raft to the very spot where the farm commando lay ambushed in the reeds. "I have waited for you a long time," said their leader, pointing a revolver at Ibrahim's chest. "Turn round, I want to bind your hands, you dog."

#### COMMUNICATIONS

*Railways.* The Turksib railway nowhere runs on Tadjik territory. Many of the communications within the republic, however, have reference to the Turksib, just as the Turksib itself would be meaningless but for its relation to the Trans-Siberian.

The Trans-Siberian is the transport-backbone of the greatest land area in the world, giving unity and articulation to the whole of Soviet Asia. The main Turksib line joins Tashkent, through Alma-Ata, with a branch of the Trans-Siberian at Semipalatinsk. Construction was begun in 1927, and the northward and southward moving tracks, together covering 1,445 km., met on May 1st, 1930. There are now various branches and extensions, of which perhaps the most important is the new trunk line, opened in 1941 and running between Karaganda and Balkash.

The Turksib line was built as part of an economic and cultural plan, within whose scope the Tadjik republic was included. From the economic standpoint the intention was to help make U.S.S.R. self-sufficient in cotton. Siberian wheat and wheat grown on new state farms along the railway itself were to enter the five republics by the shortest route to replace locally grown grain. The local grain-growing land was thus to be freed for cotton—a crop of greater value both to the native farmer and to soviet industry as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The policy related only to grain, and did not, of course, involve making Central Asia entirely dependent on imported food. Every region was at the same time called upon to institute its own agricultural industry, so as to have its own vegetables, potatoes, butter and milk, meat, and fruit. As Central Asia is short of forests, the line also brings in large quantities' of cheap Siberian timber.

Secondly, Turksib affords an advanced base for the work of cultural missionaries—men and women whose task is to stamp out illiteracy, to teach the health and healing of men and beasts, to build clubs and bath-houses, to bring the screen and the wireless, to weld the semi-nomad peoples into a productive and creative whole, and to introduce the backward to the best elements of a universal civilisation.

In addition to the link with the Trans-Siberian which Turksib affords, the Tadjik republic is served by a branch of the Trans-Caspian railway which runs through the Uzbek and Turkmen

---

<sup>3</sup> Such was the conception which prevailed at the time when Turksib was being planned and built. The pressure of events modified it in various ways, and as we shall find in the sequel, grain production has in fact increased in all five republics. The present war has much accentuated this tendency. Irrigation schemes have been pressed forward, and Central Asia is playing a big part in replacing the losses suffered in Western Russia. Apart from grain, the area under sugar-beet in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia has increased threefold, and Uzbekistan is becoming an important centre for the manufacture of agricultural machinery. The fundamental change made under soviet direction has been the transfer of grain-growing from irrigated to non-irrigated land, the former being kept for cotton and lucerne in rotation.

S.S.R. to the Caspian sea.

Such are the rail connections that join the life of Tadjikstan to the general life of the Soviet Union.

Within the republic itself railway construction is rendered peculiarly difficult by the mountainous character of the country, and by the fact that, while human traffic would move most directly along north-south lines, nature has laid the great ranges transversely on east-west lines. This entails prolonged detours by rail and by road alike. For example, the distance from Stalinabad to Ursatevsky is 180 km. as the crow flies, but the line linking the two has to twist and wind over 1,500 km. In consequence, air transport enjoys some natural advantages. Several railways have, however, been built:

(a) A branch of the Trans-Caspian runs from Termez on the Afghan frontier to Stalinabad.

(b) A line connecting the Shurah coal mines in the north of the republic with the Mel'inkovo-Tashkent main line.

(c) A light railway from Kurgan-Tyube to Nijny-Piandj.

(d) A line linking Stalinabad with Kurgan-Tyube.

*Roads.* Twenty years ago no road capable of carrying any wheeled vehicle existed in the whole republic. Communications, such as they were, were maintained by carrier-track, known locally as *ovring*—narrow hanging paths of osier built into the mountainside.<sup>4</sup> Road building involves engineering feats just as striking as railway building.

To-day there are few inhabited parts of the country which cannot be reached by motor car. The trunk roads are:

(a) The Stalinabad-Khorog road (Great Pamir track).

(b) The Osh-Khorog road, a first-class motor road, driven for 730 km. through the Pamirs.

(c) The Stalinabad-Ura-Tyube road, completed in 1936, the shortest route connecting the north of the republic with the south.

Streets in the towns have also been correspondingly improved. The name Dushambe, by which the capital, Stalinabad, was known in the pre-soviet era, means Monday, and it was so called because a village market was held there each week on that day. People who ventured out at night used to carry long staffs. The streets being unlighted, the staffs helped in groping one's way in the dark and avoiding the worst of the potholes and ditches.

The village is now a town with nearly 100,000 inhabitants. The rough unlighted streets have become broad tree-lined boulevards, with tall electric standards. There is a central square, a park, and modern buildings.

*Air Lines.* A number of air lines radiate from Stalinabad, linking it to places such as Garm, Khorog, Termez, and Baoumanabad (on the Tadjik-Afghan border).

*Canals.* Most of the extensive canal construction has been undertaken for the purposes of irrigation. The new Hissar canal is, however, also navigable.

## PRODUCTION

In the general soviet economy the special importance of the Tadjik S.S.R. consists in its being (a) the main source of electric power for Central Asia, and (b) the great base for Egyptian cotton.

*Hydro-electric Development.* The river system of Tadjikstan is reckoned to contain potential hydro-electric resources of not less than 30 million horse-power. These resources were not touched under the Tsars. By 1941 there were 57 power stations, of which the chief are Varsob-

---

<sup>4</sup> Bates, following Pilniak, has an amusing and hair-raising passage describing these tracks (op. cit. pp. 102-3).

stroi, Garm, Khorog, and Vakhshstroi. About half the effective water power of Central Asia is concentrated in this area.

*Irrigation.* In 1939 there were 18,000 kilometres of canals, supplying water to 300,000 ha. of cultivated land. To the area served another 80,000 ha. were to be added with the completion of the third 5-year plan in 1942.

The most notable of recent developments are:

(a) The Vakhshstroi scheme, which, at a cost of 130 million roubles, irrigates 42,000 ha. and provides for increasing the irrigable area to 114,600 ha. in the near future.

(b) The Tadjik section of the Ferghana canal, completed in 1939.

(c) The Great Hissar canal, which, like the Ferghana, is a joint Tadjik-Uzbek enterprise. It irrigates 37,000 ha.

(d) The canal opened at Stalinabad in the autumn of 1942; 50 km. long, it increases the area of arable land by some 40,000 ha.

Vakhshstroi is typical of soviet irrigation work in this area. Situated near the confluence of the Vakhsh river with the Oxus on the Afghan border, the valley is shut in by mountain ranges and protected from the winds. In 1931 it was still uninhabited, except by numberless herds of antelope and black-tailed gazelle. Its rich soil and its hot climate were made for Egyptian cotton. The dam and the great canal were completed in 1933, and in the spring of 1934 the first group of settlers began operations as a collective farm. By 1936 the net income of the collective was over 2 million roubles. To-day the valley is the U.S.S.R.'s main source of supply of Egyptian cotton. The building of roads and telegraphs moves forward in step with the agricultural development.

#### AGRICULTURE

The social and industrial revolutions have been balanced by a concurrent agricultural revolution. Collectivisation is claimed to be complete.

Agricultural production is now organised on the basis of 3,862 collective farms, covering 187,000 peasant households and 99.2 per cent of the area sown (799,800 ha.).

Mechanisation, too, has gone far. There are 48 tractor stations, operating 4,000 tractors and combines, and 1,000 lorries.

The labour power that works the land is no longer that of debt-enslaved share-croppers, most of the fruit of whose toil is at once absorbed by the money-lenders, as a sponge sucks up water. It is the labour of freely co-operating equals, each of whom knows that every increase in production directly benefits himself and his associates, and that the increases in production realised by co-operation and mechanisation are much greater per head than any single individual could achieve by working on his own.

The gross income of the collective farms increased ninefold from 52.5 million roubles in 1934 to 457 millions in 1938, while the average income per farm increased threefold.

*Cotton.* Production has been transformed by the Hissar canal and Vakhshstroi schemes. A large-scale source of Egyptian cotton has been created, as the following table shows:

	<i>Area</i> (‘000 ha.)	<i>Yield</i> (quintals per ha.)		<i>Production</i> (‘000 quintals)
		<i>Egyptian</i>	<i>American</i>	
1929	50			386
1933		2.5	6.5	
1938		15.0	17.9	1897

1939	110	12.7	18.2	(50 Egyptian) 1710
	(30 Egyptian)			
1946 (plan)	140	17.0	26.5	3120

Bates, whom I quote as an observer who cannot be charged with partiality either for soviet aims or soviet methods, speaks of the achieved improvement in quality and quantity of Central Asian cotton as probably one of the major facts in world industry during the last fifteen years (p. 108). The figures aimed at for 1946 show that the Tadjik republic is not proposing to rest on its oars.

*Grain.* Some 576,200 ha. are sown to grain, three quarters of the area being under wheat, and one quarter under barley, oats, and millet. Production in 1938 was just under 4 million quintals, or double the figure for 1913.

*Lucerne.* This is valuable both as a fodder crop, and as a rotation crop with cotton. Its production is being widely encouraged to prevent impoverishment of the soil by unrelieved cotton-growing.

*Livestock.* In 1914 there were calculated to be about 2.75 million head of stock of all kinds. In 1927, owing to civil war and other causes, the figure was 25 per cent less. It sank lower still in the early years of collectivisation. In 1938 it stood at some 2.25 million.

	<i>Sheep and Goats</i> (thousands)	<i>Cattle</i> (thousands)	<i>Horses</i> (thousands)
1927	873	490	54
1932	764	336	82 (1937)
1938	1500	500	102

Most livestock are still individual property, the percentage in communal ownership ranging from 4 to 15.

#### MINERALS

*Oil.* The expansion of a mechanised cotton industry has necessitated a parallel development of local oil bases to meet its requirements. For the region between the Caspian and Lake Balkhash there are two main supply areas; one on the eastern shores of the Caspian itself, known as Turkmenneft (the Turkmen Petroleum Trust), and the other consisting of scattered fields in Uzbek and Tadjik S.S.R.s.

	<i>Development since 1913 (thousand tons)</i>				
	1913	1927-8	1932	1936	1937 (plan)
Central Asia (Uzbek, Tadjik, etc.)	22.9	28.6	65.7	329.3	895
Turkmenneft	129.5	7.8	33.9	310.0	500

*Coal.* Deposits are calculated at 2,658 million tons. Some coal is worked in the north of the republic at Shurah on the Isfara river.

*Metals.* The metal resources of the country were unexplored until recently. The non-ferrous metals of Karamazar are thought to be particularly valuable. In hitherto uninhabited spots lead,

zinc, copper, molybdenum, silver, pyrites, and cadmium are now being mined on a small scale. The new Kausai mines plan to extract annually 500,000 tons of ore, containing 42,000 tons of metal.

There are large lapis-lazuli mines at Khorog.

#### MANUFACTURES

Until 1925 only handicraft industries existed—mainly silk and cotton. To-day there is an up-to-date textile industry in Stalinabad, where the local cotton is spun and woven. There is also a large printing plant.

In Leninabad the silk industry has been transformed by the erection of a giant silk combine equipped with the most modern Italian machinery. In the same town a large cannery has also been set up, in which the fruits of the Zarafshan valley are tinned.

Well equipped cotton ginning plants, presses for extracting the oil from cotton seed, clothing factories, flour mills, leather factories, bakeries, etc., are working at convenient centres all over the country.

In June 1940 a bismuth combine was opened at Adrasman, with concentrating plant and its own power station.

## II. TURKMEN S.S.R.

#### AREA

188,609 square miles, most of which is desert: agricultural possibilities limited in the main by the possibilities of irrigation.

#### POPULATION

1,253,985 (1939 census). Industrial workers number 155,000, of whom half are natives and half Russians.

#### COMMUNICATIONS

The Trans-Caspian railway starts at Krasnovodsk, where the station has been rebuilt in recent years. The main line is modernised, and double-tracked all the way to Tashkent. Some branch lines have been laid,

There is a good system of motor roads replacing the old camel tracks.

The Turkmen civil air lines hold first place for volume of traffic in the whole U.S.S.R. There is a triangular service traversing the Kara-Kum desert, and linking Ashkhabad-Urgenj-Charjui-Ashkhabad.

#### PRODUCTION

*Agriculture.* In 1939 organised in 1684 collectives and 29 state farms covering 99.8 per cent of cultivated area, with 52 tractor stations and 4,615 tractors. Mechanical methods now cover 82 per cent of the ploughing, 57 per cent of the cotton sowing, and 42 per cent of the cotton cultivation.

In 1938 over 65,000 tons of chemical fertilisers used. Between 1933 and 1937 87.8 million roubles were spent from federal funds on irrigation, in addition to the construction and repair of canals undertaken by peasants. The irrigated area was increased by 45,800 ha., or 14.4 per cent in the same period.

Mechanised methods of cleaning the canal network are now largely employed.

The total area under cultivation was 410,100 ha. in 1938; 189,200 being sown to grain and 154,000 to cotton.

Great efforts are being made to extend the cultivable area:

(a) By means of afforestation to reclaim desert land.

(b) By means of trench agriculture to utilise subsoil moisture, and

(c) By increased irrigation. A special soviet decree of April 1940 outlines the plan for bringing a further 104,000 ha. under irrigation, and for fully irrigating 20,000 ha. which were then only partly irrigated.

*Cotton.* The yield of all varieties in the 1938 crop was 239,000 tons from 154,000 ha., or 15.5 quintals per ha. The crop represented a threefold increase on 1928. The yield per ha. was raised from 7.7 quintals in 1928 to 16.4 in 1939.

The future programme up to 1946, as laid down in the decree of April, 1940, is to increase the area under long staple cotton by 86,000 ha. to 110,000 ha., and the yield to 18 quintals per ha. The yield of American cotton is to be increased to 24 quintals per ha. in the same period.

Total production is planned to reach 354,000 tons, of which long staple production is to be raised to 198,000 tons from 33,000 tons.

Egyptian varieties have been grown since 1932. The area cultivated in 1939 was 24,775 ha. with an average yield of 14.4 quintals per ha.

The gross income of cotton collectives has increased ninefold from 51 million roubles in 1933 to 474 millions in 1939. The average income per farm has increased slightly less than eightfold in the same period.

*Grain.* 189,200 ha. Roughly half the crop is winter-grown, and half summer-grown. The choice of growing season depends on the water supply. In the Murgab district, for instance, winter growing is favoured, since water can be used for grain in autumn, winter and spring when it is not needed for other crops. But in the Oxus and Tedjen valleys, where water is much more plentiful, most of the grain is summer grown.

The yield has risen from 8 quintals per ha. in 1913 to 10.7 in 1938.

#### *Other Crops*

(a) Lucerne. Increasingly grown as a fodder crop, to rotate with cotton. Area, 36,300 ha. in 1938.

(b) Pistachio nuts are grown on 26,500 ha. These groves are thirty times as large as those in Sicily, which is normally the world's largest exporter.

(c) Silk culture. 1,617 tons in 1938.

(d) Various sub-tropical fruits, such as grapes, figs, almonds, etc.

(e) Rubber is grown in the south Kara Kala districts, where conditions are favourable to the Mexican rubber tree.

*Livestock.* Over 2 million head in 1938, more than three fourths of which were sheep and goats. Caracul sheep are an important factor.

The country also breeds horses, and is one of the sources of supply for the Red Army.

The great problem is water supply. Efforts are being made to extend pasturage by sinking desert wells.

#### MINERALS

*Oil.* Great progress has been made since 1932. A new base has been established at Neftedag,



with its own refinery. A branch railway links the district with the Krasnovodsk-Ashkhabad main line. A pipe line runs to Krasnovodsk.

The output, together with that of Chelcken island in the Caspian south of Krasnovodsk, was 452,000 tons in 1938, or some 6 per cent of the total for the Soviet Union.

*Coal.* Production has recently begun at Touarkyr in the north, 200 km. from the Krasnovodsk railway; and at Kugitang in the south-east. The first mine was sunk in 1940.

#### CHEMICALS

A giant chemical combine, based on the glauber salts deposits in the Kara-Bugaz gulf, produces sulphates, iodine, bromide, and sulphuric acid. These deposits are the largest of their kind in the world.

At Gaourdak in the south-east is another chemical works, using as its raw materials the large sulphur deposits in the area, and the Kazliuk potash salts.

There are also vast deposits of sulphur at Darvaz in the middle of the Kara Kum desert, some 200 km. from Ashkhabad. They have been extensively worked since 1932, and a new town has arisen there, with its own hospitals and power station. A motor road has been built to Ashkhabad. There is an airfield and an air line for transporting sulphur.

#### MANUFACTURES

At Ashkhabad there are extensive cotton ginning plants, textile factories for cotton and silk, machine building, wool cleaning, cement, and glass works. The latter are highly mechanised and on a large scale.

At Charjui cotton ginning has been much extended, and silk reeling has been developed.

There is cotton ginning also at Merv, and has been ever since pre-revolution days.

### III. UZBEK S.S.R.

#### AREA

Uzbekistan, 64,000 square miles: Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic, 48,650 square miles: total, 112,650 square miles.

#### POPULATION

Uzbekistan, 6,282,000 (1939 census); of whom 76 per cent are Uzbeks, and 10 per cent Russians. The republic is the least thinly peopled, as well as the most highly industrialised, of the Central Asian region. The Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic, which is incorporated in the Uzbek S.S.R. comprises a further population of 351,000. The total for the whole Uzbek S.S.R. is thus approximately 6,633,000.

A considerable part of the population lives in towns. Tashkent is the economic and cultural metropolis of Soviet Central Asia. It doubled in size between 1920 and 1933, and by 1941 had a population of 600,000. Samarkand grew from 82,000 in 1920 to 154,000 in 1933, and now approaches a quarter of a million. Other large towns are Bokhara and Ferghana.

#### PRODUCTION

In relation to soviet economy as a whole the Uzbek S.S.R. is most notable for cotton, copper, coal and vegetable oils—in that order. The vegetable oils are particularly important for present war purposes.

*Agriculture.* Organised (1939) in 8,452 collective and 79 state farms, with 177 tractor stations and 22,082 tractors. Ninety-nine per cent of the peasantry are thus collectivised. The state farms specialise as follows:

Cotton	15
Stock raising	24
Market gardening and grape-growing	24
Grain	5
Mixed farming	11
	<hr/> 79 <hr/>

Mechanised methods are spreading. In 1938 and 1939 spring sowing and harvesting were carried out by machines to the extent of 28 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. These figures are below the average for the U.S.S.R. as a whole. In 1938 84 per cent of the fallow ploughing was done by mechanical means.

In 1939 the area under cultivation totalled 3 million ha. More than one-third of this total area was irrigated land (approx. 1,200,000 ha.). The chief allocations were:

Cotton	918,500
Grain	1,486,000
Lucerne	348,000
Rice	80,000

In December 1939 a decree was issued, outlining the planned expansion of production for the period 1940-45.

The irrigated area was to be increased by 430,000 ha., of which 100,000 ha. were to be earmarked for cotton growing. The cotton yield was to rise to 26 quintals per ha., and the total production to 26 million quintals. Between 1929 and 1939, and mainly in the years 1937-39, the irrigated area increased by 26 per cent (309,000 ha.). The planned increase for 1940-45 represented roughly one-third of the existing area 1939.

The chief means to this output-increase were (a) Further irrigation works (250.7 million roubles had already been spent on irrigation works between 1928 and 1937); (b) Increased mechanisation; (c) Importation of labour (family settlement schemes); (d) Greater use of specialists.

By 1941, 141,400 ha. of new land had been brought under irrigation, and turned over to cotton, vineyards, market gardening, and silk culture. The results, however, were not regarded as satisfactory, and in that year a new decree was issued, making supplementary provision for housing accommodation, road construction, telephone communications, and hydro-electric development.

Between 1929 and 1939 the gross income of the collective farms increased sixfold, from 461 million roubles to 2,711 million. In the latter year more than 600 farms had incomes of 1 million roubles or more.

*Cotton.* The Uzbek output accounts for 57.8 per cent of the total production of the U.S.S.R.

	<i>Area</i> (‘000 ha.)	<i>Yield per ha.</i> (quintals)	<i>Production</i> (‘000 quintals)
1913	423.5	12.2	5,100

1924	255.6	7.2	1,840
1929	604.4	9.1	5,500
1938	916.6	16.8	15,400
1939	918.5	17.2	16,000

The decline between 1913 and 1924 was due partly to the decay of irrigation works during the war period, and partly to mistakes in organisation arising from the fact that an irrigation system planned for rice-growing is not easily adapted to the requirements of cotton-growing.

The period 1924-39 saw big developments in the restoration and extension of canals.

In 1939 the Ferghana canal was opened, bringing the area newly cultivated between 1924 and 1939 up to 500,000 ha.

#### *Grain*

	<i>Area</i> (‘000 ha.)	<i>Yield per ha.</i> (quintals)	<i>Production</i> (‘000 quintals)
1913	1,521	6.9	10,500
1925	723	6.2	4,500
1939	1,486	8.7	12,400

The yield is still low, and attention is now being concentrated on this problem. Uzbekistan is still importing grain from Siberia. It is a measure of the development in Central Asia that, when the Turksib line was being planned, the importation of Siberian grain was looked upon as a desirable way of providing traffic for it. The aim now is to make Central Asia self-supporting in grain in order to relieve Turksib and also the Tashkent-Orenburg line.

#### *Other Crops.*

(a) Lucerne. 1939: 343,900 ha. (285,300 irrigated). 1941: 500,000 ha.

(b) Rice. Largest area of production in U.S.S.R. 1939: 80,000 ha. (166,800 ha. for the whole Union).

(c) Silk. Half U.S.S.R. production. 1940: 124,070 quintals.

(d) Jute. New crop, recently developed. 1,100 ha.

(e) Fruits and vines. Of increasing importance; export already to many parts of the Union.

*Livestock.* Mainly sheep and goats. 4 million in 1938. Uzbek S.S.R. the first producer of caracul sheep. Pelts particularly important in foreign trade. Lack of feeding stuffs the present handicap. Increase in output planned.

#### MINERALS

*Oil.* The fuel position has been transformed in the last ten years in consequence of continuous and expanding prospecting, Uzbek S.S.R. was formerly a fuel-deficient area; it is now producing oil (and coal) on a growing scale. In 1938 the crude oil output was 225,300 tons, of which 123,000 tons were refined locally.

Oil is found in the Ferghana valley (Shor-Su, Yar-Kurgan, and Chimion fields), in the Bokhara and S. Uzbek areas (Maudar and Uch-Kzil fields), and in other fields not yet fully prospected (Shirabad and south of Samarkand).

*Coal.* Uzbekistan is the newest coal base in the U.S.S.R. The Angren coalfields are estimated to have potential reserves of two milliard tons. They are situated 90 miles from Tashkent, to

which they are being linked by rail.

Lesser fields at Shirabad, near oil deposits.

*Copper.* The republic now the third largest producer in U.S.S.R. The Almalyk mines with reserves estimated at 32 million tons, 75 miles from Tashkent, are easily worked, having electricity supplied from Chirchikstroi and coal from Asgren. For this reason they are easier to develop than the larger copper mines at Kounrad in Kazakhstan. A copper smelting combine is being erected under the third 5-year plan (1938-1942).

#### CHEMICALS AND HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER.

The Chirchik combine (Chirchikstroi), on the river of that name, some 30 odd miles from Tashkent, consists of several large hydro-electric power stations, a nitrogenous fertiliser plant (synthetic nitrogen from the air), and a chemical works. It is one of the largest schemes in the U.S.S.R. Construction first began in 1932; the combine has been in partial production since 1940; completion planned for 1942.

#### MANUFACTURES

There has been marked development of secondary industry under the 5-year plans, e.g. in Tashkent; agricultural machinery plant, giant cotton mill (planned output in 1941 of 1 million metres of piece goods), silk winding mill, and many food and light industries.

In Ferghana, the centre of an important cotton and fruit growing area, there has been industrial expansion on similar lines, e.g. cotton mill (47,000 spindles) and large fruit canning plant.

The Uzbek women ranking as Stakhanovites in the mills of Tashkent, are celebrated throughout the U.S.S.R. both for their proportionate numbers and for the level of their output.

The republic contains the largest vegetable oil plant in the Union.

### IV. KAZAKH S.S.R.

#### AREA

1,585,000 square miles. The Kazakh republic achieved the status of a federal republic as recently as 1937. Until then it was an autonomous republic within the R.S.F.S.R. It is a vast region of steppe and desert, stretching across the whole of Central Asia from the Volga to the Mongolian border. Seen on the map, it spans the four other Central Asian republics as a bridge spans a railway cutting.

#### POPULATION

6,145,937 (1939 census): Kazakh, 60 per cent, Russian, 20 per cent, Ukrainian, 14 per cent, others 6 per cent. Urban population 1,706,000, or 28 per cent of the total. This proportion is five times as great as in pre-revolution times. Members and candidates of the communist party were 126,000 in 1941, as against 30,503 in 1926. In addition there were 355,082 Komsomol members and candidates in 1941.

#### COMMUNICATIONS

##### *Railways.*

(1) Turksib from Arys to Semipalatinsk.

(2) Karaganda-Akmolinsk-Kartala-Magnitogorsk (transport of blast coal to the Ural indus-

trial area).

(3) Akmolinsk-Petropavlovsk, giving access to Trans-Siberian (for Karaganda coal and Karsakpai copper).

(4) Karaganda-Pribalkhash (mining railway with extension under construction to Kounrad copper mines).

(5) Chapaev-Kandagash, via Orsk (opening up Emba oil to the Urals).

(6) Under construction in 1941: Turksib extension, Mointy-Chu, a second link between S. Kazakhstan and Siberia.

(7) Proposed line: Aral to Karsakpai.

*Roads.* Large-scale construction in recent years—1,330 km. in 1940 alone.

Eastern ring road being built in 1941 (806 km.), linking the industrial areas of the great Altai (Ust-Kamenogorsk-Bukhtarza-Malokrasnoyarka-Kokpekty).

*Air Lines.* Various civil lines linking the republic with other parts of the Union. Within the republic there is a regular service Alma-Ata to Semipalatinsk (1,100 km.).

*Water Transport.* The river system is poor. The Irtysh (which also supplies hydro-electric power) and the Ili are fully navigable, and the lower reaches of the Ural river are navigable for small craft. The rivers are more important for their fisheries.

## PRODUCTION

*Agriculture.* North and east provinces: grain-growing on black and so-called dark chestnut earth. Central plain: stock raising. South provinces: cotton (with irrigation) rice, sugar beet, and other crops.

	1938	1939	1940
Total sown area (thousand ha.)	5,832	6,106	6,333
Grain	5,155	5,329	
Cotton	111	110	
Rice		26	
Sugar beet	13		15
Fodder crops	194		

Agriculture is organised in 7,437 collective and 191 state farms, with 308 tractor stations, 35,000 tractors and 10,500 combines. Collectivisation embraces 99 per cent of peasant households, and 99.9 per cent of sown area.

In 1938 spring sowing, harvesting, and fallow ploughing were carried out by mechanical methods to the extent of 56, 61 and 64 per cent respectively.

In 1940 it was officially complained that the collectives had received only one-tenth of the number of carts needed for ordinary farm purposes.

<i>Irrigation</i>	<i>Irrigable area</i>
1915	696 thousand ha.
1939	1,091 “ “
1940	1,178 “ “

Canals have been reconditioned, improved, and extended.

(a) Kirov canal (from Uzbek and Tadjik S.S.R.s) extended. 5,000 ha. added in 1940 to irri-

gated area, and 27,000 quintals of cotton raised from the so-called hungry steppe.

(b) Works in progress in the Arna-Saisk and Kizil-Kum regions; when complete will bring in 19,000 ha.

(c) Other works in the Kizil-Ordinsky district on the Syr Daria river. The scheme provides for two canals on different sides of the river and for three dams at Kizil-Orda, Kazalinsky, and Yani-Kurgansk. 700,000 ha. to be irrigated. In 1940 work was begun on the Chiilinsky canal, and in 1941 on the canal at Kazalinstroi. Completion planned for 1944.

*Grain.* More than five-sixths of the sown area is under grain—summer corn, barley, and millet. On over 1 million ha. the yield in 1938 was 20.2 quintals per ha., which is higher than the Ukraine average.

Efforts are being made both to extend the area sown to grain and also to raise the yield to all-over average of 15-16 quintals per ha. This would imply general improvement of farming technique, more mechanisation, more tractor stations and repair shops, and methods of reckoning “labour days” that offer the incentive of higher earnings.

In 1940 the area sown increased by 227,000 ha. But a review in 1941 showed shortcomings. Three-quarters to four-fifths of the fallow ploughing-plan was fulfilled, but the fertiliser plan was only one-quarter fulfilled, owing to shortage in the supply of fertilisers. This deficiency is probably now met by Chirchikstroi in Uzbek S.S.R., which has been producing on a large scale since 1940-41.

### *Cotton*

	<i>Area</i> (‘000 ha.)	<i>Yield per ha.</i> ( <i>quintals</i> )	<i>Production</i> (‘000 <i>quintals</i> )
1930	75	5.7	430
1939	110	11.8	1,250

*Other Crops.* Tobacco, sugar beet, rice, natural rubber, and fruits.

*Livestock.* 1938: 9.39 million head, of which 5.25 million sheep and goats, 3 million horned cattle, .639 million horses.

1939: 11.83 million.

The republic is an important source of supply of wool and hides for industry, and of mounts for the cavalry units of the Red Army.

Communal ownership: 76.5 per cent of the horses; 73.9 per cent of the sheep and goats; 55.5 per cent of the cattle; 40 per cent of the pigs.

In July 1939 a special decree was issued with the object of improving and expanding the stockbreeding industry. The chief difficulties to be overcome were shortage of veterinary surgeons, of serum, and of fodder. High mortality rates were recorded—11 per cent among calves, 7.1 per cent among lambs. There was also a lack of dairy equipment and of butter factories.

The breed of sheep is being improved by crossing. To meet the forest and timber deficiency in Central Asia (except Kirghizia) a big afforestation programme is being carried out.

### MINERALS

Oil. Emba fields:	<i>Output</i> (‘000 <i>tons</i> )
-------------------	--------------------------------------

1913	100
1938	652
1940	1,000

Pipe line to Chapaev, also Dossor-Rakusha (84 km.), and Caspii-Orsk (885 km.).

Oil wells also being developed in the Aktyubinsk district.

*Coal.* Karaganda fields much the largest. Other pits at Lenger (south-east of Chimkent) and at Pavlodar.

Output, which stood at 90,000 tons in 1913, has been steadily rising in the last ten years, and reached 6.3 million tons in 1938—the third highest figure in the Union, after Donbas and Kuzbas.

A second coal base is now being established at Mangyshlak on the Caspian. Two mines already sunk and others being developed. A new town is springing up. The coal is shipped across the Caspian and up the Volga.

*Lead.* The republic contains 60 per cent of the Union's resources as at present known. It produced 84 per cent of the Union's refined lead in 1939. (Chimkent, 61 per cent; Ridder, 23 per cent).

*Copper.* The Kounrad mines are the largest: refineries at Balkash (175,000 tons p.a.—the largest in the Union), Karsakpai, and Irtysh. Together they produced 16 per cent of the Union's black copper in 1939.

*Other Metals.* *Zinc* (50 per cent of Union resources): nickel: chrome ores worked in local special ferro-alloys plant.

Also gold, wolfram, molybdenum, cobalt, antimony, and mercury.

## MANUFACTURES

There has been considerable expansion of processing and extracting plant in the cotton producing areas in recent years—textile mills, ginneries, and cotton oil presses, notably at Chimkent and Alma-Ata.

Also food, building, and various light industries.

The meat-packing combine at Semipalatinsk, and the flour mills at Karaganda, completed in 1940, are the largest of their kind in the Soviet Union,

Chemical combine at Aktyubinsk (phosphate deposits locally).

## GENERAL

In 1920 industrial production (minerals and manufactures) amounted to 6.3 per cent of total production. By 1939 the percentage had risen to 5.8 per cent, mainly owing to the development of local resources of non-ferrous metals, oil, and coal.

Plans for further development envisage the continuous settlement of peasants and workmen, with their families. Two thousand families came in 1940, and a further 5,000 were expected to arrive in 1941. The policy is to settle 42,000 householders by 1945. For the most part this migration is state-aided. But sometimes farmers come from European Russia on their own resources. It is pointed out that they could often find empty houses which only needed repairing—a fact which illustrates the flow of labour to the mining and industrial centres.

In 1940 there was a public stocktaking of the results of a generation of construction, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Kazakh soviet republic.

Progress was duly noted and credit apportioned. But there was also frank exposure of backsliding and inefficiency both in agriculture and in industry. Socialist self-criticism was particu-

larly outspoken about the many difficulties of running the metallurgical and mining industries with raw nomad labour inadequately trained in a complicated technique; about Russian foremen's and officials' inadequate knowledge of the Kazakh language; and about the lack of enforcement of labour discipline decrees. It was even alleged that, of the 335,082 Komsomol members and candidates, many were guilty of absenteeism.

Great efforts are, however, being made to give the necessary educational groundwork for technical efficiency. Illiteracy has been reduced from about 98 per cent in 1913 to 20 per cent in 1940. In the latter year there were 1,553,000 people attending educational institutions of one kind or another—more than a quarter of the entire population.

This lavish educational provision is also a direct attack on another troublesome problem. Churchgoers, mullahs, and sectaries are still a force to be reckoned with. They carry on underground agitation (or did before the war) for leaving collective farms, restoring mosques and churches, observing religious holidays and fasts, and making pilgrimages. Much of the absenteeism complained of is traced to these influences. Education is regarded as one of the best forms of anti-religious propaganda.

Although the Turkic alphabets in Central Asia are being “Russianised”—in Cyrillic script—special efforts are being made to popularise the Turkic and Tadjik languages and great insistence placed on Russian officials and workmen learning them. For this reason, the chief Russian papers—the *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* in Alma-Ata, the *Pravda Vostoka* in Tashkent, and the *Kommunist Tadjikstana* in Stalinabad—run elementary courses in the Kazakh, Uzbek and Tadjik languages,

## V. KIRGHIZ S.S.R.

### AREA

94,250 square miles.

### POPULATION

1,500,000 approx. Kirghiz, 66 per cent; Uzbek, 11 per cent (mostly concentrated at Kirghizian end of Ferghana valley); Dungan (Chinese Moslems), 11 per cent; Ukrainian settlers, 6.3 percent. The capital is Frunze, Little more than a hamlet fifteen years ago, it is now a modernised town of 100,000 with power station, tractor repair plant, a large meatpacking combine, many light industries, and a university.

### COMMUNICATIONS

#### *Railways*

- (1) Connection with Turksib, linking Frunze, Lugovaya, and Kant.
- (2) Branch joining the Central Asian from Andijan in Uzbek S.S.R. through Osh (silk centre.)
- (3) Line under construction between Kant and Rybathe on Lake Issyk-Kul. This is part of the Chu valley and Issyk-Kul development scheme, and by 1941 had reached as far as Tokmak.

#### *Roads*

- (1) Frunze-Tokmak-Rybathe (regular motor services on this section): then south to Narynsk and through Tian Shan to Kashgar in the Sinkiang province of China.
- (2) Osh-Khorog (Tadjik) motor road.



(3) Frunze-Djalyal-Abad motor road (Great Kirghiz highway).

(4) Akkul-Baikadam (62 km.) connecting the two largest cotton growing regions with Djambul (former Aulie-Ata) on Turksib.

5. Frunze-Osh motor road.

## PRODUCTION

*Agriculture.* Organised in 1849 collective farms, with 63 tractor stations (6,000 tractors and combines: 2,000 lorries). They comprise 170,000 peasant families, and cover about 85 per cent of cultivated area.

The sown area totals 1,021,500 ha., and there are 12 million ha. of mountain pasture.

*Grain.* In 1938, 799,200 ha. were sown to wheat, barley, oats and rice; about half this area was irrigated land.

*Cotton.* Some 65,000 ha. sown in 1939, which produced 97,500 tons—a yield of some 15 quintals per ha. This suggests a great improvement since 1932, when the figure given was 6.7 quintals per ha.

*Sugar beet.* This is an expanding crop, which is helping to transform agriculture in the republic. Cultivation began only in 1930. Ten years later production was 3 per cent of the all-Union total.

	<i>Area</i> (‘000 ha.)	<i>Yield</i> (quintals per ha.)	<i>Production</i> (‘000 quintals)
1933	5.8	88	510
1940	15.5	431	6,689

*Tobacco.* A high quality crop is grown, much of which is exported. More than 4,000 ha. were planted in 1939. Cultivation began in 1929.

*Irrigation.* 750,000 ha. are under irrigation—twice the irrigated area in 1914. In the 15 years 1925-40, 112 million roubles were spent on works. The plan for 1940-45 provides for a further expenditure of 170 million roubles.

1939: Great Ferghana canal opened, of which one section is in Kirghizia. It has been the means of extending the cotton growing area.

1941: Naryn canal opened, affecting 1,700 ha. in Djambulak valley.

Orto-Tokoisky reservoir completed, storing 0.5 milliard cubic metres of water.

Work in progress: (a) Great Chu valley scheme—270 km. of canal to irrigate 80,000 ha. Completion planned for 1943.

Tash-Utkulsky dam which will raise the level of the Chu River between 2 and 3 metres: 30,000 ha. involved.

(b) Ugarsk canal and Otuz-Adarsky canal (67 km.), involving 7,000 ha., half of which is to be used for cotton growing.

The farming of these new irrigation areas will, it is estimated, require the settlement of a further 25,000 peasant families.

*Livestock.* Owing to the 12 million ha. of mountain pasture the potentialities of sheep-farming are considerable.

	<i>Sheep and Goats</i>		<i>Cattle</i>		<i>Horses</i>	
	<i>million head</i>	<i>% owned collectively</i>	<i>million head</i>	<i>% owned collectively</i>	<i>million head</i>	<i>% owned collectively</i>
1932	1		.3154		.3199	
1938	2	33	.5	11	.3616	18

The supply of feeding stuffs has been greatly increased. In 1938 88,500 ha. were sown to fodder crops—twice the area of 1934.

*Timber.* Unlike most of Central Asia, Kirghizia has abundant forest areas. Lumbering is being developed to avoid importing timber from Siberia. Large sawmills recently opened at Naryn.

#### MINERALS

*Coal.* Output in 1939, 1,383,100 tons. Kirghizia is the historic stokehold of Central Asia. The largest and oldest mines are in the western districts at Kyzel-Kiya and Suliukta. There are large brown-coal reserves, and production is being expanded and mechanised.

New mines in Issyk-Kul region; bituminous and coking coal. These are the source of supply for industries in the northern districts, which would otherwise have to import from Karaganda.

*Oil.* Development begun in 1940 of deposits at Changir-Tash (near Djalyal-Abad)—44 wells sunk.

*Non-ferrous metals.* In Khardarkan region south of Ferghana valley are the largest mercury deposits in the Union; also cinnabar and antimony.

Antimony plants opened at Kadam-Djai in 1936.

Realgar (red arsenic) at Chuval.

Lead mines, tin, and indium in foothills of Chu valley.

Gold industry developing in middle Naryn river.

Sulphur deposits, estimated at 3 million tons, near Changir-Tash oilfields. Refinery at Djilia. Railway within 18 km. of workings: ample coal, power, and water.

Wolfram, molybdenum, and radium also found.

#### MANUFACTURES, etc.

(1) The basis of large-scale industrial development has been laid by factories in Frunze, Osh, and Kant.

Cotton spinning and weaving at Frunze: ginning at Karasu.

(2) Various local industries based on agricultural products, e.g. jute, tobacco, silk, sugar beet, hemp, and kenaf (paper hag making).

Sugar beet refineries at Kant and Karahalta, each with daily output of 25,000 tons during the season.

The biggest jute industry of the Union in the Chu valley.

Artificial silk, rubber, acids, and tar are manufactured from local kendyr fibre.

(3) In construction:

(a) Cement industry at Kurmentinsk in north Kirghizia. Works to be opened during 1942 with capacity of 1,500 tons p.a.

(b) Sugar factories at Novo-Troitsky in Issyk-Kul basin.

(c) Rare metal combine at Kadam-Djai.

(d) Oil refinery at Changir-Tash.

## VI. SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AND THE WAR

The war has hastened industrialisation in all the Central Asian republics to an extent that would have seemed fantastic even five years ago. By August 1942, 75 per cent of the total production in the Uzbek S.S.R. was said to be industrial—and this in spite of the very considerable increase in agricultural output.

War-time industrial growth is due (*a*) to the evacuation of western factories, (*b*) to the enlargement of the equipment of old local factories, and (*c*) to the opening up of new coal, iron ore, and oil deposits.

Textiles, cotton and silk, have shown an enormous rise in production—mainly in the Tadjik and Uzbek S.S.R.s—since the war started.

A big new meat cannery, built in Alma-Ata after the outbreak of war, has been producing 100,000 tins of meat a day since the summer of 1942. New meat-packing plants have also been set up in Tashkent, Ashkhabad, and Stalinabad. Fifteen big fruit canneries are in production in the Central Asian republics.

At Frunze, in the Kirghiz S.S.R., a vitamin C factory has been built, the output of which is to be twice as large as the all-Union output of vitamin C concentrates before the war. The raw material is green walnuts, which are available in inexhaustible quantities in the forests of the republic.

The main sugar beet areas of the U.S.S.R. are now (1942), after the loss of the Ukraine, in Uzbekistan and Kirghizia. The areas sown to beet in these republics are reported to be 250-300 per cent larger in 1942 than they were in 1941. The expected yield is 16 tons per acre. Refineries, evacuated from the Ukraine, have been set up in the neighbourhood of the Central Asian beet-fields.

The expansion of the sown area in Central Asia during the war may be illustrated from the Kazakh S.S.R. That republic harvested in 1942 over 5 million hectares more than in the previous year—an increase of some 80 per cent.

The labour needed for this astonishing increase was found in the main from the urban population of the republic. About 13 per cent of the town-dwellers (some 225,000 persons) worked in the fields from early summer until harvest time. The call-up included teachers, schoolchildren, housewives, and clerks. When shortage of transport threatened to interfere with prompt delivery of grain to the elevators and collecting centres, the collective farmers organised special transport brigades. Local soviets were empowered to mobilise 50 per cent of urban motor transport for agricultural purposes, provided this should involve no hold-up of military traffic.

A similar illustration of the spirit in which the Central Asian republics helped to make good time losses of the great food-producing areas west of the Urals and in the northern Caucasus, is furnished by the construction of the Northern Tashkent canal in Uzbekistan. This irrigation scheme came into operation in May 1942, the whole work of digging the canal and building the dam having been completed within a month. The canal is some thirty miles long. All the engineering works, including the dam itself, were carried out wholly with local materials.

Farmers and industrial workers, Uzbeks and Russian evacuees, all took a hand in the task. Fourteen thousand volunteers came from the cotton mills, the blast furnaces, and the clothing factories of Tashkent. They were joined by hundreds of book-keepers, and other clerical and scientific workers. The building trades turned out in strength, and joined with a huge force of collective farmers from Ferghana, Andijan, and other districts. Men and women from Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov, and Dnepropetrovsk, who had been evacuated with their factories, worked

side by side with them.

The war effort of Central Asia is not confined to the field of production. In the year following the German attack some 2,000 new primary and secondary schools were built in Uzbekistan alone to accommodate the children of evacuated workers. An idea of the magnitude of the evacuation can be gathered from the fact that provision on a similar scale has been made throughout the five republics. Central Asia has found accommodation for hundreds of thousands of homeless children from the war zones, quite apart from the large numbers who have been evacuated with their parents. The furniture and equipment of all the new schools had to be provided by local soviets and other organisations in the reception areas, again chiefly from local materials and resources.

Teaching goes on in a way as near the normal as is humanly possible. The general resolve is very strong that no deterioration of material conditions, however terrible, shall be allowed to interfere with the training, the knowledge, and the enlightenment, which are the birthright of every soviet child.

A quotation from the *Economist* of December 5, 1942, sums up the consequences of the war to these republics by saying:

“In the course of 1942 the centre of gravity of the U.S.S.R.’s economic life has shifted to Asia; and 1942 may rank in the U.S.S.R.’s history as the year of the great industrial ascendancy of its Asiatic republics. Asia is putting a new impress upon all sectors of soviet life. In the army, soldiers of west Siberian and south Asiatic nationality have become most prominent. Tadjik and Uzbek detachments have been fighting in Stalingrad under the Siberian General Rodimtsev.”

The final assault on Veliki Luki on New Year’s Day 1943 was also delivered by divisions which included Uzbeks and Kazakhs.

The *Economist* concludes: “Asia is rescuing Europe; and the influx of fresh blood has added new strength to the country in its struggle and suffering.”

## INDEX

- Accra,  
 Administrative boundaries. African,  
 — units, reorganisation,  
 Afghanistan,  
 Agreements, collective,  
 Agriculture, African, problem of,  
 —, mechanisation,  
 —, reorganisation, in U.S.S.R.,  
 —, regionalisation,  
 Aimlessness of British administration,  
 Akida system,  
 All-Union congress of Trade Unions,  
 Alphabet, Cyrillic,  
 Assessors, people's,  
 Autonomy and federation,  
 —, cultural, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Backward areas, Soviet, assistance to,  
 Bates, E. S.,  
 Bazaars,  
 Biological and social factors in behaviour,  
 Bobokalan,  
 Books, in Africa,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Boundaries, administrative,  
 Britain and soviet systems compared,  
 Broadcasting,  
 Broken Hill,  
 Budgets, soviet,  
 Bulawayo,  
 Burma,  
 Cameron, Sir Donald,  
 Capital Investment, soviet and African,  
 Central Asia,  
 —, Investment in,  
 —, revolution in,  
 Centrosoyus,  
 Chagga,  
 Chamberlainian,  
 Change, rate of social,  
 Chiefs, African,  
 —, Bantu view of,  
 —, functions of,  
 —, relations with British authorities,  
 Choice of rulers,  
 Cinema, in Africa,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Coffee growing,  
 Colonial development, British and soviet,  
 compared,  
 Colonial development and Welfare Act,  
 Colonial policy, defined,  
 Colour bar,  
 Communist party,  
 —and collective farms,  
 —, and village soviets,  
 —, in Tadjikstan,  
 Consumer co-operatives, in Africa,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 —Co-operation, producers,  
 Co-operatives, British, and democracy,  
 —, U.S.S.R. and British, compared,  
 Copper,  
 — belt, in N. Rhodesia,  
 Courts, native,  
 Cultural agencies, in Africa and U.S.S.R.  
     compared,  
 Death rates,  
 Decentralised collections,  
 Democracy, and Africa,  
 —, and chiefly rule,  
 —, Britain and,  
 —, and public health,  
 —, economic,  
 — meaning of,  
 —, soviet conception of,  
 Deprived categories, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Dictatorship of proletariat,  
 Doctors, ratio to population,  
 Economist, quoted.  
 Education, adult,  
 —, and social change,  
 —, Conservative report on,  
 —, in Africa  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 —, statistics,  
 Emancipation of slaves,  
 Employment, full, policy of,  
 Ends, compatibility of,

Engels, F.,  
 Equality, and democracy,  
 —, In U.S.S.R.,  
 Equal pay for equal work,  
 Ethiopia,  
 Exploitation,  
 Extra-territoriality,  
 Factory committees,  
 Farms, collective,  
 —, social security on,  
 Fascism,  
 Federation, and autonomy,  
 Fees, school, In U.S.S.R.,  
 Finance, decentralisation of,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 —, tribal,  
 Financial aid to colonies,  
 Foreign trade, as State monopoly,  
 Franchise, native,  
 —, soviet,  
 Free will, and statistical regularity,  
 Gambia,  
 German colonial methods, in Tanganyika,  
 —settlers, return to Tanganyika,  
 Gold Coast,  
 —, education,  
 —, medical services,  
 —, retail trade in,  
 —, Trade Unions,  
 Gosplan,  
 Health protection stations,  
 — provision, in Africa and U.S.S.R., compared,  
 Heavy industry, world bias towards,  
 Historical standpoint, fallacies of,  
 Housing, & a Broken Hill,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Hut and poll tax,  
 Ibrahim Bek,  
 Indirect rule,  
 — and economics,  
 Individual, the, and society,  
 Infant mortality rates,  
 Inflation,  
 Investment, excessive,  
 —, subsidising of,  
 Judicial system, in Africa,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Jumbes,  
 Kara-Kalpak A.S.S.R.,  
 Kazakhstan,  
 —, cultural agencies,  
 Kenya,  
 Kirghiz S.S.R.,  
 —, cultural agencies,  
 —, education in,  
 —, writing in,  
 K.N.C.U.,  
 K.N.P.A.,  
 Kulaks,  
 K.C.T.V.,  
 Law courts, African,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Leadership, colonial,  
 Lenin, V. I.,  
 Libraries,  
 Light industry, regionalisation,  
 Literacy, in Soviet Central Asia,  
 Littlepage, J.,  
 Machine and tractor stations,  
 Markets, unfair modes of distribution,  
 Marriages, mixed,  
 Marx, Karl,  
 Medical assistants,  
 — services, in Africa and U.S.S.R.,  
 Migrant labour,  
 Missionaries,  
 Moneylenders,  
 Monopolies, corporative,  
 —, economic,  
 Nation, definition of,  
 National self-determination in U.S.S.R.,  
 Native authorities, and colonial legislatures,  
 —, and economies,  
 —, and K.N.P.A.  
 —, place in power hierarchy,  
 —, powers of,  
 —, varieties,  
 Native councils, In Southern Rhodesia,  
 Ndola,  
 N.E.P.,  
 Newspapers, in Africa,

—, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Nigeria,  
 Northern Rhodesia,  
 —, education,  
 —, medical services,  
 —mining,  
 —, places in power hierarchy,  
 —, saturation of white settlers,  
 Opportunity, limits of native,  
 Oppression, by native chiefs,  
 Orders in Council,  
 Parliament, and colonial legislatures,  
 Patriotism, and democracy,  
 Peasants, and moneylenders,  
 Personality,  
 Planning,  
 Planning, and collective farms,  
 —, soviet  
 Polyclinics,  
 Population, and equality of opportunity,  
 —, balance of,  
 Post-war reconstruction, reports on,  
 Power, social, organisation of,  
 Privilege, abolition of, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Psychological change, effect of social  
     change,  
 Rationing, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Records, court,  
 Red Army,  
 Religion, and education,  
 Rest homes, soviet,  
 Retail trade in Africa and U.S.S.R.,  
     compared,  
 Revenue, soviet, sources,  
 Revolutions, violent and peaceable,  
 Rhodesia, capital investment in,  
 Science,  
 —, and farming, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Scripts, Cyrillic, and Latin,  
 Secession, right of,  
 Sedition,  
 Self-government in industry, corporative,  
 Sierra Leone,  
 Skilled labour, and colour bar,  
 Social security, and full employment,  
 Society, nature of,  
 Southern Rhodesia,  
 Soviet, village, operation of,  
 Soviets, hierarchy of,  
 —, method of election,  
 Stalin, J. V.,  
 Stalinabad,  
 Standard of living, British, and imperialism,  
 —, British and soviet,  
 State Planning Commission,  
 Statutory courts,  
 Storekeepers, African,  
 Suffrage, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Tadjikstan,  
 —, cultural agencies,  
 —, schools in,  
 Tanganyika, Chagga coffee-growers,  
 —, development of,  
 —, form of local rule in,  
 Tashkent, Northern, canal,  
 Theatres, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Trade cycle,  
 Trade, Imperial,  
 —, retail,  
 Trade Unions,  
 —, British and democracy,  
 —, in British colonies,  
 —, in U.S.S.R.,  
 Trans-Siberian railway,  
 Treasuries, native,  
 Tribal disorganisation,  
 — life, and industrialisation,  
 Tribute, to chiefs,  
 Trusteeship,  
 Turkestan,  
 Turkmenistan,  
 —child welfare,  
 —, cultural agencies,  
 —, education,  
 —, medical services,  
 Turksib railway,  
 Turnover tax,  
 U.S.S.R., and imperialism,  
 —, cultural agencies,  
 —, democracy in,  
 —, educational system,  
 —, health services,

—, urbanisation,  
University, see K.U.T.V.  
Unofficial agents,  
Urbanisation of African workers,  
— of U.S.S.R.,  
Uzbekistan,  
—, cultural agencies,  
—, medical services;  
Villages, and Red Army men,  
Wages, African,

—, firing of, in U.S.S.R.,  
War, and capitalism,  
—, and self-determination,  
—, Second World, and Soviet Asia,  
Wartime controls, nature of,  
Women, and social energy,  
—, and soviets,  
—, position in African economy,  
Working-class supremacy,  
Working class, as fount of social energy,