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Social Democracy and the Colonial Question

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Comrades, you all know that almost at the very time when we put on the agenda of the Sixth World Congress the development, the present situation and the perspective of the revolutionary movement in the colonies, the Second International likewise placed on the agenda of its Congress, which recently met at Brussels, the colonial policy of Social Democracy. A draft resolution drawn up and published by a preparatory commission of the Second International has just been approved with a few minor changes by this Brussels Congress.

I

WHY SOCIAL DEMOCRACY CONCERNS ITSELF WITH COLONIAL PROBLEMS

It is of interest to observe this coincidence which is, in fact, not accidental. For ourselves, for the Communist International, there is nothing new, nothing extraordinary, in the fact that we place on the agenda of one of our international sessions the revolutionary movement in the colonies. This has always been the case. At the First Congress, Comrade Lenin declared that the Party which does not study the revolutionary movement in the colonies, which does not carry on a revolutionary struggle in the colonies for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, which does not systematically and practically support the revolutionary activity in the colonies, is not a revolutionary party, but a party of idlers and traitors. At the Second Congress we dealt with the revolutionary movement in the colonies from the general theoretical and political point of view.

The nine years of our existence are at the time nine years of continuous, systematic and intense efforts not only to investigate and solve accurately the problem of the revolutionary movement in the colonies from the theoretical point of view, but for the purpose of its practical leadership, to support and promote it and accelerate its final victory. We could say, and, in fact, we must say, that one of most important characteristic features of the general political orientation of the C.I. consists precisely in the connection that we have succeeded in establishing between the development of the struggle of the proletariat in the big capitalist countries against class oppression and class rule and the development of the struggle for the liberation of the peoples in colonial and semi-colonial countries which are oppressed and exploited by imperialism.

Social Democrats Laughed

You probably remember that, during the first years of our activity in this sphere, the Social Democratic gentlemen made fun of us, of these poor Communists who were so foolish to declare that the struggle of the emir of Afghanistan or the struggle of Kemalism against the British Empire had a revolutionary significance and could support in any great degree the struggle of the proletariat in the ruling countries against Capitalism; they laughed at the stupid Communists who attributed greater importance to the mullah of Kiva than to a Social Democratic party in an advanced capitalist country.

To-day the tone of the Social Democrats has changed. They do not make fun of us any more. On the contrary, when they are touching this part of our activity, they do so with a certain bitterness, declaring that it is only we, the Communists, and the bourgeoisie who have any colonial policy, while they have none. This change is not without profound significance.

It might be said that we, too, at this Congress are not dealing with the revolutionary movement in the colonial countries in the same way as we did, for example, at the Fourth or Fifth Congresses. The characteristic features of the internal contradictions in the capitalist world, the maturing of new international conflicts and the preparation for war against the U.S.S.R., the country from which the first rousing appeal was issued for the revolt of the oppressed peoples throughout the entire world—the first symptoms of the second series of imperialist wars—these facts cast strong reflections on all problems of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries which show up these problems to-day even for us in a different manner and with a very special acuteness.

Great crises are developing. We feel that the revolt of the colonial peoples is one of the greatest factors in these crises and that in the immediate future it can play a more decisive political and revolutionary role. These are the reasons why our debates on the colonial problems acquire such great importance. It might be said that in this sphere we have really entered upon the period when each day, each moment in fact, our principles and our general political lines are being transformed into the action of millions of men in revolt, a struggle, the outcome of which may decide the face of the capitalist regime and the proletarian movement in the entire world.

Help to Bourgeoisie

But if we feel the immense significance at the present time of the development of the revolutionary movement in the colonies, the bourgeoisie, as well as its helpmate, the Social Democracy, feels it also—and is getting into action.

However, it would be entirely incorrect to say that Social Democracy did not have a colonial policy after the war. On the contrary, not only did it have a colonial policy in a general sense—in that it always recognised the necessity of dealing with colonial problems in a positive manner—but it has had a very special, concrete colonial policy in each country—one which consisted in allying itself with or directly participating in the colonial enterprises of the bourgeoisie.

What is new is that formerly the Social Democracy always felt somewhat ashamed to show up this aspect of its activity; it concealed it as something which

one does but does not mention; while now it displays its attitude on colonial questions without any embarrassment whatsoever. From this point of view, the recent Brussels Congress marked a real step in the development of the international Social Democratic movement. The Brussels Congress, which took a definite colonial stand in the fullest sense of the word, which submitted the colonial problems to a special commission presided over by a so-called British Socialist who had been imperialist Governor of the Colony of Jamaica—this Congress had no precedent in the history of the abdication of the principles of Socialism and the class struggle, or in the history of open, deliberate and avowed betrayal of the ideal of the emancipation of the workers and oppressed peoples of the entire world.

And there are reasons which cause the Social Democracy to display its colonial policy to the fullest extent.

The first of these reasons is, as the Social Democrats themselves admit, that the social democratic parties and leaders are to-day closer to power; consequently, they must demonstrate that they are ready to take upon themselves all kinds of responsibilities, not only the responsibility of being at the head of a portion of the working class in the big capitalist countries in order to check their struggle against capitalist exploitation, but also the responsibility of ruling a colony in the interests of imperialism and, by all possible means if necessary, to defend imperialism against the liberation movements of the colonial people.

“Storm That Cannot Be Checked”

The second reason, which perhaps is the most fundamental one, consists in the fact that the colonial revolution is growing and approaching like a storm that cannot be checked. The Social Democracy well knows that when this storm bears down with all its force upon the capitalist world, it, too, will be hopelessly swept aside. It therefore feels the necessity, I cannot say of stopping the revolutionary movement, which would be impossible, but of attempting to check it, to ward off the storm. It is with this in view that the Social Democracy goes to so much pains to teach the imperialists of the different countries the best methods of barring the way to revolution.

Have you not read what Leon Blum said on the revolutionary movement in the colonies? Dealing with the role played by the Communist agitators in this movement, he is forced to recognise that this role consists in nothing more than telling the colonial peoples the truth about imperialism and Capitalism. The Communists open the eyes of the colonial peoples to the comparison “between their daily handful of rice and the fabulous profits of the companies which distribute their annual dividends, which are greater than their capital.” They make it clear that “these profits come from, or, at least, are dependent upon, their labour and that by their hard labour they enrich the distant, idle and unknown shareholder who has never risked anything more than his wretched money.” The result is that the colonial peoples, says Leon Blum, are revolting against “us” and against the Socialists, against the good and faithful servants of colonial imperialism.

This, then, is the real danger for Social Democracy, the approaching colonial revolution. It is this danger which forces it openly to adopt a colonial policy.

That is also why the struggle between us and Social Democracy on this field is becoming more bitter, and why Social Democracy is attempting to mask itself more cleverly than heretofore, and is preparing new weapons to fight us with and to give a stronger support to imperialism. This is why we must fundamentally understand the position of the Social Democrats, know what they are saying and what they are doing, in order to unmask them before the working class and show up their true colours to the oppressed peoples of the entire world.

II

COLONIAL PROBLEMS AND PRE-WAR SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Allow me, comrades, to devote a few words now to the attitude of Social Democracy towards colonial questions before the war. This problem is of importance because it involves uncovering certain roots of the attitude and present policy of the Social Democrats.

The colonial question was dealt with at various congresses of Social Democracy before the war—at Paris in 1900, at Amsterdam in 1904 and at Stuttgart in 1907. A whole number of resolutions were adopted at these congresses. In these resolutions, especially in the earlier ones, good formulations of principle are to be found. For example, in the Paris resolution we find the statement that “Colonial policy has no other purpose than to increase the profits of the capitalist class and uphold the capitalist system by drawing on the blood and strength of the proletariat.”

In the resolution of the German party in 1900, it is said, “the colonial policy aims at capitalist exploitation and the increase of military power,” that it “causes conflicts between governments,” that it “contains the germ of dangerous international conflicts.”

These statements recur with more or less force in the subsequent resolutions of Amsterdam and Stuttgart. They are good statements on principle, but they contain merely a negation of colonisation in general. In these formulations we find no positive elements, no indications of the basis for a positive colonial policy of the proletariat. They do not indicate what should be the concrete attitude of the workers and of the socialist parties in the capitalist countries towards the revolutionary movements in the colonies.

What is the basis for a positive colonial policy of the proletariat? It must consist first of all in the unconditioned affirmation of the right of all peoples to self-determination. But this affirmation is not sufficient in itself. A colonial policy of the proletariat cannot limit itself to recognising this principle, cannot limit itself to the proclamation that the revolt of oppressed colonial peoples against their oppressors is an integral part of the proletarian world revolution and that, consequently, the proletariat of all lands must consider it as their own struggle and help it by all possible means. The positive colonial policy of the proletariat must arouse the spirit of revolt in the oppressed colonial peoples. This is the task that Lenin alone recognised and proclaimed openly before the war, while the whole pre-war Social Democracy never came up to this standpoint.

“Germs of Future Opportunism”

We find in the resolution of the Paris Congress only the timid declaration that “the organised proletariat should utilise all means at its disposal to combat colonial **expansion** of Capitalism,” as well as the instruction that “wherever economic conditions render it possible, socialist parties should be formed in the colonies which should maintain contact with those of the ruling country.”

In limiting the creation of socialist parties to those countries “where economic conditions render it possible” and in the fact that it speaks of socialist parties and not of support to the national liberation movement of the colonies, the germs of the future opportunist position can be clearly seen.

But even this timid reference is eliminated completely in all subsequent resolutions. It has never been developed into a complete and open statement of the duty of the workers in capitalist countries of rousing the spirit of revolt in colonial peoples against imperialist oppression and in supporting their revolt by all possible means.

Let us take, for example, the position of the Social Democratic leader who at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907 took the most left position and fought the revisionist standpoint in the colonial policy with the greatest bitterness, the position of Karl Kautsky. It is interesting to see how Kautsky—after criticising and demolishing the revisionist colonial policy, showing that under the capitalist regime every colonial policy is a policy of violence and oppression—when he is faced with the concrete problem of the liberation of the colonies becomes extremely prudent. He points out a number of reasons why the possibility of this liberation is doubtful, he shows that it is not such a simple matter, and finally arrives at the conclusion that if an agreement can be reached that the colonies must be liberated, then the problem of “how” they are to be liberated must still be discussed.

“The capitalists,” he concludes, “are not going to give up a colony voluntarily.” And then? Is the conclusion he draws from this fact an appeal for the revolt of colonial peoples against Capitalism? No. The conclusion is that: “The idea of emancipation of the colonies is a sort of border idea which shows us the course to be followed, but it is not a practical proposition for the immediate application of which we must work...”

Who Will Liberate Whom?

Who, then, is going to liberate the colonies? Kautsky concludes that it is the socialist revolution, but he has never managed to draw up the process of development of the socialist revolution of which the liberation movements of the colonial peoples form a component part.

What, then, must be done?

“The right of the natives to self-administration must be extended as rapidly as possible” is Kautsky's answer.

The conclusion, as we see, runs counter to all the premises. It is an acceptance of the capitalist colonial policy—it is a position of avowed colonial reformism. After rejecting the colonial policy, he says that attempts must be made to modify it, that means with other words its acceptance. It is very easy to see that under such conditions it was extremely difficult for the so-called social democratic left to

elaborate the difference which separated it from the revisionist and colonialist right. It is very easy to understand how, after the Stuttgart Congress, it was possible to make the famous statement that the discussion on the colonial problems was a discussion "for the Emperor's Beard," but at the basis there was no actual difference between the two currents which were fighting against each other over this point.

The position of the Second International before the war was always, then, an outspoken reformist one, the principal points of which may be summed up as follows:

- (1) Colonisation is condemned and particularly the "existing" methods of colonisation are rejected.
- (2) The possibility is recognised of improving the system of capitalist colonial domination; certain general reforms for natives are demanded and it is considered to be the duty of the socialist parties to advocate these reforms.
- (3) In this way a limit is set to the right and the possibility of the colonial peoples to dispose freely of their fate and to separate from the ruling country.

Even in the most radical formulations which we find in the Paris resolution, it speaks of independence of the colonial peoples which is to be acquired "through enlightenment and the example of modern culture and civilisation," and it speaks of liberty and autonomy to be demanded "to the extent of and according to the development of the natives." That is to say that the absolute right of the colonial peoples to self-determination is denied.

Comrades, why have I analysed the position of the Social Democrats before the war? First of all, to show where the roots are of a part, and perhaps the most important part, of the ideology and practice of contemporary Social Democracy; and, secondly, to combat the opinion which seems to be still widespread in our ranks that pre-war Social Democracy took a consistent anti-colonialist attitude, a truly revolutionary position. This opinion I have found expressed in an article by Comrade Doriot, in which he says: "At its various congresses before the war, the Second International clearly condemned colonial oppression in all its forms."¹

That is not true. In the attitude of the Social Democracy before the war there was the germ of its present attitude.

III

THE COLONIAL POLICY OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND ITS THEORETICAL ROOTS

There is no doubt whatsoever that during the post-war period. Social Democracy has gone a great way from its pre-war position of colonial reformism, which is basically that of the Stuttgart Congress, to the present position taken at the Brussels Congress. In what direction has it gone? It has gone in the direction of "August 4," in the direction of betrayal of every socialist ideal, in the direction of openly joining the ranks of the enemy. But "August 4," comrades, did not exhaust

¹ Doriot, Colonial Programme of the French Socialist Party in "Cahiers du Bolchevisme," Third year, New series, No. 2, p. 185.

completely the source of betrayal. There is something much more serious than the abandonment of the socialist ideal which occurred on this day of error, bankruptcy and shame; the betrayal is becoming a rule—the abandonment of Marxist traditions, the abandonment of class position has been made a theory and a practice, which is shamelessly lauded, a method which is declared to be the only possible method for a workers' party.

In fact, the first conclusion that we must come to in examining the post-war attitude of Social Democracy towards the colonial question is that the Social Democrats have become colonial politicians. They recognise the possession of colonies as something which their countries could never renounce and that, when their country has no colony it is up to them to demand a colony for it in a more or less open manner. In this field, there is not a single social democratic party which is an exception. It is true some "radical" statements by leaders of the French Socialist Party can be found, in which it is said that colonial expansion "is not necessary to the development of French industry." But these statements are in contradiction to the fact that the French Socialist Party has always supported the colonial policy of the French bourgeoisie and its government, and that it has always voted for all credits for colonial enterprises. And in a programme approved by the French Socialist Party in December, 1927, it is stated that without colonies "the post-war problems cannot be solved."

Policy of British Labour Party

Let us take the British party. In a programme which was drawn up immediately after the war in 1918, we find the statement "that the Labour Party is against the egoistic conception of 'non-intervention' in the affairs of the various countries of the British Empire."

It is in favour of intervention, but to what purpose and for what reasons?
"To defend the rights of British citizens who have overseas interests."

We could not ask for a more open avowal of the imperialist policy of the British bourgeoisie. And in this same programme, it is further said that, "as for this community of races and peoples of different colours, religions and different stages of civilisation, which is called the British Empire, the Labour Party is in favour of its maintenance."

This attachment to the British Empire, this proclamation that the British Empire must be maintained, is the basis of the whole policy of the Labour Party in the colonial sphere, but it is at the same time the most patent negation of the right of self-determination of nations.

In the colonial programme of the Dutch Socialist Party the question of the utility of and necessity for having colonies is not even brought up. The discussion is merely concerned with the method by which the colonies should be ruled by the capitalist government.

But what is still more interesting is to see the attitude of Social Democracy in those countries which have no colonies, such as Germany. At the Berne Conference of 1919—which was the first gathering of social democratic parties after the war—German Social Democracy openly protested against the fact that Germany was

deprived of colonies. At the Marseilles Congress, through the mouth of Hilferding, it demanded colonies for Germany. Even now, in a more or less open manner, the German Social Democrats are demanding colonies for Germany. But perhaps the best example is that of the Italian Social Democracy, the most rickety of Social Democracies—which showed no strength even in betrayal, and which not only betrayed the workers and the principles of the class struggle, but which miserably suffered shipwreck in carrying out collaboration with the bourgeoisie. At the beginning of 1928, Social Democracy approved a resolution in which it protested against the distribution of colonies as established by the Treaty of Versailles and demanded a fresh settlement of the colonial problem, thus accepting the position of Italian imperialism.

Caricature of Marxism

This colonial position, which is common to all the Social Democratic Parties, has a theoretical source which must be examined. I believe that this consists in the assertion that, Capitalism being historically inevitable, consequently everything which assists Capitalism to “spread over the entire globe,” as the Brussels resolution says, is also necessary and inevitable, not something to be rejected in principle, but to be accepted, supported and encouraged.

We find there is a specific form of one of the most peculiar deviations from Marxism, a deviation which results from an absolutely vulgar, pedantic and ridiculous interpretation of some of the fundamental theses of Marxism. Marxism maintains that all forms of production and all forms of social organisations are historically connected and reciprocally dependent upon each other. It declares at the same time that the forms of production and organisation of capitalist society are the objective preconditions for the formation of Communist society. These statements are an undeniable truth for every Marxist; but it is a peculiar way of reasoning which leads one to conclude from these statements that if we strive for Socialism, it is our task to support Capitalism and assist it in its consolidation. Such a conclusion has no trace of Marxism—it is a caricature of Marxism. But this is the conclusion which the Social Democrats have reached.

Steps to Supporting Colonialism

What is completely eliminated in this conclusion is that, for Marxism, the development of the forms of production and of society does not proceed along peaceful lines but is a dialectic and revolutionary development. Contradictions develop and break out within capitalist society. Our task is to work on the basis of these contradictions, to gather together and guide the forces of the working class which are all developing within capitalist society as its unavoidable opponent and enemy, and not to support or consolidate the capitalist regime, but to prepare for and accelerate its overthrow through revolutionary class activity.

Even Kautsky in the pre-war period defined our attitude towards the colonial question in a manner which might be the cause for all sorts of errors when he said: “When capitalist production comes into conflict with backward forms of production, we cannot, and we must not, place obstacles in its way.”

There is but one step from this statement to the statement that we must not support the revolutionary movement in the colonies because it might hinder the development of the capitalist regime.

We find this deviation to-day in different forms throughout all the so-called theoretical formulations of the socialists on colonial questions. Thus, for example, the French socialist, Zyromski, presented to the congress of the French Socialist Party a resolution in which he says: "Socialism is directly interested in the development of all productive forces throughout the world. It demands an intensive utilisation of economic wealth and this, of course, brings up the problem of relationships and contact with the less-highly-developed economic systems."

In this formulation, drawn up by a "left," there is something resembling a broadly humanitarian and progressive spirit. But from all this phraseology there follows as something inevitable the conception that we cannot reject in principle this specific form of relations with the more backward economic systems which is the colonial regime of Capitalism.

The Dutch Social Democrats, who are the specialists on these questions in the Second International, have built up a whole theory on this basis, founded on the distinction between the economic exploitation and the political domination of the colonies. According to them, economic domination is inevitable, while a struggle can be carried on against political oppression!

"A clear distinction," they say, "between the economic and political aspect which exists in the life of a colonial society offers the possibility of participation in the struggle of emancipation of the natives **from an international point of view.**"

How the Dutch Social Democrats, after recognising the necessity for economic domination, are struggling against political oppression, not from the national point of view but from the international point of view, is what we shall see later.

IV.

FORMS AND METHODS OF THE COLONIAL REGIME

We find a reflection on the position of the Dutch in the Brussels resolution, where it is said that the Socialists reject in principle "political domination" over the colonial peoples, but the question of so-called "economic domination," which is stronger, more perceptible and burdensome, and on the basis of which political domination develops, is left open. But the most patent manifestation of the position of Social Democracy towards capitalist colonial policy is shown in the introduction of the Brussels resolution, which contains an open, undisguised apology for Capitalism and the capitalist colonial system.

"The colonial policy," says the resolution in its first lines, "was the means by which Capitalism has been extending over the whole earth. It has opened up access to the natural resources of the backward countries, has developed production and modern means of transportation in these countries and has thus very greatly increased the basis of raw materials for world economy and promoted the development of the international division of labour."

Here we find ourselves faced with a general theoretical declaration, which we must analyse first of all from a theoretical point of view: Does this apology for

Capitalism and its colonial expansion correspond to the truth, is it true that the role of capitalist colonial policy is that of utilising the natural resources of the colonised countries and there to develop production in general? That is a problem which we must consider.

It is true that, in the draft of the Second International, after thus heralding the benefits of the colonial policy, it is said that these benefits could only be obtained at the price of great suffering, but this restriction does not in the slightest affect the general judgment expressed on colonial policy.

Now this judgment is wrong from the Marxist point of view. It suffices to have a moderate knowledge of colonial policy as it has always been, as it is at the present time and as it will be, in order to recognise that these social democratic assertions are incorrect.

I believe that we can say, in general, that the characteristic of every system of colonisation is that it is determined in its forms and in its development by the internal requirements of the colonising country, and that these requirements are in strict and irreconcilable contradiction to the economic development of the colonised country.

Spanish and British Examples

We could take the example of the first colonisers, of the first colonial policy, that of the Spaniards, which consisted literally in robbing the gold and precious metals in the occupied countries, because gold was then considered as the exclusive basis for the wealth of the countries. The same characteristic feature can be noticed in the regulations established for the exchange of goods and navigation between the colonies and the ruling country during the time immediately preceding the capitalist period. These regulations—suffice it to recall the famous British “Navigation Act,” which was the basis of British expansion during the 18th century, greatly contributed to the development of trading capital and made ready for the development of industrial capital in the colonising countries; but, at the same time, not only did they prevent the economic development of the colonised countries but they also prevented the positive consequences of the possession of the colonies from being felt by the other countries, the countries' without great colonial possessions.

But we must bring this problem up in relation to the most recent forms of colonial exploitation. Our analysis must be made in greater detail, but the conclusion will be practically the same. What we must say first of all is that the aim of Capitalism, in general, is not to develop the forces of production, but to pocket the greatest possible profit for each capitalist and for each individual capitalist country. The development of the forces of production is merely the consequence of conditions by which profit is created.

Colonialism Brings Highest Profits

If we examine the colonial regime from the point of view of the necessity of realising as high as possible a profit on the capital which is interested in colonisation, there is no doubt that capitalist colonisation is entirely successful. There is no capitalist enterprise which offers such great profits as a colonial

enterprise. I shall quote a few figures which were collected by Comrade Doriot. The dividends of the Bank of Indo-China reached, in 1925, 50 per cent. of the value of the shares. During three years, the French Coal Company of Tonkin distributed 240 francs of dividends for each share of 260 francs. The distilleries of Indo-China in 1920 made more than 20.5 millions in profits on a capital of 33 millions, etc. These are common phenomena. As for obtaining a profit on capital, there is therefore nothing better than capitalist colonial policy.

But we must consider the matter from another point of view, the point of view of the development of the forces of production. And here, I believe that it is necessary, first of all, to avoid the error of representing the development of industry in the colonies according to a scheme which would correspond to that of the development of productive forces in the capitalist countries during the time of rising Capitalism and original accumulation. You all recall the stirring picture that Marx and Engels gave us of the facts which accompanied the early development of industrial capital. But, in spite of these facts, the essential characteristic of this period is a general and constantly rising development of the forces of production. This characteristic is lacking, or else it is found in an entirely different form in the picture of economic life and development of the colonies exploited by Capitalism. And it is not difficult to discover the reasons for this. In fact, capital which gets control of a colony and enters the path of colonisation is already a highly-developed form of capital, which is already accustomed to holding a privileged position in the colonising country; it is capital with a particular greed for profits and one which is attempting to increase its profits by particular methods. In the colonies, this capital enjoys a position of monopoly and, furthermore, it is assured of special privileges as a result of the continuous and extensive application of methods of political domination and oppression. The result of all these facts is a change in the whole process of the development of productive forces in the colonial countries. At the same time, they determine the different forms of colonial exploitation.

There is, first of all, the elementary form of robbery of all the natural resources which are found in the colonies, to bring them over to the ruling country, to transform them and to obtain a profit. There are still colonies where this form exists and predominates.

Next there are the strictly capitalist forms which consist in exploiting the colonies as a source of raw materials which, on the one hand, are indispensable to the industrial development of the ruling country, and, on the other hand, are indispensable for obtaining particularly high profits.

The development of this system of colonisation is not a simple matter. There is no system of exploitation which is the same for all colonies. On the contrary, there are very different forms of exploitation. We could even say that there is no field in which Capitalism shows more elasticity, more capacity to adapt itself to the most diverse objective conditions for obtaining the highest profits. In order to have a complete picture of capitalist colonial policy, it is necessary to consider: (1) The method of land appropriation; (2) the system of agricultural exploitation; and (3) the exploitation of labour power. It is only after considering these three aspects of the

same phenomenon that it is possible to arrive at a correct judgment of the nature of the capitalist colonial regime as a whole.

Great divergencies exist in the form of land appropriation. Consequently, it would be incorrect, for example, to say that the capital which is penetrating into the colonies has a reactionary function because it generally bases itself on pre-capitalist forms of land appropriation and exploitation. This method is employed in certain countries (India, Eastern Africa, etc.) but not everywhere. In other countries, the predominant form is the establishment of private property for colonisers alongside great exploitation of the natives. Lastly, there is another form which consists under certain conditions in creating a system of private property for the natives. This form has been employed in certain sections of the African colonies and it is undoubtedly one of the most interesting, because, when we examine it attentively, we reach the conclusion that the introduction of private property for the natives, which could be in itself considered as an advance becomes a step backward because it is almost always bound up with the penetration of trading capital and with the creation of a strata of land speculators, agents of capital in the ruling country who are bound sooner or later to have the small native landholders or farmers in their grasp.

We find here an example of this fact which Marx pointed out for India, when he characterised the forms of land appropriation which the British had introduced into this country as a “caricature.”

But what are the motives which drive the capitalists to apply the various methods of land appropriation in the colonies? This investigation will assist us greatly in understanding the true nature of colonial policy. First of all, there are political motives. This is why, in certain cases, the most backward and feudal forms are upheld. In such cases, the feudal lords become the allies of the foreign capitalists. Another political motive is to prevent the formation of a native class capable of developing a spirit of independence and struggling for the expulsion of the imperialists from the colonies. At times an inverse process takes place. The capitalists provoke insurrections with a view to finding a pretext to expropriate the land of the natives which they need for their own use. In this field the political factor is always of the greatest importance.

If we now pass on to economic reasons, the fundamental reason is without any doubt the tendency to augment the total production. But it might be contended that there is in general a tendency to augment productivity. And it is only this second tendency which could be described as progressive. In the Congo, for example, there was recently a marked increase not only in the total amount produced, but also in the productivity. Belgian capital finds itself in an embarrassing situation, first of all because the native labour employed in the enterprises was systematically decimated and also because of the difficulty of finding outlets. Now it is proposed to stop the imports of machines into the Congo, to restrict the development of the productivity of labour and to revert to the former primitive methods of exploitation of the sources of raw material.

Systematic Destruction

Among the economic reasons which determine the forms of the colonial regime,

we must then point out the necessity for Capitalism to develop in particular certain forms of cultivation offering the greatest profits. And this development is promoted without a thought being given to the elementary needs of the native masses, who are almost always condemned to famine and physical deterioration. And now we touch upon the problem of the exploitation of labour power. In order to obtain the maximum profits, the exploitation of labour power is carried on in the colonies by methods of unheard-of brutality (compulsory labour, etc.), the results of which is the undermining and at times the complete destruction of tribes and even whole races, which frequently takes place where the plantation regime is introduced. In itself, as an abstract economic form, the plantation can doubtless appear to be something advanced and “progressive.” But what can we think of a “progress” which involves the destruction of great masses of human beings? Is it possible to say that a regime is developing productive forces when it involves the systematic destruction of great masses of workers?

If we examine the results obtained in this sphere by the colonial system throughout the entire world, we notice that the general total of the various methods which we have pointed out has had consequences which cannot generally be considered as progress. Countries which were formerly renowned for their fertility, such as India, and even China, are condemned to periodically recurring crop failures. Countries which used to have a highly-developed agriculture are showing symptoms of a permanent deterioration of cultivation. In other countries we find a systematic destruction of the population. Everywhere the creation of a class of landless and wretched peasants is taking place as well as the progressive pauperisation of the great mass of workers.

Industrial Development?

If we now consider the question from the point of view of development of industry and transportation, we observe that in not a single case can we say that Capitalism promotes or favours a development of industry in general in the colonies. In certain cases, it develops certain industries, but it is always and only with a view to obtaining greater profit for capital in the ruling country. Thus, it is at times advantageous for the capitalists to subject the raw materials obtained in the colonies to a primary working up before sending them abroad. Thus, in certain countries of South America, certain branches of industry were developed for satisfying the requirements of imperialism which is penetrating these countries, while, for example, this development does not exist in Korea, because the Japanese capitalists find it more advantageous to transport the raw materials to Japan and to work them up there. But in cases where an industry has developed, this fact does not contribute in the slightest degree to changing the character of the colony as a country economically subject to imperialism.

Evidently, during the war, the special conditions of capitalist economy promoted a certain development of industries in some colonies. But this process has now been stopped, and it is a serious mistake to maintain that the value of economic domination of the colonies by Capitalism consists in its development and promotion of industry and modern methods of production in the colonies.

We can conclude this brief survey of the forms of capitalist colonisation with the statement: The capitalist exploitation of the national resources of the colonies is taking place in a manner which offers no possibility of considering as a characteristic of colonisation the development of productive forces in the colonies. If to this we add that the development of even those productive forces which have been promoted in the colonies with a view to creating an ever-greater profit is taking place within the limits of an “anarchistic” capitalist world economy, the judgment which we must take of capitalist colonial policy, and which corresponds to reality, is the opposite of that given by the Social Democrats in their apology for the capitalist colonial regime.

The study of the political and social aspects—in the strictest sense of the word—of the colonial regime brings us to the same conclusion. In the resolution of the Second International, it is said on this point that, thanks to the development of production and modern means of transportation, a modern evolution of the social and cultural state of the colonised peoples is taking place, making them accessible to democratic ideas, etc., etc.... Of course, the colonies are not closed to progress in general, but what is the function of Capitalism in this field? Just the contrary of the function assigned to it by the Social-Democrats. Capitalism employs very different methods in the colonies in this field as well. At times it gets its support from the most backward feudal elements which still exist in the colonies. This is the case in India, Africa and even in Persia, where Britain is looking for support among the backward feudal tribes. In other countries, imperialist capitalism is getting its support and trying to create a class of trading bourgeoisie which occupies a parasitic position in production and in the social life of the country (compradores). But, in any case, Capitalism has not a progressive function; on the contrary, it ever tends to check political and social development. The most striking example is that of Latin America, the principal countries of which, towards the middle of the 19th century, succeeded in gaining a relative political independence as a result of the penetration of imperialism.

Factors of Progress

But, comrades, the problem of the character of the capitalist colonial regime must be brought up and examined by us from a broader viewpoint. We must examine the present situation of Capitalism throughout the world in order to see if the present function of Capitalism is progressive or retrogressive function.

If we accept as true the statement which we find in a collection of theoretical articles which was published by the Second International, at the time of the Congress, the statement that Capitalism has definitely overcome the post-war crisis and is now stabilised, it is easy to draw from this the conclusion that Capitalism today is playing a progressive role, and that, in the fulfilment of this role it must not be disturbed—on the contrary, it must be assisted, just as the Social Democrats are doing. But if we proceed from the position that there is a crisis in the capitalist world—which is the final crisis of Capitalism—if we maintain that the process of the development of this crisis is at the same time the process of the revolution, if we proceed from these statements, which are the only true statements which

correspond to the facts, we arrive at the conclusion that Capitalism to-day has become a factor of reaction in all countries. Everything, then, which contributes to strengthen Capitalism serves to retard the process of revolution. And everything which contributes to the weakening of Capitalism and the acceleration of its downfall is a factor of progress because it promotes the development of the revolution.

Concrete Examination

But the problem can be examined also from a more particular and concrete point of view. From the point of view of the character of the present crisis in the capitalist regime. We are going through the period of preparation of a new catastrophic crisis, we are perhaps on the eve of a new war. In the resolution of the Second International every reference to the connection between the capitalist colonial regime and the development of war dangers has been eliminated. This connection between colonial policy and war, which is the basis of the capitalist regime and one of the principal features for the preparation of the "second series" of imperialist wars, has completely disappeared from the analysis made of the capitalist regime by the Social Democrats. The position which they openly adopt at a time when Capitalism has become a reactionary force in all countries and is marching towards a new catastrophe, is the position of eulogy of and apology for Capitalism in all its forms, even in its most detestable form, that of exploitation and oppression of the colonies and colonial peoples.

Comrades, it is evident that the logical consequence of this position of Social Democracy must be the negation of the right of nations to self-determination. We find this negation in the attitude of all the Social Democratic Parties, both in their theoretical attitude and in their practice. Of course, we can find plenty of statements and empty phrases about the right of nations to self-determination in all Social Democratic appeals, etc. For example, in the appeal of the Second International for May 1, 1927, and in the before-mentioned Zyromski resolution, the right of nations to self-determination is designated as: "A principle which Socialism is not disposed to renounce and to which the last war has given enormous expansion."

But, comrades, these empty phrases cannot mask the real contents of the Social Democratic policy. Let us take this same resolution of Zyromski. After the phrase which we have just quoted, he puts the problem of the right of nations to self-determination in the following manner:

"Nothing," he says, "would more contradict Socialism than the acceptance of certain formulae inspired by a narrow, petty and egotistic individualism. Socialism owes it to itself to break down all Chinese walls. It cannot tolerate self-sufficient nationalism, and the intervention of higher economic countries constitutes the corollary of its principles."

You see how in this remarkable statement by a left socialist "self-sufficient nationalism" is not the nationalism of the imperialist colonising countries but that of the suppressed peoples who strive for emancipation.

But Zyromski is not an exception. In the official documents presented by the different parties of the Second International to the Brussels Congress for the study of colonial questions, negation or limitation of the right of nations to self-determination is the general rule.

British Labour Party

The Dutch Party, of the Second International, whose principle that “the interests of international (!) humanity set up limits to the right to free determination” is defended by the so-called theoreticians, openly declares in its report that the slogan, “Separation of Indonesia from the Netherlands,” is not its slogan. For this great country, where the revolutionary movement is already in process to break down the domination of the imperialists, the Dutch Socialists are partisans of **“evolution towards autonomy in preparation for independence.”** In other words, this means being in favour of maintaining the present situation. Fimmen is of the same opinion. At the Congress of the Dutch Social Democracy he declared that the socialists cannot “simply support the slogan of an Indonesia independent of Holland.”

There is no difference on this point between the Right and the so-called “Left.”

In a resolution submitted by the Left of the Labour Party (Maxton Group), the problem of the right of nations to self-determination is “solved” in that sense that “as rapidly as possible the less-advanced peoples should be prepared for self-government”—a standpoint which in no way differs from the programme of the avowed supporters of the imperialist colonial policy.

As to the Labour Party, in all the material presented by this party to the Congress of the Second International, it is maintained that the right of self-determination is not applicable to any of the British colonies. And in the same way all the other socialist parties of countries possessing colonies express themselves.

One question faces all workers in this attitude of the Social Democracy which denies oppressed peoples the right to liberty, namely, is this the spirit of Socialism? Does it contain a spark of the spirit which we recognise and which must be an absolute rule for us, the morality which consists in proclaiming the right of all oppressed to break their chains and the right of all exploited to rise up against their oppressors?

What is left of this spirit which made Marx say that a class which is the accomplice to the oppression of another class cannot be free? In the attitude of the Social Democrats, there is nothing left of Socialism, there is nothing more than the spirit of imperialism, the spirit of the bourgeoisie in the ruling countries, who are basing their wealth and their forces in the slavery and destruction of peoples and entire races.

Limited Recognition of Rights

But the most perfect form of the denial of the right of nations to self-determination we will find in the resolution of the Brussels Congress. In this resolution it is said that Socialism “supports the aspirations for independence of the colonial peoples who have up to the present reached the level of a modern

independent civilisation.”

The right to independence, then, is admitted only in a limited manner and under certain conditions. Proceeding from this limitation and these conditions, the "socialists" arrive at basing their whole attitude towards colonial problems on a division of colonial countries into definite categories. It is the same distinction which is at the basis of the constitution and statutes of the League of Nations, which, after dividing the different countries according to the degree of their so-called civilisation, recognises and declares that the most "civilised" countries have the right to "determine the fate" of the others, that is to say, to submit them to an economic exploitation and political oppression. It is the monstrous principle that the Second International is attempting to conceal with the mask of Marxism and Socialism!

But we must examine the question in detail and pass on to the examination of the manner in which the Social Democrats apply the principle that they uphold. For the most advanced colonial countries, then, they demand "complete liberation from the foreign yoke." But also in the most-developed countries there is a distinction to be made on the basis of their historic and objective situation. Among them there are countries where the struggle for national liberation has already begun and has reached a very high stage of development. Such are China, India and Indonesia. What do the Social Democrats demand for these countries? For China, the resolution is explicit. The resolution demands "absolute independence and equality of rights, the abolition of unequal treaties which oppress the Chinese people."

Unequal Treaties

As a statement this is all right, but what about the facts? Let us take the last of demands, the smallest, the demand of abolition of unequal treaties. Before the assembly of the League of Nations, at the moment of the victorious advance of the Chinese revolution and of military intervention in China, who took the floor to defend the right of capitalist Belgium to oppress the Chinese people? A Social Democrat, M. de Brouckere.

"We are," he declared, "against the abrogation by China of the treaties of 1863, against this patent violation of international law. We are fully conscious of our rights. Not only Belgium but all Europe and its future are at stake in the Far East."

This is already an example of the manner in which the Social Democrats defend the right to independence even of the most advanced nations.

But even with regard to China there is something more interesting to note, namely, the attitude of the Labour Party on the Chinese question. At the time when England has intervened in China to strangle the revolution, the men at the head of the Labour Party recognised and proclaimed the necessity for defending the "economic and political interests" of the English bourgeoisie in China. It is the first step towards justification of intervention. In fact, when the problem of military intervention by England in China came up, a timid resolution against this intervention was adopted by the parliamentary Labour group with a majority of two; that is to say, that half of the parliamentary fraction of the Labour Party declared itself in favour of sending the war fleet and armies of British imperialism

against the Chinese people. At the same time, MacDonald, dealing with the problem of intervention in China, declared that "the liquidation of unequal treaties by a mutinous mass is something which cannot be tolerated"; that, in case the abolition of unequal treaties is achieved as a result of the action of "a mutinous mass," a conflict "will be as inevitable as the rising of the sun," and that the responsibility for the conflict "**will not be borne by us.**" Is it not remarkable that the socialist leader, when he says "us." means the British imperialist government which is sending its warships to drown the Chinese revolution in blood? And MacDonald concludes by saying: "I believe that the outcome of events does not depend upon us but upon our opponents/."

In an article by a member of the Labour Party which appeared in the *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste*, I found something still more interesting to characterise the attitude of the socialists towards the Chinese revolution. It is Roden Buxton, who, after declaring that in China "there is a certain number of privileged foreigners established on the sea-coasts and along the river banks," declares that he can "well understand the sentiment of those people who call for a few bullets to sweep away the difficulties in which they find themselves"!

Bullets "With Prudence"

And his conclusion is that the relations between Europe and China must be determined by "prudence, humanity and justice." If we put these two passages together we can see what actually is the position of this "socialist." He calls for "bullets" to be used against the revolting workers and peasants of China, but says "do it with prudence." Is this a personal and individual attitude of the author? Can the responsibility for it be limited to the poor fellow who wrote these lines, or is it the position of the whole Second International? To be convinced that the latter assumption is the correct one, it suffices to recall that the Second International has decided to invite the Kuomintang to its Congress only after it has become a counter-revolutionary party which practises terrorism against the Chinese workers and peasants. At a time when the Kuomintang was playing a revolutionary role, MacDonald tried to characterise it not as a "national" party but as an "anti-British" party, and he made fun of the Communists who at this time were considering the possibility of supporting the Kuomintang. To-day the Kuomintang is no longer anti-British, because it has massacred the revolutionary workers and peasants. It can be recognised as a national party, even as a socialist party, and it can be accepted into the Second International. The hangmen of the Chinese revolution have the right to sit beside Otto Bauer and Fritz Adler at the Brussels Congress.

Let us now pass on to another country, to India. For India the demand of the Second International is no longer a demand for "complete independence." In the Brussels resolution, it is merely said: "The L.S.I. supports the efforts of the Indian people to obtain autonomy."

The formula is very cautious and thoroughly equivocal. It is adapted to cover the most varied and the most liberal interpretation of the integral demand for the right of self-determination. It is therefore of greatest interest to see how the problem is put forward to the party of the Socialist International, which must carry out this

policy. Now the Labour Party, in its report to the Congress, dealing with the question of the independence of India, refers to what MacDonald, as Prime Minister, said to the Indians in 1924: "Have faith in the British Government. An investigation is being made by the government, which signifies that this investigation will be serious."

There is a tremendous gap between these statements and the "right to independence"!

Shameless Expression

Let us take also the Blackpool resolution of 1927, which shows the line that the Labour Party must follow in its attitude towards the revolutionary movement of India. In this resolution we find the acknowledgement of the "right of the peoples in India to free determination." Then it says: "For this reason, the Labour Party is of the opinion that the policy of the British Government must be a policy of continuous collaboration with the Indian people, with a view to making India as quickly as possible an ally having equal rights to the same title as the other members of the community of British nations"!

I believe that it would be impossible to find a resolution in which the imperialist point of view is more shamelessly expressed. What dominates is the preoccupation of maintaining the British Empire. Everything else is subordinated to this necessity.

In the resolution of the Second International, Egypt is also mentioned, and complete independence is demanded for it. In the report of the Labour Party to the Brussels Congress, on the contrary, there is not a single word about Egypt. The problem of Egypt is ignored, which means that the Labour Party wishes to carry out towards Egypt the same policy that MacDonald carried but when the Labour Party was in power. Then the national revolutionary movement of Egypt had reached a critical point. The Labour Government at this time played a quite definite, concrete and specific role. First of all, it rejected all the demands presented by the representatives of the Zaghloul Government, namely, the withdrawal of British troops, the withdrawal by England of its economic and political "advisers" and freedom of the Suez Canal. For this attitude, the Labour Party received the compliments of the great British imperialist press. But there is more than that! At a time when the Labour Party was in power, a revolt for independence broke out in the Sudan. The Labour Government sent warships down to terrorise the insurgent population and instructed the British authorities to suppress the movement and to do everything necessary to maintain order. An imperialist government would not have acted differently.

Indonesian Revolution

Another country for which the resolution of the Second International demands complete independence is Syria. But in the report of the French Social Party to the Brussels Congress, there is not a word about its attitude towards Syria, which means that the French Socialist Party will continue to maintain with regard to Syria the same attitude which led it to vote for the war appropriations for the

French imperialist expeditions to Syria— to enable the French generals to massacre the population of Damascus and other towns.

After having given special place to the before-mentioned three countries, the resolution of the Second International declares in general that it demands the immediate introduction of autonomy for all “culturally-developed” colonies. The most important country in this category is Indonesia, because there has been a revolution and because a powerful revolutionary movement is developing there. But note the Jesuitic spirit in which the resolution declares that the independence of Indonesia must be realised “to the extent to which this country demands it”!

Why this Jesuitic clause? Evidently to remain in harmony with the attitude of the Dutch Socialist Party. And, in fact, the Dutch party says openly in its report that the slogan, “Liberation of Indonesia,” is not its slogan.

What did this party do when the mass of the Indonesian people took up arms in the struggle for its liberty, and when the Dutch Government employed every means to repress the insurrection? The report is explicit and clear. Before the outbreak of the movement, the Dutch Socialists considered it their duty to call to their government “Beware!” When the movement broke out, they “did not defend in parliament this bloody revolt,” but they severely condemned the spirit of revolt “whether it originated in Moscow or in Canton.” Afterwards, when the people of Indonesia had to suffer unheard-of repressions and numerous death sentences were pronounced as punishment for its struggle for liberation, the Socialists boasted of having made a distinction between the “guilty ones” and for having maintained that the death sentences merely for propaganda were not justified. They therefore recognised the death sentences as just for the others, for the workers and peasants who revolted. Furthermore, this is what Stockvis, the specialist of the Dutch Party on the colonial question, dared to write in an article on the subject of the repression of the Indonesian insurrection. After exonerating the Governor of Indonesia of all responsibility for the revolt, he concludes: “Justice has also something to say and death sentences cannot be avoided.”

True Nature of Social Democracy

This is how the Social Democrats talk and act. This is the true nature of Social Democracy!

I have analysed this part of the resolution of the Second International in which the theory and practice of the parties of the Second International are confronted with each other, but I wish to avoid the impression that it is a question of two separate things. It is the theory of the Social Democrats which is in accordance with its practice. In fact, can the problem of the right of nations to self-determination be considered to-day in the same theoretical and general principle way as before the war? Can we consider, as Lenin did, in an article written before the war, that it is possible for a country at a given moment to obtain the right of self-determination in a peaceful manner, as was the case with Norway, for example. From the theoretical point of view, we doubtless can, but from the concrete political point of view we cannot.

The problem of the right of the nations to self-determination confronts us to-day

in a particularly acute manner. The entire world is to-day divided in two—on one side there are the peoples who are struggling for the right of self-determination and on the other side there are their oppressors, whose domination is being more and more shaken. These are the facts. And those who are demanding their liberty do not demand it by peaceful means—they are struggling with weapons in hands. There are vast sections of humanity who are struggling, there are barricades which divide the entire earth; there is bloodshed, there are millions of workers and peasants who are giving their lives for freedom from the yoke of imperialism.

Well, comrades, in this situation, when the relationships have reached such a point of tension, is it still possible to set any limit whatsoever to the right of nations to self-determination without going over completely to the other side of the barricade? It is impossible. There is an internal logic which forces anyone who attempts to-day to justify in any way the position of the oppressors and to deny the right to revolt to fall into the same morass into which the Social Democrats have sunk, a logic which forces him to send aeroplanes to bombard the villages of the Arabs, as MacDonald did in Irak, which forces him to send warships to terrorise the people of Sudan, to prepare for armed struggle against the attempts at insurrection of the Egyptian fellahs, to exonerate the bourgeois hangmen from the responsibility for the death sentences and to justify these sentences, a logic which forces him, like Mr. Varennes, Socialist Governor of Indo-China, to set up a defence on the frontiers of his colony, when a national revolution threatened Indo-China, that is to say, to drown this insurrection in blood.

The theory and practice are not contradictory—the two things are bound together. The slightest restriction pushes you over the edge of the precipice and forces you to collaborate directly with Capitalism in the most despicable forms of its oppression.

{Nov. issue}

“GOOD” COLONIAL POLICY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Comrades, what I have just dealt with is not the full extent of the position of the Social Democracy. Generally speaking, the function of the Social Democracy does not consist in strengthening the position of imperialism. This would be too simple a function. The Social Democracy strengthens the positions of imperialism, but in a very peculiar manner, in a manner which is adapted to the task which the Social Democratic parties set for themselves, the task of deceiving the masses, of hiding from them the true aspect of capitalist colonisation and in checking the revolutionary movement in the colonies.

We thus arrive at the second part of the colonial position of the Social Democracy. After denying and limiting the right of nations to self-determination, after limiting and denying even the immediate granting of autonomy, the socialists set themselves a concrete practical task. They recognise that the capitalist colonial regime is something which actually exists, nevertheless, it has its bad aspects, because it subjects the natives to a brutal domination, although in general it is of benefit to humanity. What are we to do against these bad aspects of colonial policy?

The socialists reply: “ ‘Bad’ capitalist colonial policy must be transformed into ‘good’ capitalist colonial policy.” And here the Social Democrats — who have just accepted colonial policy in all its most revolting forms, even in the bloody repression of revolts of oppressed peoples and in death sentences—put on the mask of “good colonisers.” The meaning of this “good” colonial policy is something which changes according to the country, that is to say, according to the interests which must be recognised and defended in each colony. But there is a general form of political domination of colonies which is recognised as “just” by nearly all the social democratic parties of the imperialist colonising countries. This form of domination is what the French Socialists call “assimilation.” In the report of the French Socialist Party to the Brussels Congress a general definition of this system is given with the statement that “the French Socialists, particularly the Socialists of the French colonies, faithful to the old democratic tradition of the Revolution of 1789, look upon the problem (methods of governing the colonies) from the point of view of the political assimilation of the natives and of their civil and political equality with all French citizens.” In the same sense the reports of almost all the other parties are drawn up.

“‘Education’”—But Not Liberty

But we cannot limit ourselves to a general formula. We must examine the real meaning of the assimilation regime. This meaning is explained to us by the official resolution of the Second International where it says that for the backward colonial peoples it demands a “systematic education directed towards preparation for the independence of these peoples.”

All possible stages are included in this formula. But what is most important is that, first of all, an “education” is demanded which will enable the backward peoples to enjoy the benefits of modern civilisation. After that the question of their autonomy or their liberty can be discussed.

The characteristic feature of the assimilation regime is, therefore, that the colonial peoples must be brought up to the same level as the colonising peoples. And this is the immediate conclusion that our good socialist colonisers draw from this statement. They declare that “a fundamental form of assimilation is the participation of the colonial governments. Natives must be brought into some of the higher political bodies in the colonies.”

On what basis? On the basis of a right to vote, they say, but they at once add that it is question of universal suffrage according to the old democratic traditions, but a right to vote—says the programme of the French Socialist Party—which must be extended only to that section of natives who can “read and write French”(!). When the natives have reached the point of being able to read and write French, they will have proved that they have arrived at a stage of culture which justifies the granting of certain liberties to them. For the others, the colonial programme of the French Socialist Party says openly that the native regime must not be abolished. Now the native regime is a regime which deprives the native of all political and civil rights, which reduces him to the position of a slave of the white colonisator. This is the regime which the good socialist colonisers of France demand for the great mass

of the native population.

In the same sense, or in approximately the same sense, all the other socialist parties likewise express themselves.

The most interesting case in this sphere is that of the Labour Party, which submits a report of the Trade Union Federation of South Africa, in which it is stated that the right to vote of the natives must be granted only very gradually, and here are the conditions for its application: "The right to vote must be conditional upon education or property, but it is untenable and—in our opinion—for any length of time impossible to make this right dependent upon the colour of the skin."

That is to say that not only are education and property admitted as a condition, but at the start "the colour of the skin" is also admitted. The good coloniser here shows himself up for what he really is, a **masked slave-holder**.

A Cunning Policy

The aim of the assimilation regime reduces itself then to the corruption of a very small section of the natives—those who know how to read and write—fettering them to the colonising imperialism. This attempt corresponds to the most cunning policy of the representatives and agents of Capitalism in the colonies, to the policy which tends to break up the forces of the national revolutionary movement and prevent its development.

But good colonial policy has also its economic side. Social Democracy demands something also for the natives in the economic sphere. But what? You all know that the most important problem in the revolutionary movement in the majority of the colonies is the agrarian problem. The natives have been robbed of their land by the whites. The agrarian revolution, therefore, will have as its chief point in almost all colonial countries the seizing from the whites of the land which they have stolen. Now the Social Democrats demand that all land **which has not yet been ceded to Europeans** should be recognised as native property. These are the very terms of the Brussels resolution when it deals with the solution of the agrarian questions in the colonies! The land of the whites must not be touched!

As for taxes, the Brussels resolution states that no tax shall be imposed upon the natives nor charge of any sort beyond the expenses for administration and public service which also benefit the natives. It suffices to recall what is understood by "public services" in the colonies—construction and maintenance of railways, harbours, roads, etc., everything which serves the expansion of capital in the colonies—if we wish to understand the real meaning of this demand.

Forced Labour

As to forced labour, this disgrace of colonialism, the resolution of the Second International is radical. It says that "every form of forced labour shall be abolished."

But what is actually the opinion of the social democratic leaders of the countries which have colonies where forced labour is the chief form of exploitation of the natives? I quote, first of all, Leon Jouhaux, who writes in *Le Peuple*, organ of the French C.G.T., a body which still claims to be for the class struggle: "For the sake of justice it must be recognised that forced labour of natives has several good reasons

for existence. In the backward countries voluntary labour could scarcely be expected from the natives... philosophically speaking, it can be said that there is no excuse for forcing labour upon men. But, as a matter of fact, the necessity for resorting to forced labour is unavoidable."

These are the words of the good coloniser, Jouhaux. And the International Labour Office, an auxiliary organisation both of the International and the League of Nations, in a report on forced labour in the colonies takes a stand against "certain excesses in forced labour which endanger or shorten life and produce scarcity of human labour in the colonies." In both these cases, it is slavery pure and simple, and it is this hideous reality which the Brussels resolution attempts to cover with a radical denial of forced labour.

We find nothing, then, in the system of good colonial policy which is favourable to the natives or which distinguishes this system from the capitalist colonial regime pure and simple, such as it is, such as it has always been. Reading the reports of the various socialist parties on this subject gives us a fairly exact idea of it. In these reports there is a great number of humanitarian and progressive phrases and statements which are very moving and interesting. Thus the Belgium socialists declare that "thanks to the introduction of a Christian spirit, the atmosphere has changed." If you consider the fact, which is proved by all the reports on the Congo, that in this colony there are Negro tribes which are in the process of dying out as a result of the abominable regime to which they are subjected, you will understand the meaning of this socialist-Christian spirit lauded by the Belgium socialists.

But we find the full programme of the good coloniser in one of the reports presented by the Labour Party where "the essential points of a sane policy" towards the natives are set forth. Among these points we find—and these are the fundamental points—"the improvement of family life through suitable nourishment and through the knowledge of the food value of products... the hygienic utilisation of leisure and the development of independence of character."

Hypocrisy

I consider it superfluous to illustrate the atrocious irony of the fact that the good socialist colonisers want to teach "the food value of products" to the natives who get their nourishment from a few handfuls of rice and who die of hunger by the thousand, the atrocious irony of the fact that a fundamental task is considered to be that of the development of the independence of character of the natives who are refused the right to liberty and the right of suffrage and who are thrown as prey to the imperialists for the practice of the most brutal forms of oppression and exploitation and who are subjected to forced labour and sentenced to death if they revolt.

The crowning of the theory of good colonial policy is that the colonies must be subjected to the tutelage of the League of Nations as a guarantee against the degeneration of the capitalist colonial regime. A few concrete examples suffice to show the hypocrisy of this assertion of the "civilising" role of the League of Nations. Is the regime of countries subject to a "mandate" different from the regime in other countries? Was not Syria under the protection of the League of Nations when

French imperialism sent down its armies to crush the insurrection, when it bombarded the town of Damascus? The protection of the League of Nations cannot change matters, because the League of Nations is merely an organ of capitalist society.

Now, comrades, after examining the colonial policy of the socialists, we must investigate one last aspect of this policy, which will show us the value it has and the dangers which it involves. In the Brussels resolution there is a statement which we should consider most carefully. It says: "The Labour and Socialist International calls upon all its affiliated parties to get into touch with the independence movement of the oppressed peoples in order to support them... and to assist in the development of the political and trade union labour movement in these countries, influencing them in the spirit of democracy and Socialism."

From the political point of view this is the most important point in the resolution. Are we really to-day faced with the danger of reformism in the colonies? The problem can be examined from a general theoretical point of view. If it is true that the basis for the development of reformism in the ranks of the working class is to be found in the fact that the bourgeoisie, by enjoying special profits and especially surplus profits from the colonies, is in a position to corrupt a section of the working class, we must also state that there are in the colonies very special conditions which favour the formation of a labour aristocracy and its liaison with colonial imperialism. This phenomenon may perhaps offer an even greater danger in the colonies than the reformist movement which is developing in the ruling countries.

First of all, and in the first stages of its development in general, the labour movement is much more inclined to subject itself to the influence of another class than in its more advanced stages. Consequently, it is necessary to take into consideration the particular character of the labour movement in the colonies and the fact that the colonial proletariat is still bound up with certain strata of the petty-bourgeoisie and that it includes a vast number of gradations among which the imperialist bourgeoisie finds sections which it can corrupt and make tools for its domination.

Exposing the Reformists

Reformism, then, exists in the colonies as well as in the advanced capitalist countries as the result of an influence which is exercised upon the proletariat by another class. In all colonial countries in recent times we may observe this tendency to the formation of a reformist movement. It works side by side with the tendency of the colonial petty-bourgeoisie to desert the camp of the revolution at a given moment and to ally itself with the imperialists. I do not wish to go into details, but the problem exists and we must deal with it.

The problem is at bottom that of our work in the colonies in general. It is true that at this last Congress the Second International has unmasked itself more completely than ever before as an agency of imperialism. In the material of the Brussels Congress we can find the best arguments for the struggle against Social Democracy. But the process of unmasking the socialist agents of imperialism before

the masses is not yet completed. There are masses which still must be reached in order to show them what Social Democracy really is, in order to draw them along with us and in order to make them understand that the struggle against Social Democracy is part of the struggle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. These masses exist to-day not only in the capitalist countries but also in the colonies. We must, therefore, multiply our activity in this field.

Showing the True Path

I do not know whether or not it can be said that the inadequate activity of our parties in the colonial field can be considered as a symptom of certain social democratic survivals. This is probably true. But what is beyond doubt is that this inadequacy exists. It exists particularly in the failure to seek all forms and methods of establishing the most far-reaching and closest possible relationships with the colonies and especially with the native movement. Now we must thoroughly understand that it is in the colonies themselves that we must struggle against reformism and unmask these agents of Capitalism on the basis of their acts. There we must work to show not only the proletariat of the "civilised" countries but also the proletariat which is in the process of formation in the colonies, the natives, the great mass of peasants as well as certain strata of the petty-bourgeoisie, which is the true path which they must pursue if they wish to struggle effectively for their liberation.

We have witnessed the spectacle of representatives of certain colonial countries who came to the Congress of the Second International leaving this Congress because they recognised that here were only agents of imperialism. It was not a question of representatives of revolutionary movements but of representatives of strata of the petty-bourgeoisie who are continually vacillating between the revolution and compromises and renunciation of the struggle. But the fact is all the more significant, for it shows us what great possibilities we have for our work of unmasking the socialists in the colonies.

Let us not separate the two things! Let us struggle against Social Democracy while we struggle against imperialism and for the victory of the revolution in the colonies! By our propaganda, our agitation and our direct revolutionary activity *we* must succeed in showing all the oppressed peoples of the world that there is only one course open before them if they wish to liberate themselves from the yoke which oppresses them—the course of revolution to which we call them, and that there is only one banner under which they can fight, the banner of the working class—and we must show them that in struggling for their liberation they are struggling for the liberation of the entire world, and that this banner is ours, the banner of the Communist International.