

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

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SOCIALISM  
*and*  
COLONIAL POLICY

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by  
Karl Kautsky

Forgotten Books

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Karl Kautsky  
**Socialism and  
Colonial Policy**  
(1907)

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## Foreword

The following remarks were written down immediately after the International Congress and were intended to appear in *Neue Zeit* before the Essen Party Conference. I had assumed that at this Conference there would be a great debate on the principles of colonial policy, and hoped to make it more fruitful by grounding my viewpoint more thoroughly than could be done in the course of a ten-minute speech.

However, my work became too extensive and was finished too late. I only completed it on the Sunday the party conference started. And, moreover, the Conference did not bring the great debate that was expected, but only a discussion on the minor question whether David's point of view in Stuttgart had been different to that of Ledebour and myself. To our great astonishment this was disputed to the extent that the whole thing was called a squabble over words.

In view of this I was, after Essen, in some doubt as to whether the work still merited publication, as a dispute stigmatised from the outset as hair splitting could not reckon on much interest. But soon after the party conference discussion of colonial policy started up again; as it *had to*, because far from being mere quibbling, it is a discussion of highly important material differences. Thus it did not seem to me unnecessary to make the attempt to contribute to the clarification of the question by publishing this work.

**K. Kautsky**

Berlin-Friedenau

10 October 1907

# I. Introduction

The majority draft resolution of the Commission on Colonial Policy at the Stuttgart International Congress begins as follows:

*Congress confirms that the general usefulness or necessity of the colonies – particularly for the working class – is highly exaggerated. However, congress does not in principle reject all colonial policy for all time, as it could have a civilising effect under a socialist regime.*

After various deliberations this sentence was finally to have been replaced by the following:

*Taking into consideration that socialism will develop the productive forces of the whole world and will raise all peoples to the highest cultural level, congress does not reject all colonial policy on principle because it could have a civilising effect under socialism.*

This formulation narrowed the concessions made to the concept of colonial policy, but in spite of this it was rejected by the majority of the Congress.

The Essen Party Conference then declared its unanimity with this resolution.

Of course it did not discuss the question whether the Stuttgart minority or majority had been correct but only if there had in fact been a difference between the majority and the minority.

And in fact if one restricts oneself to the wording of the resolutions, the differences do in fact seem insignificant at first glance – not worth occupying ourselves fully with or

even getting excited about. On the one hand there is a mere verbal dispute over the concept of 'colonial policy', and on the other there is brooding over unlaidd eggs, speculation about the circumstances of a future, which is perhaps distant, but which at any rate is not discernible to us today.

But in reality these things are not so harmless. It is naturally quite unnecessary to indulge in subtle enquiries about the future, insofar as we have no influence on it and it has no influence upon us. But our total activity in the present counts for the future. The way our future takes shape depends to a large extent upon the nature of our present activity; and on the other hand, the shape of our activity in the present depends considerably upon the picture we form of the future, upon the aims which we regard as possible, desirable or necessary. The clearer our recognition of the future the more purposeful our activity in the present, and the more purposeful this is, the shorter and easier will be the way to our objectives.

If a socialist society requires colonies, then it is obvious that we also approve the acquisition and retention of colonies for the present as well, and our rejection of all colonial policy on principle fails: we can at most oppose the ways and means by which colonies are occupied and administered.

On the other hand, however, socialists who regard it as desirable that we participate in present day colonial policy are naturally driven into asserting the necessity of the foreign domination by civilised peoples over peoples at a lower level even where a socialist regime is concerned.

Thus the idea of a socialist colonial policy is connected most closely with our present policy with regard to the colonies.

For the Stuttgart discussions on the matter were exclusively confined to present day policy, and were concerned with the question whether social democracy considered that present day acquisitions were necessary or not.

Van Kol, reporting from the Commission, explained:

The minority resolution denies the possibility of developing the productive forces of the colonies by capitalist colonial policy. I am quite unable to understand how a thinking man can hold this position. One has only to briefly consider the colonisation of the United States of America. Without colonisation the natives would still be living in the most needy cultural circumstances today. Is Ledebour going to withdraw from the present social order indispensable raw materials which are provided by the colonies? Is he going to sacrifice only for the *present* the immeasurable riches of the colonies? Do those German, French and Polish delegates who have subscribed to the minority resolution wish to undertake the responsibility for simply abolishing the present colonial system? Colonies have existed as long as mankind and I believe they will continue to exist for a long time to come. There will indeed not be many socialists who consider colonies to be unnecessary to the future social order. *But we need not discuss this question today.* I only ask Ledebour whether he has the courage to give up the colonies *now* under a *capitalist regime*. Perhaps he will also then tell us what he will do with the surplus population of Europe: in what countries those having to emigrate should seek their cities, if not in the colonies? What will Ledebour do with the growing produce of European industry, if he will not create new sales territories in the colonies? And will he as a Social Democrat reject the duty of continually working to further civilise and develop under-developed peoples?

A more powerful plea for the participation of social democrats in a colonial policy under capitalism is scarcely imaginable.

Bernstein followed in van Kol's tracks. He remarked:

We may not occupy a purely negative standpoint on colonial policy, but must pursue a positive socialist colonial policy. (Applause), We must get away from the utopian idea which leads to disposing of the colonies. The final, consequence of this approach would be to return the United States to the Indians. (Protests) The colonies are here to stay: we have to come to terms with that. Civilised peoples have to exercise a certain guardianship over uncivilised peoples – even socialists have to recognise this. Let us base ourselves on real facts, which will lead us to oppose capitalist colonial policy with a socialist one. Much of our economic life rests upon products from the colonies which the natives were not able to utilise. On all these grounds we must accept the resolution of the majority.

Despite “all these grounds” we are concerned not with framing colonial policy under a distant socialist regime, but with framing the colonial policy of socialists within capitalist society.

David was the third to defend the proposal of the majority of the Commission. From his speech we extract the following sentences:

If the minority is saying that there is absolutely nothing that can be done to improve present day colonial policies, that it is harmful for the natives and for the country pursuing it under all circumstances, then the minority must, if it is to be consistent, demand that colonies must be done away with. (Quite right!) Ledebour calls to me, that is what we want: (Lively ‘Hear! Hear!’) Then the English comrades who support Ledebour’s resolution must propose in their Parliament that their colonies be abrogated, and the same goes for the French comrades. And if the supporters of this view were really in the position to do away with colonies as such: that would mean giving them back to the natives. What would in all probability happen to the colonies then? Humanity would not govern in them, they would fall back into barbarism. (Quite right!) Now comrade Ledebour has sought to give the impression that the view that a people can be justified in pursuing a civilising mission in the colonies is reprehensible in a socialist. Against this I refer to Bebel’s declaration of 1st December 1906, in which he laid down the standpoint of social-democracy on colonial policy. He said: ‘The pursuit of a colonial policy is of and for itself no crime. (Hear!



Hear!) The pursuit of a colonial policy can under certain circumstances be a civilising deed. It depends on how colonial policy is pursued. (Hear! Hear!) If the representatives of civilised societies come to foreign peoples as friends, as benefactors, as educators of mankind, to help them utilise the treasures of their land in their own interest and in that of the whole of civilised humanity, then we are in agreement with this'. But to educate means to place under tutelage! Ledebour has declared that we have no right to tutor less civilised peoples... If they do not wish merely to pose questions, but wish to be consistent, they must accept the first sentence of the resolution: the colonies must also pass through capitalism. They will not jump from savagery into socialism. (Very good!) Nowhere is mankind reprieved from the painful passage through capitalism, and it is precisely according to the scientific view of Karl Marx that this is a precondition for a socialistically ordered economy.

In his conclusion, van Kol finally directed himself against my 'book-wisdom' – the view that we should use only peaceful methods in trading with the natives of overseas territories – and put up the following bold assertion:

We have to go there arms in hand, even if Kautsky calls this imperialism.

That these views were in sharp contradiction with those expressed by the minority in the Stuttgart Commission appeared clear to the International Congress. Nobody taking part in its proceedings expressed the view that people were quibbling over trifles.

Comrade David, one of those who fought most passionately in Stuttgart, has continued to point out the depth of the contradiction between his position and ours since the International Congress. He wrote in the *Mainz Volkszeitung* (26 August):

Comrades Ledebour and Kautsky *are not* representative of the *main point of view* held by the social democratic fraction up to

the present, a view which has also been accepted by the German delegation by an overwhelming majority. These comrades rather represent their own particular conception which is in the *sharpest contradiction* to the declarations of the Reichstag fraction and to the motion which then passed against a disappearing minority in the German delegation ... It was clear after the formal rejection of the main motion of the German delegation, respective replacement by the purely negative minority conception, that the whole resolution had to become unacceptable to all those supporters of the German motion who did not wish to become guilty of severe inconsistency. In view of this state of affairs it in fact takes an *unusual amount of effrontery* to attempt to celebrate the Stuttgart proceedings as a 'victory' for the Ledebour-Kautskyite point of view: for the pure utopian-radical negation. *In reality this position was defeated.*

Van Kol saw the thing somewhat differently: he reproached German social democracy for its position on the colonial question up to the present and accused it of being based on the same viewpoint of "pure utopian-radical negation", which David discovered in Ledebour and myself. In contrast to David, van Kol saw both of us as representatives of the approach on the colonial question accepted up to now by German social democracy, and for this reason exclaimed in Stuttgart:

I ask German social-democracy: Where is your colonial programme? You have always protested against the barbarities and injustices of the colonial policy only in your hearts, and I have read Ledebour's warmhearted speeches with lively sympathy. But it is sad to have to say: You have done nothing for the development of the German colonies. *Spiritually, German social democracy has not been up to the mark on the colonial question.* Where are your writings, who are your authors who have written on the colonial question? Who among you has been to the colonies to study them? It was your duty not merely to oppose, but to act. But like France, you have done nothing ... I particularly deplore in Germany's interest the fact that social democracy there has limited itself to disputing the necessity for and the practicability of colonies.

However, despite this contradiction, van Kol and David agree that there are two tendencies within international social democracy which are sharply contradictory. Since then David has retracted this view, at least as far as German social democracy is concerned, as he put the point of view in Essen that people were only fighting over trifles in Stuttgart. Also, the resolution of the minority did not find the slightest opposition in Essen. It has been accepted by German social democracy as the foundation upon which its activity regarding colonial endeavours is to be based.

However this has not produced the clarity demanded by such an important and complicated question. The Stuttgart discussion has, as we have seen; called forth a series of arguments on the colonial question which had been disputed by one side, but accepted by not a few comrades, as evidenced by the voices in agreement. Amongst these are arguments which sound very plausible and cannot just be shoved aside with a sweep of the hand; arguments which have to be thought through, particularly as we are continually meeting our opponents in the press, in gatherings, in legislative bodies.

Its investigation becomes the more important the more colonial policy becomes the pivot of all international policy, and the more it threatens world peace, which there is little else to disturb otherwise. As, however, our practical approach to present colonial policy is determined in essentials by our expectations of the future, and as, furthermore, the matter concerns distant, little known situations, it is essential to formulate our views on these matters sharply and to differentiate clearly between different positions. On questions which touch upon the daily practice

of the proletariat, its instinct, deriving from such practice, can very often be a truer guide than the assertions of the theoreticians, who are distant from this practices This guiding light fails where the colonial question is concerned. Unless there is clear, sharp thinking and ‘book-learning’ here, one can easily land on the worst by-ways – and not just theoretically, but practically. And thus it is no mere idle verbal dispute to consider what is meant by the term “colonial policy”, but a question of the greatest importance for our activity and propaganda. Any smudging of concepts here lends assistance to the emergence of tendencies which are fundamentally incompatible with the nature of the proletarian struggle for emancipation, and which in the last analysis must damage it. The recognition of this struggle for emancipation is however the solid foundation upon which we must base all our efforts, on which alone it can rest safe and indestructible.

## II. A Positive Colonial Policy

Unclear thinking is always a great fault in practice; it makes activity uncertain, fluctuating, contradictory, dependent on general feelings and inspirations, and thus on chance. But it provides a good safeguard against criticism. What approach can be used to criticise an idea not held clearly even by its defenders who conceive it now this way and now that depending on the needs of the moment? A sharp sword which will cut through a coat of mail will stick in a mass of soft dough.

Likewise it is not easy to bring about clarity on what van Kol calls a “positive” or “socialist” colonial policy. What are we to understand by this? According to van Kol, a policy of the kind rejected up to the present by German Social Democracy. David supports the same policy and yet seeks to prove to us that this is precisely the policy already pursued by our fraction in the Reichstag up to the present. Who is right?

Different people manifestly understand different things by a socialist colonial policy. As the representatives of this policy have not defined it precisely, we ourselves must do it: but we must first of all define the idea, “colonial policy”, before we criticise socialist colonial policy. This investigation is no idle hair-splitting, as little as would be, for instance, an investigation into the concepts, “militarism”, or “capital”. If one person understands the word “militarism” as meaning arming the people and another as the system of standing armies sealed off from the people, the two will scarcely be able to come to an understanding. They may both want the same thing, perhaps a militia system, and yet one of them

may reject militarism and the other may become indignant over this rejection, on the grounds that it means disarming the people, leaving them defenceless.

And if, out of two people, one understands capital as being means of production and the other as a power to exploit based on private property in the means of production, again, they may both want the same thing, the abolition of the exploitation of labour, and yet the one may consider capital to be an indispensable precondition for all production whose abolition would be a fatal step backwards, whilst the other thinks that the progress of mankind can only be brought about through its abolition.

And that's how it is with colonial policy as well.

Now what are we to understand by it? Manifestly, a policy which sets out to acquire and to hold colonies, tracts of land mainly situated in overseas regions. Without a colony, without an overseas possession, no colonial policy.

However colonial policy itself poses two questions:

1. Are we to fight against or support the acquisition and retention of colonies?
2. Are we to fight for reforms in the colonies, once they exist, or not?

It is clear that it is by no means necessary to say yes to the first question, if one does so to the second. One can resolutely say no to the first, and yet equally resolutely demand an improvement in the circumstances of the colonies, which are held against our will. One can attempt to act 'positively' in the colonies and yet purely 'negatively'

oppose the basis of all colonial policy: the possession of colonies. He who is not able to see the logical consistency of this view, fails also to understand the nature of the whole of social democracy, which likewise consists in this: that one can fight capitalism, negate it, demand its complete abolition and yet at the same time seek positive reforms within it. This combination of positive and negative struggle which we pursue with regard to the whole of capitalism is also valid for each of its component phenomena. German social democracy has always acted in this way on colonial policy as well.

Some of our comrades certainly do not seem to have comprehended this. They do not tire of asserting that formerly we would merely have operated negatively while now we are operating positively; or 'radicals' and revisionists are distinguished by the fact that the former merely negate while the others wish for positive action. Van Kol betrays a singular view of party history when he says:

When we still were a small group, when we still believed in the theories of catastrophe, we considered it was sufficient to protest against capitalism, to continually remind our supporters of their present sufferings while painting the future paradise in stark contrast to the existing state of affairs. *Now we have recognised the duty of acting against capitalism.*

If van Kol intends to sketch his own development with these words, that may apply. Marxist social democracy has from the beginning "recognised the duty of acting against capitalism", and emphasised the uselessness of purely sentimental protest.

Thus German social democracy has never limited itself to mere protests on colonial policy, but rather has intervened most energetically for the improvement of the lot of the natives, as only recently in the Herero War. The whole of German social democracy is united on this and there is not the least difference between us; Ledebour, like David and Bernstein, recognises the necessity for “positive” action on the colonies, and he has proved this often enough by his parliamentary activity.

Neither has van Kol offered any proof in his denunciation of our party on this matter; he has not named a single instance of neglect with regard to the colonies.

Indeed if he really wanted to make international censures, he would have found a richer field outside Germany. For instance, it is nothing less than edifying to see how much *India* is neglected in the *British Parliament*. There is certainly much of a “positive” kind that could be done here which is being neglected. But, to be sure, if van Kol had spoken of the English, the whole of his much-vaunted proofs would have slipped through his hands, for amongst the English socialists, the most energetic defenders of the Indian people are precisely the most determined Marxists; and where “positive” cooperation with the government predominates, interest in the welfare of India declines. It is demonstrated particularly clearly in England that the fundamental rejection of any colonial policy, far from limiting practical activity for the subjugated colonial peoples, rather stimulates it to the greatest extent: which is as natural as the fact that the most energetic proponents of the Eight Hour Day are not the bourgeois social reformers but the revolutionary social democrats.



The things van Kol brought up against German social democracy on the colonial question were therefore nothing more than empty phrases without any substance. *Our Party has no changes to make whatsoever in this connection.*

But do we not lack a colonial programme, do we not lack literature on the colonial question? Have we neglected its study?

It is possible that we could have accomplished more on this matter. If, however we are to be charged with neglect, it can hardly be ascribed to the “purely negative” attitude of German Marxists. Not only has the “positive” work on colonial policy – the energetic defence of the rights of natives – been done principally by Bebel and Ledebour in the Reichstag, but our colonial literature has also mainly been attended to by representatives of the left wing of our party.

The first investigation of the relationship between colonial policy and the proletarian class struggle to have appeared in book form comes from a very “negatively” orientated comrade. We refer to the excellent book published by Parvus in Leipzig a short time ago with the title, *Die Kolonialpolitik and der Zusammenbruch* (“Colonial Policy and the Collapse”). It would be highly gratifying if the need of our “positive” comrades for deeper study of colonial policy brought many new readers for this book.

But Parvus is not the only one of us who concerns himself with colonial policy. I am referring to the person who is nearest to me, that is myself.

The preparations for my first work on the *Einfluss der Volksmehrung* ("Influence of Population Increase") which appeared in 1880 caused me to study the Indian situation, as the misery of India was attributed by the Malthusians to the rapid increase of its population. Then, urged on by Marx and Engels, I turned to study of prehistoric societies, which naturally required me to investigate the conditions of primitive peoples, who are the objects of colonial policy. I started at the examination of this policy itself the moment Germany began to show a desire for colonial acquisitions and thus opened the era of modern colonialism. By March 1880 I had already published, in Seyfferth's *Staatswissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen* ("Political Essays"), an examination of the question *Soll Deutschland Kolonien Gründen?* ("Should Germany Found Colonies?")

In the first volume of *Neue Zeit*, 1883, there appeared a longer essay of mine on *Auswanderung and Kolonisation* ("Emigration and Colonisation"), in which I already formulated the view which has determined the position of our party on colonial policy from then up to the present.

In the course of the same year I published an article *Aegypten and seine Zukunft* ("Egypt and its Future"); in 1884 there was an article on the Sudan, then on Tongking, in 1885 on the Indian Question and also on the Working Class Question with regard to New Guinea, in 1886 on the Chinese Railways and the European proletariat, also in 1886 on the Cameroons.

Ten years later I turned anew to the study of colonial policy, as this had been given a new and dangerous character by the naval preparations. There appeared in Volume XVI, 1. *Aeltere and neuere Kolonialpolitik* ("Past and Recent Colonial Policy"), XVI, 2 *Kiautschou* ("Rubber"), XVIII, 1 *Der Krieg in Südafrika* ("The War in South Africa"), and also *Schippel, Brentano and die Flottenvorlage* ("Schippel, Brentano and the Naval Proposals"), XXIII, 2 *Die Folgen des japanischen Sieges and die Sozialdemokratie* ("The consequences of the Japanese Victory and Social Democracy").

It can be seen that it did not require an admonition from van Kol to induce me to occupy myself with colonial policy, which I have been following for nearly thirty years, and that he would be hard put to it to find in the "positive tendency" of German social democracy a comrade who did it with equal urgency.

However, I am not the only one in fundamental opposition to colonial policy who has been driven to study it more thoroughly as a result of his labours. I will recall only my friend Cunow, editor of *Vorwärts*, the most important ethnologist in Germany and perhaps even in the entire international social democratic movement, which has been made exceedingly well informed by his studies on the colonial policy of the various states.

To be sure none of us has made study trips to the colonies, but neither have our "positive" comrades in German social democracy. So what can these reproach us with? We have as little hindered them from making study trips as from working out programmes and books on colonial policy. Quite the contrary. Should some of these comrades wish to go to the Cameroons or South-West Africa, I would propose that the Party pays their travel expenses.

But van Kol will have to allow that in general we view the results of the study trips of individual delegates and other European politicians with a certain mistrust. Such trips by people without an ethnological background, who are active in Europe and therefore can only briefly leave their country, are much too short to allow them any deep insight into the situation. Also, freedom of movement is not unlimited in most colonies. As a rule, the authorities allow the traveller to observe only what it suits them. He then sees little more than Potemkin villages. By these means, travellers investigating Russia have been induced to sing the praises of Siberian jails. It is even more difficult to enquire into the truth in the colonies than in Russia because of the language difficulty.

It is not the passing traveller who can be counted a reliable source on colonial circumstances, but rather the person who remains there longer, lives among the natives, and comes into disinterested contact with them, an investigator, doctor, missionary or engineer, not a trader or soldier. He who remains in Europe and reads the reports of such people will get a truer picture of colonial circumstances than one who spends some weeks inspecting one or a few colonies. Of course, one of these reports will not suffice. Accidents play a big part in the personal experiences of every individual. It is essential, however to sort out the general, the typical, the necessary and the essential and to separate it from the accidental, the transitory, or the local. Individual personal experiences are not sufficient for such a task, for which it is necessary to draw together the experiences of many observers of the most different times and countries. Not one study-trip but the investigation of colonial literature can enable us to have a deeper insight into the nature of colonies and colonial policy. Study trips can then lend colour and shape to the picture gained in this way, but they can never

replace working through the literature without giving a false picture.

Thus we must place only a little value on study trips, especially as it is a matter of accident whether one of us has the necessary time and petty cash. If Comrade van Kol was in that position, and if his previous lengthy activity as an engineer in the Dutch East Indies enabled him to see more on his last trip than travellers normally get to see, then this is certainly very satisfactory, but it is by no means a result of his "positive" standpoint. If there has so far been no one in the same position amongst German social democrats, it is pointless to accuse us of neglect of duty and to see this as the result of an alleged tendency to negate, and of wanting to do nothing positive.

We admit that German social democracy has emphasised the protest against colonial policy as such more than our Dutch sister party has done. Perhaps the latter has also achieved more in the way of colonial reforms. But that is not because our basic rejection of colonial policy keeps us from any useful reform activity, but because our political situation is different to the one in Holland.

In the first place, it makes a big difference that the German Reichstag has much less to discuss in the way of colonial matters than the Dutch Chamber. But there is also the fact that there is no longer the slightest danger of Holland's empire being extended. On the contrary, everyone there thinks it is already too big. In fact, van Kol was so good as to propose in the Dutch Chamber, that certain colonial territories which are too burdensome to Holland should be sold to Germany, and this ingenious plan met with the applause of the respectable bourgeois colonial politicians of his country.

On the other hand, in Holland there is a demand for reforms which will rejuvenate the colonies – which are becoming impoverished frighteningly quickly, and which in their present state threaten to become an oppressive burden on the mother country. Thus particular proposals for reform made by socialists have under certain circumstances a prospect of acceptance, if they do not harm the capitalists.

The matter is different here. True, German colonial policy is, if possible, a still worse business proposition for the state than the Dutch, but in relation to the size of the state, the German colonies are far less significant than the Dutch, and their threat to state finances was, until recently at any rate; a lesser one. For this reason also, the interest of the mass of the people, particularly of the possessing classes and their following, in the reform of colonial administration, is far less active, and thus it is far more difficult for us to effectuate such reforms.

But it is just the insignificance of the German colonies which constantly spurs our colonial fanatics to try to obtain an extension of the empire. This gives rise to the impulse for an intolerable increase in naval armament, which brings about the situation of having a Damocletian sword of a world war of colonial expansion continually suspended over Germany, as was shown so terribly only recently by the Moroccan affair. For this reason it is vital to direct all efforts against *this* side of colonial policy, the most dangerous one for Germany, and thus it appears a natural necessity that the struggle against every extension of colonies, the fundamental rejection of colonial policy, remains the priority in the political activity of German social democracy, and that the struggle for reforming the colonies has a lower priority, whilst the reverse is true in Holland. This difference springs from the fundamental difference in the situation in these two countries: it has absolutely nothing to do with the

question whether one rejects colonial policy decisively or not.

However, van Kol does not merely assert that, the Dutch socialist fraction has by its action obtained significant gains for the colonies in Parliament, but has also added:

In no other field can easier, or greater victories against capitalism be obtained than in this.

This reveals an abnormal capacity for illusion. The first precondition which needs to exist to make gains against capitalism is a working class willing and able to fight. The finest protective laws are practically useless if there is not a proletariat behind them, watching over their implementation, and ready to fight for them if necessary. Now this factor is lacking far more in the colonies than in the mother country. The power which wins the protective laws is far removed from the colonies and it is only with difficulty able to supervise their implementation. And yet it is supposed to be easier to limit capitalism in the colonies than in Europe: Experience up to the present proves the contrary. Nowhere is it more difficult to tame capitalism, nowhere is it able to give vent to its fury so boundlessly, as in the colonies.

Comrade van Kol unfortunately also neglected to give the slightest hint in his report on the colonial question, put before the Congress by the Dutch delegation, as to what the powerful advantages are, which he and his friends have gained in Parliament for the colonies. And yet the Report covers over 30 printed pages. Surely that was room enough to set out such an edifying example for our benefit.

A few years ago van Kol was still saying:

We cannot help the Indies, even if we were to ruin Dutch finances to do it ... We are too powerless to honourably return what we took away in the Indies." Yet there is one way, despite all pessimistic considerations: Reduction of our colonial possessions.

In 1903 van Kool still thought it impossible to obtain any considerable gain for the Indies without reducing Dutch colonial possessions. That condition has not been fulfilled to this day. Was van Kool deluded at that time or has he become more modest as he became more "positive"? Should "positive" activity in the end only be taken to mean self-limitation, sacrifice of everything not voluntarily conceded to us by the ruling classes? In that case, only those politicians who prostitute themselves to the ruling classes would work "positively" for the proletariat or the colonies; whilst those who stubbornly stand upon their honour while taking everything they can get without declaring themselves satisfied with anything not fully corresponding to our principles, and who do not proclaim any of the crumbs falling from the table of the rich reveller to be a meaningful gain leading to powerful advances – these would be purely "negative".

We could certainly not be enthusiastic for a "positive" policy in that sense. Should the fundamental rejection of colonial policy keep such a "positive" policy off our backs, then so much the better. Such a principled rejection will not only not hinder a genuine fight for reforms and improvements, but on the contrary will further it in the most powerful way.



### III. The Ethic of the Colonial Policy

We have seen that the necessity of looking after the interests of the subjugated nations in the colonies is no reason for not fundamentally rejecting colonial policy, that is the occupation and retention of colonies.

But our friends supporting socialist colonial policy are able to produce still other arguments for it, ethical and economic.

Bernstein pointed to the right of peoples with higher culture to “exert tutelage over” peoples with lesser culture, that means to govern them. He spoke specifically of a *controlling* relationship. David also fought for this position and van Kol explained, in addition, that one has to go “arms in hand” to the natives if one wishes to civilise them.

If this ethic is valid, then we may certainly not reject colonial policy which is its necessary expression.

I am far from underestimating the role of ethics in politics. While it is true that its power is in the final analysis only that of an instinct, not that of a clear conviction gained from scientific knowledge, instinctive ethical impulses have predominated in every mass movement up to the present, and no one, not even a person who allows his views to be determined by the scientific investigation of experience, can dispense with ethical impulses.

But ethics is not a power which stands outside and above society, but one which springs from the society and changes with its changing needs, and which is also different for every

class. Every class has its particular ethic; this forms a weapon without which it cannot pursue its fight for existence, which is suited to its particular relations of existence, and to which it must remain true if it is to assert itself as a class and grow to its greatest strength.

Thus the proletariat has its own ethic, which is necessary to it. Does the idea of the right of the higher culture to exert control and tutelage over the lower have a place in this ethic?

Not at all. On the contrary, this idea is a necessary component of the ethic of capitalism. Capitalism is a relationship of exploitation, and thus is also a relationship of control and tutelage. But exploitation does not rest on naked force, nor on the right of the strongest, nor even on state structures, but on the economic freedom of the individual, which is turned into subjection by the fact that one side possesses nothing whilst the other monopolises the means of production. However, the lack of property brings with it the lack of cultural resources and thus also of culture. Culture accordingly appears to be limited to the ruling classes. Thus the dominion of the ruling class over the proletariat gains the appearance of the dominion of culture over ignorance, a dominion of select intelligence over the great mass of the unwashed, "the great unwashed", as the English say. [Kautsky's phrase is in English. – *Note by translator.*] And the possessors hold fast to this appearance, as it gives the best ethical justification both to themselves and to the rest of society for their exploiting relationship. According to this ethic, they do not exploit the proletariat for their personal advantage, nor for the sake of profit, they *exert tutelage over* it purely in the general social interest. The fight for the

privileges of higher culture is the ethical lie preserving the life of capitalism, just as the fight for the true religion was for feudalism, especially at the time of the transition to capitalism.

Within one's own nation, this ethic appears as the vindication of the higher right of the 'haves' over the 'have-nots'. With regard to other nations, who are to be exploited, this ethic proclaims itself as nothing else than the right of capitalist nations to dominion over the whole of mankind.

The proletariat could not make this ethic its own without sanctioning its own exploitation and disavowing its own fight for emancipation. True, the proletariat feels acutely its own lack of culture, but it feels the drive to share in culture no less acutely. And the feeling exists in the proletariat that it is just its dependence, the 'tutelage', the relationship of dominion, which prevents its ascent to a higher culture; that this ascent can only be opened up in the fight against the tutelage and dominion which press upon it and by their final overthrow. A class exerting tutelage, or ruling class, has never yet raised its subjects to greater maturity and independence of its own accord. This rise has always occurred *against* and not *through* the upper classes.

If the ethic of capitalism says that it is in the interests of culture and society for lower classes and nations to be ruled, the ethic of the proletariat says that precisely in the interest of culture and society the oppressed and those under tutelage must throw off all dominion.

The proletariat as the lowest of all classes cannot throw off the domination which oppresses it without making an end of all dominion, without abolishing all class rule.

But is this not to apply to the colonies, are we to accept the ethic of capitalism for them? Are we to proclaim the abolition of all class rule in our own country only and at the same time erect a new class dominion in the lands outside European civilisation: the domination of the white race over the dark-skinned races (including the Hindus)? The ethical awareness of the class-conscious proletariat rebels strongly against this idea. And if the attempt made to rob the proletariat of the conviction that it was not merely fighting for itself but for the whole of mankind, this would grievously weaken the ethical force of its class struggle.

Of course Bernstein now appeals to Marx. The sentence he quotes seems particularly conclusive to him. He has already quoted it once, a decade ago, in his *Voraussetzungen* ("Presuppositions"), to show approval for colonial policy and he is forever bringing it forward. Unfortunately he quotes it without the preceding sentence, which is necessary and gives meaning to the subsequent sentence. The former reads:

From the standpoint of a higher economic social formation, private property of single individuals over the earth's surface will appear quite as absurd as private property of one person over another person.

Now follows the sentence quoted by Bernstein:

Even a whole society, a nation, even all the contemporary societies taken together are not owners of the earth. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and have to leave it to the following generations like *boni patres familias*. (*Capital*, Vol. III, 2, p.309)

If Bernstein had also quoted the previous sentence, then it would at once have been clear to everyone, that here Marx was not in the least thinking of colonial policy. It is not a

matter of him approving the latter, but of condemning *private* ownership of the soil. No trace is to be found here of the right of higher culture to dominion over backward races, of the introduction of governing relations.

The paragraph forms the conclusion of the investigation into capitalist ground-rent and capitalist ownership of land, and insofar as one may wish to draw a recommendation from it, it can never be that primitive peoples should be subjugated but only that the landowners of capitalist nations should be expropriated.

In fact, if we wished to infer from the Marxist sentence that all those nations must be expropriated who do not manage the earth like a good *paterfamilias*, we would have to begin in Europe first of all. The way the English marnage in Ireland, for example, is just now again coming flagrantly to the fore. Ireland's population is in constant decline: In 1841 there were still 8,175,000 heads, in 1901 only 4,459,000, and the figure drops continually. In 1906 there were only 4,386,000. The number of occupied houses dropped from 1,329,000 in 1841 to 858,000 in 1901.

Perhaps we should first refer to Scotland, where the landlords transform immense stretches of fertile land into hunting grounds? The same process is proceeding today in the Austrian Alpen lands. In England proper, as in the rest of Europe, an incessant flight from the land is taking place, because private property in the soil under the capitalist mode of production condemns agricultural workers to barbarism. Finally in Russia, we find rapid ruin of agriculture and increasing impoverishment of the peasant class

Why, therefore, should we stray afar, when it is necessary to stop the desolation of the soil and the oppression of the peasants in Europe itself?

However, Marx's sentence can to some extent be reconciled with colonial policy. It results from a view which must influence socialists not less but even more than the fundamental rejection of all class domination and thus also of foreign domination. The fight against class rule is only one side of the proletarian class struggle. This dominion cannot be overcome without a certain degree of the productivity of labour. The development of the productive powers at the disposal of humanity is of the greatest importance to the proletariat. But what if this development should require a colonial policy? What if the two fundamental endeavours of the proletariat – that for the abolition of all class rule and that for the highest productivity of labour – should come into contradiction with each other? That would be a serious problem for the proletariat: the consistency, and with this also the weight and the uncompromising nature, of its struggle would be broken if liberation could only be obtained by the simultaneous enslavement or domination of another section of mankind.

We must therefore investigate the effect of colonial policy on the productive powers of mankind. But one may not take this investigation as being a question of whether there are workers who gain out of colonial policy in the sense that it provides them with an occupation.

Van Kol does this for the Dutch colonies when he says in his Report to the Stuttgart Congress:

The working class of Holland gains to some extent from the colonial possessions.

In any case, the Dutch workers draw only an insignificant 31 to 35 million approximately in wages from the colonies.

Van Kol himself remarks that they would probably earn these wages even if Holland did not possess any colonies, but in spite of this he spoke in his Resolution of the *utility*, even *necessity*, of this – of course, often described in exaggerated terms. However the most determined protest must be made against this kind of argumentation and calculation. We would land up in the most dangerous situation if we followed them through.

There is a tendency for all activity in the capitalist mode of production to take the form of wage labour. Does this imply anything at all about the utility of these activities for the working class? Van Kol himself makes the comparison between colonies and militarism, which also provides work and wages for many workers. Well, look at all the things that provide work and wages: Building churches, providing court luxuries, even prostitution and crime. Marx once parodied this approach beautifully by an exposition of the utility of crime, which provides work and wages for so many judges, lawyers, policemen, prison warders, hangmen, workmen building bridewells etc. Then one could draw up a resolution on the utility of crime for the working class.

An investigation of the economic effects of colonial policy may not be pursued in this manner. It has been to the credit of the fighting proletariat up to the present that, wherever it conducts its struggle for emancipation with full vigour, it allows itself to be guided only by general social considerations, and never allows the capitalist calculation of personal gain to be decisive in its evaluation of a political measure or demand.

The English textile workers in the early sixties of the last century offer a shining example of this, and there are some similarities with present colonial questions. The American Civil War over the abolition of slavery had broken out. The English capitalists placed themselves on the side of the

slave-owners, for, they said, the negroes are children who require tutelage. They only work when they are forced to do so. Without slavery, no cotton; without cotton, no cotton industry. The abolition of slavery, the liberation of the negroes meant the ruin of the English textile industry, the starvation and death of the workers, the retrogression of culture.

And the facts seemed to bear this out. Import of cotton stopped, a shocking crisis occurred in England, fearful misery prevailed amongst the workers.

But the workers remained firm. They did not allow themselves to be fooled by those demonstrating to them the utility of slavery for the workers of England. True to the sentiment required for the abolition of all class dominion, which had been awakened so forcibly in them by the Chartist movement, they not only did not allow themselves to be misled into speaking for slavery, but on the contrary opposed it most energetically; and it is they who have to be thanked that the English Liberal Government did not declare war against the North of the United States, to save slavery in the South.

It is in this spirit that we wish to approach the investigation of the economic effects of colonial policy. Not that we have anything to fear from the reckoning in van Kol's sense. It is precisely the German colonies that are miserable business. Therefore it may suggest itself that only the business view should be emphasised during the investigation of the colonial question, and that colonial possessions should be rejected for this reason. But that would be a deviation from the correct position in a fundamental discussion of the question.



## IV. Work Colonies

If we wish to investigate the significance of colonial policy for the development of the productive powers of mankind, there is one sharp distinction that we must make. There are two kinds of colonies which are as different as fire and water. Anyone who confuses them instead of clearly distinguishing between them will never attain a clear understanding of the colonial question.

In my article of 1880 I named two types of colonies: "Work Colonies" and "Exploitation Colonies". I still hold these descriptions to be valid today.

The work *colony* is settled by members of the working classes of the motherland, craftsmen, wage workers, and particularly, peasants. They forsake their native country to escape economic or political pressure, and to found a new home for themselves free from such pressure. Such a colony rests upon their own labour, and not on the labour of subdued natives.

On the other hand, an *exploitation colony* is settled by members of the exploiting classes of the motherland, where the booty did not suffice them, who therefore aspire to extend the field of their exploitation. They go to the colonies, not in order to find a new home, but in order to forsake the colony when they have squeezed enough out of it; not to escape pressure at home, but in order to become capable of exerting even greater pressure in the motherland. The economic utility of such a colony does not rest on the labour of the colonists, but on the plundering or forced labour of the natives.

Work colonies are possible for European nations only in temperate climates; in hot zones the European cannot perform the heavy work demanded by the cultivation of a colony. They are only possible in very thinly populated regions, in which a very primitive mode of production predominates, perhaps hunting, which requires immense territories to support a single individual. In heavily populated territories with developed production, the settlers would of course find no room, and they would not find the freedom they demand, for there they again stumble upon private property in land, ground-rent, state and military structures, which they had sought to escape.

If settlers from the European civilisation come into a practically unpopulated land, and apply themselves to its cultivation, they immediately raise its productive power. They replace a backward economy, which hardly produces but rather mainly gathers what nature freely offers, with the highest productive methods of their time. Even more: freed from hidden pressure, and burdens of ground-rent, taxes, military service, etc., they are able to develop spiritual and material forces much more freely than in the mother country. They do not merely replace the tiny productive force of the savages with the high productive force corresponding with their cultural level, but are able to develop their own productive force much quicker than the motherland, and thus become one of the powerful driving forces for developing the general productive forces of mankind. The most shining example of this is provided by the United States of America.

We certainly cannot take an attitude of rejecting this kind of colonialism. But do we not thereby come into conflict with

our rejection of every kind of colonial dominion? Not at all. These colonies originated in the effort to escape class domination, they do not rest on the exploitation and oppression of the natives, but on the settlers' own work. Thus the latter are not founding a special, new kind of class domination over the natives. Certainly, up to the present, these have led everywhere to the repression, are often to the complete destruction of the natives, but that was not an unavoidable result of this kind of colonialism. The territories opened up to cultivation are so massive here that they are easily big enough to support both the new settlers and the old inhabitants, if these were instructed and civilized and made familiar with the new mode of production. But these colonists were peasants, and, more than any other class, peasants lack the flexibility and understanding to fit into a foreign setup. This results from their immobility and isolation, which limits their horizon to that of the parish, especial where trading relations are little developed, The peasant is also too much absorbed in his work to find time to happily absorb himself in a foreign structure and to act as educator and civiliser. All attempts in this direction made with regard to the savages in peasant colonies were within a short time again given up, not because it was impossible to civilise the savages, but because it was complicated; and the peasant confronted the savage without understanding and with distrust from the beginning. The peculiar nature of the savage, free and bold, seemed immoral paganism and devilish wickedness to the narrow peasants and petty bourgeois who came from Europe. Thus conflicts easily arose which called forth deep and endless hostility. So there never was any systematic and lasting work of enlightenment amongst the savages in the peasant colonies That this was not impossible is shown by the shining success of the Jesuits

in Paraguay, who raised some 100,000 wild Indians to a significant level of productive power, without the use of arms, without subjugation – in fact, because these were not used – until the violent intervention of the Spanish destroyed their work. We must greatly regret that in the work colonies the natives were not likewise civilised, preserved and made into useful citizens of the country. But that should not cause us to mistake the massive advantages of such colonies for the development of human productive power.

With regard to the work colonies, therefore, one must very often condemn the way the natives are treated, but may not reject the colonisation itself on principle, but rather recognise it as a powerful lever of human development.

Should we understand Bebel's declaration on our position regarding colonial policy in this sense? He said:

Gentlemen, the pursuit of a colonial policy is of and for itself no crime. In some circumstances the pursuit of a colonial policy can be a civilising act; it only depends on the way the colonial policy is pursued. There is a great difference between what colonial policy should be like, and what it is like. If the representatives of cultivated and civilised societies, as for instance the European nations and the North American are come to foreign peoples as liberators and civilisers, as helpers in necessity, to bring over to them the acquisitions of culture and civilisation, in order to civilise them into cultured people, if it occurs with this noble intention, and in the right way, then we social democrats are the first to support such a colonisation as a great civilising mission. If they therefore come to the foreign societies as friends, as benefactors, as civilisers of mankind, in order to help them, in order to help them use the treasures of their land, which are different to ours, in order to be useful to the native and the whole of civilised humanity, then we agree with this.

If this declaration is to be taken to mean that we approve every colonial policy consisting in the demand for *work colonies*, where the cultural elevation of the natives is simultaneously catered for without using force – then one would certainly be able to agree with it without any qualification.

But if so, this declaration has only academic and not programmatic significance, for there is scarcely an opportunity for colonial activity of this kind anywhere, certainly not to any significant extent any longer.

All those territories which may be considered as possible work colonies are already occupied, and in fact have become independent states, formally in many cases: the United States, Canada, South Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Australia, South Africa. They have all ceased to be objects of a European colonial policy, working in a civilising manner to enable them to develop their productive forces; some of them, on the contrary, have the power to bring a higher civilisation and improved productive forces to Europe.

This fact must not be let out of sight if one wishes to be clear about colonial policy. The bourgeois colonial enthusiasts purposely seek to obliterate the distinction between work colonies and exploitation colonies, in order to exploit the sympathy aroused by the former to win support for the latter, which are the only ones coming into practical consideration today. It is our task to stop their game by never letting the difference and contradiction between the two different kinds of colony be forgotten. This task is unfortunately often neglected. The defenders of the socialist

colonial policy in Stuttgart have also mixed up the two kinds of colonies indiscriminately.

Thus van Kol says:

The Minority Resolution further denies the possibility of developing the productive forces of the colonies by a capitalist colonial policy. I am quite unable to understand how a thinking person can hold that view. One has only to think for an instant of the colonisation of the United States of North America. But for the colonisation of America the natives there would today still be living in the poorest cultural circumstances ... I ask Ledebour only this, whether he has the courage to give up the colonies now, under capitalism. Perhaps he will also tell us what he will do with Europe's surplus population, in what Lands those people obliged to emigrate are to find cities to live in, if not in the colonies?

I will not raise the question whether present-day emigration is to be attributed to 'over-population' or rather, as in the past, to political and economic pressure.

It is precisely the most thinly populated countries of Europe which today despatch the greatest number of emigrants – Ireland, Russia, Hungary, Italy, the Balkans.

But let us follow through this quite peculiar conception of emigration, which it is very strange to hear from the mouth of a socialist. Perhaps van Kol will kindly tell us to which colonies he wishes to direct the stream of emigrants. Should it flow to Java and Borneo? Or to Burma and Siam? To the Congo or Cameroons? In 1905, 28,075 Germans emigrated through German and foreign ports. Of this 27,202 went to America, 84 to Australia, 139 to Africa, to Asia: none.

Really, what a terrible situation the European 'over-population' would get in if there were no longer any African or Asiatic colonies!

But it is these, and these alone, which are concerned in the present day colonial question. Only the exploitation colonies are under consideration, tropic colonies whose nature precludes a mass emigration of working elements from Europe.

Let us now examine the effect of these on the development of the productive forces of mankind, whether these attain the same significance as work colonies whether we have come to the irreconcilable conflict between those two principles by which we have to judge our whole struggle.

## V. Old Style Exploitation Colonies

Exploitation colonies work quite differently from work colonies. They lie in the tropics where the European cannot perform hard work. There, the working classes can only be composed of natives or of imported inhabitants of other tropical or sub-tropical countries, perhaps Negroes, Hindus or inhabitants of Southern China. From the outset, Europeans came there only as the exploiters of foreign labour. As a rule their residence there is only temporary, as they cannot stand the climate permanently, and because, as members of the European exploiting classes, they are accustomed to a way of life and to pleasures, which are rarely available in the tropical colonies. The European does not seek a home in the tropical colony but rapid enrichment.

The quickest way to this, however, is by *plunder*, and the richer and more numerous the people are who are to be plundered, the greater the riches yielded. If the working colonist seeks empty deserts for his settlement, the exploiting colonists first direct their aim at territories with a high level of culture, provided that they are not able to defend themselves properly. It is the *lack of defences*, the lack of martial spirit and military technique, and not the lack of culture, that makes a country an exploitation colony. However rough a people may be, however much it may need higher culture, if it possesses nothing attracting covetousness, but on the contrary has the means and courage at its disposal to defend itself, no European nation would consider applying the right of higher culture to it and fulfilling a cultural mission there. But if people of non-



European culture is not skilled in human massacre and is not familiar with the most modern murder machines, then the urge to apply the 'right of higher culture' against it will develop the sooner and more strongly the higher its own culture is. Nobody has yet attempted, for example, to 'exert tutelage' over the Montenegrins to lead them to a higher culture. But India is highly developed, filled with the finest culture, a place, which has produced magnificent art and deep philosophy, has since the end of the Middle Ages formed the main object of every European colonial policy. India and the way to it: all colonial policy revolves around the striving for India and the search for a way to it.

This society has nearly as many inhabitants as Europe – the latter contains 400 millions, India 300 million; it comprises twice as many inhabitants as all the other present colonial territories taken together. This enormous mass of peoples, in part highly civilised, has been the object of continual plunder by Europeans for hundreds of years – at first direct robbery in the literal sense of the word, and when this no longer paid, they were systematically bled dry through the taxation system. In ancient times and the middle ages India was famous for its riches and the well-being of its inhabitants. Diodorus (at the time of Augustine) praises this country for never having famines. It was still richer than Europe in the 14th century, Marco Polo called it the most noble and richest country in the world. Since then this territory has sunk to complete poverty, to a state of constant famine and wretched pestilence.

Such is the development of productive forces brought to a population of 300 millions people by the colonial system.

Whilst searching for the shortest way to India, America was discovered.

In America, instead of a country with an ancient culture, rich treasures in gold and silver were opened up to European greed. When these had all been taken from the inhabitants, the precious metals themselves began to be mined. But abundant labour was required to do this. The natives, in possession of their means of production, not accustomed to working for strangers, were not voluntarily to be had for mining work. Thus they were *forced* to work. And when the work killed them and they died out, they were replaced by imported negro slaves. As soon as the 'labour question' was solved in this way, and there was abundant labour power available, further products started to be produced for sale to Europe, sugar-cane, coffee, cotton etc.

Did this increase the productivity of labour in the colonies? Not at all. True, the *number of products* the colony furnished to the world market was increased. But that does not mean the same as developing *productivity*. Increasing productivity means increasing the products produced by the *same expenditure of labour*. That is the determining thing for the proletariat. The capitalist is concerned only with the mass of products and the mass of surplus value, without concern for the expenditure of labour by which they were produced. He himself does not, of course, work. Whether the rising surplus value and the rising masses of products are manufactured by the growing productiveness of labour, or by growing overwork and undernourishment of the worker, is of no concern to the capitalist – but does concern the proletariat. It wishes to free itself from the heavy drudgery which weighs upon it, but this can only be

done, whilst the productivity of labour remains constant, by reducing the mass of products at the disposal of the society. If it does not wish to reduce this mass of products, but on the contrary wants to raise it, whilst simultaneously reducing its burden of work, this can only be done by raising the productivity of labour.

Such an increase, however, has not been brought about by forced labour in the colonies, even if it has periodically brought an increase in production.

Forced labour is always unproductive labour. The forced labourer does not direct his whole energies to doing his work most efficiently, but only to cheating and doing damage to his hated master and slave-driver. As little work is done as badly as possible, working animals and tools are abused in the worst way. Furthermore, wage labourers on starvation wages do not work much better.

In spite of this, even forced labour, slavery or bondage could in former times become the basis of technological advance, in that it produced a class of exploiters who were given the leisure to devote themselves to the arts and sciences, and thus also to serve technological advance.

But the forced labourers themselves were not the most suitable people to apply these advances. *Free* workers were needed for this. A higher culture cannot arise where labour power takes the form of slavery. The advanced technique of the ancients, such as the handicrafts of the middle ages, was carried on by *free* city workers. Where social development makes unfree labour the *general* form of labour, it leads to a dead end, out of which a way to further advance can only be opened by the destruction of this culture by free labourers,

or by labourers who have freed themselves. That can very often only happen by the victory of a lower culture over a higher one. So much for the 'rights' theory of the higher culture over the lower.

Thus, for instance, the culture of Greece and Rome came to a dead end in the ruins of the society of the Caesars, which led to the victory of the German barbarians. According to Bernstein's principles, the Roman Caesars would have had a right to 'tutelage' over the Germans, and the victory of the latter over the Romans, started in the battle in the Teutoburg forest, would have been one of the worst defeats of human advance.

Later on also, some revolutions meant, to begin with, the victory of a lower culture over a higher one, if the latter had been created through the exploitation of labourers. For the cultural level of the exploited will often be a lower one than that of the exploiters, who have at their disposal full leisure and the richest material resources. I have shown in my *Thomas More* that the protestant reformation meant the rebellion of peoples of lower culture against the more highly developed Italians, and that the stormers of the Bastille from the Parisian suburbs were far behind the lords and ladies of the aristocracy as far as culture was concerned.

Where there are class contradictions, the exploited class, if it is less cultured, can advance to a higher culture by overthrowing the higher culture oppressing them.

But to return to our subject. We have seen how the colonial system completely disrupted India's productive power, in that its European conquerors – Portuguese, Dutch, English – stripped it and threw it into deep poverty; how, on the

other hand, the colonial system reduced the productivity of human labour to a minimum in the territories where precious metals were acquired and the plantations established by turning it into forced labour.

But was not the productivity of labour in Europe, at least, raised substantially by the products of this abominable and awful squandering of materials and human energies?

Certainly the robbery of the exploitation colonies brought enormous riches to Europe. But the robbers did not take pleasure in their booty. Its lustre aroused the jealousy and greed of neighbours, against whom the acquired riches and their sources had to be defended in bitter conflicts: conflicts which increasingly exhausted the country. Neither in Portugal, nor in Spain, was the productive power of the country raised by colonial policy, rather was it limited and undermined, so that even today both countries languish in its consequences. Also, the industrial development of France and Holland was restricted by the unending colonial wars. The development of Holland's industrial boom stopped after the 17th century, and it is still industrially backward today.

France's productive power was completely ruined in the 18th century, the age of its colonial expansion. Its industrial revival did not again begin until after the great revolution, after it had almost completely lost its colonial empire.

Only one country has drawn rich profit from colonial plunder and used it for a powerful development of productive forces: *England*. Thanks to its insular position it did not have to exhaust itself in simultaneous battles on land and sea, like the other colonial powers. Almost all its

strength could be devoted to the fleet, whose pre-eminence enabled it to defeat its enemies everywhere.

But the increase in productive power deriving from the colonial policy did not signify an all-round improvement, even for England. Not only the merchants and industrial capitalists, but also the great landowners won increased strength. Whilst in France the aristocracy was financially ruined, and so prepared for its collapse in the great revolution (which gave such powerful impetus to the development of the productive forces), in England the aristocracy was so strengthened by colonial booty that it has maintained itself as the ruling class of England to this day, despite the revolution of 1648. In this way a powerful conservative class was created, but at the same time it gained the means which allowed it, in the main, to live without exploiting agricultural labour. This leads, where it is in operation, not to the abolition of that exploitation, but to the abolition of agricultural labour itself, to the clearance of peasants and transformation of cultivated land into parks and hunting grounds.

The industrial capitalists of England, however, used the power they gained from the colonial policy, not merely to develop the productive power of their own country, but also for the suppression of the industrial power of other, competing countries. Thus all industrial progress was limited both in Ireland and the American colonies, and in India blooming industry was destroyed.

At the same time the aristocracy and bourgeoisie used their superiority, resulting from the colonial policy, to depress the working classes to the utmost and to burden them with the

entire weight of the endless wars, which were prosecuted in the colonies and about the colonies, often until the masses were completely exhausted. The epoch when England drew the greatest riches from the colonies, when its colonial empire expanded most rapidly, when its colonial policy gained the most shining success, was also the time of the greatest misery, the deepest degradation of its working classes.

That is another lesson for the working class on the use of colonies.

The exploitation colonies thus reveal themselves to be a very two-edged sword as far as the development of the productive forces are concerned. They advanced the development of England's productive power, but not in every sphere even here, and this development was bought at an outrageous price: it cost the fettering – even large scale destruction – of the productive forces of the greatest part of the rest of the world.

This phase of colonial policy, however, is today almost as much a thing of the past as the establishment of work colonies. The European peoples lost interest in colonial policy to a great extent in the first decade of the last century. Large-scale capitalist industry had taken a firm hold in Europe, and provided ever greater amounts of new capital, so that colonial exploitation receded in importance. This was all the more so because at the time of the (French) revolution, or even directly before it, the most important colonies apart from India, the American colonies, had broken loose from the mother countries which were limiting their economic development.

It is not until the eighties of the last century that a new era of colonial policy begins. This now sets its sights on the rest of the undivided world, on *Africa* and *China*. Here it can also only be a question of exploitation colonies there is no room for immigrants in China, rather China itself pours floods of emigrants into the rest of the world. But in Africa it is the climate which prevents Europeans from farming it with their own manual labour, except in the furthest South, which is already colonised.

The new colonial system nevertheless has a completely different character from its predecessor.



## VI. New Style Exploitation Colonies

Up to this time exploitation colonies were regarded as suppliers of capital, which was extracted from them in the most varied ways. Today, however, the productive power of large-scale industry and the exploitation of the working class has so enormously developed in the capitalist countries that it supplies colossal surpluses – surplus value – a large part of which is again used as new, additional accumulated capital.

The capitalist mode of production has shown itself as the most mighty means of developing the productivity of labour that history has shown up to the present. Competition and profit were its powerful mainsprings. Competition threatens every enterprise working with lower than average productivity with destruction so the striving for profit drives towards constantly increasing productivity, which brings extra profits to every undertaking producing with greater than average productivity. The capitalist mode of production no longer fulfils the function of providing a massive impetus to the development of the productive forces. In the 80s of the last century it had already arrived at a limit beyond which it increasingly acts as a brake on the further development of the productive forces. As yet this is not in the sense of making any further expansion impossible, such expansion still occurs, but rather in the sense that a mode of production has become possible in which the development of productivity proceeds more quickly than under capitalism, which is forced to place ever greater obstacles in

the way of the advance of productivity in the interests of its own survival.

True, the spurs of competition and of profit remain in existence, but production continually finds itself limited by the market. If the capitalist mode of production raises the mass production of goods to the utmost, it also limits to a minimum the mass consumption of the workers who produce these goods, and therefore mass produces an ever greater surplus of goods for personal consumption, which have to be sold outside the working class. A market for them is found first of all by the destruction of primitive rural domestic manufacture and of handicrafts, first at home and then in other countries. But the extension of the market in this way proceeds far more slowly than the extension of production. The extension of production therefore continually meets with obstacles. In the 80s of the 19th century it appeared that production could immediately overtake every possible expansion of the market. The capitalist mode of production seemed to have reached the limit of its capacity for expansion, and therefore to have reached its end. It appeared as though a permanent and considerable expansion of the market for consumer goods was possible in only one way which keeps pace with the increase in productivity: by a permanent and considerable expansion of the consumption of the working class. This would have meant that the demand for an increase in working class consumption would no longer be made solely in the interests of the working class itself, but would be a demand which needed to be met for the advance of production. The overcoming of the capitalist class, whose closest interests were opposed to this expansion in proletarian consumption, and the victory of the working

class, already appeared to have become an urgent economic necessity, which had to take place before long.

But the capitalist class found a series of expedients to prolong their rule; but they all come down to restricting the productivity of labour on the one hand and increasing the wastage of products on the other. On this basis production can proceed, can even on occasion take on the pace of the highest prosperity, but at the expense of the productivity of labour, which is partly restricted, and which is partly squandered uselessly.

The next remedy used was the limitation of competition, which is the mighty spur to constant improvement in production, and the securing of extra profits not through such improvements but by the creation of monopolies.

On the one hand external competition was limited by *protective tariffs*. In the place of free trade, which had made a triumphant procession through Europe in the 50s and 60s, came tariffs, and not merely on industrial but on agricultural goods too. The true intentions of the ruling class were thus made clear. Their aim was not to speed up industrial development, but to procure extra profits for the owners of the means of production at the expense of the consumers, that is by the limitation of consumption.

But *internal* competition became increasingly uncomfortable for the capitalist class. It sought to get quit of it by the introduction of organisations of entrepreneurs into the production process, by cartels and trusts. By these means the powerful drive for the increase in the productivity of labour is counteracted. Competition is limited to a minimum and a new direction is given to the striving for

super profit. This is much easier than increasing the productivity of labour. The cartelised entrepreneur can now raise his profit above the average by charging *monopoly prices*. The determining factor for profit is no longer the perfecting of technique, but the perfecting of the organisation of entrepreneurs; all the penetration of the capitalist genius is now directed towards completing and perfecting this. Monopoly prices can only be raised to a certain level, where they do not restrict consumption too much. If they go higher, the amount of goods produced drops accordingly, that is, the level of demand on the market drops.

The cartel and trust thus do not merely set aside a series of motives for technical improvement, they often get into the position of directly limiting the performance of their undertakings in order to keep their high prices intact.

The further cartels develop and spread, the clearer the proof that the capitalist mode of production has passed beyond the stage when it was the most powerful agent for the development of the productive forces, and that it is ever more hindering this development and creating ever more unbearable conditions, as is shown by that E1 Dorado of the trusts, America. Socialism has already become an economic necessity today, only power determines when it will come. Getting this power for the proletariat through organisation and spreading consciousness is the most important task of social democracy today. Nothing is stranger than those socialists who believe it is necessary to prepare for a further development of the power of capitalism.

It is not only by restricting production that the capitalist class seeks to escape the unpleasant necessity of applying the increased productivity of labour to the multiplication of consumption goods for the working class. The capitalist class also seeks to get rid of the surplus products of their enterprises by wasting them. A very effective way of doing this is by the arms race on land and sea, that combination of militarism and marinism which has swollen to ever more enormous dimensions since the 80s of the last century. Thus inventive genius is increasingly diverted from the sphere of the productive forces to that of the destructive forces. Thanks to this, the mass of destructive forces grows ever greater, but so also does the mass of defensive forces which are set against them, and the time span gets ever shorter within which the individual weapons of destruction and defence have to be overhauled and replaced by more effective ones, which have to be mass produced at the greatest speed; and ever increasing numbers of people are drawn away from production for working class consumption to the production and servicing of these war machines. But if once this gigantic destructive mechanism were put to real use the resulting ruin would be monstrous.

Humanity has never yet seen a more abominable or colossal confinement of the productive forces than this. No other mode of production has endured anything remotely similar. The capitalist mode of production has been successful to such an extent that it needs this madness if it is to be able to continue its exploitation of the working masses. The capitalists prosper by this, and thus demand an arms race at every level, which could never have taken on such a magnitude if they were denied the resources for it.

But truly, even this system of confining the productive forces only offers a brief respite to capitalism, whose subsequent collapse must be even more terrible. For the arms race is as oppressive to the working classes, who have to bear the burden in life and property, as it is profitable to the capitalist class and its hangers on. Working class opposition to the arms race is increasingly powerful, and it brings to socialism perhaps as many supporters as the direct class struggle against capitalism. This opposition must become immediately irresistible if a world war unchains all the fearsome suffering harboured by this system.

But the abolition of militarism, like that of the system of cartels and trusts, is today only possible through socialism. It is now only in the framework of socialism, and not of capitalism, that there is room for the massive productive forces which would be released if all the men and materials drawn in to the production and servicing of destructive forces by militarism and marinism were diverted into the production and servicing of means of consumption.

There have been socialists who defend militarism by saying that it gives work to so many workers who otherwise would remain unemployed, and thus see a use in militarism. When bourgeois politicians, who regard socialism as a mere dream which does not arise as a practical question, defend militarism in this way, that is understandable. But a socialist should see in the fact that capitalism is only able to ensure the continuation of production by the most frantic and murderous waste only an argument of the most forceful kind, against capitalism, and not a justification of this waste.

Besides these two methods, capitalism has a third at its disposal to rub the rouge of health and youth into its wasted cheeks; and it is this method which is bound up with our present subject.

In order to escape the necessity of producing increased means of consumption for the workers of its own country, capitalism produces means of destruction, communication and production in rising quantities for export, that is, primarily for the economically backward, agricultural countries. As these countries do not have the necessary cash to buy those goods, they are sold on credit by the capitalists of the exporting country, or the goods in question remain the property of the exporters. In other words, the capitalists do not export their products as commodities for *sale* to the foreign country, but as *capital* for the *exploitation* of the foreign country.

Is one then to believe that this at least advances the productive forces in the agrarian countries? But even that is not the case. In so far as an expansion of the productive forces does occur in this way, it is sooner or later more than balanced by the constriction of the productive forces.

The export of capital to agricultural countries primarily serves the advance of militarism. These countries either have to defend themselves against conquest by one of the great military powers, or, if they are already a colonial territory, be defended. Even in the latter case the colony has to pay the lion's share of the costs, or the whole costs, as in British India, of militarism.

But, what for a highly industrialised country merely means a slowdown in the advance of its productive forces, here

becomes only too easily the source of utter ruin, complete bankruptcy.

But the railways? Even these chiefly serve strategic purposes as a rule in agricultural countries with their sparse traffic. They are built with an eye to making defence easier, not production, and the interest on them then costs more than they pay.

Naturally not all railways in agricultural countries are of this kind. But even where they do serve production, they only apparently raise the productivity of agricultural labour. As long as the railway is beyond his reach, the peasant in backward countries has only little opportunity of selling his products. It is not difficult for him to keep the surplus produce in good years, which serves as a reserve for bad years. The ground is also of little value, he can easily keep a suitable amount fallow and thus avoid quickly exhausting the soil.

Now comes the train and connects him with the world market. His harvest surplus is now diverted there, no reserve remains to him for bad times, The land rises in value and the fallow thus becomes a loss. The productivity of agriculture could nevertheless gain greatly from this if the peasant were simultaneously placed in the position through increased revenue to gather up a reserve fund in money or credit and to acquire improved tools and more cattle and manure and thus balance out the loss of fallow land.

But militarism makes itself oppressively obvious in the agricultural countries. It is fed with foreign money, and even the railways are built with capital from abroad. Indebtedness to the foreign country rises and with this the necessity to



raise taxes. The increased revenue of the peasants is already anticipated by the state. Without money, without improved tools the peasant must now continue the old husbandry, but without any natural provision for bad times and without fallow land. The first bad year thus becomes a catastrophe for him. Often he has to sacrifice his cattle, at least some of them; with reduced draught cattle, with less manure, he has to cultivate the soil, which is cultivated ever more badly and thus is steadily exhausted. The result: increase of bad harvests, retrogression and finally desperate decline of agriculture.

That is the picture as shown to us today by Russia. But we can observe the same process in India. There also, continual increase in famine and misery, in spite of the heavy flow of English capital to India with a consequent improvement of the Indian productive forces in places.

In his report to the International Congress, Hyndman, who is closely acquainted with India, says of this:

Impoverishment increases. Mr. Digby, an official of one of the big famine relief agencies with special opportunities of getting information, calculates that the peasants outside the areas of fixed taxation's only get half as much to eat in a year as their grandfathers and only a third of that obtained by their grandfathers' grandfathers. In spite of this land tax is collected with great severity and has to be paid to the government in cash, before the harvest is brought in. [1]

It is for this reason that England draws an ever increasing sum of money from India, which now amounts to a round 700m marks a year. (Compare this with Hyndman's *Die Ursachen der Hungernöte in British-India* ("The Origins of the Famines in British India"), *Neue Zeit*, XVII (2), p.69.)

The same is reported from the Dutch Indies. In his article on the *Zusammenbruch des holländischen Kolonialsystems* ("Collapse of the Dutch Colonial System") (*Neue Zeit*, XXII (1), p.425), Vliegen quotes a speech of Van Kol's in the Dutch Parliament on Java, with which he is particularly familiar. Vliegen writes on this:

Van Kol gives a survey of Java's distressed state, which approaches that of India. The chronic famine so long familiar in British India, has now made its entry into Java, the most fertile country in the world: One million people, according to the accounts of the authorities, are hungry. In 1860 every Javanese obtained 12.4 pikols of rice (1 pikol = 61.76 Kilograms.) In 1883 they still got 11.3 pikols, in 1900 only 9 pikols.

These are the results of the growing export of capital to the agricultural countries. Superficial observers may allow themselves to be blinded by the picture of the blessings spread by the railways, canals and other modern acquisitions in countries such as India. There are even party comrades who see the famine and disease of India through rose-coloured glasses. The improvement in the means of communication and production would in fact have to significantly raise the productive forces of the economically backward nations if it did not coincide with the continual increase in military burdens and foreign indebtedness. Thanks to these factors this improvement only becomes a means of extracting more products from poorer countries than before, of extracting so much that not only is the whole of the surplus production deriving from the technical improvements soaked up, but the mass of the products remaining in the country for the producers diminishes. Under such conditions technical advance becomes a method of wasting resources and causing impoverishment.

But the capital-exporting capitalists derive rich profit from this, a double profit. They get rid of their products, which no longer can find a market at home, and they get rid of them not as simple commodities, for which they would merely receive their value, but as capitals, as means of increasing and continuing indefinitely the exploitation of the capital-less agrarian country. This continues as long as the exploited country allows it. But the pressure to throw off the burden grows at the same rate as the exploitation.

Rebellion against capitalist exploitation always begins as soon as the exploitation reaches a given level, but at home domestic capital has the reassurance of knowing that the state power is behind it protecting it, and is very often lacking abroad. And there it does not take a fundamental proletarian uprising against collective capitalist exploitation to threaten the security of foreign capital. The state power and the possessing classes of an agricultural country with debts abroad will quite happily use any good opportunity to escape the pressure of many a foreign capital, even if only in order to practise capitalist exploitation on their own account.

The English, for example, have lost countless capitals through the bankruptcy of, say, South American states, railways and mines. It was not always a matter of real inability to pay, often it was only unwillingness.

Capitalists escape this danger if the agrarian territory to which they are exporting capital is under the state power of a country with European capitalist culture, that is, if it loses its independence and becomes a colony. But it is not sufficient if just any European power colonises the country, and thus

secures the safety of European capital. They want the state power of their own country to do this.

If capital needs the state power to ensure it the undisturbed progress of exploitation, it often wants it to make it possible for exploitation to begin. The furnishing of defensive weapons and armoured vessels, the building of railways and canals, the opening of mines cannot be undertaken at will: they require the approval of the state power. Every state naturally prefers to use its native capitalists. Insofar as these export capital they therefore have the greatest interest in ensuring that the colonial possessions of their own state are as extensive as possible and grow as quickly as possible.

Thus a new era of colonial policy has arisen in the capitalist nations since the 80s. Germany created a colonial empire, France, England and Holland extended theirs; and scarcely had the United States reached the stage of being able to think of exporting capital when they seized several Polynesian islands and the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

This colonial policy has nothing in common with the past policy of founding work colonies. Its object is only to establish colonies in the tropics, exploitation colonies. But it also differs from the old policy of exploitation colonies, which regarded colonies as mere places to be plundered, where riches could be amassed and carried back to the mother country to be used as capital. On the contrary, it is a policy which draws capital to the colonies and builds up civilisation in them, thus apparently no longer destroying, but advancing, culture.

But we have already seen that one must not allow oneself to be fooled by appearances, that the growth in the productive forces which eventually arises is more than taken up by the

simultaneous growth of military concerns, with consequent squandering of productive forces and growth of foreign indebtedness.

In colonies where primitive production relations still govern, where communist relations predominate on the land, and the people are in possession of their means of production and make what is by their standards a comfortable living, incoming capital first requires the artificial, forcible creation of the situation which will make the population an object of its exploitation. This means that the natives have to be expropriated, forced to work, in order to provide profit for capital. Thus the abominations of the earlier colonial system repeat themselves, the time of the primitive accumulation of capital; the abominations of Cortez and Pizarro, of Clive and Warren Hastings, Such are the infamies of the Congo state, and they are closely followed by many other blossoms of modern colonial policy, whether German, French, English, Dutch or American.

The defenders of a socialist colonial policy no doubt have such phenomena in mind when they still decline to reject colonial policy on principle, when they demand the forcible retention of the colonies whilst rejecting "present methods of colonisation".

However, things are no better in the old colonies, where developed commodity production has already appeared, as well as an impoverished and oppressed population and, accordingly, where the preconditions of capitalist exploitation do not have to be artificially produced. Here, under a strong state power, economic laws operate with sufficient power of their own to safeguard capitalist exploitation. Here the abominations can be dispensed with. Thus the administration of British India offers perhaps a much friendlier picture than that of our colonies. Here and there can be found a certain benevolence towards the

natives. But even if the colonial method differs here, its effect is no less disastrous for the colonial country, And how easily personal goodwill flies to the winds, to be replaced by barbaric cruelty, when the state power, and thus the security of exploitation, is only slightly challenged, is shown by the latest English oppressive measures in Bengal and Egypt.

Even this 'peaceful' colonial system sooner or later matures the conditions which force populations only partly capable of resistance into uprisings. Where, however, this rebellion does not succeed, where the capitalist yoke is not to be shaken off, this new colonial system leads to financial bankruptcy. Just as Russia, where foreign capital also plays such an important role, today hovers between revolution and bankruptcy, so too will be the position of British India; whilst Java is threatened by bankruptcy without revolution.

The system of trusts and cartels and that of militarism cannot guarantee the capitalist mode of production against collapse. Neither can the export of capital with its resulting new-type colonial system, However, the new colonial system, like the system of trusts and cartels and that of militarism, has become a mighty means of holding back this collapse for several decades.

Colonial policy has become a necessity for the capitalist class, just as militarism has. But it is bad logic to conclude from this that colonial policy is now a necessity for the proletariat as well. Why should this not apply to militarism as well? It is no more necessary to the proletariat than capitalism is. And capitalism has today become an evil, not merely from the proletarian, but also from the general social, point of view. It has become a fetter on the full development of the productive forces of mankind. Likewise, colonial policy has become a means of prolonging the existence of capitalism, not through the extended development of the productive forces, but through their limitation Colonialism

has become an evil which must be fought even where it appears in apparently benevolent forms.

The ethical instinct of the proletariat fills it with abhorrence of all forms of racial or class domination, of all foreign domination, and scientific investigation of the factors important to the development of the productive forces shows that this instinct is true, and that the proletarian class interest makes it the class whose permanent and particular interest today coincides with the general social interest. Furthermore, we have every reason to reject colonialism, which can be no more than foreign domination, racial domination, from the point of view of developing the productive forces of mankind.

## Footnote

1. The Indian peasant is either taxed individually, the Rayotwar system, which applies to 278 million acres, or he is regarded as the tenant of a “Zemindar”, upon whom a fixed tax is placed for his whole territory. 318 million acres are under the latter form of taxation. (*Note by Kautsky*)

## VII. Forcible or Peaceful Colonising

If our analysis is correct, then it follows that the proletariat always directs itself energetically against the acquisition of new colonies, and must support equally energetically all native colonial independence movements. Our aim must be: the emancipation of the colonies; the independence of the nations inhabiting them.

One cannot from the proletarian point of view argue for the *sale* of colonies. We fight against colonial policy on principle, and therefore not just in Germany. Whether a colony goes from German into French or Dutch possession, or vice versa, does not alter the fact that we fight against their inhabitants being under foreign rule. The *sale* of a colony as a temporary expedient, to replace barbaric by milder rule, is of no concern to us here.

However our socialist colonial politicians, as represented in Stuttgart by Kol, David and Bernstein, strenuously oppose giving up the colonies. They give three reasons for not giving them up:

1. There are nations which need to be placed under tutelage, which cannot be allowed to run around on their own;
2. The colonies must in all cases pass through the capitalist stage if they are to be able to reach socialism;
3. Giving up the colonies would let these fall back culturally.

All three reasons show the same thing as is shown by the refusal to give up the colonies: that the defenders of a 'socialist' colonial policy in fact are bidding for a share



in *present day* colonial policy from which they merely wish to strip the barbaric methods. Whether the reasons given prove anything else besides, we shall see partly.

The first reason has already been partly dealt with in our investigation of the 'right' of a higher culture to dominion over a lower one. Only a few remarks are required to complete the case that is made there.

The sentence on the necessary tutelage, even dominion, over some nations can be taken in two ways.

On the one hand, it can be taken as an assertion that mankind falls into two large groups of nations: those of higher culture, and those of lesser endowments who cannot develop themselves further under their own power, and who therefore are either dominated and further developed by the more advanced nations or, where they resist this, must be cleared out of the way.

But if this assertion is correct, colonial policy would provide the least appropriate means of making the necessary selection among nations. As we have seen, it is not the cultural development of a nation, but its ability to resist and the richness of its resources, which determine whether it is selected to be an object of colonial policy or not.

But this division of mankind into two separate groups is wrong. It is an expression of European pride and megalomania, a variation of the belief that Europe alone was in possession of the true faith, which must be forced on all other nations. It has not the slightest scientific basis. Certainly there are great intellectual differences between individual nations, as well as differences of a physical kind.

But with regard to the so-called racial characteristics, it cannot be decided with any certainty whether or how far they can be traced back to descent from a particular original race of human apes, and whether or how far they came into being in the course of historical development. The unity of mankind is however proven by the fact that there is one rule of development for all nations, despite all differences in modes of development; by the fact that we find the same features among the savages and barbarians of the remotest zones as existed among the ancestors of the present civilized nations. And it is not possible to say with certainty of any people, not even the most backward, that it is incapable of development; it is not possible to discover a limit to its capacity for development. If anyone denies this it is incumbent on him to provide proof – a thing never yet attempted.

But it is probable that the advocates of a socialist colonial policy do not mean their division of mankind into lower and higher races in this sense either. They perhaps start from the generally conceded fact that peoples exist at the most varied cultural levels, and merely suppose that it would be highly desirable if the advanced peoples were to advance the development of the retarded as far as possible. They think that this would not be possible by the peaceful methods of trade, example and enlightenment. Primitive barbarity requires force to overcome it, and thus a colonial policy, that is, the conquest and subjugation of the country, is required.

I was roundly scolded for rejecting this view by van Kol in Stuttgart:

The learned Kautsky made a worse mistake when he advised on the promotion of industrial development in the colonies.

We should bring machinery and tools to Africa: Book-learning: With this he will civilise the country! ... If we Europeans arrived there with tools and machinery, we would be sacrificed without protection to the natives. *For this reason must we arrive with weapons in our hands.*

One question above all: if the savages want nothing to do with better tools, if the savages were as obstinately to reject axes, knives, spades, hammers and gimlets etc., as in real life they greedily demand them, why force these things upon them, arms in hand? Is one also, arms in hand, to force the savages to *use* these tools? But this is nothing less than *forced labour*. And if forced labour is to be introduced, armed intervention will indeed be necessary. It will be resisted most obstinately by the savages, who will equally obstinately resist all tools and machinery which make their appearance as the instruments of forced labour.

If, however, forced labour is not being advocated – and I hope no supporter of a socialist colonial policy wants this – what is the purpose then of intervention with armed might? Can free labourers ever be induced, other than by persuasion and example, to use improved tools in place of poorer ones? And, on the other hand, have free labourers ever refused to use improved tools when they had recognised their superiority and made themselves familiar with their use? Why should “arms in hand” be necessary for all of this?

Van Kol thinks that the savages would kill and gobble up those coming to them with tools and machinery before they got a chance to explain the new techniques to them. He thinks my analysis to the contrary is “book learning”, which cannot stand its ground against the experience of van Kol, the old hand from the colonies. With every respect to this experience of van Kol’s, one can, however, very well have

spent 16 years in Java as an engineer without having learned how to communicate with savages. Contemptible book learning, on the other hand, enables us to get to know the experiences of other people who have accurate information on intercourse with savages. Here there are actually many explorers and missionaries who testify that one can advance right into the heart of Africa and enlighten and educate the most savage savages without 'arms in hand'. The experiences of, for instance, a *Livingstone* mean a little more to me in this connection than the contrary analyses and jokes of our friend van Kol. The doctor and missionary Livingstone lived in the heart of Africa, then still completely unexplored, for 30 years after 1841 almost without a break. In 1873 he fell victim not to the savages, with whom he was on the best of terms, but to the murderous climate. He needed no colonial policy, no armed might, to have an enlightening and educative effect on the negroes. And yet he had set himself the difficult and dangerous task of making propaganda against slavery amongst the slave-traders.

The translator of his last book on his travels, *Letzte Reise von David Livingstone in Zentralafrika von 1865 bis zu seinem Tode 1873* ("Last Journey of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1865 to his death in 1873") (published by Horace Waller, Hamburg 1875, in 2 volumes), Dr. J.M. Soyes, wrote of him:

Livingstone was a great scientific investigator and discoverer but a still greater man. originally going to Africa as a missionary, his undertakings to the end preserved a pious character, in the noblest sense of the word, in that his constant aim was to combine efforts to increase the knowledge of the geography of Africa with the most loving zeal for the education and enlightenment of the natives. He was an untiring opponent of slavery. Before every village

headman and chief he repeated his condemnation of the cruelty of the trade in humans, the fearful consequences of which he painted with touching perception. Again and again did he exhort the natives: 'Do not sell one another, but love one another' – and he gave the most moving proofs a thousand times over in his dealings with the negroes of this love of his neighbours, which ran like a red thread through all his endeavours. He treated the negroes like a father does his children or a teacher his pupils.

It was people such as Livingstone that I had in mind when, with "book learning", I declared that whoever wishes to bring culture to the more backward peoples must first of all win their confidence. Force is the least suitable method for this.

I also had in mind the results achieved by the Jesuits in *Paraguay*. Not that I wanted to idealise that Jesuit state. The state served the exploiters and the cultural activities of the Jesuits were therefore confined within limits. But one thing has been made clear; how completely useless, or even counterproductive, it is to approach savages with arms in hand when the aim is not to use them for forced labour but to make them familiar with more advanced methods of production.

Instead of coming to the savages with arms in hand to force a new civilisation upon them, which they had not comprehended, the Jesuits came to them unarmed, studied their peculiarities and sought to build upon the given social base, and to impart higher knowledge to the savages. They did not touch the gentile organisation nor the communism, did not place any unaccustomed burden of work upon the savages, but sought to attract them to the new forms of labour by letting them be regarded as pleasures. One is reminded of Fourier when one reads, for instance, the report

on the cotton crop, made by the Jesuit priest Antonius Sepp from Paraguay in 1698:

This is done by the children who go at it with joy and who are led out and accompanied back by trumpets and pipes to maintain their joy. They each received for this, after the harvest had been brought in, a long white shirt.

Music, dance and masquerade play an important role in the Jesuit state and the Fathers have to ensure that the church service occurs in the most joyful manner. Father Sepp says his day's work begins with visiting the sick, then the school, after which he visits the musicians and listens to their singing; then he instructs the "harpists", organists and "tiorbists", and takes the dancers "in hand". *"I teach them several dances such as we are used to have in our comedies. It is most needful to captivate the unbelievers with such things here."* There is also dancing in church.

Music was the main means used by the Jesuits, on their arrival in the wilds of Paraguay, to attract its indomitable inhabitants so that they could be settled and instructed in all the arts.

The Jesuit Charlevoix reports of them:

They understood, as though it was innate to them, with little effort all arts in which they were instructed. Although no propensity to invent anything new was observed in them, it was soon noticed that they possessed the gift of imitation all the more completely ... They construct and play all kinds of musical instruments. It has been observed that they have made the best constructed organs after looking at them. The same applies to globes, carpets of the Turkish type and all things difficult of manufacture. Every settlement has a school in which the children learn to read and write. There is also another one in which music and dancing are taught ... Everywhere there are workshops with gilders, painters,

sculptors, goldsmiths, watchmakers, locksmiths, carpenters, joiners, weavers, copper-founders, in one word, workshops for all the arts and crafts which could be useful to them. As soon as the children reach the age when they are able to work, they are taken to these workshops and appointed to the profession for which they show most liking. Their first masters were Jesuit brethren who had been brought out for the purpose. Frequently, even the missionaries themselves were obliged to guide the plough and handle the spade in order to start agriculture off and encourage them to cultivate the land, to soup and to reap." (*Geschichte von Paraguay* ("History of Paraguay"), Nuremberg 1768, Vo1.I p.359, Vo1.II p 7.)

It was in this way, and not with arms in hand, that the Jesuits won the trust of the Indians and gained influence over them. In fact, rather than "exerting tutelage" over the savages by armed might, they ventured to give them arms to defend their new civilisation from those Europeans who thought to civilise them in the customary manner. Unfortunately, the powerful forces fielded by European culture were superior in military matters. In 1750 the Spanish and Portuguese started a war against that singular community, which defended itself desperately. Its complete destruction took five years. The inhabitants were either carried away into slavery or chased into the primitive forests. The land itself has since gone wild and its inhabitants are naked savages.

As I have already said, I am far from idealising the Jesuit state of Paraguay. It too was only a means of exploitation; the order of Jesuits only civilised the Indians as much as was in its own interests. But it proves *one* thing beyond all doubt: that "arms in hand" are not necessary to carry out a civilising policy and that peaceful means of civilising are superior.

Certainly, intelligence, study and kind patience are required. People who are only able to envisage such a civilising policy as taking a steam engine to Central Africa and giving it over to the savages to do with as they wish will exert themselves in vain. The policy of armed might is certainly much simpler and requires much less knowledge, intelligence and patience. What Cavour said of the state of siege applies to it: Any fool can rule like this.

But it is precisely because the peaceful method makes much higher demands on the civilisers and teachers that the violent method has won out. Today, under the rule of force, the dross of civilisation, good for nothing in Europe, seems quite good enough to impart a higher culture to savages, whilst the method of unarmed cultural effort can only be entrusted to selected people. As the teachers are, so will the pupils be; replace frightened, hardened and hostile teachers with happy and trustful friends. If in the first case all the intelligence of the “pupils” is only employed in avoiding the “teacher” or in injuring him, in the second case it is used to comprehend him and please him by success.

Of course van Kol does not have the intention of using armed force or violent behaviour. It is plainly only to be used to maintain the social order intact. But things have their logic which takes its course, whatever ones wishes are in the matter. When armed might is summoned up in a strike, this is only supposed to be to maintain the social order. But it always proves to be the best way of embittering and provoking the strikers. If anything threatens the social order, it is the summoning of armed might.



This applies to the primitive man no less than to the civilised man.

Van Kol and his friends may only see “naive doctrinaire book learning” in all of this. But it is the book learning which was promulgated by the likes of Owen and Fourier, and which animated all the great socialist thinkers from Thomas More to Marx; and it is based on the best pedagogic practice since Comenius.

The proletariat has not the least grounds for revising any part of this.

These explanations should not, however, persuade us to have too great an involvement in the “education” of backward peoples. Proletarians know from their own experience how unpleasant philanthropists who feel the need to patronize them can become. What proletarians need is the opening up of the sources of higher culture and guidance in their use. As to the range and purpose of this culture, they prefer to determine this for themselves. It is easier for them to find out what they need, than it is for some stranger, who cannot get to know their needs and conditions of life as well as themselves. The same applies to all nations, backward or advanced.

Even the Jesuits in Paraguay went in for far too much tutelage and too many rulers. Free trade with the primitive races, which makes available to them the knowledge, the understanding, the ownership of tools and methods enabling them to render their labour more productive, will in all these places suffice to advance their development rapidly, as long as these tools and these methods are not brought to them as means of or preliminaries for exploitation and oppression.

There is no question, for instance, that the Moroccans would have the slightest objection to their harbours being improved, and to being connected by trains with the towns of the interior. But if these harbours and trains are to serve, as in Algiers and Tunis, to ease the penetration of the country by French soldiers, tax-collectors and usurers, then to be sure they oppose these technical improvements most vigorously.

Even savages are very eager for improved tools – naturally only for those they can use in conjunction with the given conditions of production. To come to them with steam engines would be book learning indeed!

Dr. R. Pösch reports of the Papuans in New Guinea that their young men freely volunteer for work on the plantations in order to obtain iron knives and axes, with which they are usually rewarded there. In his book on *The Rise of the American Proletarian*, Lewis quotes the claim made by Peary that the Eskimos place an almost unbelievable value on tools. “A man offered me his wife and two children for a skinning knife. And a woman offered me everything she possessed for a needle.”

The alleged incorrigible laziness of primitive man, who only works when an outside power forces him to do so, is also a legend. The only truth in this is that he will work for *others* only if he is forced to. How much he will work for himself depends entirely on circumstances, such as the fruitfulness of nature, the extent of his own needs and finally on the kind of labour involved. There are human activities, which are so pleasurable in themselves, that they are practised for their own sakes, often with true passion, such

as hunting or artistic creation. Other labours have no charm of their own, such as, for example, agricultural work, or monotonous, unartistic industry. From such labours the primitive man prefers to escape – but so does civilised man!: he undertakes it freely only in as much as his own or his dependents' existence is at stake. But his sense of duty is highly developed, and where circumstances require that he works for his family or his tribe then he can become an untiring worker.

Dr. Pöch, who was quoted earlier, says of the Papuans of New Guinea:

One often hears the reproach that the Papuans are lazy and dirty. I would not readily subscribe to either of these assertions. In general, only as much work is done as is necessary: the coastal dwellers work less because the flat fertile coastal strip is more fruitful, and the mountain dwellers work more. Anyone who has been in the mountains of New Guinea, and seen the men thin out the primitive forest on the steep slopes and dig the hard soil with sticks, or the women struggling home from their plots in the evenings laden with harvest produce, anyone who has seen these things will not easily call the Papuans lazy. Their often beautifully built homes, the great primitive boats made from a single tree trunk (canoes) with their outriggering, are evidence of their diligent labour.

I will give one example of Papuan cleanliness: A felled tree lay slanted across the path near the entry to a Papuan village. I felt it was my duty as an ethnologist to ask about everything and had often found that the most simple things have their significance. 'The trunk is for cleaning feet on in dirty weather before entering the village square', was the explanation. And the village square, the area between the huts, is really clean; rubbish is not tolerated there, and the women daily bring fresh white coral sand from the sea shore and spread it out. Later on, I once had occasion to walk through a village when it was raining. When I saw the beam I remembered its purpose and wiped my shoes. An old man

then came out of his house and shouted: "The first white man to clean his shoes!! However, I really cannot hold it against Europeans if they do not initially know that this Papuan, smeared with coconut oil and red clay, and smelling quite strange, is such a fanatic for cleanliness with regard to his village area."

Livingstone reports about a tribe in central Africa (the Ulungu people on the lake of Tanganika):

My long stay here gives me the opportunity of observing that the men as well as the women are constantly occupied. The men plait mats or weave or spin. The only time I see the people idle is in the morning, at about 7 o'clock, when they all come and sit down in order to greet the first rays of the sun as it rises over our clump of trees. And even this time is often used to thread pearls. (*Letzte Reise von David Livingstone*, Hamburg 1875, Vol.I, p.265)

Livingstone describes a village of smiths in another part of his book:

The blows of the hammers sound uninterruptedly, a proof of how diligent the people are. They combine agriculture and hunting with nets with their handicraft. (p.180)

Is there much "education" or "tutelage" required for such people? One gives them better tools; makes higher, that is, scientific, knowledge available to them; and apart from that leaves them to themselves, Here also, everyone must find their own salvation.

With respect to the policy of civilising the primitive peoples, which must be striven for from a socialist point of view, it would be less necessary to exert tutelage over the peoples to be civilised than over the would-be civilisers who are to operate among them.

Any unsuitable individual amongst these could have a fatal effect. For amongst uncivilised peoples individual differences, like class differences, are little developed. For this reason, feelings of solidarity with their comrades in the tribe and veneration for the moral commandments of the tribe are still particularly great. But they judge the whites according to their own customs, and judge the whole by the part, make the individual responsible for the collective. On the other hand they also carry over the respect felt for the race to each of its individuals.

Thus some lumpen rascal from Europe can easily enough mess up a whole tribe, which sees him as a miniature of the whole. Again some “rowdy” can by his provocations embitter a whole peaceful tribe against the European world in general and both consequences are difficult to correct.

Foster friendly trade with the uncivilised peoples; transmit knowledge and tools whilst keeping all unsuitable elements at a distance – that would be the kernel of the civilising policy incumbent on the civilised peoples. It is this which was the ideal of most of those comrades who supported a “socialist colonial policy”.

## VIII. The Necessary Transition Through Capitalism

The advocates of socialist tutelage over foreign peoples have still another argument against giving up the colonies, *in petto*: The colonies must definitely pass through capitalism if they are to be able to get to socialism. In order to make them ripe for socialism we must give them the opportunity to develop capitalism, and therefore social democracy – it necessarily follows – must pursue a capitalist colonial policy. Of course this must occur without using capitalist methods.

David explained in Stuttgart:

The colonies also have to pass through capitalism. There can be no jump from savagery into socialism there either. (Very good!) *Nowhere is mankind relieved from the painful journey through capitalism* and it is precisely according to the scientific postulation of Karl Marx that this path is a preparation for a socialistically organised economy.

Van Kol brought on the heavy guns in his final remarks:

Ledebour has called the endeavours of the majority reactionary. I am quite unable to understand how a man of science can fail to recognise that capitalism is necessary in the colonies before there can be thought of socialism. For this reason we work for the revolutionary (?) development of the colonies because it will facilitate the transition from feudalism to the modern state, through capitalism to socialism. The jump from barbarism to socialism is impossible. (Very true!) The contrary view is not only *unscientific*, it is *stupid* and *narrow-minded*.

So van Kol speaks here not only as the “man of experience”, whose 16 years in Java have made him the practical judge of colonial policy on the entire surface of the earth, past present and future, but also as the man of science who

delivers his annihilating verdict. True he only aimed at Ledebour, but I felt myself hit as well and felt unmasked in my stupidity and narrow-mindedness.

What was left to me? There is no appeal against the verdict of science, like that of the supreme court. I can do nothing but look for mitigating circumstances. Perhaps I will be excused to some extent if it emerges that I am the victim of seduction.

In a piece of writing dated 1894 we read:

It is not only possible, but certain, that, after the victory of the proletariat and after the transfer of the means of production into common ownership amongst the peoples of Western Europe, those countries which have only just fallen under the capitalist mode of production, and have still preserved gentile arrangements or remnants of them, are given in these remnants of common ownership and in the corresponding popular habits a powerful means by which to *significantly shorten* the process of their development to socialist society and to spare themselves the greater part of the suffering and struggles which we in Western Europe have to labour through. But the example and the active assistance of the hitherto capitalist West is an indispensable condition for this. Only when the capitalist economy is defeated in its homeland and in the countries of its greatest development, and only when the remaining countries see in this example 'how it is done' – how the modern forces of production are placed at the service of the community as collective property – only then can they make a start on this abridged process of development. *But then also with certainty of victory. And this applies to all countries at the pre-capitalist stage, not only Russia.*

The man who expounded this stupid, narrow-minded and naively doctrinaire piece of book learning was called *Frederick Engels*. The work in which he outlined it is in the postscript to his essay *Soziales aus Russland* ("Socialism and Russia") printed in the pamphlet *Internationales aus*

*dem Volksstaat* (“Internationalism and the Nation State”), p.66. Marx shared Engels’ point of views which so completely differs from the “scientific” view of Karl Marx, which David developed.

But to be sure, the matter is not settled with an appeal to Marx and Engels. They could err, and Bernstein and Sombart certainly assert that, excellent though the scientific conceptions of Marx and Engels are, they are disfigured and distorted by their revolutionary requirements.

Let us therefore turn from the authorities to the decisive factor in science: *experience*. To be sure, we unfortunately have as yet no experiences of the transition from capitalism to socialism. About this we have only scientifically grounded conclusions drawn from experience up to the present. But of course we possess experience in plenty of the course of development of peoples up to capitalism. Now do van Kol and David wish to assert that every people reached their present stage of development along precisely the same path, and had to pass through all the same earlier stages of development as other equally developed or more highly developed nations? If so, one glance at colonial policy itself is sufficient to reduce this *ad absurdum*.

Present day colonial policy depending on the export of capital is distinguished by the fact that it carries capitalist exploitation and capitalist production into all the colonies whatever their level of development. Therefore it can well be said that there is no colony which does not consequently jump over one or more stages of development.

That applies even to the most advanced of the nations outside the European cultural area, a nation which became



acquainted with capitalism not through colonial policy but through the more complete and effective method of unforced trade: *Japan*. None of the nations outside the European cultural area was as far advanced as Japan when it took up capitalism, and yet to do this Japan had to skip a whole series of centuries, It missed the centuries during which feudalism became corrupt in Europe whilst mercantilism and the manufacturing system were ripening within it. Insofar as one may compare Japanese with European conditions, one can say that the Mikado's realm jumped straight from the 15th to the 19th century.

However the leaps made by colonies with primitive populations are still greater. The Kaffirs in the gold and diamond mines of South Africa make an unmediated leap from the realm of the gentile system to that of modern capitalism, of the trust system and the rule of industry by high finance. Mr. Cecil Rhodes has by no means taken the trouble to first raise the Kaffirs to the next stage of development, which would perhaps have been comparable to the Franks under Charles the Great, and allow them then to run through the whole European development so that they would end up something like the Parisian proletariat of today.

One has only to transpose the David/van Kol law of "science" from the level of a figure of speech to that of specific ideas in order to understand its absurdity immediately.

It is obvious that a nation will only bring to another nation methods of production and knowledge which it has attained itself, and not methods, tools and ideas which it has long

recognised as being inadequate and which no longer have a living existence and are only to be found in museums and history books. And it is equally clear that a people will prefer to trade with the most developed people with which it is in contact, and that it will prefer its more advanced methods and tools to the less advanced ones of other nations, even if it has free trading relations and is not forced into cultural advance by means of armed force.

Naturally an economically backward people cannot use everything manufactured by an advanced people; and it has to fit everything it receives into its own particular conditions – that is, incidentally, another reason for preferring civilising to occur by means of free trade rather than by the compulsion of the colonial system, for strangers can only with difficulty perform this adaptation judiciously and without friction and injury. But the backward nations have since time immemorial learned from the more advanced, and they have often therefore been capable of leaping with one bound over several stages of development which had been climbed wearily by their predecessors.

In this way limitless variations arise in the historical path of development of nations, just as variations arise from the difference in the natural conditions of individual territories. And these variations increase the more the isolation of individual nations decreases, the more world trade develops, and thus the nearer we come to the modern era. This variation has become so great that many historians deny there are any historical laws. Marx and Engels succeeded in discovering the laws governing the variations, but they have only provided an Ariadne's thread for finding one's bearings in the historical labyrinth – they have definitely not

transformed this labyrinth into a modern urban area with uniform, strictly parallel streets. It is David and van Kol who have achieved the latter feat. They never tired of reproaching us Marxists with stereotyped thinking, but it is to them that the Marxist law which governs phenomena in the last analysis appears as a stereotype, as a form, which must be taken on by every manifestation of the history of peoples.

Whoever conceives Marxism in this manner will not find it a means of getting his bearings in the real world, of comprehending reality, but a means of coming into conflict with reality at every possible point, of bumping against it. Indeed he will from time to time perceive the need to revise this kind of Marxism, which in fact is in desperate need of revision.

The proletariat has not the slightest cause, either at the present time, or after its victory, to advance the development of capitalism amongst the agrarian peoples in the alleged interest of socialism. Certainly socialism presumes a certain level of development of capitalism, that is, a given level of development of the productive forces and a given power in the proletariat, which grows with capitalism itself. A socialist mode of production can as little proceed from economically backward countries as from economically backward branches of production. It can as little develop, for example, from our own small peasants as from Central Africa. If however the basic branch of capitalist industry is so strongly developed in the old capitalist countries that on the one hand its oppression has become unbearable, and on the other hand the might of the proletariat has so grown as to lead to a defeat of the capitalist class, and to their political and economic expropriation – then socialism can and will

rapidly overflow from these centres of economic life into those branches and areas of production which are not so highly developed economically, and it will be able to take these over much quicker than capitalism, for unlike capitalism, it will bring to the producers in them not misery, subjugation, degradation, but all-round improvement and satisfaction. Certainly there can be nothing said today about how that will happen. Socialism will have to undergo the most varied alterations and accommodations in the differing situations. We are just able today, if necessary, to use past experience to draw conclusions about future development: but only about its *regular, typical course*, which in the final analysis always recurs. The peculiar manifestations which in real life result from the conjuncture of the most advanced with the most backward forms of societies and states never happen twice and therefore cannot be foreseen. At this point it is only possible to spin an infinite web of speculation which would have no practical purpose because it can have no influence upon our present activity. For this we only need to know that spreading capitalism to backward countries is definitely not a requirement for the spread and victory of socialism.

But it would also be absolutely monstrous if the proletariat, which fights capitalism most sharply at home, were to set itself the task of giving it a clear passage in other countries. What would this mean? Is it only commercial capital that is to be brought to them, or perhaps usury capital? Certainly not. These kinds of capital on their own do not form any prerequisite for socialism. It is productive capital which is meant. But capitalist production is impossible without a proletariat. Bringing capitalism to the colonies means first that a proletariat has to be artificially created where there is

none to hand, means the colonial labouring classes have to be expropriated and brought under the whip of capitalism. On the other hand, where a big enough proletariat already exists, it means that it has to be kept under the whip of capitalism, and the state power has to be asked to suppress every rebellion of the proletariat against capital. Capitalism cannot exist without a state power to protect capitalist exploitation. If we consider that capitalism is unavoidable in the colonies, it would be the task of the struggling, as well as the victorious, proletariat to place state power in the colonies at the disposal of capital!

Of course there are also people who assert that the proletariat must advance capitalism even in Europe, as this is a precondition of its own freedom. There is nothing more erroneous than this position. The building up of capitalism is the historical task of the capitalist class, and we can quite happily leave it this task. It will do justice to it under all circumstances as long as it controls the necessary power. And if it no longer controls this power – then it has become redundant with the loss of its power.

The historical task of the proletariat is from the start determined by its economic opposition to the capitalist class. It consists of the *fight against* capitalist exploitation and thus also against capitalism.

However the false idea that the proletariat has the task of advancing capitalism arises in the following way: The proletariat is not the only opponent of capitalism. Others are to be found among the producers in the modes of production that capitalism overcomes, for instance, craftsmen and peasants. These also fight against capitalism, but in a

different manner to the proletariat. We have seen that the proletariat's greatest aim is to advance the productivity of labour. Even the way it opposes capitalism must be subordinate to this principle. It can only use methods to restrict capitalist exploitation which do not limit the productivity of labour. But this can be done despite shortening of the hours of labour and rises in wages or other improvements in working conditions. In fact such improvements have a beneficial effect on the productivity of labour. However, a proletariat schooled in socialism has never conducted a struggle against machines or against female labour.

On the other hand, the petty bourgeoisie and other opponents of capitalism, who are not so much exploited as made redundant by capitalism, seek to fight against it in ways which do restrict the productivity of labour, which place limits on large scale industry, on the use of machinery, and on science. The proletariat cannot employ such methods but must reject them. It must advance *technical* development, and thus arose the illusion that it has the task of advancing *capitalism*.

In truth, the proletariat must fight against capitalism, but it is confined to certain ways of doing this because of its concern for the productivity of labour.

However, if we are not able to support the craftsmen and peasants when they want to fight against the technical development of capitalism by constricting it, then we are even less able to support the capitalists or large landowners when they want to summon up the state power to advance their own interests against the petty bourgeoisie and

peasants. Here our other principle comes into force, which makes us fight against the oppression of any class by another. And thus the solidarity of all labouring classes becomes evident. The proletariat is of course recruited from the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry. The more depressed these are, the more difficult is its own struggle to maintain and raise its standard of living. For this reason every action the state power takes against the petty bourgeoisie and peasants in the capitalist interest, even if it occurs indirectly, as for instance through tax legislation, must receive determined opposition from the proletariat. It may never make itself responsible for such a promotion of capitalism.

Our position with regard to the backward agrarian peoples who are the object of present day colonial policy is exactly the same as towards the petty bourgeoisie and peasants, There are comrades who feel a great interest in the modes of production of agrarian countries, e.g. Morocco, and who regret their disappearance. From the aesthetic point of view that is very often justified but, despite that, such regret is a romantic sentimentality which is too much in contradiction with the tendencies of economic development to have a useful purpose. Wherever our personal sympathies may lie, we can and must place no obstacle in the way of competition where the capitalist mode of production comes into free competition with backward modes of production.

But the situation changes if we are asked to help the state power to fight for the interest of the capitalist class against the backward nations, and to subdue these for them with armed might, as happens in colonial policy. We must resist this with determination. The proletariat must never let itself become the voluntary policeman of capitalist exploitation.

This is ruled out by its ethical sensibilities, which make the proletariat the defender of all the oppressed and disinherited, of whatever country, race, religion or sex. But this is also ruled out by the solidarity of interests which unites the proletariat with the labouring classes of all countries, for every oppression abroad has an effect back on its own position at home.

In Germany, where colonialism is a recent development, it has not yet had the effect of bringing the blacks expropriated in Africa to Europe, to reduce wages here, but has had an effect at the other pole: on the capitalist class.

If colonialism expropriates great amounts of labour power, which is then defencelessly exposed to every oppression and exploitation, then this nurtures in the exploiters the greatest disregard and cruelty in their treatment of their labourers. For every exploiting class goes to the furthest limit that will be tolerated in the treatment and mistreatment of their victims. In this way the colonial sections of the ruling classes are made brutal, and this has an effect back on the parts remaining in the homeland, which corresponds directly to the amount of interest these take in colonial matters.

Almost a quarter of a century ago I already had occasion to comment, in the article referred to above, *Auswanderung und Kolonisation*, on the orgies of cruelty and greed the mere prospect of colonies had called forth in many colonial enthusiasts among the German people: that nation which once believed that its idealism was its permanent distinguishing characteristic, which raised it high above the "shopkeeper nations" with colonial policies, such as the English and Dutch.



I then commented:

And is the German people to give itself up to such brigandry – there is no other name for such a colonial policy – to a form of economy which assumes such horrible forms even on paper in the study, and which will be made ever more hideous in practice by conflicts of interest? Are we to covet the fame of being able to point to our Pizarros, Warren Hastings and van der Bosch, who are so unashamedly cited by our Messrs colonial-fanatics as their models?

And to what purpose? Mr. B.F. himself explains with his brutal candour, which may be very uncomfortable for some of his like-minded comrades, that with the introduction of his “System”, consumption ‘in the colonies’ will not rise; on the contrary, local trade will near enough cease!! How are the poor slaves, be they contract labourers or forced labourers, to obtain the means to procure European commodities? The colony to be founded will scarcely provide an extensive market for German industry. But it will enable enormous riches to flow into the pockets of all those who exploit it: the plantation owners, the trades people, the functionaries All the spendthrifts in the German kingdom who are gifted with the required lack of scruples will turn to the colony in order to squeeze a sufficient amount of unpaid labour from the slaves and then return home. But they will not employ their acquisitions ‘for the benefit of the domestic labouring population’ in ‘liberal manner’ (as the colonial enthusiasts assured us then – K.) but they will lay it out in industrial undertakings. A large part of the capital of the country, and thus the disposal of thousands of workmen, will fall into the hands of the most depraved section of the nation, which will wish to continue the habits acquired in the handling of slaves when they come to deal with free labourers. Business morality here, which even now is tottering, will definitely change for the worse, and the treatment of labourers will become rougher and more careless.

Whoever thinks these views far-fetched should read up on the corrupting influence which the English who got rich in India, the ‘Nabobs’, exercised on the morality of English society. It is significant that in English drama and belles-lettres of the last century (the 18<sup>th</sup>), the fashion was to portray the scoundrel in the form of a Nabob returned home from India.

What I then expected from a colonial policy has since come to pass. The German colonies to this day have not become an extensive market for German industry. But a decline of morals and a coarsening of behaviour has certainly taken place in the colonies and this has been transferred into the ruling class of Germany, even if their power to lavish riches did not develop as was then expected. The heroic picture of this tropical frenzy has become the model of all the tricksters and Junkers, who want to arrange their relations with their own workers in the same way. And this new heroic age has already captivated the fantasies of the poets and thinkers, who hail a simple Simon, and carry over the cult of brutality and vulgarity into art, philosophy and social relations.

It can be seen that we have every reason to perceive the best preparation for socialism in the advance of capitalism in the colonies!

## IX. Relapse into Barbarism

A more weighty objection to giving up the colonies than the one just dealt with is this: the fear that they would then lapse into barbarism. This objection cannot be dismissed without consideration. It requires a more thorough investigation, with which we wish to conclude our explanation.

The disadvantages expected from giving up the colonies can be examined from two points of view: that of the mother country and that of the colony. From the first a point of view it could be feared that giving up the colonies would lead to a decline in their productive investments. In this way the mother country would lose an advantageous market for its industrial products and an indispensable supplier of raw materials.

Let us assume for the moment that the apprehended regression in production really occurred. Would the consequences really be so devastating? The significance of the colonies in the world market should not be exaggerated.

According to the *Statistical Year Book for the German Empire*, shares of trade were as follows:

		1890	1904
		per cent	per cent
<i>German colonies</i>	<b>German Africa</b>	0.0	0.0
<i>French colonies</i>	<b>Algeria</b>	0.5	0.5
	<b>Tunisia</b>	0.1	0.1
	<b>French Inds</b>	0.1	0.3
	<b>Other Fr. colonies</b>	0.3	0.4
<i>British colonies</i>	<b>In tropical Africa</b>	0.1	0.1
	<b>India &amp; Ceylon</b>	3.9	3.9
	<b>West Indies</b>	0.4	0.2
	<i>Total</i>	5.4	5.5

If these colonies were given up, and as a result imports and exports were discontinued, less than 6% of world trade would be affected; and if German Africa were given up, not a thousandth part of this trade.

And their share of world trade is not increasing. Whilst Japan's share rose between 1890 and 1904 from 0.6% to 1.4%; China's from 1.5% to 1.7%; the United States' from 9.1% to 9.8%; Argentina's from 1.3% to 1.7%; Mexico's from 0.5% to 0.7%; Canada's from 1.2% to 1.9%, that of the tropical colonies, the exploitation colonies, which alone are in question here, remained static. The increase in several of the French colonies can be ascribed to an expansion of their territory.

But it would be quite monstrous to assume that the colonies will cease producing the moment they were freed and came under their own administration. For, even without the compelling power of the state, the compulsion exerted by economic forces is too great to be reversed and it will continue to be active, if perhaps in a different form. A few primitive colonies, such as Senegambia, may fail if freed. On the other hand a cultured country like India is far too advanced in commodity production to be able to dissolve its connection with world trade if freed. However, the lion's share of world colonial falls to India; without that realm it would be a diminishing quantity.

Now it is possible to estimate the significance of the colonies otherwise than by their share in world trade. It is possible to consider their value to the *imperialist idea*, to the idea of creating an Empire, economically self-sufficient, sufficiently extensive to be able to produce all its own raw materials and to sell all its industrial products on its own markets, so that it is absolutely independent.

This aim has arisen simultaneously with the rise of cartels, new protective tariffs, the combination of militarism and marinism, and the new colonial era since the 80s. This aim is closely connected with all of these developments, and is the offspring of the same economic situation which has increasingly transformed capitalism from a means of developing the greatest productivity of labour into a means of limiting this development. The higher the tariff barriers between the individual capitalist states grow, the more each of them feels the need to assure itself of a market which no one can exclude them from, and to gain supplies of raw material which no one can cut off

But to say that this aim has deep roots in the economic situation is by no means to say that its success is assured. The productive forces continue to develop and grow in power under capitalism despite all restriction, and they smash not merely the tariff system, but also this aim of imperial economic independence. In spite of all the customs duties, world trade grows and its value increases even more rapidly than the total of duties. And the international division of labour takes on such dimensions that the most highly developed industries can less and less be limited to the markets of a single state, however extensive it is and however manifold its colonial possessions may be. The growth in the division of labour is so enormous that none of the advanced industries can manage with the raw materials of its own territory, however monstrous the empire it may try to create

Let us look at England, for example. No country disposes over colonial possessions even remotely comparable to hers. The population of India alone puts in the shade the total population of the colonial possessions of all the other powers put together, including any that they could still acquire. And in spite of this, England has long since been unable to supply her demand for

cotton from her colonies, to take one instance. In 1905 she imported 2,204 million pounds of cotton. 58 million pounds of this came from British possessions and 2,146 million pounds from other countries, of which the United States alone provided 1,729 millions. The latter also furnish the most copper, 52% of world production; next comes Mexico with 11%; the tropical colonies produce almost none. The latter also contribute only a little wool. The main producers of wool are Argentina and Australia.

How could it then be made possible for a colonial empire to cover the entire demand for raw materials of a great capitalist state? It is simply quite unthinkable. But since the aspiration is so deeply embedded in the capitalist situation, the capitalist class obstinately resist this conclusion. The drive for colonial expansion by the great states is therefore not restrained, but remains unbounded; it can never reach a satisfactory limit. For this reason the mutual arms race must grow ever greater and the danger of a world war come ever nearer.

These are the only practical results which can be produced by imperialism. Against this it is able to secure neither a market, nor suppliers for its industry. Rather does it threaten that free trade with customers and suppliers on the world market which alone can now satisfy modern industry.

The capitalist class has its own good reasons for fostering imperialism. But the proletariat has equally good reasons for opposing it as a means of prolonging the exploitation of the proletariat at its own cost.

This noble object is no reason why social democracy should refuse emancipation to the colonies. But will the colonies not themselves suffer from being freed? This is feared for three reasons. The colonies could suffer because emancipation could bring about the

collapse of the present colonial state structure and thereupon a worse kind of exploitation than capitalist exploitation could arise; and finally, the capitalist undertakings in the colonies would decay or even be directly destroyed.

The first fear need not detain us long. It is certainly correct to say that whilst every people is mature enough to govern itself, it does not follow that it is mature enough for every form of self-government. The democratic administration of a great state requires a series of preconditions – high level of popular culture, a strong press, lively trade in the whole of the area of the state – which exist only in a very few colonies. If they are given up by the Europeans they are threatened with disintegration into innumerable small communities, independent of each others. But this misfortune may not be all that bad. A small democratic community can, and usually will, be better administered than an undemocratic gigantic state, and may accomplish far more, relatively. No one would wish to set Russia above Switzerland.

The second objection is, on the other hand, more serious: that giving up a colony would take it from the frying pan into the fire, would deliver it from one kind of exploitation or subjugation merely to submit it to a more evil regimes.

This danger doubtless exists. Of course not in all cases. Class differences must reach a very advanced level before a state power can arise which is powerful enough to exert serious oppression. And even this oppression is at the beginning a relatively minor one for the mass of the people. One must not let oneself be fooled by the arbitrary rule and cruelty which some of these primitive despots exercise in their immediate environment. The masses usually have little experience of it, Livingstone, for instance, writes of the Central African natives:

Accurate observation of the natives of the Ulungu tribe leads me to believe that they are exceedingly polite. How this extraordinary mutual respect may have arisen, I am unable to understand; it does not seem to be stimulated by fear of each others. There was not even fear of the headmen and those hoary old platitudes that savages can only be ruled by fear seem to be unknown here; and yet they are in any event governed, and on the whole, not badly. (*Letzte Reise von Dr. Livingstone in Zentralafrika*, Vol.I, p.260).

India was already a very highly developed country with considerable class contradictions when it was taken into the possession of Europeans. They found there a powerful despotism and intense exploitation of the peoples. But all the oppression of native princes seemed small in comparison with that practised by England. Macaulay, certainly no ill-disposed enemy of the English regime, paints the following picture in his essay on Lord Clive:

Every servant of a British factor (agent of the India Company – K) was armed with all the power of his master; and his master rise armed with all the power of the Company. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings here reduced to the extremity of wretchedness. They had been accustomed to live under tyranny, but never under tyranny like this. They found the little finger of the Company thicker than the loins of Suraja Dowlah ('the ruler of Bengal', a very wicked despot whom the English had chased out – K]. Under their old masters they had at least one resource: when the evil became insupportable, the people rose and pulled down the government. But the English government does not to be so shaken off. That government, oppressive as the most oppressive form of barbarian despotism, was strong with all the strength of civilisation. It resembled the government of evil genii rather than the government of human tyrants.

Since then the forms of English rule in India have certainly become more human, but the economic pressure of English rule still remains unbearable and leads to chronic poverty, whilst this rule is armed "with all the strength of civilisation", against which every uprising has been in vain up to the present. Native despotism



is today also less of a burden to the country than the liberal English regime. That was admitted in 1904 by Lord Salisbury in the English Parliament:

The British Government is never guilty of the violence and arbitrariness of the individual ruler. But instead of this it has its own particular faults which are much more innocent in *intention*, but far more terrible in *effect*.

That is confirmed by the facts. In a series of states, within India, where administration has been left to the native princes, the population finds itself more healthy, prospers better and is subject to less famines than the rest of the realm.

The taxes per head (in British India) are nominally lower than in the native states. In reality they are markedly more oppressive; for the population in the native states, which is much more wealthy, can bear payments easily and comfortably which would ruin the impoverished countryman in the British territory ... In the protectorates which have native home rule, during the time of a famine and for some time afterwards, either no taxes at all are collected, or only very trifling ones. In the British area of administration very little consideration is taken even in the very worst times, and if it is at all possible the full amount of taxes is exacted. Secondly, in the native territories, the peasant pays only one-eighth of the taxes due on cultivated land. In the British territory fallow and cultivated soil are taxed equally. That is a meaningful and important difference, which is for the most part to blame for the continual, deterioration of agricultural land in the British area. As the natives have to discharge the same taxes for the fallow land, they seldom leave a part of their small possession fallow; the land is continuously cultivated until it is totally exhausted. Thirdly, in the native states a peasant pays no tax on a well which he builds himself. In the British administrative area his taxes are immediately raised for such an improvement. Many such differences can be recounted. (Hyndman, *Die Ursachen der Hungersnot in British-India* ("The Causes of the Famine in British India"), *Neue Zeit*, Vol.XVIII, 2, pp.71 & 73)

It is clear that the “barbarism” into which India would sink if the British gave it up does not appear all that terrible. On the contrary, the English are hindering the rise, of India out of the barbarism of oriental despotism. With their overwhelming strength they guarantee the absolute regimes of the native rulers of the protectorates. It does not occur to them to have such rule limited by elected legislative Assemblies. For if despotism were to fall in the protectorates, their own despotism in the territories directly administered would be found even more unbearable. The casting off of the English yoke will clear the way for the defeat of the native princes as well.

For a while, a despotism of a different kind threatened to become dangerous for India if they threw off English rule: that of the *Russian Tsar*, whose regiments had already reached the Indian frontier. Whatever one may think of the British regime in India, a Russian one would without a doubt be worse. First of all, its need for money would force it to intensify the exploitation of the country whilst at the same time placing still more restrictions on the development of the productive forces. And all free political activity would be made impossible. At the same time it would signify an unprecedented increase in power for Tsardom. It should be remembered that England draws a round 700 million marks a year from India. What powerful resources that would provide for Russian despotism.

Russian despotism is the most evil and dangerous enemy of all human development. Every particular national interest has to be subordinated to the fight against it, however important and legitimate it be. For these reasons Marx and Engels in their time opposed the national uprisings in the Balkan states. For the same reasons the socialists of Europe could not, until recently, give their undivided sympathies to the efforts of the Indians to gain

independence. The more far sighted Indians themselves did not, under these circumstances, demand complete independence, but only home rule under British protection: something like Australia or Canada, which are in fact independent, and which incur no duties but only advantages from the recognition of the dominion of the mother country without any reciprocal contribution they remain under the protection of its army and fleet.

But since Japan's victory over Russia, the situation with regard to India has considerably changed. This victory has not merely overcome the illusion of inferiority of the Asians as against the Europeans and greatly raised their self-confidence. It has also made an end for ever of the Russian danger. However long the struggle between Tsarism and revolution may be drawn out, it has become unthinkable that Tsarism could ever again achieve the strength to conduct a great external war. Today that can only be done by a government which has the nation behind it. A strong Russia, capable of an external war, can only be created by the victory of the revolution. But such a Russia would be a democratic Russia. Whatever form its relationship to India may take, its expansion would no longer be a matter threatening all humanity. Today we no longer have the slightest ground for viewing Indian efforts for independence with anything but the greatest sympathy.

Even if there is no fear in this case of a relapse into barbarism, it would however be premature to assert the same about the freeing of every other colony. There are no doubt situations where the form of rule is still worse than that exercised by the English in India.

Oriental despotism becomes horrifyingly oppressive wherever it masters the instruments of power of European civilisation, but at the same time becomes the debtor of Europe. The need for money

is so severe that such a state is even more avaricious than the capitalists with their mania for profits, but by the same token, it is deprived of the possibility of improvements, which are forced into existence by the capitalist profit motive, Furthermore, the resources of power borrowed by oriental despotism from civilisation, that is, the bureaucracy and army, make its rule as irresistible as that of capitalism. But since only external characteristics are imitated, the despots do not get the broad view made possible by civilisation, which has an insight into the most extensive and manifold conditions opened up to it by means of world trade and historical investigation. This kind of despotism brings to a peak the oppressive and degrading effects of capitalism, without developing any of its progressive qualities, and in the same way it develops only the oppressive characteristics of oriental despotism while destroying those aspects of it which soften its rule. It pairs despotism and capitalism in an abominable union.

Where capitalism takes power in backward nations in this way it usually has a more evil effect than the colonial system An example of this is provided by the Turkish regime.

Furthermore, unbearable conditions can be created where an agrarian people adjoin a nomadic people. The former are accustomed by their mode of production to a quiet, peaceful way of life, without weapons; whilst the mode of production of the latter, that is of equestrian peoples, engenders boldness, restlessness, desire for plunder and ruthlessness, which easily flares up into wild barbarity, plundering expeditions, acts of devastation which make all work impossible by the destruction of the most important instruments of production and even, finally, the carrying away of the best labour-powers into slavery – this is the state of affairs which results when cultivators and nomads adjoin.

An example is afforded by the Kurds in Armenia or the Arab slave-robbers in Africa.

Assuredly, if the colonial rule of a European power is discontinued in order to make way for such despotism and rapine, no benefit would be afforded either to the inhabitants of the country, or to human development.

But foreign domination is not the only and not the best way of preventing such situations. The abominable form of despotism in question only draws its strength from the support given by European "civilisation". It becomes untenable and collapses the moment this support is withdrawn. Europe has only to stop delivering money and weapons to the Turkish Sultan and his absolute regime will come to an end. If that has not yet happened, that is merely for the reason that Europe, that is to say, capitalist Europe, does not wish it. It sees the Sultan as its tax-gatherer who squeezes from his people the sums required by the European capitalists as interest on their capitals. For this reason, the authority of the Sultan can at most be broken where a European power wishes to replace him as occurred in Tunis or Egypt. It cannot, under any circumstances, be broken by the liberation of his subjects. But this capitalist practice is no reason for social democracy to see a colonial policy as the only alternative to such despotism.

What is required for the protection of peaceful agrarian peoples against warlike nomads is certainly not the driving out of the devil by Beelzebub, which would subject the peaceful agrarian people to foreign domination. The interests of the peasants would be far better protected if they were made capable of bearing arms, were provided with weapons and were instructed in their use. If the Armenians were treated in this way it would soon be seen how

they got on with the Kurds. Of course the peasants might come upon the idea of using their military capacity against every exploiter and every attempt at exploitation – but social democracy cannot see this as any ground for accepting a colonial policy as the only alternative to nomadic rapine and slave hunting.

And there is a better way of bringing the robber nomads themselves to self-control and higher culture than by forcible subjugation. Rassel writes of this:

The changeover from a nomadic to a settled existence has only ever occurred in three ways. Either a wandering people has been restricted by force to such limited territories that there can no longer be any question of living by moving around with the cattle; or the herds are lost in a war; or finally, the people lives so near to a territory with a more stable and thus more secure culture that it voluntarily gives up its free but impoverished life in exchange for the peace and pleasures of a more stable existence. This last process is slower, but it is more *fundamentally effective*. It begins with the inclination, which exists also within these rough natures accustomed to hardships, for the enjoyment of culture and for the adornment of existence.

Trade is the most effective means towards this end.

Its effect under the conditions existing here is greater than the advancement of economic activity. Trade becomes a factor in politics, and eventually in culture, in that it satisfies those needs, stirs them up again, creates new ones until the nomad finally comes to the opinion that he is not able to provide for his needs as a narrow shepherd, and therefore goes over to agriculture or industry. (*Völkerkunde* “Ethnology”), III)

Free trade, which increases needs and brings improved means of satisfying needs, is here also shown to be superior to the method of armed suppression. And yet Rassel is not considering the kind of *trade* aimed at *civilizing* the nomads, but only at *exploiting* them. Friendly trade with no exploiting intentions

would have an earlier and surer effect in settling the nomads and in ending their menace to their neighbours. The economic and intellectual superiority of modern civilisation over the barbarians must not be undervalued. It can work wonders in taming them – but of course, only if it is applied intelligently and patiently.

Where this is done, the ending of foreign rule over the nomads need not necessarily endanger their neighbours, that is, not if the neighbours are simultaneously made able to defend themselves.

However, the fears that the colonies would sink into barbarity do also have an economic basis. It is correct that every people is mature enough to take account of its own economic interests; that it requires no tutelage for this, and that it gets on much better without it. But that is not to say that every people is always mature enough for every mode of production. Now the capitalists at present export countless capitals to the colonies, with which they found great undertakings of all kinds; railways, canals, mines, cotton spinning, as well as cultivation of tobacco, coffee, cotton etc. What will happen when colonial political rule by the mother country ends? Will not all these undertakings be given up, and would this not be a massive technical step backwards for the colonies themselves, quite apart from the losses of the European capitalists?

We have already touched on this question whilst considering what harm is to be apprehended to the mother country from giving up the colonies, and need only to fill it out in one or two respects. Where such undertakings rest upon forced labour, direct or indirect, there is indeed the probability that they will be given up if the colonies themselves are relinquished. But the disadvantages which could follow from this for the colonial population are fewer than those springing from forced labour. We expect that the

freeing of the colonies will in this connection have similar consequences as the freeing of slaves. Production is temporarily damaged, but economic needs gradually revive it after the production process has been adapted to the new circumstances, The use of labour saving equipment may be advanced in the plantations. Where that is not possible the plantations may be broken up and transformed into small farms, which are worked by their owners themselves: which would likewise be an advance over forced labour.

The following figures apply to cotton production in the United States:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Cotton Crop</b> millions of lbs	<b>Price per lb.</b> cents
1859	2,397	12
1869	1,325	29
1879	2,607	11
1889	4,717	7

We can see that cotton production temporarily dropped considerably under the effects of the freeing of slaves, but then expanded all the quicker.

The situation is worse with hard to undertakings of trade and industry. These cannot, in case of necessity, be broken up and transformed into small holdings as in the case of plantations. They have to be continued as they are, or broken up.

But it is precisely undertakings of this kind which presuppose a free proletariat. They are carried on by free labourers who are either found on the spot, or come from outside – the directors and foremen always come from outside. To secure the other labour



powers here it is only necessary to have the requisite increase in wages. Such enterprises, however, find the conditions of their prosperity predominantly in colonies which already have a higher economic and social development behind them. It is not to be feared that in such circumstances the advance of industry or railway undertakings will be in some way damaged by the freeing of the colony. If railways can be constructed in Turkey or China, they can be equally constructed in a free India or Egypt. The native states in India build railways just as jealously as the British Government. However, industrial undertakings in less developed colonies, which could be endangered by their being given up, are so rare that they cannot be taken into account. In such regions, only the railways are considerably developed, and it would be necessary to protect them. But what if this should only be possible by means of armed might? Formerly the caravan routes were made secure for travellers by the payment of tolls or tributes to the tribe whose territories they crossed. The railways could be secured in a similar way. It is not probable that, for instance, the negroes in the Congo, or on the Zambesi, would wish to disturb the operation of the railways in their territories, if they were free; they would be satisfied if they were left in peace and would finally come to feel affection for the railway if it no longer brought them armed rascals from the Congo state or Rhodesia, but only cheap tools and means of consumption. But if they should nevertheless place difficulties in the way of the conduct of the railways, their opposition could we overcome by giving them an interest in the railway, perhaps by paying a rent for the ground which they would collect. These peaceful methods are not merely more worthy, they could well turn out cheaper in the long run than the suppression and repression of the natives with armed force.

Giving up the colonies does not therefore mean giving up the technical advances which capitalism has brought to them, but only

giving up the methods used up to the present to secure their use and replacement by other methods which are perhaps less convenient, and which would require more patience and understanding of the peculiarity of the natives, but which further the well-being and development of the natives much more than the methods of colonial conquest and possession.

After all of this, there can certainly be no doubt that we social democrats are everywhere obliged to advocate the release of the colonies. The grounds which have been advanced against this do not pose the question of *whether* they should be released but only of *how*. They only prove that the giving up of the colonies is no simple process – just as, for instance, giving up the system of protective tariffs is not easy; the making good of a stupid act is seldom a simple process – that usually, one cannot simply get out of the colonies, but that, just as with the relinquishment of protective tariffs, one has to prepare for the giving up of a colony, if it is to proceed without causing any damage.

It would however be highly unnecessary for us to worry our heads at present as to what would have to be done in each individual colony to prepare for its liberation. To seek a solution to this complicated problem, which would differ for each colony, would be to perform a quite superfluous labour, as the capitalist class will never voluntarily give up a colony.

This was talked about in the Manchester days, when capital still had a secure basis for its domination under free trade and the most rapid development of the productive forces. This was also the time when the freedom of India advanced most rapidly. But today, in the era of imperialism, the possession of every colony, however unfertile and costly, appears so priceless to the capitalists of every

nation that they will fight tooth and nail any attempt to give up even a foot of any of them

The idea of giving up the colonies voluntarily can, therefore, so long as the rule of capitalism continues, only function for us like a compass which shows us the direction in which our policy on the colonies must tend, and not as a practical proposal on whose immediate implementation we must work. Its main practical implication for us is that we cannot agree to any extension in colonial possessions, and that we must work zealously for an increase in the self government of the natives. The native uprisings to throw off foreign domination will be always certain of the sympathies of the fighting proletariat. But the armed might of the capitalist nations is so immense that it is not to be expected that any of these uprisings could come anywhere near their aim. As much as we understand such rebellions, and as deeply as we sympathise with the rebels, social democracy cannot encourage them, just as it does not support pointless proletarian putsches in Europe itself.

But if it is not to be expected that the colonies will attain their independence in the capitalist era – not by force and still less by the benevolence of the ruling classes of the mother country – neither is it the case that the victorious proletariat will be much taken up with the question of giving up the colonies.

Whenever and however the proletariat may be victorious, its victory can only occur in a period of colossal shifts of power which result from long, embittered struggles and which shake all humanity to the core. Revolutions in Europe and North America cannot fail to affect the states in the rest of the world. The shifts of power between classes must be accompanied by shifts of power between races and states, just as it is probable on the other hand

that internal revolutions are started off by external revolutions, world wars.

In this era of violent upturns, the nations which are already struggling for their freedom in the most advanced colonies must rapidly grow and find the strength to tear themselves away from the dominating countries whose state power will be totally absorbed by internal dissensions. India, the Philippines, Egypt, which at present already have such vigorous national movements, such a strong national, urban intelligence, and the beginnings of an industrial proletariat, will win their independence simultaneously with the proletariat of Europe and North America. Today there can no longer be any doubt of this. At the same time, however, the other colonial possessions must be influenced, even uprooted, by this great conflict. If Egypt is freed, then, the whole of North Africa and the Sudan, and also the rest of the black part of the world, must land up in the most vigorous turmoil. Following Egypt's example, and under her influence, all these possessions must be spurred on to energetic insubordination against all foreign rule.

The same result must also follow the liberation of British India and the Philippines in the Island of Sound and in Polynesia. And these events, together with a Chinese uprising, must shatter European domination in the Indian hinterland.

The French Revolution and the consequent wars created the situation which enabled Mid and South American colonies to free themselves. The coming proletarian revolution will do the same for Africa and tropical Asia.

When the European and North American proletariat has conquered political power it will not be confronted with the question whether to pursue a socialist colonial policy or not, whether the colonial peoples are ripe for self-government or not; whether to grant them freedom or whether to exert tutelage over them and educate them in a patriarchal and well-meaning despotism. It will find that the

most important colonies are independent states, and that the others are either under their influence or in complete uproar, and it will find that only one question will have to be decided: will it defeat the rebels in bloody war, will the European revolution forcibly smash the African or Asian revolution, or not?

And to this question the answer cannot for a minute be in doubt.

If we, therefore, are the opponents of a capitalist colonial policy – and the supporters of a socialist colonial policy never tire of telling us that they are, that they condemn it – then we are also opponents of every *possible*, if not – every *conceivable* colonial policy. A colonial policy which proceeds hand in hand with the education of the natives would have been possible in the democratic work colonies that existed in the 17th and 18th centuries. But since the 19th century this kind of colonial policy belongs irrevocably in the past. Therefore, the end of the present day capitalist colonial policy will mean the end of all colonial policy. The victory of the proletariat will of course find the most various kinds of cultural stages in existence in the world, and this victory will not make the spread of European technology, of European science and thought amongst the peoples of the tropics unnecessary – rather will it create the soil there for the most rapid dissemination of these things. But from this cultural mission no new relations of domination will arise. The victorious proletariat will not be the ruling class in the countries now possessed as colonies, but will forego all foreign domination.

The proletariat cannot free itself without freeing the whole of mankind. In this lies its greatness, its power of attraction, because of which its struggle for emancipation, its class struggle, has from the beginning drawn to it the greatest and most far-seeing spirits of all classes. This is the sign under which it will be victorious.

## Appendix

# A Letter from Frederick Engels

It is now a quarter of a century since the colonial movement began in Germany. Whilst occupied in studying it, I once also asked Frederick Engels what attitude the English workers took towards their colonies.

Engels replied to me on 12th September 1882 as follows:

You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here, you see, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers' consumption is based on the boom of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies. In my opinion the colonies proper, i.e. the countries occupied by a European population – Canada, the Cape, Australia – will all become independent; on the other hand, the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated – India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions – must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g. in Algeria and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing for us. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the half-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses. One thing alone is certain: *the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.* Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds.

The Egyptian business is a Russian diplomatic manoeuvre. Gladstone is to take Egypt (which he does not have and if he had it, would not keep far long), so that Russia can take Armenia; which of course, according to Gladstone, would again be the liberation of a Christian country from the Mohammedan yoke. *Everything else in the case is pretence, humbug, subterfuge.* Whether this little plan will succeed will soon be seen.

The end refers to the occupation of Egypt by the English after the Egyptian uprising under Arabi-Pasha. Recently, a letter from Engels of 9th September 1882 was published in which he warned against judging the Egyptian national movement from a purely emotional point of view. From this the conclusion was drawn that Engels had been particularly sympathetic to Egypt's annexation by England. We see from the above how little that was the case.