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what is

NEO-COLONIALISM?



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The United Nations, Africa, Asia, South America—even the British Parliament—are hearing this new term. For half the population of the world Neo-Colonialism is the biggest challenge of our time. It is up to all of us to understand its full meaning.

1-The Advance of Political Independence

During the 15 years following the end of the Second World War the majority of the colonial people in Africa and Asia achieved a considerable degree of political independence and self-government.

The concept of "neo-colonialism" refers to the new tactics which the imperialist powers adopt during the period when direct political domination is weakened or no longer possible. It also characterises the relationship of the imperial powers to many countries and peoples, such as those of Latin America, which, although they have been independent for very many years, remain weak and economically backward.

NOT SO NEW

Whilst the features which we associate with neo-colonialism have achieved special prominence at the present time, they are not a new phenomenon. The main aims of classical imperialism, of which British and French capitalism of the 19th century were outstanding examples, were to achieve control over raw materials and foodstuffs, while at the same time securing markets for industry and fields of investment for capital, as well as bases for strategic purposes.

Political imperialism, in the sense of administrative domination, was only secondary to these aims. Thus American capitalism established itself as the paramount imperialist power without undertaking any significant colonial conquests. Nevertheless, political control reinforced economic domination, as it enabled the individual imperial power to limit both foreign rivals and the local bourgeoisie from sharing in the economic spoils; while at the same time it hindered or suppressed the development of the national democratic movements.

The advance of political independence therefore implies a significant setback for world imperialism, and is a necessary step on the road towards the achievement of complete freedom.

2-Neo-Colonialism is Their Answer

This advance was due to a number of causes. The national movements experienced a remarkable growth and became powerful enough to insist on having independence. The traditional imperialist powers were weakened in the course of the last war, and, on a world scale, a change in the relation of forces between those who supported colonialism, in one form or another, and those who were against it, made

it easier for the national movements to advance towards their goal of independence.

The imperialist powers, when forced to retreat from positions of direct control, attempt to maintain domination over ex-colonial and economically under-developed countries through the methods of neo-colonialism. But neo-colonialism is a tactic whose use is not confined to the traditional colonial powers; the United States, Western Germany, Japan and others claim that they are "non-colonial" powers, but they also try to ensnare the new states in their neo-colonialist embrace.

The former colonial peoples are becoming increasingly aware of the dangers which threaten them from the side of neo-colonialism. Of special significance, in this respect is the Resolution on Neo-Colonialism adopted by the Third All-African Peoples' Conference in Cairo in March, 1961, which warned that neo-colonialism "is the greatest threat to African countries that have newly won their independence or those approaching this status." (See Appendix). The most important features of this neo-colonialist system are the following :—

3—Economic Features of Neo-Colonialism

The real purpose of neo-colonialism is to ensure the continued exploitation of economic resources and wherever possible to extend economic influence and domination, while at the same time using these economic vantage points for purposes of political pressure. Clearly this economic influence and domination is most easily achieved in countries engaged mainly in the production of raw materials and foodstuffs for metropolitan industries, while remaining poor and insufficiently industrialised themselves.

The development of a modern diversified economy is discouraged by the difficulties of obtaining investment capital, while at the same time capitalist domination of the world market has ensured that the gap between the prices paid for raw materials in comparison with that of manufactured goods has continually increased during the past decade. Recent economic difficulties in, for example, Ghana, British Guiana, and other countries arise from this situation.

PRICE AND PROFITS SABOTAGE ECONOMIC AID

It has been estimated that in Latin America the value of raw material exports has declined to such an extent that today it takes $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the amount of exported goods to purchase the same amount of imported machinery as it did ten years ago, while U.N. reports for Africa and Asia show the same trend. It can be shown that a revaluation of 14 per cent. in the prices of export products from all the non-industrialised

areas of the world would equal the present total of all public aid to under-developed countries.

One of the most effective means for the penetration of Asia and Africa has been in the form of economic and technical "aid." This is often given in the form of private capital, which is concerned with profit making, often through the exploitation of the rich natural resources, especially minerals, and the cheap labour power of the colonial countries.

The profits obtained flow back to the neo-colonialist powers. For Britain, for example, figures of the Board of Trade show that interest and profits from overseas investments (excluding oil and insurance, which are substantial items) increased from £194 million in 1958 to £246 million in 1960.

When neo-colonialist powers give economic "assistance" in the form of State aid, this is mainly for financing developments such as roads, railways and harbours linked with the extraction of raw materials, especially minerals, and their transport for industrial use in the metropolitan countries. The building of such communication links has strategic significance too. State aid from the imperialist powers to assist genuine industrialisation, that is the building of heavy industry and machine-building industry, is not readily forthcoming. In fact, considerable insistence by the newly independent countries (for example, Ghana's long campaign to obtain assistance for the Volta Dam scheme) is usually necessary before economic aid to assist industrial growth is forthcoming.

In this connection, it is significant that recent reports of the European Economic Community show that a mere one per cent of its Development Funds are being used in Africa for developing industry.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S.A.

Of special importance in recent decades has been the expansion of United States capitalism in the under-developed countries. In 1939, for example, American investment in Africa amounted to only about \$100 million. During the war years exports increased by 600%, and there was a considerable increase in investment also. By 1959, the total investment reached more than \$2,000 million, i.e. a 20-fold increase, and brought with it a profit of 20%, i.e. \$400 million. In South Africa alone, American investment increased from \$86.6 million in 1953 to \$600 million in 1960. American capital is thus gradually overtaking European capital and taking over its colonial heritage.

EFFECT OF THE COMMON MARKET

A new form of economic threat faces the African territories — the European Common Market. A major purpose of forcing Britain to join

is to allow the major O.E.C.C. countries, particularly West Germany, to wrest from Britain the right to further penetration into Britain's economic sphere of influence in Africa, and to mobilise Europe's capitalism, with U.S. resources behind it, to fight for retention and expansion of Western economic control over Africa. A number of African national leaders have already warned that, irrespective of the effects of this economic arrangement on Europe, as far as Africa is concerned the European Common Market is intended to maintain the present economic relationship between the two continents, preserving Africa as a producer of low-priced raw materials for export and as an importer of relatively higher priced manufactured goods from the industrialised powers in the West. Thus the European Common Market would create obstacles to the industrialisation of African territories and seriously hinder their economic growth.

4-The Political Features of Neo-Colonialism

In spite of being forced to relinquish constitutional control (or finding it expedient to do so) over many colonial countries, the neo-colonialist powers have tried to retain as much political influence and control as possible. This is important insofar as it enables them to safeguard economic and strategic interests, provides allies in the struggle against the Eastern bloc, and strengthens them in inter-imperialist conflicts, which are only partly over-shadowed by their common interests in the cold war.

USING "INDEPENDENT" GOVERNMENTS

Where imperial states are able to hand over power to a grouping of their own choice rather than to the representatives of the people's main national organisations, regimes are established which, anxious to preserve and extend their own privileges, are ready to accept limitations on their independence which genuinely democratic national movements would completely reject. This undoubtedly happened in the Kamerun Republic and in many parts of the French Empire. The result has been that the so-called Brazzaville bloc continues to support French political and economic interests and their adherence to the Common Market is an illustration of this. The recent failure of the Lagos Conference to invite and support the Algerian Provisional Government illustrates this point clearly. The British, though perhaps in less direct fashion, adopt similar policies as is shown clearly in the case of Malaya.

EXPLOITING TRIBAL DIFFERENCES

Neo-colonialism also make considerable use of religious, ethnic and tribal differences and of irrational boundaries, mainly created by 19th-century European conquerors, in order to find new allies, and to prevent

the creation of a united anti-imperialist front. Alliances are made both with the old and reactionary feudal or tribal authorities, and with the newer indigenous bourgeoisie which is to a great extent dependent economically and politically upon foreign capitalist support. With the coming of liberation, therefore, the nationalist movements which formerly represented the whole people, now begin to show divisions and political parties are created which base themselves on economic and social interests. It is especially to the parties of the old feudalists and of the new bourgeoisie that capitalism looks for support.

However, it is not always completely successful in creating such alliances, since the new bourgeoisie has not yet spent its potentiality for progress; its striving for fuller independence, and the development of its own economy and market, constantly bring it into conflict with the imperialist powers. The peoples in such states can take advantage of these conflicts to prevent the activities of the neo-colonialists from achieving success.

5-Strategic and Military Features of Neo-Colonialism

The importance of strategic interests and military bases has often prevented the granting of independence. The bitter and costly struggle in Cyprus was due to this, and still today the independence of Malta, Aden, Singapore and of many African countries is being delayed because of their military value. In many countries independence was not granted until the new governments had agreed to the setting up of military bases, and had concluded defence agreements. These usually involve the training of officers and equipment of the new national armed forces by the former colonial power, and the provision of facilities for deploying its troops to "protect" its bases and lines of communication.

This has been an almost general pattern, but Cyprus, Tunisia, Morocco and Malaya have been especially blatant examples. In the case of Nigeria and Sierra Leone also a pre-condition for political independence was a military understanding with Britain, and similar concessions have been forced on Algeria by the French Government. In the Kamerun, and the States of the former French Community in Africa, French troops and military advisors remain, as well as French bases, though in some of these territories there have been demands recently that these concessions be ended.

MILITARY BASES IN AFRICA

Military bases in Africa have been established not only by the former colonial powers but also, in some cases, by the United States, as for example, in Morocco and Senegal, as well as the powerful U.S. air

base at Wheelus airfield in Libya. In some cases these bases are not the responsibility of any one power, but come under N.A.T.O. control; thus N.A.T.O. has 17 air bases in Africa, and eight naval bases. There are numerous C.E.N.T.O. and S.E.A.T.O bases in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Thailand and Phillipines. These bases are of value both in the struggle of the neo-colonial powers against the Soviet Union, and as a means of aiding political and economic allies within the newly liberated territories.

The refusal of the French to abandon their base at Bizerta, or of the United States to give up its base in Cuba, indicates the key role which these bases play in imperialist strategy. No country can be truly free until foreign bases are abolished and foreign troops withdrawn.

6—Cultural Features of Neo-Colonialism

Imperialism also attempts to maintain power through the cultural domination established during the period of direct rule. In many countries the external signs of the domination remain even after they have won their political independence — from statues of conquering generals in the main squares and streets (which themselves, like the names of towns, rivers and whole territories, are associated with the former ruling power) down to the school text books which teach British, French, Belgian or Portuguese history and traditions rather than those of the indigenous peoples. The problem of ending this cultural domination is especially difficult since, in their initial period, the new states suffer from a shortage of teachers, schools, universities and books, and the fight against illiteracy and ignorance is one of the most urgent problems.

NEED FOR INDEPENDENT PRESS AND BROADCASTING

A disturbing feature at present is the acquisition by foreign interests of existing newspapers, and the development of a foreign press and news distribution monopoly. Local radio services and information centres are also often dominated by foreign organisations. The creation of an independent press and broadcasting system, and the need to teach their own history and culture are amongst the urgent tasks which face the peoples of the "new" countries.

7—External Aid and Neo-Colonialism

Many of the governments in the newly liberated countries realise the enormity of the economic-political and cultural problems which they have inherited as a product of colonial rule and the dangers which neo-colonialism presents to their free development. They recognise the

need to develop rapidly a new economic structure based on industrialisation, agrarian development and reform, and the establishment of their own banking institutions. These changes can no longer be achieved only on the basis of private enterprise but require co-operative effort, national planning and frequently require regional and international co-operation. Thus African regional or continental associations are not only a political aim or ideal but a truly necessary step to abolish the terrible poverty and backwardness in which the people of that area have lived for generations.

THE PROBLEM OF INVESTMENT

The economically under-developed countries urgently need capital for their development and technical aid and education. These countries are not entirely devoid of capital resources, but the accumulated capital, which could be used to develop and strengthen the local economy, is largely removed to the metropolitan countries by foreign capitalism which owns the existing economic resources. The unfavourable price relationships, mentioned previously, also affect adversely internal investment.

Thus the capital required can often only come from the more developed countries in Europe or from America, but it will be rejected, and rightly so, if it is accompanied by conditions and obligations which limit the democratic choice of the people and of their national sovereignty. Even when economic loans have no apparent strings attached, they can often hinder economic growth through the heavy interest burden they carry, the need to repay the loan in the currency of the country granting the loan, or the high cost of technicians.

Many countries have declined economic aid which was connected with unacceptable political demands and have had to rely on their own meagre internal resources, and this had often led to a curtailment of some economic planning. To build up their economies many under-developed countries are diversifying their trading and economic relations, making agreements at government level for technical and economic assistance, both with the Western powers and with the Soviet Union and associated countries, on the basis of respect for the sovereign rights of the recipient countries.

3—The Meaning of “Positive-Neutralism”

In the political sphere also the newly liberated countries have attempted to extend their independence. There is a growing demand for the abolition of unequal military treaties, the withdrawal of foreign troops and the dissolution of reactionary alliances such as S.E.A.T.O.-C.E.N.T.O. Until recently, the colonial countries were the pawns of

outside powers. Some still remain so, but many have begun to pursue independent policies and to make their own distinctive contribution to solving world problems.

“Positive neutralism” does not imply, as its opponents suggest, isolation and withdrawal from world politics. On the contrary, as outstanding national leaders in Asia and Africa have stressed, it carries with it a most deliberate and firm commitment to uproot colonialism and neo-colonialism and to help safeguard the peace of the world. But in pursuing these aims, (not, it must be said, always consistently) newly independent states have emphasised that they will take no part in any military alliances nor will they tie themselves to either camp; they will judge each question on its merits and support policies and actions which they deem to be in their own interests.

In carrying out this policy of “positive neutralism,” the newly liberated territories can make a most important and vital contribution to the struggle to save mankind from the horrors of thermo-nuclear war, and can help to create conditions in which the genuine co-existence of states with different social and political systems becomes possible.

9—The Stand of the M.C.F.

The Movement for Colonial Freedom has always recognised that national self-determination is the first step towards colonial liberation. In our original basic statement of policy adopted at our founding conference the first object expresses our support for the right of all peoples to full independence (including self-determination and freedom from external, political, economic and military domination).

Whilst significant areas of the world remain under direct foreign rule and their political liberation will present considerable difficulties, we believe that it is our duty to help the former colonial peoples complete their fight for emancipation.

In particular, we need to increase our activity to end foreign military bases on the soil of these new states, to secure the termination of imposed military agreements and to assist these states to win their economic independence. In carrying out the last-named task we should not hesitate to support the former colonial peoples if they find it necessary to take over or nationalise enterprises on their soil which are at present owned by foreign powers, even when the latter are British.

In appealing to the British people to support this policy, the M.C.F. believes that it is acting not only in the interests of the formerly subject peoples but also in the best interests of the British people themselves. The winding up of British bases overseas removes British soldiers from being exposed to danger, saves finance which could be used for positive

social purposes, and helps to remove potential sparks of a new war. By helping the former colonial peoples to inherit their own resources we are weakening the very big monopolies and "take-over" tycoons who are the barriers to social advance in Britain.

Together the British people and the former colonial peoples have struggled to end colonialism; together we can defeat neo-colonialism and help to usher in a new epoch of peace and progress for all mankind.

APPENDIX

Third All-African Peoples Conference Resolution on Neo-Colonialism

The 1961 A.A.P.C. at Cairo passed a lengthy resolution on Neo-colonialism, as this, it was felt, had become a key question.

The resolution opened by stating that neo-colonialism "is the greatest threat to African countries that have newly won their independence or those approaching this status." When the recognition of national independence becomes inevitable, the imperialists "try to deprive this independence of its essence . . . by imposing unequal economic, military and technical agreements, by creating puppet governments following false elections, or by inventing some so-called constitutional formulas of multi-national existence intended only to hide the racial discrimination favouring settlers. Whenever such machinations appear insufficient to hamper the militancy and determination of the popular liberation movements, dying colonialism tries, under the cover of neo-colonialism or through the guided intervention of the United Nations, the balkanisation of newly independent states, or the systematic division of the political or trade union forces, and in desperate cases, as in the Congo, colonialism goes as far as plots, repressive measures by army and police, and murder in cold blood." Neo-colonialism "manifests itself through economic and political interference, intimidation and blackmail in order to prevent African states from directing their political, social and economic policies towards the exploitation of their natural wealth for the benefit of their peoples." The United States, Federal Germany, Israel, Britain, Belgium, Holland, South Africa and France were named as the "main perpetrators" of neo-colonialism.

The resolution described eight main manifestations of neo-colonialism: (1) Puppet governments; (2) Regrouping of states into federations or "communities" linked to imperialist powers; (3) Balkanisation, or deliberate fragmentation of states; (4) continuation of economic dependence after political independence; (5) Integration into economic blocs which maintain the colonial and under-developed character of the African economy; (6) Further economic penetration through capital investments and loans; (7) Direct monetary control, as in those countries whose finances remain in the hands of the former

colonial power; (8) military bases, sometimes disguised as "scientific research stations" or "training schools."

After describing in detail the agents of neo-colonialism (including Moral Rearmament), the resolution deals with the means of fighting it. It calls first for the mobilisation of the African masses for the liberation of Africa, and adds : "The Conference realises that the struggle against neo-colonialism must be associated with the struggle against all forms of opportunism which is the mask of imperialist accomplices." It then sets out nine steps for fighting neo-colonialism, among them :

- (i) all independent African states to give aid to liberate those still dependent.
- (ii) all independent African states which still retain foreign military and para-military bases, to liquidate them as soon as possible.
- (iii) no aid with strings attached to be accepted.
- (iv) the independent African states to intensify their efforts to create an effective form of co-operation in the Economic, Social and Cultural spheres.
- (v) independent African states should not, under the guise of neutrality, remain passive on vital matters affecting the whole of Africa.
- (vi) the All-African Trade Union Federation should be launched immediately.