

THE PROBLEM OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE

An Answer to a Reader's Criticism

By H. RATHBONE

(Concluded.)

[This is the concluding portion of an article, the first part of which was published in the March issue (pp. 161-172). It is in the form of an answer to a criticism by Geoffrey Gorer, the author of "Africa Dances," of a review of that book which was published in the November issue of the LABOUR MONTHLY last year. Geoffrey Gorer's letter will be found in full in the March issue: as the writer stated in reply, "the central question raised by our correspondent is whether the policy of full independence is a practical policy for the peoples of the African colonies, whether in the words of the review, 'their independence is a primary condition for the improvement of conditions there.'" The writer in dealing with this raised in the first part of his article the question as to whether extreme colonial exploitation is not the very essence of imperialism. Proceeding from this he examined the so-called backwardness of the African peoples, and to prove that their reputed backwardness is really based on a complete underestimation of their capabilities, he reviewed the recent struggles of the Nigerian and Gold Coast peoples. This review of these struggles in other parts of Africa he continues in this concluding section.]

Kenya and the Right to Form Trade Unions

LET us take East Africa, Kenya for example. Here for many years any sign of independent combination among the mass of people in the tribal areas, let alone those forced to work on the farms and in the towns has been suppressed. For instance, there is the case of Harry Thuku, who attempted to form a trade union in 1921. This union, first under the name of the East African Native Association, was formed primarily to fight against a $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. reduction in wages which the settler employers suddenly announced they were going to impose. The Association was declared illegal, but was soon revived in a legal form under the name of the Kikuyu Central Association. So strong did it become that the Government took action by arresting Thuku under the Removal of Natives Ordinance, 1909, which empowers the Government to deport

any native suspected of sedition from one part of the country to another and hold him there without trial. However, Thuku was not immediately deported, but placed in a jail in the capital of Kenya, Nairobi. An agitation for his release was promoted by the Association, and when a demonstration was held outside the prison, troops opened fire on it and according to an eye-witness in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* of March 20th, 1929, 150 were killed, though the Government asserted that the number was only eighteen. Thuku was then deported and wholesale arrests were made, and under the Masters' and Servants' Ordinance many others were fined 10s. to 20s. for having absented themselves from work without their employers' permission (such fines would represent in some cases from three to four months' wages).

The Kikuyu Central Association survived though in a semi-illegal form. Its programme has been declared "revolutionary" and "bolshevism," though it contained, *e.g.*, in its 1929-30 programme submitted to the Government for the latter's commentary only such demands as (a) individual titles in land; (b) no encroachment on land already reserved; (c) no interference by Government District Officers in Native Councils; (d) permission to plant economic crops to be granted; (e) native representation by Africans as well as by Europeans on the Legislative Council and on the Municipal Council; (f) primary compulsory education; (g) the abolition of the Kipandi system whereby all native workers are compelled to carry registration cards or passes; (h) the recognition of only one chief for the Kikuyu tribe who should rule according to native custom; and (i) the establishment of a Central Native Council with representatives from the various tribes to act as a "consulting medium" between the Government and the natives.

At one time, though treated as an illegal organisation, the Association was able to work openly though very restricted in its activities, but immediately it tried to get into touch with bodies outside of Kenya the Government came down on it and hamstrung its organisation by passing an Ordinance prohibiting the collection of subscriptions by bodies except those recognised by the Government and also prohibiting the assembly of more than five persons together, except an official, euphemistically called an interpreter, was present. The Association has always regarded such so-called interpreters as just government spies.

Now what has been the reaction to these developments in England by, for instance, the Labour Party? Even a demand for the return of Harry Thuku, the leader of the Kenya African workers, to organise themselves in a trade union was not for a long time taken up, and it was only when obviously the Government agents from Kenya had at last found means of making him innocuous that the Labour Government finally conceded his release and return, only to go back into complete obscurity as far as is known. But on no occasion have they ever demanded

the repeal of the Masters' and Servants' Act by which any activities in organising the African workers in trade unions similar to those of Harry Thuku could be carried on. True, they have in their statement on Colonial Policy a paragraph saying that all African workers should have the right to organise in a trade union. But in practice they completely ignore the efforts of Africans themselves in this and in other cases, *e.g.*, in Sierre Leone, to organise by trying to procure the repeal of the Masters' and Servants' Acts or in actively supporting a strike movement when it takes place. Even in Bathurst, Gambia Colony, when in 1928 the workers tried to organise and had a demonstration which the police broke up, it was only after protest had been organised apart from the Labour Party that the Labour Government even deigned to seek information and then only from official quarters, completely ignoring the Union.

Further, we have to say that the Labour Party has given no support whatever to the demands of the Kikuyu Central Association. It is certainly true that they passed, on the recommendation of a previously appointed Government Commission, the famous Land Trust Ordinance by which the existing reserves in East Africa were guaranteed to the Africans "for ever," a solemn pledge which was so hypocritically broken by the last National Government immediately gold was found in the reserves. But when this Ordinance had been promulgated they took no steps to encourage the Kikuyu Central Association, but carried on as a Labour Government the same practices of administration as before.

Here in Kenya also is a striking example of the attitude of the British Government towards the implementing of their so-called trusteeship of the Africans. This example shows how, while they profess to regard the Africans as a backward race that must be progressively led forward to the point when the Africans might be graciously granted a *measure* of self-government, they are actively blocking the Africans' own efforts to obtain any education, which presumably the imperialists would say the lack of which was preventing them from moving forward out of their so-called backwardness.

Indeed, we find in the Report of the Native Affairs Department for 1931 for Kenya on page 75, the statement that "perhaps one of the principal handicaps at present is lack of education." That this is nothing but a hypocritically pious statement is shown by the following remarks taken from this self-same report but twenty pages earlier. After admitting that the demand for the extension of education was "widespread and insistent," especially in certain populous districts, it went on to say :

The demand also was for independent schools, and the main objection to such schools was the difficulty of exercising proper supervision and control. *Offers to subscribe both capital cost and full maintenance from Local Native Councils or private sources were numerous* and rendered the

position for Government most difficult, because the Government thought it essential to have entire control of these schools, but owing to the serious financial crisis it could not contemplate further contributions from central funds (page 52) (our emphasis, H.R.).

Because the Government refused to expend the salary of even one extra inspector—assuming that even that was necessary—though the schools were going to be built and run without a penny coming from the Government funds, the ban on any further education was maintained. This is quite apart from the fact that the despotic nature of the rule of British imperialism in this colony is revealed by this Government refusal to allow any school in the colony to exist except it be under their own direct control.

This example fits in well with the well-known fact that the funds set aside for education in all the colonies of Africa is a miserable proportion of the whole resulting in only an infinitesimal fraction of the population getting any education at all. Here again, the Labour Party and the Labour Government have failed even to carry out what lay behind their Hastings policy statement and initiate any campaign for more educational facilities.

Here also the Labour Party is only logically carrying out its fundamentally incorrect policy. For if Africans are too backward to govern themselves, obviously they cannot control their own schools, obviously they cannot have their own legislative assembly, etc., or even have representation in the existing assembly. The system whereby the present Legislative Assemblies are empowered to look after the interests of the natives on the advice of one or two members who are appointed for that purpose (but actually, in practice, who do the very opposite) becomes in fact, the Labour Party policy even though its statements as in the Hastings Conference Report on Colonial Policy are of a very different character. Consequently, to all intents and purposes the existing official colonial policy is its policy with the result that not only is the Labour Party altogether out of touch with any Colonial movement, but secondly the white administrators in these colonies tend no longer to feel uncertain as to whether they will be backed up by a Labour Government in carrying out the usual policy, and what is more they can afford to ignore the Labour Party policy altogether.

Bechuanaland and Unequal Justice

Now take the position in Bechuanaland. The agitation will be recalled that arose around Chief Tshekedi's refusal to hand over those responsible for the flogging of a decadent Britisher in 1933. It will be remembered how, as a result of this, the whole question of the status of the British Protectorates in South African came up for discussion and how there was a great agitation developed for the handing over of these Protectorates

to the Union of South Africa. On the other hand, a whole section—a section which, in the end, temporarily proved the most vital—were for their retention on the ground that the South African Government could not be relied upon to carry through the duties of “trusteeship” which they said Great Britain had undertaken when it had declared protectorates over them. Quite apart from the fact that existing conditions in the Protectorates could not very well be much worse even if they were handed over to South Africa—conditions which force 40 to 60 per cent. of the total male able-bodied population always to be outside the Protectorates seeking a living for themselves in the mines of South Africa and Rhodesia, etc., and buying food to send back to their people in those predominantly agricultural countries to prevent them from starving—quite apart from these conditions being well known here (it was, in fact, a candidate of the Labour Party in the recent General Election, Leonard Barnes, who himself exposed these facts in his book, *The Second Boer War*), again the Labour Party sided with those who desired the retention of these Protectorates by Britain and openly proclaimed their opposition to handing them over to the South African Union.

On the other hand, the peoples of the Protectorates themselves do not appear to have ever been consulted as to whether or not they would prefer neither of these two alternatives, but rather whether they would desire complete independence. The LABOUR MONTHLY at the end of 1933 in the December issue published an article entitled “The Events in Bechuanaland” in support of this latter policy. The writer of the article urged that while Tshekedi was known to be probably preparing a sell-out in the sense of agreeing to a still more stringent exploitation of the people, the masses in Bechuanaland, he pointed out, and in addition the workers here, must be on their guard against any such sell-out, such as the granting of any further mining concessions in Bechuanaland to British capitalists, something which the Bechuanaland chiefs, obviously owing to the pressure from the mass of the people, had always hitherto resolutely refused to do. For any such concessions would increase the hold of the imperialists over the Protectorate. As the writer stated, in the struggle against the granting of these concessions the mass of the people would come to realise the true standing of Tshekedi and would come to see that a revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle was the only struggle that really would lead them to independence.

The Labour Party, by supporting the retention of Bechuanaland by Britain as a Protectorate was, in fact, facilitating the possible sell-out by Tshekedi which actually did happen afterwards, or rather during the period when the agitation was still on; for he finally granted certain mining concessions over large tracts of the land. At the moment there is no news of any starting of operations on these concessions, but there is

no doubt that when this first happens, those who most put their faith in Tshekedi—and it will be remembered that it was obvious that Tshekedi had the mass of the people behind him in his original stand against Admiral Evans and his parade of force—will begin to realise that to carry through the struggle more revolutionary methods and new leaders would be needed.

South Africa and the Overcoming of Inter-Tribal Barriers

Now South Africa is in a somewhat different position to the other British African colonies owing to the fact that it is treated as a dominion and therefore the Union Government is regarded as independent of the British Government. Consequently, the latter always divests itself of responsibility for happenings in South Africa. Nevertheless, from the one fact that sixteen million pounds of direct tribute is drawn yearly by British capitalists from South Africa, quite apart from the fact that the whole of the defence of South Africa against external aggression is solely in the British Government's control, it is clear that whatever verbal shifts the British Government employs to pass on the responsibilities for the situation in South Africa, British capitalism as a whole is directly responsible for conditions in South Africa.

As is well-known, conditions for the Bantu and other non-European races in South Africa are one of the worst of any colonial country. Probably more than other African people, their freedom is restricted to an enormous extent. As was mentioned above, every feeling of hostility between one tribe and another which ever existed is sedulously kept alive by the Government. Nevertheless, such feelings have no real basis as various movements have shown—a particularly striking example being the first few years of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (commonly called the I.C.U.), organised by Kadali when the workers and peasants almost altogether without regard to their tribal origin joined up and flocked around this union as they considered that here was an organisation which could stand up for their interests against the Dutch and British alike. Actually, as it turned out, Kadali was unable or unwilling to carry through the organisation and it broke up into separate parts, and now only survives as a shadow of its former self in certain districts.

This example proves, however, that whatever the obstacle of language or race may be, under certain circumstances the conditions give birth to a movement of solidarity which breaks through all these obstacles. Certain it is that, as the example of the I.C.U. has shown, the desire for common struggle is often much greater than the existing forces capable of carrying it through in an organised fashion ; nevertheless, this is no argument for not persisting and learning from former mistakes.

I give just this one example from South Africa, and it seems to me to supply overwhelming proof that there exists the possibility in South

Africa as in every other colony, in spite of the obstacles that are put in their way, of Africans uniting. Yet many other examples could be given to-day of this possibility existing on a still more extensive scale such as around the issues of the fight against fascism (the Greyshirts), for the equalisation of wages, against the innumerable discriminatory laws, and especially against the two new Native Bills now before Parliament.

The Armed Forces the First Specific to Crush all Protest

As we have shown in the examples we have given, any attempt at organised struggle, however elementary, has been met with the full armed forces of imperialist rule, and there has been no hesitation in endeavouring to break up or illegalise any organisation whenever its formation has been attempted.

Last year, in South Africa, there occurred quite a relatively small but analogous example of this. Some native South African workers in the new state steelworks in Pretoria dared to leave their work in order, as their spokesman put it in a subsequent court proceedings, to insist on a definite reply to their request for a higher rate of pay; he stated that they were at present getting 2s. 6d. per shift and that they desired a rise of 6d. a shift. All 29 were arrested and tried for breaking their contracts under the Masters' and Servants' Act. The magistrate, in condemning them to a fine of 5s. each, read them the following lecture: "You think you can dictate to white people at the steelworks. You had better be careful" (*Johannesburg Star*, April 26, 1935). This example has added significance, for since then the magistrate's threat has so far proved an empty one in face of what we understand is now nearing a hundred per cent. organisation of these native steelworkers in a union of their own.

Large scale examples of this use of force are seen from the fact that troops were called out on several occasions in Kenya at the time when Harry Thuku was arrested and many of those who were demonstrating or on strike were killed and hundreds more were arrested, or from the ruthless suppression of railway workers in Sierre Leone when they tried to organise their union in 1926. Or more recently still against the Rhodesian copper miners when they dared to strike in protest against a sudden 50 to 100 per cent. increase in their taxation. Not only were these armed forces used to suppress the demonstration or strike in these cases and to shoot down and make wholesale arrests, but under the shadow of the bayonets of imperialism all efforts were made to carry through and try and ensure that every vestige of organisation was broken up.

All Strikes Must Lead to Violence, Say the Government

The case of the strike against increased taxation in the Northern Rhodesia Copper Belt is especially significant from several points of

view. Here it was obvious from the Report of Enquiry that the Government was taken completely by surprise not only by the mass nature of the strike, but also by its organisation and solidarity whatever tribe the Africans belonged to or language they spoke and to the fact that as the Report repeatedly states no damage was done to property or indeed any assault committed on European women, the latter of which they especially seem to have expected, in spite of the fact that for a time the Africans were completely in control of some of the areas and had a free run of the mine property. The Report states that the strike was "entirely unexpected by the Government" (page 58), though they themselves admit that they :

Cannot help sympathising with the feelings of the natives when they were informed in the middle of the year that their tax had been increased retrospectively (*i.e.*, from the beginning of the year, H.R.) ; such an action amongst income-tax payers has been known to give rise to lively protests (page 33).

Yet, in spite of this professed sympathy for the strikers, they find that the firing by which at least six Africans were killed was justified !

We find elsewhere in the Report the real reason for the justification of these murders. For as a result of their investigation into the firing, one of their findings is the following significant statement :

It is clear that any serious strike among natives at the mines must for many years resolve itself into a strike with violence.

Here, if anywhere, it is made crystal clear that such is the degree of exploitation, such is the necessity to maintain it at this intense level that any protest against it by the workers must at all costs be crushed. This comes well indeed from gentlemen who have just prided themselves on repeatedly drawing attention to the restraint of the strikers and to the fact that practically no damage was done to the mines as was mentioned above, as evidence of the good and "friendly" relations which they assert exist between the African workers and the European mine managers and other staff. Friends, indeed, when these workers give of their surplus labour for the "high" wage (in the words of the Report)—of an average of 5s. 10d. a week. But when four times more than this weekly amount is yearly deducted in direct taxation and the African protests, friendly relations *must* give place to violence ; any African who persists *must* necessarily be shot.

One last important point that came out as a result of this strike—the joint organisation of which between the three mines at least sixty miles in all apart being maintained by bicycle pickets—was the fact that Government apparently dared not make use of the usual Masters' and Servants' Ordinance which of course exists in this colony. All those arrested were apparently convicted of "rioting" or "incitement to riot"—the temper of the Africans, their consciousness of the necessity for joint and organised

strike action obviously forcing an unprepared Government to treat this Ordinance, which seeks to prohibit any worker from leaving his employment without his employer's permission, as a dead letter. It reinforces our argument that the struggle and its degree of success will force in a like degree the Government to retreat.

Repression with Violence the Rule

Nevertheless, the local Governments persist in employing in all these African colonies of Britain every possible means to prevent any independent organisation or movement towards solidarity. South African legislation abounds in every sort of law buttressed up by unwritten customs which in every direction fetter the freedom of the native South African. The latest new attempt to abolish the franchise in the Cape province in South Africa for the limited number of the native population which pass the stringent qualifications as laid down in the Act of Union, is an example there of this developing process. Moreover, in the Bill which the Government have introduced to substitute for this franchise a system of advisory councils for the Negro peoples, they have taken the opportunity to try and dove-tail it in with other restrictive legislation. For instance, a conviction under the Riotous Assemblies Act is to be considered a disqualification from being a member of these so-called councils, which are to be set up under the indirect method of election in this Bill. Now this Riotous Assemblies Act, passed a few years ago, gives the Minister of Justice in person power to sanction the deportation from one part of South Africa to another of anyone he considers as "stirring up hatred" between the different races in South Africa.³ The result is that anyone who takes part in organising native South Africans is liable to be had up under this Act and his movements by a series of convictions finally completely restricted; already, several people in South Africa have only two provinces out of the four in which they can move freely as a result of this Act. The series of Pass laws, the Urban Areas Act, the Colour Bar Act, all these and many more have their different ways of restricting the liberty of the Africans. A similar process, though not as yet so developed and intricate, is growing up in all the other colonies.

Parallel to this legal restriction, the African in all sorts of ways continually finds himself up against the British Government or the white population generally because of his colour. In South Africa, for instance in Johannesburg, the natives can only use special trams and from most

³This Act, by the way, in this is like the much older Removal of Natives Ordinance of Kenya that was employed as mentioned above against Thuku. It will be seen that the lofty condemnation of South African native policy by the British Government as in no way compatible with the "pure ideals" of the native policy pursued by British imperialism in the Colonies it directly administers, is really nothing but hot air and in this particular, this policy, so much condemned by British publicists, seems to have its origin in exactly that policy with which it is so unfavourably contrasted.

cinemas they are barred ; again, the colour bar exists against their entry into any skilled occupation, though managers in the gold mines are known to have admitted that there isn't a job in the mines which natives are not capable of performing. In many African colonies if any white agent of the Government or of any British firm is seen to admit into his house Africans as social beings, he himself is in danger of being victimised both economically and socially or at any rate of being passed over when due for promotion.

In general, every free development of African economy is prevented. There is the classical example of certain peasants in Kenya being forcibly prohibited from growing a commercial species of coffee which is suitable for sale outside the colony on the grounds that all such coffee should only be grown by the white colonisers ; several peasants a few years ago when they insisted on doing this had their plants torn up by white agents before their eyes and had no means of redress. The consequence of the whole of this restriction on commerce and industry is that there is for instance no native owned bank in the whole of the British colonies of Africa and hardly any industry at all owned by Africans apart from small trades and peddling.

The whole situation boils down to this, that at every point the African is coming to see the personification of all the difficulties he meets with in developing his own economy in the armed force of the British Government or its local agents. True, a few Africans in one or two of the colonies are recruited into the local regiments, but the British practice, particularly in the last few years, has been to disband these military units and only recruit Africans for the police force, while in certain of the colonies there is conscription for the European population into so-called "Defence" forces, openly stated to be, as for instance in Southern Rhodesia, primarily for "defence" against the African inhabitants of the colony. Consequently, when any worker strikes for higher wages and better conditions or any peasant protests against heavy taxation or against the swindles, practised by the big trusts to rob him or her of even the local market price let alone the world market price for his goods, he or she immediately comes up against the full forces of imperialism.

The Perspective of the African Revolution

For a variety of reasons, however, it must be stated that the development of African economy has lagged considerably behind the fully-developed capitalist economy of those regions with more temperate climates. For one thing, technique is only now being able to solve the barriers to economic development which the extremes of heat and of cold have formed. Added to this is the fact that imperialism has, as we have shown, deliberately stifled more comprehensively even than in almost

any other group of colonial countries all attempts by Africans to use what possibilities the existing level of capitalist technique has hitherto offered.

The result, of course, is that the level of African economy is still low. In this very limited sense African society is backward compared to European, but as we have shown in the process of the struggle, Africans with practically no previous experiences of their own and with the meagre opportunities left open to them of learning from the struggles of the European workers and peasants, can in no sense be called inherently backward.

In consequence of this position, while advanced colonial countries such as India can very well achieve independence prior to the revolution in the imperialist countries, it must be stated that it may very well happen that the backward nature of Negro African economy *may* result in African independence being achieved *only parallel* with the revolution in imperialist countries.

This possibility lays an additional responsibility on the victorious revolutionary movement in the imperialist countries being particularly prepared to come to the assistance of the colonial peoples. By assistance, we mean that kind which the Soviet Republic of Russia proper was able to render to the republics of the former colonies of the Tsarist Empire. A sharp distinction must here be drawn between this kind of *assistance* and capitalist *exploitation* of these colonies. The victorious revolution in the imperialist countries would of course immediately recognise the absolute independent sovereignty of the colonial peoples and their right to select whatever form of government they considered best fitted to their development. At the same time the possibility of friendly assistance by a British Soviet State to the former British Colonies is immense. The lending of technicians in all branches of industry and of every kind of scientific worker, the advance to them of machinery so that they can create an industry best suited to their climate⁴ and resources.

Further, the tremendous experience of the British working class on both the industrial and political fields would be invaluable to Africans, enabling them to learn to avoid the mistakes and setbacks which British workers have suffered before they reach their goal. British trade union, political and co-operative organisers would all be needed on the basis of friendly relations between the two peoples.

⁴Here we are aware of the doubts of many Africans as regards the advisability of encouraging factories in Africa. After seeing the hell many factories are in Britain, they shudder at the prospect of deliberately creating such hells in tropical Africa where their horror would be ten-fold intensified. But industrial technique has now reached such a level as would make it possible, to take one instance only, for the what might be intolerable heat in factory life in the tropics to be completely counteracted

What can Now be Done

Isn't it obvious that, as we have pointed out in giving examples to show the stage of the struggle in several of the colonies, there is likewise tremendous room for fraternal bonds of solidarity being forged in the struggle of the two peoples *to-day*, which will prepare the way for the technical and organising assistance being offered and more readily accepted by the Africans on the victorious morrow.

As we have shown, the extreme exploitation of the Africans is the very essence of imperialism. Consequently, this means that the initial fight for the elementary rights of organisation and meeting, health, housing and education, will be met with even greater resistance than in the home countries. But driven back the imperialists can be, and the more conscious the solidarity of the British workers the more certain will be the Africans' success. Trade union and political organisers prepared in advance to stand up against all the forces of the State (remember the Rhodesian statement to the effect that it was inevitable that all large-scale colonial strikes would lead to, read must be suppressed by, violence) will be even more valuable than after the revolution. The fight for the sending of trade union and political delegations on tours of investigation like the T.U.C. delegations to Russia or to attend African conferences and congresses, the organisation of literature, both its writing-up, printing *and* despatch, offer immense fields of work.

Finally, even though we have seen that independence is a primary condition for the improvement of the Africans' conditions, this by no means involves that the struggle for the betterment of these conditions and the beating back of the yoke of imperialism from off their necks does not itself, as indeed we have shown it does, lead directly forward to the final struggle for independence.

There exists to-day a large body of opinion in the rank and file of even the Conservative, as well as the Liberal and Labour, Party who, while not prepared to recognise the right of colonies to secede, nevertheless are willing to join in protesting against the denial of the elementary rights of free speech and organisation, against the repressive measures of the Government in putting down any independent movement, however mild its nature, against the dastardly health and housing conditions, against the deliberately niggardly provision for education, against low wages and high taxation, and for above all the provision of more land to the people.

In the protests that should be made in collaboration with these people, the actual conditions of imperialism will become revealed to large masses of them and the problem of African independence will come to be a demand of urgency to them and not a utopian dream, as is regarded by many to-day, or again by many others as a practical impossibility.

Such a large body of opinion exists to-day, just because the colonial problem, owing to the question of the redistribution of colonies now being sharply put by the fascist expansionist countries like Germany, Italy and France, occupies the very centre of the international political field. Consequently, many who have previously accepted the evils of imperialism and passed them by in the face of what appeared to them more urgent problems, by the very struggle of the Abyssinians against fascist Italy are now being forced to take sides in this war of colonial liberation. Inevitably, the vast majority take the side of Abyssinia against Italian fascism and then immediately come up against the problem of the colonies of their own imperialism.

To draw these people in who now for the first time are realising that there is such a thing as a colonial problem, to join with them in protesting against any single evil or evils of capitalism, to join in demanding the elementary rights at present denied the colonial peoples, can but widen the struggle, can but advance the consciousness of wider and wider numbers to the true significance of imperialism, can but lead to similar processes in the colonies and so inevitably lead forward to the joint struggle of the vast majority of the British and Colonial people for complete independence, for complete freedom from the yoke of imperialism.

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