

Effects of the Imperialist War upon the Colonies.

By M. N. Roy.

The fact that the colonies constitute a valuable reserve of Imperialism was very well demonstrated during the war which broke out ten years ago. Although the theatre of the great world conflagration was in Europe, the colonies belonging to the imperialist powers involved in the war were no less a victim. Firstly, the war was carried into several colonial countries which had very little to be engaged in that notorious massacre. For example, the inhabitants of Africa were not at all concerned in this conflict between two robber nations under the domination of any of which they would be led out the same fate — that of spoliation, slavery and racial exploitation. Secondly, there were other countries which did not become the scene of actual warfare; nevertheless, they were forced to contribute heavily in human lives and materials. The most important in this category was India.

The scramble over colonial possession was not the least important of the causes that led to the imperialist war. That is the case, the very subject peoples had no reason to be engaged in this conflict, which was undertaken to decide at the point of arms to which group of imperialist robbers they would belong. The forced participation of colonial soldiers in the war was, therefore, bullying the slave to forge his own chains. And the imposition of heavy economic burdens upon the colonial people for the prosecution of the war was making them buy their slavery at a dear price. This was the greatest irony of history.

By its very nature capitalism forced upon the foremost European powers the necessity of colonial expansion. England had the field early enough. By virtue of the fact that she was more than fifty years the workshop of the world, she became the mistress of the world at the expense of earlier imperialist nations, namely the Portuguese and Dutch. She even succeeded in checking the march of French Imperialism in Asia and America. When towards the end of the last century she entered the lists, she found all the coveted regions of the globe in possession of England and partially of France. Her determination to secure a place in the sun by any means, led to the great world conflagration which has reduced her to such a hopeless state from which capitalism cannot recover.

This war, which was caused by such predatory motives, was shamelessly declared to be the war in defence of democracy and the rights of peoples to live in freedom. England, France and Tsarist Russia, which taken together, dominated the major portion of the world inhabited by hundreds of millions of people not belonging to the ruling nations, were champions of this fight for freedom. The subject races were called upon to participate in this war which was to save the world from autocracy — which would make the world safe for democracy, but which in fact was meant to give the upstart Teutonic Imperialism which dared to challenge the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxons and their allies.

Not aware of the fact that these empty phrases might not succeed in blindfolding the bourgeoisie of the most advanced colonial lands, like India, imperialist governments thought it necessary to make some gestures indicating the prospect of some readjustment in imperial relations. That is, promises for administrative reforms and economic concessions were made to the native bourgeoisie in remuneration for services that they were required to render for the prosecution of the war. It means that the class character of the imperialist war was manifest even in the far off countries. The object was to harness the immense colonial reserve forces for the cause of the world slaughter; and the native upper classes were found ready to lend themselves willingly to the policy of Imperialism in return for the promise which was made, once the emergency was over.

At the end of 1915 and the beginning of 1916, when the Entente looked almost lost, the ability of England to draw heavily upon the reserve forces, both in man-power and material resources, saved the situation. Thanks to the troops sent out of India, a considerable portion of the British army could be withdrawn from the Eastern Fronts and sent into the decisive battles fought on the fields of France and Flanders. Besides, no less than 200,000 Indian soldiers participated in the hardest campaigns on the Western Front. This contribution of India is calculated together with the contribution from the French-African colonies and the masses

of coolies imported like cattle from China to work behind the trenches, one can visualise to what an extent the colonial peoples were bled to satisfy imperialist greed.

The story of the brutality with which these colonial herds were recruited to be sacrificed on the battle fields in unknown lands, often thousand of miles away from home, has not yet been told. In India, for example, recruits were enlisted from the peasantry which had been left largely under feudal tutelage. The native feudal barons enthusiastically undertook the task of sending their levies for the defence of the Empire which had so kindly protected them by systematically obstructing the growth of modern means of production. But the method of recruitment was often so violent and the enthusiasm among the old soldiers as well as the new recruits naturally so lukewarm, that the Indian troops were not at all trusted, and were treated like bands of convicts. In 1916 signs of mutiny among the troops were noticeable. Many instances of fraternisation with the nationalist insurrectionary movement were discovered. Consequently, all the Indian regiments were kept disarmed. Of course, as usual, they were invariably officered by Englishmen, and the artillery is as a rule manned by British soldiers.

There was no end to the deceitfulness with which the situation was handled. The troops were told that they would not be sent to the European fronts; that they were being sent to release the British troops in Egypt and Arabia; and that in no case would they be called upon to take part in actual fight. But in any case the Indian

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The Day of the German Nation.

"It is the ardent hope of our hearts that the arms will be victorious which fight for the sacred cause of the German people. The picture now presented by the German Reichstag as the representative of the nation will engrave itself indelibly in the consciousness of the whole German race and will remain in history as the day of the proud and tremendous revival of the German spirit. . . . Man for man, the German social democrats have voted for the loan. In line with the whole of the international social democracy, the German social democracy, the jewel class-conscious proletarian organizations, is also utterly opposed to war, and ardently in sympathy with the peace and solidarity of nations. . . . but since the German fatherland is in danger, since the national independence of the people is menaced, the social democracy stands up in the defence of the fatherland, and the "men without a country", the "red gang", as the Kaiser once sneeringly called them, are now offering to the State, the blood and treasure of the toiling masses."

soldiers were completely helpless. They were disarmed and placed under the constant vigilance of British soldiers and officers armed with the most modern means of warfare. At the least sign of disaffection they could be wiped out. It was, therefore, easy to herd them on the transport ships like packs of cattle; and once they were on ships they could be sent anywhere. On the fronts there was no choice. Indian troops were always placed in the front trenches. No less than fifty per cent of the Indian troops in France were killed.

Then the miserable economic plight into which the masses of the Indian peasantry has been reduced by imperialist exploitation, was helpful to recruitment. The arge army of landless peasantry are hungry practically all the year round. The imperialist policy of obstructing the development of modern industry had overcrowded the land. Millions and millions of people are unemployed several months out of the year. And those who are fortunate to get employment are miserably paid. Therefore, the employment in the army is very much coveted. Low as the wages of the Indian soldiers are, they are almost princely as compared with the agricultural wages. Then the standard of living in the army is also much higher than that of the Indian poor peasant who hardly lives as a human being.

All these factors taken together made it possible for imperialism to draw fully upon Indian reserves. The contribution of India in the realm of supplies was no less considerable and

no less forced than as regards man-power. Practically the entire burden of supplying and outfitting the armies on the Eastern Fronts fell upon India. Besides the enormous contribution made in munitions, equipments, transport-vehicles, food-stuffs, etc., 100,000,000 pound sterling was raised and sent to England as "India's gift" to the war chest. Then the amount raised in the shape of loans comes up to several times as much.

During three years such a large portion of the total food-stuff produced in the country was exported to feed the armies, that not only the prices went up, in some cases as high as 400 per cent, but the scarcity caused by this export verged on famine all over the country. To demonstrate their loyalty the landlords had contributed handsomely to the war-chest, only to shift the burden on the already bent backs of the peasantry. So that it was the poor peasant who ultimately paid in human life and material resources for the war which was waged in order to vindicate the hegemony of British Imperialism, that is to keep him perpetually in slavery.

The end of the war found India absolutely exhausted. The economic ruin of the peasantry, which constitutes the great bulk of the population, told heavily upon the general economic life of the nation. The impoverishment of the majority of the people necessarily reduced their buying power. The war had ruined the people of India no less seriously than it ruined the belligerent nations actively involved in the conflict.

England came out of the war victoriously. Not only was the impertinent German rival crushed, but new territories of large extent and many more millions of subject peoples were added to the British Empire. But what was India's share in this victory? She helped to free the small nationalities from Teutonic tyranny; she herself, however, continued to be under British domination. She helped to make the world safe for democracy, but she was considered unfit for democratic government. The promises made during the war were not translated into action. The bourgeoisie, which during the war had stood loyally by the British government in the hope of getting a place in the sun in remuneration for the meritorious services rendered, became discontented. They dared to demand that the doctrine of self-determination should be applied to India. Already during the war they agreed to help England prosecute the war on condition that India would be given Home Rule as soon as the victory was won. Victorious British Imperialism wriggled out of the promise by offering a beggar's share which was indignantly rejected by the largest section of the bourgeoisie; but the upper strata found the Reforms sufficient for their interest

Encouraged by the wide-spread discontent among the masses, the bourgeoisie threw down a challenge to Imperialism. The country was in a state of revolt. Imperialism did not hesitate a day in forgetting all the professions about the rights of nations and self-determination. It came down upon the popular movement with all the forces of repression. The stories of Amritsar are already notorious. The echo of that infamous incident was heard in England even in the last weeks in connection with O'Dwyer Sankern Nair Case. Before the signing of the League of Nations Covenant signed at Versailles, the voice of a great people was drowned in blood.

It will be interesting to recollect what attitude the British Labour Party, and particularly Macdonald, took at that moment. They were not yet encumbered with the responsibility of the Empire. The League of Nations, which they hailed as a panacea for all the evils of Imperialism, had not yet been proposed in its true character as the pernicious instrument of imperialist domination. Nevertheless, Macdonald and his colleagues objected to such "insane acts" as the Amritsar Massacre, not as violent suppression of the rights of people, but as a crime which might provoke a situation which would place the English women and children in India in danger. The pacifist Mr. Macdonald has always been an imperialist. He believes in the civilising and democratising mission of the British Empire. Therefore, today we find him valiantly endeavoring to rescue the capitalist system from the impasse it has been dragged into by imperialist greed.

The tenth anniversary of the day when the predatory nature of Imperialism set fire to the whole world, finds one who ostensibly opposed the war, at the head of the great Empire which emerged victorious out of the international butchery, trying to assure the permanence of this Empire by seeking to induce the hundreds of millions of people subjugated by it to live peacefully under the protection of the British Lion. The bourgeoisie is staggered at the catastrophe in which the world has been landed. Having failed to drag the capitalist system out of this hopeless impasse, it is called in the hypocrisy of Social Reformism, and Snobbish Socialist Imperialism to help them in this graceless task. The pacification of the colonial people is considered to be one of the ways out. Labour Imperialists and petty-bourgeois reformists have been employed to perform this work and to glorify Imperialism thereby. But Imperialism has pronounced its sentence. Nothing can save it. The ravages of the imperial war will be remedied only by a victorious civil war on an international scale — a civil war which will overthrow capitalism and disrupt Imperialism. The sufferings of the last ten years are, therefore, the birth pangs of a new revindicated human