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IMPERIALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The charter of the United Nations begins with a series of paragraphs which profess to set forth the fundamental principles by which "the peoples of the United Nations" mean to be guided and the essential objects which they propose in common to pursue. The United Nations, we are there told, are determined not only "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," but also "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," and to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors."

Article Two of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, at its session in Paris on December 6, 1948, states: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

"Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which

a person belongs, whether it be independent, Trust, Non-Self-Governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."

To what extent have these rights been realized? With how much success have these aims been pursued? To what extent have the distinctions mentioned been wiped out or overcome? To what extent are they backed by a burning desire to translate these pledges into action? What provisions for action exist? In other words, what part of it is just an expression of pious hopes; what part of it is, in fact, hypocrisy? But even more important is the question 'what parts of these two and similar declarations are feasible and in what parts is the feasibility precluded?

Both documents contain provisions which exclude the possibility of the international enforcement of several provisions of those very declarations. They make it impossible for one country to force another to implement these provisions. And this arouses the fear that, despite the fact that these declarations are the first declarations of this kind internationally accepted, -- the bill of rights and the declaration of the rights of man adopted by the American people and the French people during their own revolutions were national documents --- these rights and aims of mankind have not come nearer to their realization. This holds true, especially with regard to the subject we are discussing today, human rights and imperialism. I would like to take the word or the term imperialism

during this discussion in its strict and generally accepted sense of colonial militarism which is the domination of one country over another.---The latter usually of a more underdeveloped nature than the dominating country.

The United Nations Charter, in this respect, contains provisions with regard to the direction towards self-rule of the dependent territories. In the section dealing with the dependent territories, it also contains provisions with regard to the fundamental rights and safeguarding the fundamental interests of the population of such areas.

And when we in Indonesia, through our underground channels, heard about the Charter being worked out in San Francisco, a flash of high hopes went through our ranks. Would this be the light by which we could guide ourselves toward our goal? But, soon these hopes vanished. From the daily reports which were beamed all over the world, dealing with the proceedings of the San Francisco Conference, it became gradually very clear that after the war the colonial situation would not be changed, at least not on the basis of the United Nations Charter. If anything was going to be changed in our relationship with our former masters, that change would have to be made by ourselves.

The United Nations Charter provided for a United Nations Trusteeship Council. After heated debate, however, it was decided in the San Francisco Conference that no country was under compelling obligation to transfer its colonies to that Trusteeship Council. The administration and the development of the existing colonies, therefore, remained the exclusive right of the colonizing country, outside the scope of the United Nations and its Charter.

The mere fact that there is expressly no obligation at all on the part of any country to submit its dependent territories to the United Nations Trusteeship Council suffices to prove that here again the United Nations Charter, itself, precludes in a way the possibility of the enforcement of some of its own provisions. History, however, has now shown that there is another and unexpected way in which the colonial problem could enter into the jurisdiction of the United Nations. Only -- and this is the lesson which the Indonesian revolution contains ---only when a subjugated people rise up in arms against their colonizers, or when their colonizer tries to crush the nationalist movement by armed force, only then does the colonial issue pass beyond the boundaries of the exclusive sovereignty and jurisdiction of the colonizing metropolitan power and into the jurisdiction of the Security Council. Therefore, only when the old colonial issue becomes a threat to the peace is the matter dealt with by the United Nations on the basis of other provisions of the United Nations Charter and it is not dealt with by the Trusteeship Committee, but by the Security Council. Then the anomaly of the

whole situation and the basic injustice of it are tragic.

What are the features of colonial imperialist rule from the viewpoint of human rights? Under colonial rule the needs and the interests of the colonizing metropolitan power were decisive in determining the final economic structure, social organization and political status of the colony since that rule was in the first place intended to serve and safeguard the interests of the metropolitan power. It could not but be based on the denial of democratic rights to the indigenous population. It could not be based on serving the interests of that indigenous population, nor could it aim at stimulating the activities and responsibilities of that indigenous population in any field, economic or industrial, for fear that they might clash with the final interests of the metropolitan power. Therefore, there was no industry to speak of -- only a one-sided agricultural economy to keep labor's wages low.

The interests of the indigenous population usually were only served to the extent that they coincided with the immediate or long-term interests of the metropolitan power. In the final analysis, these interests were the decisive ones, and wherever these interests were endangered by economic or political activity on the part of the indigenous population, there the security of life and property, of freedom of speech, of right of fair trial -- the appearance of which was sometimes carefully kept up -- and all that is generally considered as the basic human rights, ended. For instance, Sjahrir was exiled for more than ten years, until the Japanese invasion, without trial and without indictment. Two articles of the Netherlands East Indies Penal Code made it punishable by imprisonment or exile for anyone who acted contrary to public order, either orally or in writing -- in other words, contrary to the colonial order. Strikes were not forbidden, but anyone inciting to strike was considered as endangering public order. The Dutch Governor-General in the Netherlands East Indies was vested with so-called exorbitant powers -- the powers to isolate anybody whom he, personally, and not a court, considered as being contrary to public order.

The factors mentioned here eventually gave rise to the colonial society as it is known now. It was a society where the top layer almost exclusively, economically, politically and socially, consisted of Dutchment, the middle class of foreign Asians, and the rest of the native population. It was a society which consisted of groups, racial groups which socially remained apart.

without social contact with each other. These social groups, and even social classes, tended to coincide with racial lines. It was a society which was only held together by the economic motive and lacked any real social integration.

How then do the colonized people themselves feel about this colonial rule? Their resistance against colonial rule very naturally took the form of a struggle for democratic rights. For the same reason, it took the form of a struggle for the safeguarding of the essential human rights, human rights in the widest sense of the word, as pertaining also to human rights in the political, social, economic and educational fields.

Therefore, this colonial nationalism which arose as a reaction against colonial rule was characterized by these main elements: a struggle for raising the standards of living of the people and a struggle for democratic and human rights. But colonial nationalism, as a reaction against foreign rule had not only these positive elements but it also had negative and disruptive elements as well. In many colonial countries the social^{and economic} problems which exist in every country very often tend to take the form of racial problems, since the social lines of division and economic differences are many times identical with the division of racial groups, as in India, Indonesia and Malaya. This is not coincidental, but many times the results of a deliberate racial colonial policy pursued by the colonial power. Example: Indonesia, Malaya.

Reaction against the social and economic differences,

therefore, many times took the shape of racial hatred, disfiguring the essential character of the nationalist movement, and not only disfiguring but also paralyzing it, since emotionalism or, in this case, racial hatred, never opens any prospects for the solution of problems which are in essence social and economic problems. This realization only gradually permeated the nationalist movements in the colonial countries and there was only a gradual shift from this emotional reaction against the colonizers to a more objective political strategy, aiming at well-defined political and economic aims based on a cold analysis of the actual social problems. Nevertheless, it is true that much of the original impetus and original force of these nationalist movements was derived from this violent and explosive emotional reaction. It was this aspect, in fact, which preoccupied the colonized people as a whole and as individuals, as long as freedom from colonial subjugation was the main and predominating problem, just like that of a man with diseased eyes, who is constantly aware of the fact that he has eyes and that he wants them cured, whereas the average man uses his eyes and ~~xxxxxx~~ is scarcely aware of them.

It is a reaction found in a colonial situation but found as a general reaction of any political minority in any country where there is discrimination against them, sometimes despite the fact that that political minority may at the same time be a numerical majority. It is a feeling which pervades the whole atmosphere in which such a minority lives and works and which is the dominating reaction against any real or even imaginary injustice resulting from their status under political discrimination. It is a reaction which makes impossible a sound and more businesslike and objective reaction to the general problems of society. It is a reaction which, nevertheless, can only be cured by the attainment of full freedom or, in the case of a political minority, by the attainment of political equality. The leaders of Asia have been aware of this force, and of the danger it constituted, not only as a tremendously

important political factor among the forces at play in Asia but even more so because they felt it as their personal problem, as their personal tragedy. Nehru said: "We suffer from the disease of nationalism and that absorbs our attention and it will continue to do so till we get political freedom. As Bernard Shaw said: A conquered nation is like a man with cancer; he can think of nothing else---There is indeed no greater curse to a nation than a nationalist movement, which is only the agonizing symptom of a suppressed natural function. Conquered nations lose their place in the world's march because they can do nothing but strive to get rid of their nationalis movements by recovering their nationalist liberty....I have often yearned...for a chance to do some solid, positive, constructive work...Destruction and agitation and non-cooperation are hardly normal activities for human beings. And yet, such is our fate, that we can only reach the land where we can build after passing through the deserts of conflict and destruction. And it may be, that most of us will spend our energies and our lives in struggling and panting through those shifting sands and the building will have to be done by children of our children's children". These forces, however, no matter how dangerous they may be in the long run, are unquestionably the main source of energy which gives a political movement, arising as a reaction against colonial rule or against political discrimination in general, its momentum. It is fortunate that this is so, because an extended period of loss of freedom, with the consequent loss of human rights, either as a result of

colonial domination or political discrimination in general, is bound to have some very definite results in the psychological structure of the subjugated people. Such was the situation with regard to many parts and layers of our population before the Japanese invasion. There is a general inclination towards passivity. There is a continuous anxiety or fear prevailing among the population and too much of an inclination to avoid responsibility or any situation which might involve danger because of the insecurity as a result of the absence of human rights. If there is no immediate insecurity then there is still the feeling of envy, mixed with hatred, with regard to the dominating people; and at the same time, there is a self-consciousness and over-sensitivity with regard to their own position. In short, there is a general and deep demoralization of the whole people or the whole group. For it is true that the quiet resignation of a people or a group to a position of political and social insignificance and immaturity, is undermining the essential core of that group. This process of undermining the vitality of the people cannot be checked, not even by an improvement of social and economic conditions imposed from the outside, by outsiders. It is this process of ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ demoralization which eventually leads to the disintegration of that people.

This demoralization is not halted by the gradual improvement of living conditions brought about from the outside by others. It can only be stopped when the people themselves come to a realization of this demoralization, of their own passivity, their own sterility, and assert their will themselves and project that will into the political and economic scene.

Colonial subjugation, in fact, ends with the refusal of the subjugated people themselves to accept their role any longer. It ends at the very moment that they start questioning the right of their masters to subjugate them. Therefore, imperialism ends not at the moment that the imperialist power grants freedom, but at the moment that the colonial people themselves discover their potential ability to assume to themselves the responsibilities which until then were the exclusive right of their masters. For the same reason, discrimination against a minority in a country ends not with the passage of a civil rights program but ends at the moment that the minority themselves is convinced of its own creative ability. It is this basic attitude of the subjugated people or the minority towards their own position which in the end decides the question of freedom or subjugation, equality or continued discrimination. The final achievement of these goals may take decades but the matter has been decided in principle at that very moment.

Political immaturity and social inferiority end at the very moment that the people or the group concerned realize that political maturity and social equality are not products to be granted from the outside, but that they are products of conditions which will have to be created by the people themselves out of the conviction that what matters is the activation of the psychological and indigenous creative forces within themselves without which the attainment of political, economic and social maturity is impossible.

Out of this idea, this basic conception, colonial nationalism was born.

Colonial nationalism is, in essence, a reaching for renewed participation in life, out of the passivity of the past, out of the despair and dejection of living a life which is not one's own. It is a reaching for responsibility, a responsibility for their own life and for their own part in the general picture of society. It is this element in the nationalist movement which has evoked again the creative abilities of the people. It is in this way that colonial nationalism has brought about the spiritual renewal of the people, their spiritual renaissance based on the rediscovery of their own creative resources, because they have rediscovered their own human dignity.

Sjahrir --- To us, nationalism is only a bridge to achieve a position of full and complete human dignity. It is not a means of satisfying ourselves, still less a means of doing harm to the commonwealth of nations. We adhere to our belief in humanity, we are not enemies of humanity. Our nationalism is only a single facet of our service to mankind.

Despite the brutal forms it sometimes may take, in expressing itself, in essence our struggle is nothing but the struggle for the liberation of our beings as human individuals, along the road of the liberation of the soul of our people. The political fulfillment of our people is only a road to reach a position of self-

esteem and maturity for each of us as an individual.

Colonial nationalism, as a struggle against imperialism, as a struggle against the negation of democracy and human rights, has always been in essence a moral and ethical struggle because it is a struggle which leads the people out of a life without sense and without prospects. It is the inner acceptance of responsibility and the inner willingness for participation in life which makes for the positive and creative elements of colonial nationalism. The revival of a nation or of a group lies, therefore, not in claiming human and democratic rights but in actively creating those social and political conditions in which these rights can be realized by the people themselves.

From this viewpoint, therefore, the declarations of human rights and the provisions of the spirit of the United Nations is not a force in itself but it is merely the registration of the general consciousness of the world. They by themselves do not create the conditions in which they can be enforced or realized. That is up to the people and the groups of people themselves. But only in quiet self-confidence, based on the revival of their creative energies such people can create those conditions in which the human rights can flourish.
