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## LABOUR MONTHLY

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# LABOUR MONTHLY

*War Pamphlets*

No. 1

## The Imperialist Struggle for a New Redivision of the World

by

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(Reprinted from Vol. 22, No. 11 of *Labour Monthly*)

## T H R E E P E N C E



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# The Imperialist Struggle for a New Redivision of the World

BY E. VARGA

NEVER HAS human history been so rich in events, nor the succession of social formations so rapid as in the last century. This will be clear if we picture the world as it was a hundred years ago.

In 1840, the capitalist mode of production was already in the main the dominant one in the majority of the countries of the world. But the capitalist system had reached its highest development in several of the countries of Western Europe and in the United States of America; only in these countries had the bourgeoisie won political power and established a political régime answering to the interests of the capitalist mode of production.

Germany was still split up into thirty-six States, each with strong survivals of feudalism, its own currency and customs duties and its own laws. In the 1867 preface to *Capital*, Marx said of continental Europe, contrasting it to England, as follows:

“... We, like all the rest of Continental Western Europe, suffer not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead. *Le mort saisit le vif!*”

The Hapsburg monarchy on the Danube was a feudal absolutism in every respect. Italy was partly split up into a multiplicity of tiny States, and was partly under the foreign yoke of the Hapsburgs. In Russia, serfdom and the tsarist autocracy continued in full sway. In Turkey, which at that time embraced all Asia Minor, Northern Africa and the Balkans, a feudal system prevailed, headed by a military-clerical chief in the person of the Sultan. Japan, which was still completely cut off from the outer world, was partly under the sway of a pre-feudal system. As to Asia, with the exception of India and Africa, only its outskirts had been opened up by the capitalist powers of Europe.

Capitalist technique was still very primitive seen through the eyes of to-day. Textiles were the predominating branch of capitalist industry. In all Europe there were only 3,000 kilometres of railways, while in Asia and Africa there were no railways at all. Electricity, gas, automobiles and the chemical industry was still unknown.

But those were times of unhampered technical development of technology, of free competition and falling prices. Marx and Engels wrote in 1848, in the Communist Manifesto, that “the cheap prices of its (the bourgeoisie’s

—E.V.) commodities, are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate."

The cyclical movement of capitalist reproduction and the periodical crises of over-production had already begun in Western Europe. But the rapid expansion of the capitalist market as the result of the conversion of the peasants, who had hitherto maintained a self-sufficing economy, into purchasers and producers of commodities facilitated and expedited the passing of the crises.

It was a time when capitalism still signified progress and the rapid development of productive forces. It may still have seemed to the bourgeoisie that its special class interests coincided with the interests of society in general. Hymns of praise were sung to capitalism.

But amidst the chorus of eulogisers of capitalism, discordant notes, the warning voices of accusers and doubters, like Sismondi and the Utopians, could already be detected. In England the mass movement of the Chartists had already arisen, and was criticising the capitalist evil. But the man who was destined to discover the inherent laws of the capitalist mode of production and its historically transitional character—Karl Marx—was then, in 1840, still a student at the Berlin University.

It was a time when England was undisputably the leading capitalist country, the "workshop of the world", the mistress of the seas, a country which fought for its interests by the hand of foreign mercenaries, by the hand of other nations. England's hegemony had already lasted for about half a century.

This was the "comparatively peaceful" era of capitalism, as Lenin called it. Since the struggle for markets was chiefly waged by means of cheap prices, it was enough for British capital to open new trading ports in other countries. There was no need for it to conquer these countries outright. Even as late as 1852 Disraeli, the British Conservative Prime Minister, declared: "The colonies are millstones around our necks." (See Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VI.)

\* \* \* \* \*

But sixty years later, in 1900, the world presented an entirely different picture. The capitalist mode of production had brought the whole world under its sway. At the same time, the character of capitalism itself had changed. By virtue of its inherent laws of development, capitalism of the period of free competition had been converted into monopoly capitalism, imperialism. The transition to imperialism had been attended by profound changes, with which the reader will be familiar from Lenin's brilliant work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. We shall only dwell on the factors which have a direct bearing on the wars for the redivision of the world.

Combined in monopolies, finance capital seeks to secure maximum profits not so much by increasing the sale of commodities at low prices, as was the case in the period of free competition, as by high monopoly prices. This is attainable only by the artificial restriction of supply, by the elimination of free competition. For this purpose, associations of employers are first of all formed in the various branches of production in each country; after this, foreign competition is eliminated, or at least weakened, by the

introduction of protective tariffs; the "home market" is protected so as to allow only home monopoly capital access to it. In some cases the monopolistic combines of the stronger imperialist powers share up the world's markets and form international cartels.

But owing to high monopoly prices, the capacity of the home market is insufficient for capital, which accordingly experiences a need for foreign markets. And as the finance capital of all imperialist countries is striving for the same end, competition, ousted from the home market, is resumed in the foreign market and in an even more acute form, the form of dumping, that is, the sale of commodities abroad at below the cost of production, and sometimes even below self-cost. Only a monopoly of foreign markets makes it possible to sell goods abroad, too, at high monopoly prices. Consequently, monopoly capital, unlike the capital of the time of free competition, strives to bring foreign countries *under its political sway*, to transform them into colonies, to redivide the world among the imperialist powers in order to safeguard their monopoly in the markets.

There is one other reason that induces monopoly capital to subjugate other countries.

The high super-profits accumulate in the hands of the monopolistic combines in the form of money. This newly accumulated capital cannot find a fruitful field of investment in one or another branch of production in the home country, for if it did the production and supply of goods would exceed the capacity of the market (in view of the high prices imposed by the monopolies), which would lead to a fall in prices. Hence the tendency to export capital to countries capitalistically still undeveloped, where "profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap" (*Ibid*, Chapter VI).

But in order profitably to invest its capital in a foreign, backward country and to compel the native population to work as wage labourers, the financial oligarchy needs a guarantee of the security of its property and the right to dispose of the labour power of the natives. That is achieved best of all by conquering and enslaving the backward country, by converting it into a colony. And so, the export of capital is a stimulus to the imperialist policy of conquest.

An industrial monopoly is best guaranteed against the appearance of new competitors when the sources of raw material required for the production of its goods are its own exclusive property. Hence the hunt for sources of raw material all over the world, often enough not so much for the exploitation of these sources as to prevent them falling into the hands of competitors, present or future.

How is the monopoly of sources of raw material to be secured? The best way is for the imperialist power concerned to seize the country in which these sources lie and convert it into its own colony or semi-colony. The hunt for sources of raw material is therefore another stimulus to the imperialist policy of conquest.

But as the financial oligarchies in all imperialist countries pursue a similar policy of conquest, wars among the imperialist marauders for periodical redivisions of the world are inevitable.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, parallel with the transition to monopoly capitalism, another highly important change was in

progress among the imperialist countries : as a result of the law of unevenness of capitalist development, Great Britain was overtaken by two of her competitors—Germany and the United States of America—who ousted her from her monopoly position as the “workshop of the world”. Here are a few figures in illustration :

|               | PRODUCTION                    |        |                              |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
|               | Coal<br>(millions<br>of tons) | Iron   | Steel<br>(thousands of tons) | Cotton<br>(consumption) |
| 1850          |                               |        |                              |                         |
| Great Britain | 49.0                          | 3,200  | —                            | 640                     |
| U.S.A.        | 6.3                           | 564    | —                            | —                       |
| Germany       | 5.2                           | 208    | 6                            | 18                      |
| 1870          |                               |        |                              |                         |
| Great Britain | 110.0                         | 6,000  | 200                          | 1,100                   |
| U.S.A.        | 29.5                          | 1,665  | 69                           | 263†                    |
| Germany       | 26.4                          | 1,391  | 170                          | 81                      |
| 1900          |                               |        |                              |                         |
| Great Britain | 225                           | 9,000  | 4,900                        | 1,540                   |
| U.S.A.        | 241                           | 13,789 | 10,188                       | 875                     |
| Germany       | 109                           | 8,521  | 6,646                        | 307                     |
| 1913          |                               |        |                              |                         |
| Great Britain | 287                           | 10,300 | 7,700                        | 1,920                   |
| U.S.A.        | 509                           | 31,900 | 31,301                       | 1,307                   |
| Germany       | 190*                          | 19,300 | 18,329                       | 486                     |

(*World Economic Crises*, Vol. I. Institute of World Economy and World Politics of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., 1937.)

As we see, Great Britain which, in 1870 still far surpassed her competitors in all the more important branches of production, by the end of the nineteenth century had been overtaken and outstripped by her competitors—Germany and the United States—in all branches except the textile industry, whose importance had relatively diminished compared with heavy industry. This particularly applies to the highly important “new” branches of industry, of which figures are not available for purposes of comparison. But it may be safely said that Germany had surpassed Great Britain in every branch of the chemical industry, and that the United States as well as Germany had surpassed her in the machine-building industry. There can be no doubt that on the eve of the first world imperialist war both German and American capitalism, if we take only their power at home, were much stronger than British capitalism.

But the possession of colonies did not keep pace with the development of the internal strength of the leading capitalist powers. Significant in this respect are the figures cited by Lenin in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VI.

\* Plus 87,000,000 tons of brown coal.

† Figures for 1871.

# COLONIAL POSSESSIONS OF THE IMPERIALIST POWERS ON THE EVE OF THE WORLD WAR OF 1914

|                                           | Great<br>Britain | France | Germany | Russia | U.S.A. | Japan |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| Territory (millions of sq.<br>kilometres) | 33.5             | 10.6   | 2.9     | 17.4   | 0.3    | 0.3   |
| Population (millions)                     | 393.5            | 55.5   | 12.3    | 33.2   | 9.7    | 19.2  |

The size of the population of the colonies is, of course, economically more important than their territory, which may, as was the case with Germany’s African colonies, consist chiefly of sterile deserts. We find that the population of the colonies exploited by British imperialism was three times as large as the population of all the colonies of the other five Great Powers together!

In particular, the colonial possessions of Germany and the U.S.A., which had economically outstripped Great Britain in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, did not at all correspond to the economic, military and political might of these two powers.

Actually, British capital occupied an even more privileged position. In addition to its own colonies, it intensively exploited those belonging to the small states, especially the Portuguese colonies in Africa and the Dutch colonies in Asia. In the “semi-colonies” (China, Turkey, Persia) whose population Lenin estimates at 361,200,000 as well as in a number of the South American “dependant” countries like the Argentine and Uruguay, Great Britain had vast capital investments and powerful economic and political interests. According to the laws of imperialism, such a state of affairs was bound to raise the problem of a forcible redivision of the world.

At that period American finance capital was by no means as interested in a redivision of the world as German finance capital. The vast territory of the U.S.A. abounded in sources of raw material of all kinds: coal, oil, ore, cotton, etc. Part of the arable area was still uncultivated. Neither was there any particular urge to export capital, as it could be quite profitably invested at home. Consequently, there was no “superfluous” capital in the United States; on the contrary, right up to the first world war America imported capital, and at the time of the outbreak of the war owed some \$7,000 million to other countries, including \$4,000 million to Great Britain.\*

What American monopoly capital needed most of all was additional sources of cheap labour power. These it acquired not in the way the imperialist states of Europe did—by exporting capital to colonial countries where labour was cheap—but by importing millions of immigrant workers from all parts of the world. This influx of immigrants, or new consumers of goods, made possible the constant and extensive enlargement of the home market. Hence the export of goods was not as important for the U.S.A. as for the European countries. The United States exported less than 10 per cent of its output, whereas Great Britain, France and Germany exported approximately 23 or 25 per cent.

Quite different was the position of German monopoly capital. Germans had no sources of the highly important raw materials, such as oil, non-ferrous metals, textile staples and fats, on her own territory; she also lacked foodstuffs. In order to import all these Germany had to export large quantities of

\* Cleona Lewis, *America’s Stake in International Investments*, Washington, 1938.

her industrial manufactures, and this brought her into conflict with the colonial monopoly of the imperialist powers, especially of Great Britain.

The apologists of British imperialism, of course, never tired of asserting that in accordance with the "most favoured nation" principle the British colonies were opened to the trade and the capital of all countries on an equal footing with those of Great Britain. Formally speaking, this was correct, but actually it was far from the case. The building of railways and ports, electrification, the supply of rolling stock and the exploitation of sources of raw material in the British world empire were virtually a monopoly of British capital. Unless he has the "protection" of the authorities, no capitalist can secure in the colonies the labour power he needs. British capital likewise controlled the shipping, the banks and the credit system of the colonies. It was very hard for "foreign" capital to find any profitable field of investment in the British or French colonies.

Quite different was the case in the colonial possessions of states which were poor in capital. While Tsarist Russia was engaged in colonial conquest in Manchuria and Central Asia, the raw material resources of the Ukraine and of Baku were being intensively exploited by British, French and Belgian capital. Russia had become entangled in debt to the Western Powers and was dependent on them.

The English have always been fond of asserting that the Germans may acquire in the market the raw materials secured in the British Colonies on the same terms as British merchants. The British imperialists pretend to be oblivious of the fact that even so the colonial super-profits derived from the production of raw materials remain in the pockets of the British colonial capitalists.

The contradictions between the economic might of German monopoly capitalism (which in 1913 had undoubtedly far outstripped Great Britain), and the fact that the colonial population under its sway amounted to only 3 per cent of the population of the British colonies must be borne in mind when elucidating the causes that gave rise to the first World Imperialist War. Great Britain's reply to Germany's attempt to create her own colonial empire in Asia Minor (nominally under the rule of Turkey)\* by building a railway from Berlin to Baghdad was to *encircle* Germany. Great Britain concluded military treaties with France, Japan and, in 1907, with Russia, with which she had never found herself in the same camp ever since the Napoleonic wars. (Tsarist Russia felt that Germany's advance was a menace to her colonies in Central Asia and to her claims to Constantinople.)

British diplomatic intrigues had prepared the way for Italy's desertion of Germany by Italy, and for the adhesion of the United States to the British bloc. The first World Imperialist War was essentially a war between Germany and Great Britain for colonial possessions. As Lenin said, the problem of colonial possession was decided on the battlefields of Europe.

The issue of the war was not in Germany's favour. Under the Versailles Peace she lost even those not very valuable colonies which she had possessed

\* That German finance capital chose this particular territory for the foundation of a colonial empire was not fortuitous. Whereas Germany possessed a more powerful army, England enjoyed superiority on the high seas. Colonial seizures in overseas countries would have met with the resistance of the British Navy, whereas Asia Minor could be reached by internal waterways led through Austria-Hungary and the Balkans.

before the war; large pieces were cut off from her European territory, and a huge burden of reparations was imposed on her. All this was done with the object of preventing German capitalism from ever recovering and becoming a competitor of equal strength to Britain. Turkey was deprived of all her regions that had a non-Turkish population. Great Britain rounded out her colonial empire in Africa, obtained a straight road from Cape Town to Cairo, and established new lines of communication with India through Arabia and Irak. Such a division of the world was even more advantageous to Britain and France than the one that had existed before the World War. Italy was left out in the cold.

The nations under the colonial yoke of Tsardom were liberated by the Great October Socialist Revolution. Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, with the aid of the Soviet Union, largely or entirely shook off their dependence on imperialism.

As a result of the first imperialist world war and the changes that had directly sprung from it, the relation of forces by the time of the outbreak of the second imperialist war was as follows:

COLONIAL POSSESSIONS OF THE GREAT POWERS  
(Millions of sq. kms. and millions of inhabitants)

|                                                                                                                                 | Colonies |       | Home Countries |       | Total |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|---------|
|                                                                                                                                 | Area     | Pop.  | Area           | Pop.  | Area  | Pop.    |
|                                                                                                                                 | 1932     |       |                |       |       |         |
| Great Britain                                                                                                                   | 34.9     | 466.5 | 0.25           | 46.2  | 35.1  | 512.7   |
| France                                                                                                                          | 11.9     | 65.1  | 0.55           | 42.0  | 12.45 | 107.1   |
| Germany                                                                                                                         | —        | —     | 0.47           | 64.8  | 0.47  | 64.8    |
| U.S.A.                                                                                                                          | 0.3      | 14.6  | 9.4            | 124.6 | 9.8   | 139.2   |
| Japan (without newly conquered provinces of China)                                                                              | 0.3      | 28.0  | 0.4            | 65.5  | 0.7   | 93.5    |
| Total—five Great Powers                                                                                                         | 47.4     | 574.2 | 11.07          | 343.1 | 58.42 | 917.3   |
| Colonies of other Powers (Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Norway and Portugal)                                         | 9.6      | 87.6  | —              | —     | 9.6   | 87.6    |
| Semi-colonies and dependent countries (Arabia, Butan, Nepal, Sien, Central and South American countries, Abyssinia and Liberia) | —        | —     | —              | —     | 34.9  | 150.0   |
| Countries fully or mainly liberated from imperialist dependence (China, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan)                         | —        | —     | —              | —     | 3.0   | 480.7   |
| Other countries (capitalist)                                                                                                    | —        | —     | —              | —     | 3.98  | 224.1   |
| U.S.S.R.                                                                                                                        | —        | —     | —              | —     | 21.2  | 163.2   |
| Mongolia and Tuva                                                                                                               | —        | —     | —              | —     | 1.4   | 1.6     |
| People's Republic                                                                                                               | —        | —     | —              | —     | —     | —       |
| The World                                                                                                                       | —        | —     | —              | —     | 132.5 | 2,024.5 |

This table shows that Great Britain's superiority in the colonial world had become even greater than before the first World War. Great Britain had

over 466 million colonial people under her sway (a small part of this number—the inhabitants of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and part of South Africa, a total of about 20 million—are English; they are not colonial people in the true sense of the word, but they are in a state of economic and financial dependence on England), while France, the U.S.A. and Japan together had only 108 million. Until she conquered Abyssinia, Italy's colonies were only of slight value; Germany had no colonies at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the first World War, the importance of colonies to the monopoly capital of the imperialist powers has increased. The general crisis of capitalism which was still in an embryonic state before the World War, has now developed to the full. In all capitalist countries, the contradiction between the tendency of capital to extend production, on the one hand, and the relative restriction of the markets, on the other, has grown more acute. Hence the chronic idleness of a large share of production capital, chronic mass unemployment and a chronic redundancy of loan capital.

The finance capital of the imperialist powers is seeking a way out of the situation by strengthening its monopoly in its colonial markets, which is clearly shown by the following figures, borrowed from G. Clark's *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism*\*. This tendency has markedly developed in the past six years.

#### GREAT BRITAIN'S TRADE WITH HER COLONIAL EMPIRE

|        | (percentage of total trade) |         |         |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
|        | 1904-13                     | 1919-28 | 1929-34 |
| Import | 25.7                        | 33.0    | 32.9    |
| Export | 34.8                        | 40.5    | 44.6    |

#### FRANCE'S TRADE WITH HER COLONIAL EMPIRE

|        | (percentage of total trade) |         |         |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
|        | 1904-13                     | 1919-28 | 1929-34 |
| Import | 10.6                        | 10.8    | 16.4    |
| Export | 12.6                        | 14.9    | 24.1    |

These figures quite clearly reveal the rapidly increasing importance to these countries of their own colonies as markets, and show why wars for colonies, for a new redivision of the world are inevitable in the era of imperialism in general, and in the period of the general crisis of capitalism in particular.

This increase in trade with the colonies was achieved by the abandonment of the "most favoured nation" principle and the introduction of tariffs for the protection of English goods in the colonies and of colonial goods in England. Trade between the component parts of the British Empire had likewise increased.

The most complete monopoly is that of Japan in the Korean market. In 1936, of Korea's total imports amounting to 762 million yen, 717 million yen came from Japan and Manchuria, and of total exports amounting to 593 million yen, goods to the value of 518 million yen were exported to Japan and of 56 million yen to Manchuria.† An almost one hundred per cent monopoly.

\* G. Clark, *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism*, New York, 1936.

† Hubners *Weltstatistik*, 1939.

We find the contradiction between the economic might of the monopoly capital of Germany and of Great Britain, on the one hand, and their colonial possessions, on the other—which was one of the chief causes of the first World War—reproduced in a far more acute degree two decades later. The plan of the British and French finance oligarchy to hold their dangerous competitor—German finance capital—in a state of permanent economic suppression suffered a fiasco. It did so owing to the inherent laws of the capitalist mode of production, owing to the rivalry between Great Britain and France and the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States.

Notwithstanding the predatory Versailles Peace imposed on Germany, notwithstanding the heavy burden of reparations, German capitalism entered on a new phase of progress, partly with the help of American and British loan capital. By 1938, German capitalism had again taken first place among the capitalist countries of Europe, which is incontrovertibly proved by the following figures quoted in the *League of Nations Year Book* for 1938-39:

#### OUTPUT IN 1938

|             |                         | Germany | Great Britain | France |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------|---------------|--------|
| Coal        | (millions of tons)      | 186     | 232           | 47     |
| Brown coal  | ( " " " )               | 195     | —             | —      |
| Iron        | ( " " " )               | 18.6    | 6.9           | 6.0    |
| Steel       | ( " " " )               | 23.2    | 10.6          | 6.2    |
| Aluminium   | (thousands of tons)     | 160     | 23            | 45     |
| Electricity | (billions of kilowatts) | 55      | 25            | 19     |

These figures show that Germany has again considerably outstripped her European rivals economically. As is inevitable under capitalism economic development was accompanied by growing military power. The measures that had been taken to limit German armaments ceased to be effective and by 1939 Germany again possessed a powerful army and a stronger air force than any capitalist country in the world. Between the economic and military might of German capitalism, on the one hand, and its total lack of colonial possessions on the other, there was a similar if not more acute contradiction than in 1914. German monopoly capital began to demand an appropriate share in the exploitation of colonies. As in 1914, the reply of the British bourgeoisie was a new attempt to encircle Germany.

The importance of colonies as sources of raw material has grown considerably since the first World War. The British Empire's monopoly of certain raw materials, such as nickel, tin and rubber (the monopoly of rubber is shared by Great Britain and Holland) has become the source of vast super-profits. With the progress of technology such rare metals as manganese, chromium and molybdenum have become indispensable to modern metallurgy.

How true to-day is what Lenin wrote twenty-four years ago!

"... Monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are controlled by the one group. And we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them; for example, by buying up mineral lands, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of a struggle with competitors, including the risk that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a State monopoly.

The more capitalism is developed, the more the need for raw materials is felt, the more bitter competition becomes, and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds throughout the whole world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies." (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Chapter VI.)

Alongside of the economic importance of the colonial sources of raw material, their strategic importance is now greater than ever before. Oil, iron ore, non-ferrous metals, rare metals, rubber and many other kinds of raw material are indispensable for the conduct of modern warfare.

The bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries which lacked colonies suffered politically as well as economically. With the development of the general crisis of capitalism, the growing acuteness of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the formation of strong Communist parties in the capitalist countries, and the stimulus furnished to the revolutionary working class movement all over the world by the progress of socialist construction in the U.S.S.R., it has become more important than ever to the bourgeoisie to have a buttress within the working class in the shape of a bribed labour aristocracy. Only when this social basis of opportunism in the working-class movement existed could Social-Democracy play its traditional role as the main social buttress of the bourgeoisie. But to maintain a labour aristocracy, colonial super-profits, foreign capital investments and the brutal exploitation of defenceless colonial peoples were required.

The possession or lack of colonies explains the difference in the position of the Social-Democratic parties in the various capitalist countries to-day. Two sharply-defined groups of countries have arisen in the past ten years. The first group consists of the "rich" countries, the countries with extensive colonial possessions and huge capital investments abroad and with a corrupt labour aristocracy at home: Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries (the latter do not possess large colonies and, with the exception of Sweden, have no foreign capital investments, but they are to a large extent appendages and satellites of the British Empire). In all the countries of this group, the Social-Democrats are a legal mass party, are represented in the bourgeois coalition governments and continue to be the main social buttress of the bourgeoisie. But Social-Democracy is encountering the growing resistance of the working class, a result of the activities of the Communist parties.

The second group consists of the "poor" countries, countries with no foreign investments and with no, or only very small, colonial possessions: Germany, Italy, Spain, etc. The bourgeoisie of these countries is not in a position to maintain a labour aristocracy large enough to guarantee success to the activities of Social-Democratic parties in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, the bourgeoisie of these countries has entirely dispensed with the services of the Social Democratic parties, has driven them underground and has attempted to transfer to other parties the function of main social buttress of the bourgeoisie hitherto performed by the Social-Democratic parties.

Colonies are not only of economic and political, but also of strategical value. To-day more than ever before, every newly conquered region serves as a strategical base for further conquest. Any rocky island, however sterile and deserted, is of the utmost value if it helps to strengthen the strategical

position of some imperialist country; territory is important in itself, irrespective of its economic value. Hence the increased tendency on the part of the imperialists to seize any area they can, if only to prevent it becoming a military base for others. Economic, political and strategical factors in conjunction render a struggle for a new redivision of the world inevitable in the period of the general crisis of capitalism.

The present war is an imperialist war for the redivision of the world. And what Lenin said of the World War of 1914 likewise applies to the present war. The way for this war was similarly paved by *all* the imperialist countries. The financial oligarchies of all the imperialist countries bear an equal responsibility for it.

Lenin wrote in 1916, and repeated the idea several times before the October Revolution, that the proletarian revolution would break out "in connection with war".\* At that time it never occurred to the ruling classes that their rule was in any way endangered. But they know it to-day, and are afraid of it. The example of the Soviet Union is a warning to them. Nevertheless, the inherent laws of capitalism drive them to launch again into a struggle for a redivision of the world. The power of the Soviet Union, the strength of the Red Army, their fear of the working masses in their own country, and Stalin's wise peace policy all helped to frustrate the Munich policy of a united front of the imperialist powers against the Soviet Union. The antagonisms among the imperialist powers over the division of the world have *temporarily* proved to be stronger than the fundamental antagonism between capitalism and socialism.

The war between the imperialist states is undoubtedly weakening the entire capitalist system. The superiority of socialism stands out all the more clearly and distinctly. The conditions for successful proletarian revolutions are ripening in a number of other countries, and so are the conditions for successful anti-imperialist revolutions in the oppressed colonial and semi-colonial countries.

\* "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International," *Collected Works* Vol. XIX.

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*This pamphlet is officially recommended by Marx House to all students of their classes and correspondence courses on "Imperialism." Full particulars of these can be obtained from MARX HOUSE, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1.*