CHAPTER IV: IMPERIALISM

1. Feudal and Dynastic Imperialism

For many centuries the main motivating force behind empires and imperialism has been to direct human society through unified dominion and superior civilization by races of the highest material efficiency. The advocates of imperialism think that the progress of humanity itself requires the maintenance of the race struggle in which the weaker races will be governed by the socially efficient race. The races of superior culture must assert their right by conquering, ousting, subjugating, and if necessary by extinguishing races of lower efficiency. The imperialists find the moral sanction of their theory in Hegelian philosophy which admits that the superior nation has the right of conquest over other nations.

This idea of world domination through better culture and superior civilization inspired the Romans to build up their empire. Pliny says, "To enjoy the protection of the Roman empire is a blessing indeed for all the provinces, especially under our present emperor. For he has organized a system whereby the wealth of the world can be distributed to any part of the earth, as occasional need may demand. He regards the distant tribe across the sea as part of the people of the Rome, equally to be protected and nurtured. He knits East and West together by an interchange of goods, so that all peoples may know the assets and deficiencies of each and understand how much better it is to serve a single ruler than to be the slaves of discord masquerading as freedom." Thus, Roman Empire claimed the right to dominate over other nations because of its superiority of social arrangement. The Roman empire was destroyed. The Germanic races and the German empire next undertook the task of Germanizing the whole world. But Charlemagne renewed the Roman empire and reconciled the German races to Roman civilization.

The motive for territorial expansion on the part of modern capitalist states differs essentially from early expansionist desire. In the early empires conquest did not serve to acquire private wealth for the class of big bourgeois but served the purpose of widening state boundaries and creating empires by offering new territories to satisfy the ambition of feudal lords and of the king. The old feudal dynastic imperialism carried with it the conception of an empire as a state composed of many nations but united by a common ruler with a view to civilize the conquered races considered heathen by the ruling nation. Later on, pan-Germanism which strove to unify the adjacent countries was moved by a similar national spirit which sought not only to dominate weaker states but also to Germanize them. The conquered people were taught to believe that penetration and permeation of German civilization were essential to their well-being. In this way, Pan-Germanism developed into imperialism and was made into a legend by Hitler to support his ambition for world conquest. Like Pan-Germanism Pan-Slavism began as as cultural movement among the various Slavic peoples but was later absorbed into the Tsarist imperialism.

2. Colonial and Financial Imperialism

Modern imperialism, on the contrary, is a continuation of capitalist exploitation in an age when capitalism is growing into monopoly from the earlier stage of free competition. Since capital no longer yielded sufficient profit in the home state the capitalist class exported it to undeveloped countries. Modern imperialism is founded rather on a policy of commercial than of territorial expansion. But for the security of capital which was emigrating to backward countries open or disguised political control became essential. Thus, modern imperialism became more and more identified with a policy of control of native races by conquest and administration and by financial reorganization and capitalist development.
Although trade and not territory was the aim the outcome was colonial empire. Such is the case of British dependencies. Thus also Algeria and Morocco under the Restoration, Indo-China under the Second Empire, Tonkin and Tunisia under the Third Republic came successively under the French Empire.

From about the end of the first world war modern colonial and commercial imperialism has entered a new phase. This neo-imperialism does not hide for expansion of colonies and territories but wants to enrich itself by throwing a net-work of economic control over poorer states with ties of currency and finance. The encroachment of monopolies, finance, currency control, loan and aid carries behind them the strings of political and ideological control. Trade is no longer competitive; it becomes coercive. This tendency is evident from the American dollar imperialism. Here, the moral plea of American aid is the reorganization of backward countries. Yet when the American military power forces the open in Japan, and in other Eastern countries, compels weak states to make treaty agreeing to keep American armed forces in their territories, stockpiles certain raw materials to maintain a trade monopoly and to carry out its rearmament programme, -- this trade policy assumes political form and becomes covertly imperialistic. The facility of financial control lies in the fact that it enables foreign powers to derive benefit out of weaker states without assuming political responsibility. America is controlling the foreign and domestic policies of half the world through the dollar aid.

Imperialism whether of the old Germanic-Slavic model or of the Euro-American type has drawn philosophical justification from Hegel. According to Hegel, Roman and German empires had their historical sanction in their power to develop superior states. Since Idea has the right to exist through states the superior or more rational state has the right to thrive and grow at the expense of the backward races. "It is the absolute right of the Idea to step into existence in clear-cut laws and objective institutions ---- The same cond.
consideration justifies civilized nations in regarding and treating as barbarians those who lag behind them in institutions which are the essential moments of the state. Thus a pastoral people may treat hunters as barbarians, and both of these are barbarians from the point of view of agriculturists, etc. The civilized nation is conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality.\(^1\)

3. Soviet Ideological Expansion

While in the twentieth century, new imperialism abandons the claim of world domination through territorial or colonial expansion and steps into more subtle forms of domination through financial aid and control, the new totalitarian state developed in the Soviet Union on the basis of Marxian philosophy is opposed to the notion of world domination by the economically dominant class and aims at the progressive control of the proletariat over the capitalist world. The communist ideal divides the whole of humanity into two irreconcilable camps, promises a universal social order and attracts the oppressed classes of all nations with its call for an equalitarian society. The same apocalyptic vision which occupied the mind of the most fervent pan-Slavists has captivated the imagination of the builders of the Soviet Union also. The superiority of the Soviet system over all others and its consequent claim to initiate the whole world into the ideals of highest panhuman morality are still the inspiring principles of Soviet Russia. As Zhukov declared, Soviet literature, reflecting a much higher system than any bourgeois democratic system and a culture many times higher than bourgeois culture, has the right to teach others the panhuman morality. In fact, Marx promised to render to the individual the full wealth of his total personality and thus to carry history to its Hegelian end —— the realization of liberty beyond the realm of necessity and the communists of Russia have found in

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1. Philosophy of Right, p.219
themselves the bearer of this mission. It is their sacred duty to create the world of the proletariat which will assume the certainty of the salvation of mankind.

The ideological expansion of the Soviet Union together with its aggressive policy on neighbouring countries has introduced a new type of expansion directed by the Communist Party in the name of the proletariat. It lacks the capitalist string of Western imperialism but brings in the bond of a new ideology and culture forged by the Party elites of the U.S.S.R. and pretends to impose it gradually over the world. With all the social and economic achievements of the Soviet regime, almost miraculous in magnitude, it has one strange similarity with Tsardom which it destroyed, viz., that both have established a closed society highly centralised and controlled from the top. Russian masses have taken communism and its leader with the same fanaticism as they once had for the Tsar, and the imperialist ideals of pan-Slavism and Orthodox Church. The advance of communism, therefore, bears a remarkable external resemblance to the old Tsarist imperialism although its socio-economic content is fundamentally different.

The territorial expansion of the Soviet system under the control of the Communist Party and with the motive power of Party ideology is inherent in Marxist philosophy. The historic mission of the state where the proletariat have come to power is to help the proletarian movement in other countries either by fomenting internal revolt or by bringing them within the sphere of influence of the proletarian state. This is far from imperialism as it is now understood, i.e., as a system of capitalist exploitation of backward countries abroad. But the two have a similarity of technique and method which cannot be overlooked.