Imperialism, Nationalism, Chauvinism

By Hannah Arendt

“"I would annex the planets if I could!” — Cecil Rhodes

I

The Inner Contradiction, between the National and the Imperial Principles.

“Expansion is everything,” said Cecil Rhodes and fell into despair; for he saw every night overhead “vast worlds which we can never reach,” part of the universe to which he could not expand. He had discovered the moving principle of the new, the imperialist era; and yet, at the same moment, he recognized in a flash of wisdom its inherent insanity and contradiction of human conditions. Naturally, neither insight nor sadness prevented him from expanding. He had no use for his flash of wisdom that had led him far beyond his normal capacities which were those of an ambitious businessman with a marked tendency towards megalomania.

“World politics is for a nation what megalomania is for a single person” said Eugen Richter (leader of the German progressive party) at about the same historical moment. But he gained a Pyrrhic victory when, through his opposition in the Reichstag, Bismarck’s proposal to support private companies in the foundation of trading and maritime stations suffered defeat. It seemed as though national politicians and statesmen—like Eugen Richter in Germany, or Gladstone in England, or Clemenceau in France—had lost touch with reality and did not realize that trade and economics had already involved every nation in world politics. The national principle had led into provincial ignorance, and the battle fought by sanity was lost. Business men who never before had been much interested in politics, reasonably satisfied as they were with the police function of the National State which guaranteed them protection of their property, decided that their new, expanding affairs were no longer sufficiently safeguarded and that they

1 S. Gertrude Millin, Rhodes. (London, 1933), p. 138. The whole quotation reads as follows: “These stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach! I would annex the planets if I could. I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far away.”

had to go into politics for business' sake. They earnestly believed that "patriotism in overseas possession is best carried out through "money-making" (Huebbe-Schleiden), that the national flag is a "commercial asset" (Rhodes) and they did their best to win the national representatives as business-partners.

Even worse than corruption was the fact that the incorruptible became convinced that world politics was a working reality and not the megalomaniac product of imperialism. Since maritime stations and access to raw materials were a necessity for all nations, they ended by secretly believing that annexation and expansion as such had to be aimed at for the sake of the nation. They were the first not to understand the fundamental difference between the old foundation of trade and maritime stations for trade's sake and the new policy of annexation and domination. They believed Cecil Rhodes when he told them to "wake up to the fact that you cannot live unless you have the trade of the world," "that your trade is the world, and your life is the world, and not England," and that this is why they "must deal with these questions of expansion and retention of the world." Without willing it, sometimes even without knowing it, they became not only the accomplices of imperialist politics, but were the first to be blamed and exposed for their "imperialism." Such was the case of Clemenceau who in his desperate worry about the future of the French nation turned "imperialist" because he hoped that colonial manpower would protect French citizens against aggression. When, at the Peace table in 1918, during one of those short spells of anti-imperialist eruptions of public opinion, he insisted that he did not care about anything as long as he could draft in French colonies and mobilize the "force noire" for the protection of France, he mobilized

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3 Within the British Empire, we have to distinguish between the Maritime and Military Stations such as the Cape of Good Hope during the nineteenth century, the Settlements or Plantations such as Australia and the other dominions and the colonial Empire proper such as it was acquired after 1884, when the era of expansion began. Not only were, during the following decades, vast stretches of new territories and many millions of people added to the older colonial possessions that had been acquired through "fits of absentmindedness" or through "incidents of trade"; but these possessions themselves, such as British India, received a new political significance and a new kind of government.

4 Millin, op. cit., p. 175.

5 Cf. Lloyd George, David, Memoirs of the Peace Conference (Yale, 1939), I, 362ff. "M. Clemenceau seemed in his speech to demand an unlimited right of levying black troops to assist in the defense of French territory in Europe if France were attacked in the future by Germany. . . . M. Clemenceau said that if he could raise troops, that was all he wanted."
public opinion against the “imperialistic schemes” of the only great European people that did not have any. Compared to this blind nationalism in its last desperate stage, British imperialists, compromising on the Mandate system, looked like the guardians of the self-determination of peoples, even though they at once misused it through the concept of “indirect rule” by which the British administrator governed “the people . . . not directly but through the medium of their own tribal and local authorities.”

By adopting imperialist methods of domination Clemenceau has not saved, as we now fully realize, the French nation from German aggression, although his plan was followed up and carried out by the French General Staff. Poincaré’s famous phrases of 1923, “France is not a country of forty millions; she is a country of one hundred millions,” became the watchword of French nationalists and has been recently repeated by General De Gaulle. This imperialism for the sake of the nation has changed fundamentally the very foundations of French rule over conquered peoples and dealt, unknowingly, a deadly blow to what might have become a French Empire. For the French, in contrast to all other European nations, actually have tried in our times to build an Empire in the old Roman sense, to combine ius with imperium. They alone have attempted to develop the body politic of the nation itself into an imperial political structure. They did not leave the care of overseas possessions to the expanding affairs of businessmen, but conceived them as the result of “the French nation marching . . . to spread the benefits of French civilization;” they tried to incorporate the conquered peoples into the national body by treating them as “both . . . brothers and . . . subjects—brothers in the fraternity of a common French civilization, and subjects that they are disciples of French light and followers of French leading.” This was the reason for giving colored delegates seats in the French Parliament and of incorporating conquered Algeria into the mother country. That all these attempts were finally defeated and that France appears today as an imperialist power like others is partly due to the European popu-

7 Ernest Barker, op. cit., p. 4. Cf. Also the very good introductory remarks on the foundations of the French Empire in: The French Colonial Empire. Information Department Papers No. 25, publ. by The Royal Institute of International Affairs. (London, 1941), pp. 9ff. “The aim is to assimilate colonial peoples to the French people, or, where this is not possible in more primitive communities, to “associate” them, so that more and more the difference between la France metropole and la France d’outremer shall be a geographical difference and not a fundamental one.”
lation in the colonies, the so-called French colonials, who were not Empire-builders but a multi-national clique of businessmen with imperialist ambitions, and partly to those nationalists in France herself who considered the colonies as lands of soldiers and their populations as "a really economical form of gunfodder, turned out by mass-production methods." 8

Imperialism is not empire-building and expansion is not conquest. The imperial passion, old as history, time and again has spread culture and law to the four corners of the world. The conqueror either wanted nothing but spoils and would leave the country after the looting; or he wanted to stay permanently and would then incorporate the conquered territory into the body politic and gradually assimilate the conquered population to the standard of the mother country. This type of conquest has led to all kinds of political structures—to empires in the more distant and to nations in the more recent past. At any rate, conquest was but the first step toward preparing a more permanent political structure.

Conquest as well as empire-building, has fallen into disrepute during the last century for very good reasons. The new concept of the nation, born out of the French Revolution, was based upon the sovereignty of the people and its active consent to the government (le plebiscite de tous les jours) and it presupposed the existence of an

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8 See: W. P. Crozier, "France and her 'Black Empire','" New Republic, January 23, 1924.

A similar attempt at brutal exploitation of overseas possessions for the sake of the nation had been made by the Netherlands in the Dutch East Indies after the defeat of Napoleon had restored the Dutch colonies to the much impoverished mother country. By means of compulsory cultivation, the natives were reduced to slavery for the benefit of the Government in Holland. Multatuli's 'Max Havelaar', first published in the sixties of the last century, was aimed at the Government at home and not at the services abroad. (See: De Kat Angelino, Colonial Policy, Vol. II. The Dutch East Indies, (Chicago, 1931)). This system was quickly abandoned and Netherland Indies, in a sense, has become "the admiration of all colonizing nations." (See: Sir Hesketh Bell, Foreign Colonial Administration in the Far East. (1928). Part I). The Dutch system has many similarities with the French brand of imperialism: the grant of European status to deserving natives, introduction of a European school system, etc., and has achieved the same though less violent result: a strong national movement among the subject people.

In the present article we shall ignore both Dutch and Belgian imperialism. The first is a curious and changing mixture of French and English methods; in our context it is atypical because the Netherlands did not expand during the eighties, but only consolidated and modernized its old possessions. Belgium, on the other hand, would offer too unfair an example. Her expansion was first of all the expansion of her King personally, unchecked by any government or other control. The story of the Belgian Congo is sufficiently well known, but in its unequalled atrocity likewise atypical for the initial stages of imperialism.
imperative number of equally sovereign national organizations. This meant in practical politics that wherever the nation appeared as conqueror, it aroused national consciousness as well as desire for sovereignty among the conquered peoples, thereby defeating all genuine attempts at empire-building. The British “empire-builders” never succeeded in including their nearest neighbor, the Irish people, in the far-flung structure of either the British Empire or the British Commonwealth of Nations. The “empire-builders” put their trust in conquest as a permanent method of rule—and failed miserably; but when after the last war Ireland was granted dominion-status and welcomed as a full-fledged member into the British Commonwealth, it ended with a new though less palpable failure. The oldest British “possession” and the newest British dominion unilaterally denounced its dominion status (in 1937), and severed all ties with the English nation by not participating in the war. The rule of permanent conquest since it “simply failed to destroy her” had not so much aroused “the slumbering genius of imperialism” of the English nation as it had awakened the national resistance of the Irish. The national structure of the United Kingdom had made impossible quick assimilation and incorporation of the conquered people; the British Commonwealth never was a “Commonwealth of Nations” but the heir of the United Kingdom and the political body of one nation dispersed throughout the world; it was not, as can be seen by the Irish example, an imperial structure in whose framework many and different peoples could live together and be contented. This inner contradiction between the body politic of the nation and conquest as a political device has been obvious ever

10 As Lord Salisbury put it, rejoicing over the defeat of Gladstone’s first Home Rule Bill. During the following twenty years of Conservative—and that was at that time Imperialist—policy (1885-1905), the English-Irish conflict was not only not solved but became much more acute.

11 For the historian, it still is a riddle why in the initial stages of national development the Tudors did not succeed in incorporating Ireland into England as the Valois had succeeded in incorporating Brittany and Burgundy into France. It may be, however, that this process was brutally interrupted through the Cromwellian Government that treated the country as one great piece of booty to be divided among its servants. After the Cromwellian revolution, at any rate, which for the formation of the English nation was as crucial as the French Revolution became for the French, the United Kingdom had already lost the power of assimilation and integration which the body politic of the nation has only in its initial stages but loses gradually with its maturing. What then follows is, indeed, one long sad story of “coercion (that) was not imposed that the people might live quietly but that people might die quietly” (Chesterton, op. cit., p. 60.). For a historical survey of the Irish question that includes the latest developments, compare the excellent unbiased study of Nicholas Mansergh, Britain and Ireland. In: Longman’s Pamphlets on the British Commonwealth. (London, 1942).
since the grandiose failure of the Napoleonic dream. It is due to this experience rather than to mere humanitarian considerations that conquest since that time has been officially condemned and has played but a minor role in the adjustment of borderline conflicts.

The British have tried to escape this dangerous inconsistency of modern attempts at imperial rule by leaving the conquered peoples to their own devices as far as culture, religion and law were concerned, by staying aloof and by desisting from spreading British law and culture. This has hardly prevented the natives from developing national consciousness and clamoring for sovereignty and independence—though it might have retarded the process somewhat. It has, on the other side, tremendously strengthened the new imperialist consciousness of a fundamental, and not only temporary, superiority of man over man. This, in turn, has embittered the fight for freedom of the subject peoples and blinded them to the unquestionable benefits of British rule. From the very aloofness of their administrators who “despite their genuine respect for the natives as a people, and in some cases even their love for them, . . . almost to a man, do not believe that they are or ever will be capable of governing themselves without supervision,” 12 they cannot help concluding that they are to be excluded and separated from the rest of mankind forever. Although the British attempt at combining a national body at home with an empire abroad did not have the desired consequences of stabilizing the imperial structure, it had serious consequences for the political structure of the mother country. For empire’s sake, they had to keep King and House of Lords, both of which are in contradiction to the free development of national sovereignty but desperately needed for the rule over subject peoples to whom one could not give the status of citizens. The result was that those who first of all were entitled to be British citizens had to remain British subjects. The final outcome of all these compromises and clever devices was imperialism.

Imperialism cannot even be granted the extenuating circumstances of being a mixture of conquest and empire-building, although it occasionally falls back to the old methods of the former and always boasts of the grandeur of the latter. The old “breakers of law in India” (Burke) were pirates and conquerors of the looting type whom the Indian peoples had reasonable hope to see leave some day. If

they had changed into makers of law, they might have become empire-builders; but the English nation was not interested in this and would hardly have supported them. As it was, they were followed by an unending series of administrators all of whom wanted "the African to be left an African," although a few, who had not yet outgrown what Harold Nicholson once called their "boyhood-ideals" wanted to aid them to "become a better African"—whatever that may mean. In any case, they were not "disposed to apply the administrative and political system of their own country to the government of backward populations" and failed consequently to tie the far-flung possessions of the British Crown to the English nation. In contrast to true imperial structures where the institutions of the mother country are in various ways integrated into the empire as a whole, it is characteristic of imperialism that national institutions remain separated from the colonial administration although in its initial stages they are allowed to exercise some control over it. It is to the salutary restraining of these institutions that we owe those benefits which, after all and despite everything, the non-European peoples have been able to derive from Western domination. But the colonial services themselves have never ceased to protest against the interference of the "unexperienced majority," namely the nation, that tries to press "the experienced minority," namely the imperialists, "in the direction of imitation," governing in accordance with the general standards of justice and liberty at home.

Here lies, incidentally, one of the many unhappy misunderstandings which still bar the way to adequate insight into the phenomenon of imperialism. The conscience of the nation, represented in parliament and free press, was equally represented by the colonial administrations of all European countries—be they England or France or Belgium or Germany. In England, however, in order to distinguish between the imperial government seated in London, and controlled by parliament, and local administrators or the white local population, this influence was called the "imperial factor," thereby crediting imperialism with those merits and remnants of justice which it eagerly tried to elimi-

13 These boyhood-ideals play a considerable role in the attitude of British administrators and officials when serving abroad. If they are taken seriously, they prepare for such tragedies as the life of Lawrence of Arabia. How they are developed and cultivated is very well described in Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Company.*

14 Ernest Barker, op. cit., p. 150.


16 Lord Cromer, op. cit.
The political expression of the "imperial factor" in England was the concept that the natives are not only protected but in a way represented by the British, the Imperial Parliament. Here, the English came very close to the French experiment of empire-building, although they never went as far as giving actual representation to subject peoples. Nevertheless, they obviously hoped that the nation as a whole could act as their trustee, and it is true that it invariably has tried its best to prevent the worst.

The imperial factor, therefore, should rightly be called the national factor in British imperialism; a factor which invariably came into conflict with the imperialists. The prayer which Cromer addressed to Lord Salisbury during his administration of Egypt in 1896: "Save me from the English Departments" has been repeated over and over again until in the twenties of our century the nation and everything it stood for was openly blamed by the extreme imperialist party for the possible loss of India. The reason: the government of India that "knew well enough that it would have to justify its existence and its policy before public opinion in England" felt itself not free to proceed to those measures of "administrative massacre" which had been tried out immediately after the close of the last war in the form

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17 The origin of this misnomer is quite clear in the history of British rule in South Africa. It is well known how—to take the most famous instance—local administrators, Cecil Rhodes and Jameson, involved the Imperial Government in the war against the Boers, much against its intentions. The situation was that "the Imperial Government retained, indeed, nominal control. . . . In fact Rhodes, or rather Jameson, was absolute ruler of a territory three times the size of England, which could be administered 'without waiting for the grudging assent or polite censure of the High Commissioner'". (See: Lovell, Reginal Ivan, *The Struggle for South Africa, 1875-1899*, (New York, 1934), p. 198). And what happens in territories in which the British Government has resigned its jurisdiction to the local European population that lacks all traditional and constitutional restraint of national States can best be seen in the tragic story of the South African Union since its independence, that is, since the time when the Imperial Parliament had no longer any right to interfere.

18 Cf. for instance the discussion in the House of Commons in May, 1908, between Charles Dilke and the Colonial Secretary. Dilke warned against giving self-government to the Crown colonies because this would result in a rule of the white planter over the colored worker. Whereupon he is answered that the natives, too, had a representation which is the English House of Commons. See: G. Zoepfl, "Kolonien und Kolonialpolitik." In: *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften. 3. Auflage*.


of "punitive forces" as a radical means of pacification.\(^{21}\) The same conflict between the national and the imperialist factor was characteristic of French rule. The Governor Generals appointed by the French Government in Paris were either subject to powerful pressure of French colonials as in Algeria, or they simply refused to carry out reforms in the treatment of natives, inspired as they were, by "the weak democratic principles of my Government," in the words of the former associate of Pétain, the Governor General of Madagascar, Leon Cayla. Everywhere, imperialist administrators felt that the control of the nation was an unbearable burden and an open threat to domination.\(^{22}\)

And in this, the imperialists are perfectly right and know the conditions of modern rule over subject peoples better than those who, on the one side, protest against government by decree and arbitrary bureaucracy and, on the other, hope to retain their possessions forever for the greater glory of the nation. Paradoxically the imperialists know that the body politic of the nation is not capable of empire-building. They are perfectly aware of the fact that the march of the nation and its conquest of peoples, if it is allowed to follow its own inherent law, ends with these peoples rising to nationhood themselves and defeating the conqueror. The French methods, therefore, which always tried to combine national aspirations with empire-building have been much less successful than the English methods which, since the eighties of the last century, have been outright imperialistic, although restrained by the mother country that had retained its national democratic institutions.

\(^{21}\) Compare the great article on "France, Britain and the Arabs" which T. E. Lawrence wrote on this occasion in *The Observer* (August 8, 1920); "... There is a preliminary Arab success, the British reinforcements go out as a punitive force. They fight their way... to their objective, which is meanwhile bombarded by artillery, aeroplanes, or gunboats. Finally perhaps a village is burnt and the district pacified. It is odd that we don't use poison gas on these occasions. Bombing the houses is a patchy way of getting the women and children... By gas attacks the whole population of offending districts could be wiped out neatly; and as a method of government it would be no more immoral than the present system." (Quoted from: T. E. Lawrence, *Letters*, edited by David Garnett (New York, 1939), pp. 311 ff.)

\(^{22}\) The same conflict between national representatives and colonial administrators in Africa runs through the history of German imperialism. In 1897, Carl Peters was removed from his post and had to resign from the Government service because of atrocities against the natives. The same thing happened to Governor Zimmerer. And in 1905, the tribal chiefs addressed their complaints for the first time to the Reichstag, with the result that the colonial administrators threw them into jail and the German Government intervened. See: P. Leutwein, (President of "Der Koloniale Volksbund"), *Kämpfe um Afrika*. (Luebeck, 1936).
Imperialism and the Disintegration of the National Body

When imperialism entered the scene of politics during the scramble for Africa in the eighties of the last century, it was propagated by businessmen, opposed fiercely by those who were in power and welcomed by a surprisingly large section of the educated classes. To the latter it appeared as a God-sent life-saver, as a panacea for all evils, as an easy way out of all conflicts. And it is true that imperialism in a sense has not gone back on these promises; it has given a new lease of life to political and social structures which were even then quite obviously undermined by new social and political forces and which, under other circumstances, even without the interference of imperialist developments, it would hardly have needed two world wars to destroy. As it was, it conjured away all troubles and produced that deceptive feeling of security, so universal in pre-war Europe, from which only the most sensitive minds escaped, like Péguy in France or Chesterton in England, who knew by instinct that they lived in a world of hollow pretenses and that stability was the worst pretense of all, and who could only marvel at the miracle of longevity. The solution of the riddle was imperialism and the answer to the fateful question why the European comity of nations allowed this evil to spread until everything was destroyed, the good as well as the bad, is that all governments knew well enough that their countries were in a secret state of disintegration, that the body politic was being destroyed from within, and that they lived on borrowed time.

Innocently enough, expansion appeared first as the panacea for the evil of excess capital production and offered its remedy of capital export. The tremendously increased wealth produced by capitalistic production under a social system based on maldistribution had resulted in "oversaving," that is, in the accumulation of capital that, within the framework of the existing national capacity for production

23 For this and the following compare J. A. Hobson, Imperialism, who already in 1905 gave a masterly analysis of the driving economic motives and of many of its political implications. When, in 1938, his early study was republished, Hobson was perfectly right in stating in his introduction to an unchanged text that this book is a real proof "that the chief perils and disturbances ... of today ... were all latent and discernible in the world of a generation ago ..." (p. v). Cf. Barker, op. cit., who in 1941 still calls the colonial Empire proper—not the dominions—"an exportation of English money."
and consumption, was condemned to idleness. This money actually was superfluous, needed by nobody though owned by a growing class of somebodies. In the decade which preceded imperialism, the owners of this superfluous wealth had first tried the way of foreign investments without expansion and without political control. This had brought about an unparalleled orgy of swindles, financial scandals, speculation and gambling in the stock-markets. Big money resulting from over-saving showed the way and became the pioneer for little money, the result of the little fellow’s hard work. Domestic enterprises, in order to keep pace with the high profits of foreign investments, turned likewise to fraudulent methods and attracted an ever-growing number of people who in the hope of miraculous returns threw their money out the window. The Panama scandal in France, the Gruendungsschwindel in Germany were classical examples. Tremendous losses resulted from the promises of tremendous profits. The owners of little money lost on such a scale and at such a tempo that the owners of superfluous big capital soon saw themselves left alone in the field which, in a sense, was a battlefield. After having failed to transform the whole of society into a community of gamblers, they were again superfluous, excluded from the normal process of production to which, after some turmoil, all other classes returned quietly though somewhat impoverished and embittered.  

Export of money, foreign investment as such is not imperialism and does not necessarily lead to expansion as a political device. As long as the owners of superfluous capital were content with staking “large portions of their property in foreign lands” and although this tendency already ran “counter to all past traditions of nationalism,” they would only have confirmed their alienation from the national body in which they led the existence of parasites. Only when they appealed for government protection of their investments after the initial stage of gambling had opened their eyes to the possible use of politics, did they re-enter the political life of the nation. In this appeal, however, they followed the established tradition of bourgeois society that since

24 For France compare George Lachapelle, Les Finances de la Troisième République, (Paris, 1937) and D. W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France, (New York, 1940). For Germany, compare the interesting contemporary testimonies, such as Max Wirh, Geschichte der Handelskrisen, (1873), Chapter XV, and A. Schaeffle, “Der ‘grosse Boersenkrach’ des Jahres 1873.” In: Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Staatswissenschaft, (1874), 30 Band.  

its beginnings had wanted to use political institutions exclusively for the protection of property. It was the first class in history whose origin, as well as ultimate aim, was ownership as such and that so far had been satisfied with being the dominant class of society without aspiring to direct rule. Through the fortunate coincidence of the rise of this class of property-holders and the industrial revolution, the former had been transformed into producers and stimulators of production. As long as they fulfilled this basic function of modern society which essentially is a community of producers, their wealth had an eminently important function for the nation as a whole. The owners of superfluous capital were the first section of the class that no longer profiteered from some real social function—even though it be the function of an exploiting employer—and whom consequently no police in the long run would have been able to save from the wrath of the people. For this wrath rarely strikes those who derive their power from some necessary activity. It is not aroused by mere abuses, but it becomes violent and implacable as soon as profiteering fulfills no function at all, even though the profiteers may have lost all real power and exploit nobody.\textsuperscript{26} Expansion then was not only escape for the superfluous capital itself, but still more for its owners from the menacing prospect of remaining entirely superfluous and parasitical. It saved the bourgeoisie from the consequences of maldistribution and gave a new lease of life to its ownership concept that only now, when wealth could no longer be used as a factor of production within the national framework, had come into conflict with the production ideal of the community as a whole.

Older than the superfluous wealth was another by-product of capitalist production. This was the human debris that every crisis, following invariably upon each period of industrial growth, would permanently eliminate from producing society, who would become permanently idle and as superfluous for the community as the owners of superfluous wealth. That they were an actual menace to society had been recognized for decades and their export had helped to populate the dominions of Canada and Australia as well as the United States. The new fact of the imperialist era is that these two superfluous groups,\textsuperscript{26} This has been conclusively demonstrated by Tocqueville with respect to the French aristocracy before the Revolution. The more the aristocracy lost its real power of government and administration, the more its privileges were hated by the people that no longer understood its very existence. See \textit{L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution}. Livre II, chapitre I.
the owners of superfluous capital and the owners of superfluous working power, joined hands and left the country together. The concept of expansion, of exporting government power and of annexation of every territory in which nationals had invested either their wealth of their work seemed the only alternative to increasing losses of wealth and population. Imperialism with its idea of an unlimited expansion seemed to offer a never-ending remedy to an increasing and never-ending evil.27

Ironically enough, the first country where superfluous wealth and superfluous men were brought together was itself in a position in which only a miracle could save it. South Africa had been in British possession since the beginning of the century because it assured the maritime road to India. The opening of the Suez-canal, however, and the following administrative conquest of Egypt left the old trade station of the Cape without any greater importance. The British would, in all probability, have withdrawn from Africa as, before them, all European nations had withdrawn whenever their possessions and trade interests in India were liquidated. “As late as 1884 the British Government had still been willing to diminish its authority and influence in South Africa.”28 If any spot of the earth was threatened with becoming superfluous then, it was certainly South Africa.

The second ironical (and almost symbolical) fact about the unexpected development of South Africa into “the culture-bed of Imperialism”29 lies in the very nature of its sudden attractiveness after it had lost all value for the Empire proper. In the seventies, diamond fields had been discovered and the eighties brought about the discovery of large gold mines. Gold became the god for the owners of superfluous wealth as well as for the superfluous men who came from the

27 These motives are especially prominent in German imperialism. Among the first activities of the “Alldutsche Verband”—founded in 1891—were efforts to prevent German emigrants from changing their citizenship, and the first imperialist speech of Wilhelm II, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Reich, contained the following typical passage: “Aus dem Deutschen Reiche ist ein Weltreich geworden. Ueberall in fernen Teilen der Erde wohnen Tausende unserer Landsleute. . . . An Sie, meine Herren, tritt die ernste Pflicht heran, mir zu helfen, dieses grossere deutsche Reich auch fest an unser heimisches zu gliedern.”


29 E. H. Dance, The Victorian Illusion, (London, 1928), p. 164. “Africa, which had been included neither in the itinerary of Saxondom nor in the professional philosophers of imperial history, became the culture-bed of British imperialism.”
four corners of the earth; preventing, with Government support, the development of all industries for the production of consumer goods, they established the first paradise of parasites whose lifeblood is gold. Imperialism, the result of superfluous money and superfluous men, began its startling career by producing the most superfluous and the most unreal goods.

It may still be doubtful whether the panacea of expansion would have been so great a temptation for national statesmen as it actually became, if it had offered its dangerous solutions only for those superfluous forces which, in any case, were already outside the pale of the body corporate of the nation. The curious weakness of national opposition to imperialism, the numerous inconsistencies and outright broken promises which were so characteristic of the behavior-patterns of modern national politics and which frequently have been ascribed to either opportunism or bribery have another and deeper motive. They sprang from the conviction that the national body itself was so deeply split into classes, that class-struggle was so universal a symptom of modern political life, that the very cohesion of the nation was utterly jeopardized. Expansion again appeared as a lifesaver if and insofar as it could deliver a common stake to the nation as a whole, and it is mainly for this reason that imperialists were allowed to become "parasites upon patriotism."

Partly, of course, such hopes belong to the old vicious devices which try to overcome domestic conflicts by foreign adventures and conquests. The difference, however, is marked. Adventures in politics are by their very nature limited in time and space; they may succeed in overcoming conflicts temporarily, although as a rule they would even fail in that and rather tend to sharpen them. The imperialist adventure of expansion appeared from the very beginning as an eternal solution, because expansion was conceived as unlimited. Furthermore, imperialism did not even appear as an adventure in the usual sense,

31 See: Selwyn James, South of the Congo, (New York, 1943), pp. 333 ff.
32 See De Kiewiet, op. cit. Chapter VII.
33 The instances are too numerous to be quoted. Interesting in our context, furthermore, are only those in which the honesty of the persons involved is beyond doubt. Such for instance is the famous case of Gladstone who as the leader of the Liberal Party had promised to evacuate Egypt; when, however, his party came into power, the liberal government did not evacuate.
34 J. A. Hobson, op. cit., p. 61.
because it based itself less on nationalist slogans than on the seemingly solid basis of economic interests. Within a society of clashing interests in which the common good had been identified with the common interest, expansion as such appeared to be a possible common interest of the nation as a whole. Since everybody had been convinced by the owning and dominant classes that economic interest and the passion for ownership are the sound basis for the body politic, national statesmen were only too easily persuaded to yield when a common economic interest appeared on the horizon of possibilities.

These then are the reasons why nationalism developed so clear a tendency towards imperialism, the inner contradiction of the two principles notwithstanding. From the very beginning of the new movement and in all countries alike, imperialists would preach (and boast) of their being "beyond the parties," and claim to be the only ones to speak for the nation as a whole. This language would attract and delude precisely those persons who still had some kind of political idealism left and some feeling for patriotism. The cry for unity resembled precisely the battlecries with which peoples always had been led to war; and yet, nobody detected in the universal and permanent instrument of unity the germ of universal and permanent war.35

The group which engaged most actively in the nationalist brand of imperialism and contributed most efficiently to the businessman's confusion of imperialism with nationalism, were the government off-

35 The slogan "above the parties" has been repeated again and again in the course of the German imperialist movement. All Leagues, societies and groups propagating overseas expansion pretended to direct their appeals to "men of all parties," to "stand far removed from the strife of parties and represent only a national purpose"—as the President of the Kolonialverein Hohenlohe-Langenburg put it in 1884. (See: Mary E. Townsend, Origin of Modern Colonialism. (New York)). Likewise the official historian of the Pan-German League insists on its being "above the parties; this was and is a vital condition (for the League)." (See: Otto Bonhard, Geschichte des alldeutschen Verbandes. (1920)). The first party to claim to be "above the parties" as a "Reichspartei" was the national-liberal party under the leadership of Ernst Bassermann. (See: Daniel Frymann (ps. for Heinrich Class), Wenn ich der Kaiser war—Politische Wahrheiten und Notwendigkeiten. (1st ed. 1912.)

The situation in England is far more complicated, although the disinterest of imperialist politicians in domestic politics is very marked and well known. (See for instance: Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase. 1919-1925. (Boston-New York, 1934), p. 7). More important than this, more important even than such beyond-parties foundations as the Primrose League is the disturbing influence of imperialism upon the two-party system, which finally has led to the Front-Benches system. The "diminution of the power of opposition" in Parliament and the increasing "power of the Cabinet as against the House of Commons" as "chiefly attributable to Imperialism" have been noted already by Hobson (op. cit., pp. 146 ff.). The working of this system has been described by Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, The Party System. (London, 1911).
cials. The national state has created, its functioning depending upon them, the civil services as a permanent body of officials who serve regardless of classes and regardless of government changes. Their professional honor and their self respect—especially in England and Germany—derived from their being servants of the nation as a whole. They constituted the only class that had a direct interest in supporting the fundamental claim of the State to independence from classes and factions. That the authority of the national state itself depends to a large degree on the economic independence and political neutrality of its civil servants has become obvious in recent times when the decline of nations invariably started with the corruption of its permanent servants and with the general conviction that these were in the pay—not of the state—but of the owning classes. At the close of the century, the owning classes had become dominant to a point where it was almost ridiculous for a state-employee to keep up the pretense of serving the nation. The disintegration into classes had left them somehow outside the social body and had forced them into forming a clique of their own. In the colonial services, they escaped the actual disintegration of the national body. In ruling foreign peoples in far-away countries, they could much better feel themselves to be heroic servants of the nation, as those "who by their services had glorified the British race,"36 than if they had stayed at home. The colonies were no longer simply "a vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes" as James Mill still could correctly describe them; they were to become the very backbone of British nationalism which found in the domination of far countries and the rule over strange peoples the only way to serve British and nothing but British interests. The services actually believed that "the peculiar genius of each nation shows itself nowhere more clearly than in their system of dealing with subject races." 37

The point is that only far from England or Germany or France, a national of these countries could be nothing but an Englishman or


37 In the words of Sir Hesketh Bell, former governor of Uganda, Northern Nigeria etc. See: Foreign Colonial Administration in the Far East, (1928), Part I, p. 300.

The same sentiments prevailed in the Dutch colonial services. "The highest task, the task without precedent is that which awaits the East Indian Civil Service official . . . it should be considered as the highest honor to serve in its ranks . . . the select body which fulfills the mission of Holland overseas." See: De Kat Angelino, Colonial Policy (Chicago, 1931), Vol II, p. 129.
German or Frenchman. Within his own country he was so entangled in economic interests or social loyalties that he felt actually closer to a member of his class in a foreign country than to a man of another class in his own. Expansion gave nationalism a new lease on life and therefore was accepted as an instrument of national politics. This shows in how desperate a state the European countries found themselves before the start of imperialism; how fragile their institutions had become; how outdated their social system proved in the face of the growing capacity of man to produce. The means for preservation were desperate too; and in the end, the remedy has proved worse than the evil which, incidentally, it did not cure.

III

Chauvinism and the Bridge between Nationalism and Imperialism

Imperialism carries out the decline of the nation. The more ill-fitted nations are for the incorporation of foreign peoples (which contradicts the constitution of their own body politic), all the more are they tempted to oppress them. In theory, there is an abyss between nationalism and imperialism; in practice, it can and has been bridged. Ideologically speaking, the bridge between them is called chauvinism.

In contrast to imperialism, chauvinism is an almost neutral product of the national concept insofar as it springs directly from the old idea of the “national mission.” It has a logical affinity with expansion because a nation’s mission might be interpreted precisely as bringing its light to other, less fortunate peoples that, for whatever reasons, have miraculously been left by history without a national mission. As long, however, as this concept did not develop into the ideology of chauvinism and remained in the rather vague realm of national or even nationalistic pride, it frequently resulted in a high sense of responsibility for the welfare of backward peoples. It produced that type of men whom one could find scattered in all the colonial services, particularly the British, who would take a fatherly interest in the peoples they were ordered to rule and who would easily assume the role of the dragonslayer, thereby fulfilling in a manly fashion the gallant ideals and dreams of their boyhood.38

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38 For a magnificent example of this attitude, see Rudyard Kipling’s tale “The Tomb of His Ancestors,” The Day’s Work. (New York, 1898).
The trouble with the "national mission" is that it implies a holy mission, that it presupposes a kind of divine origin of the people and that it claims "chosenness." Since, by its very definition, national divine election can be granted only to one people, this concept destroys the idea of the unity of mankind which, based on the divine origin of man, is inconsistent with any doctrine of the divine origin of peoples.\(^3\) Whether the existence of peoples is explained through natural influences (Herder) or whether they are considered the product of political organization as in the best French tradition, under no circumstances should they be regarded as of divine origin. For only as long as peoples are recognized to be the product of Man, can man remain the creation of God. Any claim to divine mission—be it the German "Wesen an dem die Welt genesen soll," or the British "white man's burden," or "la mission de la France éternelle" or Polish Messianism—automatically makes the members of one people superhuman, and the members of all others sub-human.

Chauvinism has been latent in nationalism ever since its conscious beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century. For a long time, however, it was hardly allowed to influence practical politics and led a kind of innocent dream existence in the minds of romantic intellectuals, precisely because its trend towards expansion of the nation was in itself a hopeless affair. Up to the era of imperialism, chauvinist schemes would be judged and condemned for their lack of realism. When Eugen Richter denounced world politics as megalomania, he spoke up against this absence of common sense, of balance, of moderation which had so far been characteristic of chauvinist devices only.

Chauvinism, however, marked the nationalism of all imperialists from the beginning. This has much to do with the fact that the superfluous classes which in one way or another were alienated from the normal destinies of their countrymen, would discover their national feelings far away from the motherland where the simple fact of being the citizen of a European country assumed an importance that it had held nowhere else. It was not only Cecil Rhodes who detected what

\(^3\) Very typical are, in this respect, the recent remarks of Adolf Hitler on the subject: "God the Almighty has made our nation. By defending its very existence we are defending His work." Speech of January 30, 1945. Quoted from New York Times, January 31, 1945.
a “rare and lovely virtue” it was to be born an Englishman and it was not only Carl Peters who left his country and went to Africa for the outspoken purpose of becoming a member of a “master-race.” Chauvinism was the result of experiences that had severed the national consciousness from the national soil, that had alienated nationalism from the country where the nation happened to live, that had shifted pride and loyalty of nationals from the visible achievements embodied in the whole of the national world and represented by its material as well as its spiritual aspects, to the qualities of the “soul” which every member through the accident of birth shared with every other member of the same people. This made possible the degrading identification of love for one’s own self and love for one’s nation. In the words of one of the last representatives of this chauvinist brand of imperialism, “Soul means race as seen from within, whereas race is the exterior of the soul.” In other words, not Germany, or France, or England was the center of their pride and loyalty, but rather they themselves. Cecil Rhodes, convinced that he came from “the first race in the world,” saw himself as the incarnation of Saxondom and expected to be remembered at least four thousand years, whereas the much less lucky Carl Peters, after being dismissed from the German colonial services for excessive cruelty, propagated among his countrymen the development of Germandom to a “national race” whose incarnation he felt himself to be.

This inherent arrogance of all chauvinists who would think of themselves—not as Germans, or Englishmen, or Frenchmen—but as the German, the Englishman, the Frenchman, made them not only prone to criticize their countries and countrymen according to the single yardstick of what this country and these countrymen owe to them, but formed the psychological basis for that stress of the “personal element” in colonial administration which characterized imperialists from the beginning and has later been transformed into (or hidden by)

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40 “If Rhodes did not realize the advantage of being English in blood and bone before he arrived in Kimberley, he learnt to appreciate it there . . . it seemed a rare and lovely virtue.” S. Gertrude Millin, op. cit., p. 15.


42 Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, p. 22.

43 Millin, op. cit., p. 346.

the regime of experts. Each of these administrators, once shipped abroad for domination purposes, condemned to the “artificial life (of a superior caste) removed from all the healthy restraint of ordinary European society,” could feel himself so much the incarnation of all his country’s possible virtues as in an emergency this country’s might would be compelled to back anything he personally stood for—his best or his worst, his beneficence as well as his malfeasance.

Chauvinism in countries with overseas possessions would be essentially a severance of national sentiments from the national territory, but not from the state (in whose services more often than not the imperialists could be found). Chauvinism in those countries that aspired to continental empires and had no or only small overseas holdings was characterized by severance of national loyalty from the state. This was the case in the so-called pan-movements—in pan-Germanism as well as pan-Slavism—both of which originated in nationality-states where the State was not even supposed to represent the sovereignty of the people but appeared as a supra-national bureaucratic machinery whose authority was vested in the ruling houses. The oppressed peoples of Austria-Hungary became chauvinistic before they were given a chance to achieve nationhood, because the cautiously administered minimum of national freedom given to the nationalities amounted to nothing more and nothing better than the oppression of other nationalities. Over the exploitation of Czechs by Germans, of Slovaks by Hungarians, of Ruthenians by Poles rose the structure of the supra-national state—as the supra-social state of the homogeneous nations was supposed to rise over the fissures of class-struggle.

Since the dynasty put dynastic interests above all others, none of the numerous nationalities, not even the dominant ones, like the Ger-

45 Up to the times of Nazi-imperialism, history has known only one clear-cut case of domination in which the “personal element” was allowed complete ‘freedom from control. This was the well-known case of the King of Belgium’s business enterprise in the Belgian Congo which reduced the native population from between 20 and 40 millions in 1890 to 8,500,000 in 1911. (Cf. Selwyn James, op. cit., p. 305.)

An early insight into the importance of the personal element in imperialist politics can be found in Lord Cromer’s letters with respect to the situation in Egypt. ‘. . . the working of the whole machine depends, not on any written instrument, or, indeed, on anything which is tangible, but on the personal influence which the English Consul General can exert on the Khedive . . .’ (Letter to Lord Roseberry in 1886). One year earlier in a letter to Lord Granville (a Liberal) he was still dubious ‘whether it would be advisable to continue the present system of government in Egypt’ precisely because “its working depends very greatly on the judgment and ability of a few individuals.” Quoted from Zetland, op. cit., pp. 134, 219.

46 Hobson, op. cit., pp. 150-151.
mans and Hungarians, could feel represented by it. Furthermore, in this area of Europe where every spot is a place of mixed populations, the lack of political representation could not be compensated for through love of a homogeneously populated territory. Most of these peoples had never succeeded in striking such deep roots in their soil as those of Western Europe. Nationality, therefore, was already diverted from territory to a certain degree when it cut loose from the state absolutely and became a value in itself. The fact of being born a German, a Czech, or a Slovak took the place of all other loyalties normal in the development of national states. Used to living among other nationalities and in constant competitive struggle with them, their national consciousness itself would awake with the stressing of personal virtues rather than past or present common achievements which no body politic could adequately represent and for which no living community could give adequate testimony.\footnote{The Czechs are the exception that prove the rule. They were lucky to find and deserve praise to have listened to men who, like Masaryk, consciously stressed common history, common language and common spiritual achievements in order to achieve the transformation of their people into a nation in the genuine sense of the word.}

This chauvinism, wide-spread among the nationalities in Austria-Hungary, took the most dangerous and aggressive forms in those two that had fellow-nationals beyond the borderlines of the country—the Germans and the Slavs.\footnote{It is a well-established fact that the pan-German aspirations of the German minority in Austria-Hungary were much more radical than those of the corresponding groups in Germany proper. The "Alldutsche Verband" complains frequently about their aggressiveness, and the "exaggerations" of the Austrian movement. (Cf. Otto Bonhard, Geschichte des alldutschen Verbandes, (1920), pp. 58 ff.) In 1913, the All-deutsche Verein fuer die Ostmark published a program whose clear-cut aggressive aims at that time were almost unequaled; its main point was the "Aufrichtung eines . . . deutschen Mitteleuropa umfassenden einheitsstaates auf arischer Grundlage . . . der.den Mittelpunkt des gesamten deutschen Lebens des Erdballs bildet und der mit allen Germanen-Staaten verbunden ist." (Quoted from Eduard Pichl (alias Herwig), Georg Schoenerer, (1938), 6 Bde. Bd. VI, 375).} They became adherents of expansion—not of their own countries but of the neighboring ones, Germany or Russia, that would bring them national redemption as a gift.\footnote{Russian pan-Slavists recognized very early in 1870 that the destruction of Austria-Hungary would be the best possible starting point of a pan-Slav federation or a pan-Slav Empire. (Cf. K. Staehlin, Geschichte Russlands von den Anfaengen bis zur Gegenwart. 1923-1939. 5 Bde. Bd. IV/1, p. 282.)} Used to national oppression, they were as willing to recognize the "mastership"...
of the big brother\textsuperscript{50} and to bow under his superiority as they were prepared to achieve nationhood at the expense of others and to assume rule over weaker nationalities lacking the good fortune of a big brother beyond the borderline. Their nationalism, in other words, was chauvinistic from the very beginning and stimulated by dreams of oppression.\textsuperscript{51} Living in territories where frontiers were not time-honored but had changed numerous times, their dreams of expansion were unlimited although clashing with one another.\textsuperscript{52} These Slavs and these Germans were the first Europeans who \textit{en masse} and not in small groups became chauvinistic.

The secret of the success of the pan-movements from which modern racial imperialism has inherited more than from any other form of imperialism or chauvinism,\textsuperscript{53} lies in the solid mass-basis of people. Within the double monarchy the people were already organized in a body corporate that as a rule could be realized only after the destruction of the national body. Chauvinism, created by the dissolution of the old trinity of people—territory—state was the natural though perverted form of their national feelings. Here were masses at hand who had not the slightest idea of the meaning of \textit{patria}, not the vaguest notion of the responsibility of a common limited community and no experience of political freedom. They indeed were ready for adventure and ripe for imperialist expansion. The chauvinist state of mind of the German minorities, scattered as they were all over

\textsuperscript{50} Enthusiasm and admiration for Bismarck were unbounded among pan-German Austrians; and Slav peoples—they already at the time of the Crimean war, had been called the only reliable allies of the Czar (See: Staehlin, op. cit., V, p. 35)—were only too willing to help that ‘die Oberhoheit des grossrussischen Stammes ueber die ganze slawische Welt zur unanfechtbaren Tatsache werde,” (as Dostoyevsky once put it, (Ibid.), p. 281.)

\textsuperscript{51} This is especially true for the German brand. “Nicht gleichberechtigt,” said Schoenener, “wollen wir werden mit jedem Juden, Bosniaker und Zigeuner. Wir wollen uns das Recht der Erstgeburt nicht rauben lassen.” Pichl, op. cit., VI, pp. 355-56.

\textsuperscript{52} It was upon this situation that during the last war French politicians based their hopes of defeating German domination in Europe. “Ce qu’il faut opposer a la Confédération germanique, c’est la Confédération slave, autrement dit le Panslavisme organisé.” And: “Il nous faut une revanche absolue de la race slave contre le germanisme.” See: L. Léger, \textit{Le Panslavisme et l’intérêt français.} (1917) It is obvious that we today witness an attempted revival of this policy with, however, much better chances of success. Whether this actually is in support of French interests or whether France does not rather put herself between the devil and the deep sea—remains to be seen.

\textsuperscript{53} Adolf Hitler has frankly recognized his indebtedness to the Austrian Pan-Germans. There is little reason to doubt his words when he says: “Ich erhielt (in Wien) die Grundlage fuer meine Weltanschauung im Grossen und eine politische Betrachtungsweise im Kleinen, die ich spater nur noch im Einzelnen zu ergaenzen brauchte, die mich aber nie mehr verliess.” \textit{Mein Kampf}, p. 137.
Europe, was one of the main reasons that German imperialism chose the continental way of expansion rather than the way of colonial acquisitions. The “Germans abroad” were not only easy stepping-stones for further expansion, they generated not only a comfortable smoke-screen of the right to national self-determination, but they also provided the very models for organization at home.

Chauvinism may be the condition of continental or the result of over-seas imperialism. It is, at any rate, the only ism that prepares the nation or the people for expansion, induces it into that great adventure which essentially is beyond the possibilities of a national body politic and lures it, under the pretext of empire-building, into the ruin of imperialism. For the only limit in space of permanent expansion is destruction and its only limit in time is death.