

# *The American* MERCURY

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## AMERICA'S PLAN FOR THE COLONIAL WORLD

BY GENEVA

DUMBARTON OAKS did not consider the fate of some six hundred million subject people in the colonial empires in Africa, Asia and the Western Hemisphere. Most of these subject people are brown or black, underemployed, underpaid, undernourished, ill-clothed, uneducated, disfranchised and increasingly restless under the rule of privileged white oligarchies. Their articulate leaders look to the United States as the most powerful and the most idealistic nation in the world to help them in their fight for self-government and economic reform.

They look to us with some hope but with more skepticism. They are controlled by our Allies, and they have heard Allied promises before. They are lukewarm about the war because

they feel that the governments and leaders engaged in the war are lukewarm about them. They fear that the war will simply add new mandates and old Japanese and Italian colonies to the British and French Empires, and leave them essentially where they were before.

As far as the United States Government is concerned the skepticism of the colonial peoples is not justified. We mean well and this time we mean business. It is simply a question of whether our patience will last as long as our good intentions. We have not challenged the truculent imperialism of Churchill, the soft platitudes of Queen Wilhelmina or the touchy irredentism of De Gaulle because a war is going on and the military ex-

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perts tell us that an outward show of unity is important in maintaining morale. When we come to the peace settlements it will be a different story.

Our State Department is developing a program of broad and humanitarian trusteeship which, if accepted by the great powers, will go a long way toward that freedom defined so eloquently by Wendell Willkie as "the orderly but scheduled abolition of the colonial system." We do not know how much of the program is acceptable to our Allies, but at this writing there are signs of co-operation and good faith as to part of the program in the next to the highest places in the British Government.

Any world-wide system for colonial control will naturally be a part of the organization planned at Dumbarton Oaks. It will probably be born at a later conference, a Colonial Table, where the representatives of the United Nations will sit down to discuss the control of dependent territories in the postwar world. This Colonial Table may be Table 3 in the sequence of major international parleys arising out of this war. Table 1, which began at Dumbarton Oaks, was concerned with the over-all world organization. Table 2 will probably be the Peace Settlement table for the major powers; and it might be a five-year head-ache. Table 3 may prove to be the most important of them all.

At this Colonial Table we shall confront three large empires, the British, the French and the Dutch; and three small ones, the Belgian, the Portu-

guese and the Spanish. The British Empire will overshadow them all because it is so large that it tends to set the standards for all the rest. In fact, if India is included, it is more important than all the other empires combined. (I assume that by the time we reach the Colonial Table the Japanese and Italian Empires will no longer exist because they will be in Allied hands.)

The population picture of these empires will look something like this — taking round, prewar figures, and including India, Burma and the Philippines, and all the League of Nations mandates:

British.....	440,343,000
French.....	70,259,000
Dutch.....	64,733,000
American.....	18,821,000
Belgian.....	14,131,000
Portuguese.....	10,380,000
Spanish.....	935,000

Over 2,000,000 of these 619,602,000 people are already living nominally under international trusteeship, since they belong to the mandated territories of Africa and Asia which were taken over by the League of Nations from Germany and Turkey at the end of the last war. They occupy a kind of no-man's land in the colonial areas of the world. So also do the people of India and Burma. I have counted India and Burma as parts of the colonial system, but the British decline to put them in this category because these countries have more democratic rights than the Crown Colonies have. To me this classification is a distinction without a differ-

ence as long as Great Britain maintains such iron control in both countries. It is on a par with the effort of British propagandists in this country to gloss over the difference between the subject colonies and the free dominions under the general euphemism "British Commonwealth of Nations," a bit of protective coloration which Churchill, with his robust candor, scorns.

## II

What shall our attitude be at the Colonial Table toward these vast empires? The answer naturally begins with the Atlantic Charter, which declared in Principle Three that we would "respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they shall live." And the answer also begins with our own policy in handling dependent peoples.

Fortunately, on that score, our record is nothing to be ashamed of, in spite of the current reactionary attacks upon our record in Puerto Rico. We have no colonial office and almost no colonies. The dependencies which we do control have been very handsomely treated. By tradition our people have always been anti-colonial since the American Revolution freed us from the colonial system. Our anti-European and anti-colonial Monroe Doctrine helped to redeem the rest of the hemisphere from that system.

If at times we have oversimplified the problem of dealing with backward peoples, as the British believe, and our

policy of the rapid grant of independence has left many problems unsolved, there has been a certain fundamental rightness at the core of our attitude. We blundered into temporary and timid imperialism in that adolescent period of the Spanish-American War when we saved Cuba from Spanish rule and acquired the Philippines and Puerto Rico almost by accident; but when our orgy of militant philanthropy was over, we realized with some amazement and chagrin that neither the Filipinos nor the Puerto Ricans welcomed our "liberation." Since then we have tried to make up for our mistakes by promising the Philippines independence in 1946 and by offering Puerto Rico a plan for electing its own Governor. It is true that we indulged in a tactless venture in dollar diplomacy in Haiti and Nicaragua some years ago, but through our recent Good Neighbor policy in Latin America we have almost effaced the memory of the invading marine.

We have the right to speak out boldly for our own international standards at the Colonial Table because we are the outstanding example in modern times of a power that has triumphed on the field of battle without claiming the spoils of victory. We did not keep an inch of territory acquired by conquest in the last war, and we do not intend to keep an inch for ourselves in this one.

But although our record will entitle us to moral leadership at the Colonial Table, we will make a great

mistake if we assume that all the decency is on our side and all the tyranny is concentrated in the cold hearts of European diplomats. Europe is not united in its imperialism. Progressive forces are making profound changes in the traditional attitudes of nearly all European peoples.

Take British opinion, for example. When Winston Churchill declared in his Mansion House speech that "we mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's first Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire," he was expressing the irritation of an imperialist on the defensive, stung by repeated criticisms of the colonial system not only in the United States but in his own country. He spoke for a nation facing desperate postwar poverty, a nation which sees in its colonies the only hope of staving off economic ruin. He did not express the new colonial idealism which is finding support in the British Labor Party, the Liberal Party and even in some sections of the Conservative Party.

Churchill's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonel Stanley, has suggested regional commissions for "consultation and collaboration," designed to promote the well-being of the colonies and including in their membership both colonial and non-colonial powers having interests in each region. Stanley has proposed rather vaguely that the native peoples should have "an opportunity to be associated" with these commissions. The Dutch and French Governments

will probably accept the British minimum. The Russian attitude is unknown, but there is no evidence that Stalin will openly challenge the new regional arrangements unless Britain and the United States decide to challenge his rearrangement of the map of Eastern Europe.

### III

The new world control-unit for colonies which is now taking shape in Washington and London discussions may begin with the controversial record of the Permanent Mandates Commission created by the League of Nations at the end of the last war for the former German and Turkish colonies. As a precedent this Commission's record is more instructive than inspiring, but we cannot afford to be critical because our absence was a major cause of its weakness. Although the United States never appointed any of the eleven members of that Commission, nor participated in its deliberations, because our Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, we did sanction the temporary trusteeship by making independent treaties with the mandated units.

The new world colonial plan will probably include an International Commission as trustee either for all colonies in the world or for the two limited classes of colonies taken by the victors in World War I and World War II. This Commission will serve as an agent of the United Nations, subject directly to the Security Council or to

the General Assembly proposed at Dumbarton Oaks. Beneath it in the new set-up will be Regional Commissions for every colonial area of the world, composed of both colonial and neighboring non-colonial powers. Beneath these Regional Commissions will be the colonial agencies of the individual nations assigned to administer each territory. It is generally agreed that single-nation rule at the local administrative level is absolutely necessary to avoid multi-national confusion.

The imperial world will probably be divided into seven and possibly eight regions: three in Africa (East, West and Northeast), two or three in the Pacific (Southeast Asia, South Pacific, North Pacific) and one in the Caribbean. It is almost certain that the United States, because of its moral prestige and its security interests in both oceans will be asked to serve on the Caribbean, West African, North and South Pacific, and possibly the Southeast Asia Commissions.

No matter how much we suspect that Europe wants our participation in this scheme to camouflage established tyrannies, we cannot refuse to serve unless it is apparent at the outset that the whole scheme is doomed by bad faith. Isolationism now means defeat for us and our fighting men in this war, and bitter defeat for the subject peoples who look to us for justice. This time, if there is any prospect whatever of success, we must go in with our eyes open, guarding against the traps of the skillful obscurantists

who make a profession of ruling subject peoples.

We have recognized the need of international co-operation in colonial development by participating in the past two years in the one Regional Commission which is being hailed everywhere as the prototype of colonial commissions after the war, the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission. And we have not burned our fingers. On the contrary, our participation in that Commission has been significant and useful for ourselves and for the native peoples of the area.

But our experience in the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission will not in itself be enough to guide us to a new world policy. The Commission has been experimental and advisory, and the world needs, in addition, agencies of international trusteeship with teeth. We will not secure an effective system of trusteeship at the Colonial Table unless we stand boldly and persistently for a minimum American program. We believe that such a program should include the five following political principles:

1. *There must be genuine representation of the dependent peoples themselves both at the Colonial Table and in the membership of the International and Regional Commissions.*

There has been very little of such representation in the past. The powers always presume to speak for their subjects. Sometimes they have no other alternative. Sometimes a colonial governor who says that his people are not ready for any kind of self-

government is actually speaking the truth. Perhaps the soundest general formula for representation would be an elastic one: Wherever an opposition political or labor movement exists in a colony, based on democratic principles, and has won the allegiance of a considerable proportion of the people, the chief opposition leader should be one of the representatives of that colony in international conferences, at least in an advisory capacity.

Most colonial governors would oppose such a policy vigorously. It has long been one of their favorite maneuvers to choose a pliant politician from the native population, hang a royal decoration around his neck, and call him a leader of the people.

2. *The new International Commission must have jurisdiction over the whole colonial world, including the established older colonies as well as the newly acquired dependencies of Japan and Italy, and the mandated territories inherited from the last war.*

On this point sharp differences of opinion may exist even in the American delegations, and there is danger of a weak compromise solution. The British, Dutch and French will want their established colonial systems left alone as much as possible and they are likely to suggest that real international supervision should be confined to the former mandates of the League of Nations and to the newly acquired former colonies of Italy and Japan (Italian Libya, Italian East Africa and the Japanese islands of the Pacific). There is no reason why the principle

of international trusteeship should be confined to the war-acquired territories, except for the bad historical precedent of the Mandates Commission. Imperialism is imperialism whether it is old or new, and the daily routine violence necessary to maintain old tyrannies is almost as inexcusable as new aggression.

Moreover, to limit the principle of trusteeship to a few newly acquired territories will prevent the establishment of a world-wide *system* of trusteeship with recognized minimum standards of supervision. A limited system will allow a colonial power to play off especially favored possessions against international wards to the detriment of the wards. However, when we advocate the imposition of one system of trusteeship upon *all* colonies we must watch carefully for some imperialist legerdemain. Our motive for desiring extensive international authority is perfectly sound; we wish to lift all mandates and all colonies, new and old, to the level of self-government as rapidly as possible. But many advocates of the *status quo* will favor extensive rather than limited international trusteeship for exactly the opposite reason. They know that some gesture toward internationalism is unavoidable and they believe that by inviting practically the whole world into Regional Commissions, they can make those commissions purely advisory and consultative bodies which will not seriously interfere with colonial business-as-usual.

Some British statesmen are now

using the word "partnership" in describing the ideal relationship of the mother country to the colonies in preference to the word "trusteeship." It is likely to be a 50-50-one-horse-and-one-rabbit affair in practice. Partnerships within an empire implies no supervision by or responsibility to a world authority. It is this type of diplomatic double-talk which we must scrutinize with the greatest care.

3. *The Regional Commissions must have affirmative powers to investigate every important colonial situation on the spot, and the International Commission must have ultimate reserve power to take away any colony from its administering power if that power fails to enforce minimum international standards.*

The Permanent Mandates Commission failed because it had only negative powers and because it required unanimous approval for any affirmative act. The members of the Commission sat and waited for annual reports, and the reports came through the very government agencies which were supposed to receive critical supervision. The natives were not allowed to come near the Commission and some powers even objected when questionnaires were sent around to various colonies by the Commission.

Some mandate powers openly deceived the Commission and on one occasion South Africa sent bombing planes over its mandated territory to collect a dog tax from black men who had no money. The Japs, who were supposed to report their chief activi-

ties in mandated Pacific islands to the Commission, concealed important facts about migration and indentured labor, and finally built a whole system of illegal military fortifications in defiance of their pledges, while the Commission was powerless even to visit the islands!

As a last resort, in the case of the repetition of such conduct, an International Commission should have the power to transfer administrative control of a colony to another power. If, for example, the Franco Government should continue to use its African island of Fernando Po as a center for slave-trading in members of neighboring tribes, as it is doing today, and Franco professed inability to prevent the traffic, as he doubtless would, an International Commission should have the right to step in and kick Franco, or any similar offender, out.

4. *The preparation for and the progress toward self-government should come within the reviewing power of Regional Commissions, and regular reports should be rendered concerning positive steps toward democracy.*

This will be the final test of Europe's co-operation with the United States, and it is the one most likely to be rejected by the European powers. The British, particularly, resent our emphasis upon political reforms. They squirmed when Wendell Willkie insisted upon a time table for colonial freedom and the suggestion was greeted with wild enthusiasm from Burma to Trinidad.

"There is a tendency," warned



Colonel Oliver Stanley, Secretary of State for Colonies in a 1943 speech, "here and abroad to judge our sincerity and measure our success by the test of political evolution alone." While there is a measure of truth in the implied criticism, more can be said on the other side. Americans are critical of political oppression partly because it is a result of both economic and cultural neglect. In Africa, for example, the British use the Negro's ignorance as a reason for denying him democratic institutions, but the British are largely responsible for the native's ignorance because they have brought schools to less than 20 per cent of their African subjects.

Under an international trusteeship the natives should not be compelled to wring every new advance in education, civil rights and self-government from a reluctant home government. The pressure should come from within the international community.

5. *No government which legalizes racial discrimination as part of its administrative procedure should be permitted to administer any colonies.*

This is meant for South Africa, which is already a mandate power and is trying to spread its appalling policy of racial discrimination northward to the very heart of Africa. Under that policy, which is frozen on the statute books, wages, education and the very right to lie down at night are entirely contingent upon the color of a man's skin.

It may be considered an act of effrontery for a nation which includes

Mississippi in its hegemony to insist upon racial decency in colonial administration, but if we sanction the official discrimination of South Africa in international affairs, we may as well start preparation for continuous war in Africa and Asia. If the issue is not joined now, it will return to plague us with worse crimes. Already the South African racial bigots are trying to extend their policy to the colored majority in Southern Rhodesia and they will attempt the same development in Northern Rhodesia, Tanganyika and Kenya. The British Colonial Office is inclined to fight them, and with our help they can be beaten.

These political requisites for a colonial new deal are only half the story. The other half is economic. Hungry natives cannot eat constitutions, and frequently new constitutions do not bring any substantial improvements without economic reform. The redistribution of political power in the world's colonial system will be of little use unless there is a serious effort to redistribute work and wealth also.

While the whole scheme of Dumbarton Oaks is threatened with premature extinction by European power politics, no honest and informed person can feel confident that either the political or the economic aims of our colonial diplomacy will be achieved. But the goal of a self-governing world is more than worth fighting for, and the moral support of six hundred million people should provide all the necessary inspiration.



# SHIP WORKERS IN THE NORTHWEST

BY AL LAKE

PLANS for postwar employment offered by business, civic groups, politicians, Government officials, and shipbuilding moguls leave the workers in the Northwest shipyards absolutely cold. They believe they face from two to four years of unemployment, soaring prices, housing shortages, wage reductions and strikes.

Badgered and hounded since 1941 by movie stars, all sorts of super-salesmen, professional pepper-uppers and propagandists of every variety, workers long ago learned to shrug off the frothings of these gentry. They have also wearied of the drivel of housing authorities, U. S. Employment Service spokesmen, Army and Navy big shots and Government bureau heads.

Since last November, these workers have gone their own sweet way about their jobs, largely ignoring the pleadings and admonitions of the bosses; asking only to be left alone to dawdle through their days. On the job they loaf, get drunk and potter along just as they wish, actually defying Management to fire them.

Management, itself, is ill. Weary of perpetual changes in ships' plans, bored with promises that are seldom fulfilled, at the mercy of the unions, forced to employ any man or woman who has at least one hand and one leg; stuck with incompetents by the manpower freeze, Management looks on postwar optimism with a jaundiced eye.

And, because these things are so, far more than because of any manpower shortage, production is down a good 25 per cent.

The bright side of the workers' picture is the hope of unemployment compensation for a period long enough to permit them to adjust *themselves*. For Management, the thin light in the darkness is that it won't be long before it can rid itself of 60 per cent of its workers forever. With the other remaining 40 per cent, Management hopes to struggle through into the full sunlight — in about four years — if all goes well.

Says Management: "We don't know what's going to happen."

Says Labor: "We're in for the

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