

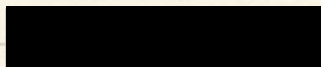
ESSAY COMPETITION . CLASS. A.

A
A.3

name

Terence . S. Taylor.

date of birth



address

255, Belmont Rd,
Belfast,
N. Ireland.

school

Campbell College,
Belfast,
N. Ireland.

I am the only member of the school to have attempted
this essay.

List of headings.

- 1/. The attack made against our colonies by. the U.S.A, Russia, India, Latin America, the Arab states etc.
- 2/. How we came to acquire our colonies.
- 3/. An answer to the criticisms made by the countries mentioned above & a summary of their own weaknesses.
- 4/. Just what we have achieved in our colonial territories.
- 5/. Summary & conclusion.

'Colonial powers are heavily criticised in the United Nations for having Colonies at all. Write a speech which you think a delegate from a Commonwealth country might make in reply to such criticisms.

Mr President.

It is my duty on behalf of the British Commonwealth to make reply to the criticisms & accusations directed against Britain's colonial policy both past & present. Though such criticism is nothing new I feel it is time that the true facts & situation were laid before you all.

We are said to exploit our colonies & to deprive colonial peoples of wealth & democratic self-government. We are accused of discriminating between races & of providing insufficient education in our territories. Here in the United States of America there exists a belief that we, the British should be ashamed of our colonies & that in a dispute between a Briton & a colonial, the white man is always wrong & the coloured man invariably right. In this country also, a Mr Dorn of South Carolina has said that, "when in fact the Colonials do move out Communism moves in." Some Americans regard our giving of independence as the reluctant surrender of a repentant Imperial power relieving the inhabitants of these countries from 'oppression'. Mr Adlai Stevenson has written, "British Imperialism has many sins on its conscience!" It seems that an unqualified tribute to British Colonialism comes dangerously near 'Un-American activity'.

From the Soviet Union come strong denunciations of Britain's Imperialism & capitalist exploitation. They accuse us of placing British officials in the better paid posts, of busily exploiting the territories while demanding subservience from the local peoples. Soviet representatives have frequently alleged that Colonial Territories are exploited for their primary

products entirely for the benefit of the metropolitan countries & that there are no democratic institutions. Why, they ask, are there not legislatures elected on a basis of universal suffrage & by the secret ballot?

They frequently press for the extension of parliamentary democracy to dependent territories, some of which are obviously not yet fitted for it, & they are severely critical of such examples of progress as may be seen in the development of Ghana.

Seldom have we faced so strong an attack as that of Bulganin & Khrushchev in India in 1955. One marvels at Satan reluking Sin! Among our most severe critics are the representatives of India. They condemned us for suspending the constitution of British Guiana consequent on the behaviour of the People's Progressive Party, an entirely Indian party. They criticize us over the number of Chinese in our territories in South East Asia. They accuse us of collective punishment & unjust collective fines. They regard themselves as champions of the underdeveloped countries opposed to Colonialism & conveniently forget Hyderabad in 1948.

The members of the Latin American countries lose no opportunity of vaunting their anti-colonialism & denouncing our conduct in particular. These are by no means the only opposition that we have to put with. Amongst the most extreme fanatics of anti-colonialism are the Arab States. Egypt, for instance, broadcasts the most violent attacks against the Western world. An example of the line taken is that the Mau Mau rebellion in which white arms defeated black courage must begin again: not only in Kenya but in the entire continent of Africa. Africa belongs to the Africans! Cairo's campaign of abuse stresses the racial intolerance of all European & Christian nations & suggests that we

in Britain are not in earnest about self-government for dependent territories. Sir John Glubb has said that, "The Egyptian radio daily pours the bitterest poison in the ears of millions in the Arab countries & nearly everything it says is untrue. The majority of the listeners are utterly ignorant of the world & have no background to judge the truth or falsehood of the statements made." Typical of the wild accusations is that of the Syrian representative who has rebuked the colonial powers for not genuinely preparing & training the people under their tutelage for self-government. And to all this Indonesia & Liberia add their vituperation. These examples of wild, unjust, & fanatical accusations will all be answered, but first I will outline the truth about our colonies, how we acquired them & how we have cherished them.

Britain's first colonies, in the West Indies & North America, had few indigenous peoples, & these, like the Maroons of Jamaica benefited from British rule. From that time forward the British tradition has remained constant. It has brought to its colonies the principles & ideals of the seventeenth century Whigs & constitutional lawyers. This tradition has been adapted by practical idealists like Durham & Lugard but its aim has remained constant — to bring peace, the rule of law, freedom of speech, together with educational, economic & political progress. What did the Pathans, the Baganda or the Ashanti know of such things until they came under Britain's benevolent rule?

Our detractors forget that in many parts of Africa, Britain's first objective was to rescue the inhabitants from local tyranny, from the Arab slave raiders & from tribal wars, fetishism & human sacrifice. Such motives actuated us with Sierra Leone in 1788, with Benin & the Fulani, with the Fanti & Ashanti, Nyasaland,

Kenya & Uganda. As you must now realize there was in fact, a negligible amount of fighting against the indigenous inhabitants of the present colonies. It was our greatest African administrator, Lord Lugard who said, "Several of our colonies were acquired solely as depots to assist in the suppression of the slave trade, others in support of missionary endeavours which were certainly not prompted by greed or profit."

Another misconception regarding British Imperialism is that throughout modern times Great Britain has followed a policy of 'grab' taking colony after colony for her own aggrandisement & profit. During the last century the British middle class led by the 'Times' strongly opposed the 'wretched colonies' which cost the taxpayers so dear. As long ago as 1865 the British House of Commons adopted the resolution "that all further extension of territory or assumption of Government, or new treaties offering protection to native tribes would be unexpedient & that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more & more to transfer to them the administration of all the governments with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all the African territories." East Africa may be taken as an example. Here the Sultan of Zanzibar implored Kike to take over the East African coast & save it from slavery, but the British Government declined the offer. Later still we have repeatedly refused requests from indigenous rulers that British protectorates should be established over their territories. Preparation for self-government involves educational & economic development & the training of the people in the working of parliamentary democracy. As a colonial power

aware of its responsibilities we have risen to those responsibilities & have conscientiously maintained a policy of preparation for self-government. Almost alone among the metropolitan powers Britain has consciously undertaken the doctrine of trusteeship & the 'dual mandate' - to develop the resources of primitive countries for the benefit of their peoples & to guide these peoples towards civilization & independence.

I feel that this would be a good moment to return as I promised to the attack made by so many of you on colonialism in general. We in Britain & in the Commonwealth cannot help wondering just what prompts this stream of ill-informed criticism which clouds the issue & makes more difficult the well ordered transition from colonialism to independence which is in the best interests of the peoples most concerned. I think I can best counter the attack by dealing in turn with each of the countries which I referred to before.

First then the United States. While I admit they do not join in the more violently anti-colonial denunciations they are inclined to 'sit on the fence' & abstain from voting. Such action is apparently intended to express general sympathy with an attack on colonialism while disapproving of the more violent methods of the anti-colonialists. This gives satisfaction to neither side. The American's attitude is a strange one. When he thinks of colonialism he confines his thoughts of the colonies of European powers, to the British Empire over which he still sees the spirit of George the Third ruling tyrannically. Russian colonial expansion in Central Asia is Communism, Indian action in Hyderabad & Kashmir is a harmless demonstration of nationalism; the irredentism of Guatemala & Argentina, justified anti colonial disposition.

Of course American colonies are nothing more than "possessions". But do not forget that Puerto Rico was conquered from Spain; that Alaska was bought from Russia, that the Panama Canal Zone was acquired in the twentieth century by methods which would have been condemned if used by Britain in the last century. Typical of American ignorance & misconception of this subject is their consistent use of the phrase 'Released from oppression' as a substitute for 'given independence.' Let me sum up by saying that the majority of the anti-colonial opinion in America is based on an emotional & instinctive dislike of conflicting racial feeling, something which has dogged her own development! To America the absorption of a continent seems to be a natural process, but an Empire containing numerous detached portions of land is an example of rank Imperialism.

The U.S.S.R. which denounces imperialism & imputes land grabbing motives to the Western powers, has annexed since 1939, from friend & foe alike, some 266, thousand square miles of territory with populations exceeding 22 millions. One of our former ambassadors in Russia has said, "The central government of Moscow has for thirty years pursued a policy of imperialism which has had no counterpart in any of the so-called Western imperialist systems." The victims of Soviet expansion & absorption are certainly less 'free' than the inhabitants of British colonies. Even so we recognise Soviet sovereignty over the whole of the Soviet Union, forming a single unit that was built up by expansion over land. But at the same time we must insist that the British Colonial Empire, although split up by intervening oceans, is every bit as much

of a single international entity as the Soviet Union.

We admit that the people of Fiji are not the same race as those of England, but neither are the people of East Siberia or Central Asia of the same racial stock as the inhabitants of Moscow. We have expanded by sea lanes, just as Russia or the U.S.A have expanded by land roads or inland waterways.

The representatives of India maintain that they speak with recent experience of colonial status & can therefore understand better the disadvantages from which dependent peoples suffer. But it must be remembered that Britain offered dominion status to India in 1931 & it was only her own bitter divisions, which Britain tried to restrain, that delayed the day of independence. Perhaps India's own conduct since she gained her independence does not altogether entitle her to criticise the Imperialist attitude of the older colonial powers. The Indian representative here has attacked 'the entire notion & system of collective punishment as reprehensible to civilization.' He says "We lived under this system of collective fines. It is a violation of human rights;" implying that this was the sort of thing that happened in the bad old days of British rule, & there is no suggestion that this system still exists in Independent India & yet they cannot deny that this is so.

The Latin American countries who criticise us so freely, live themselves under a tradition of lawlessness unknown to the Western world. When they blame us for the bad housing & low wages paid to the inhabitants....; what then are the conditions in Latin America? With the possible exception of Argentina & Brazil the countries of South America are fundamentally & inescapably

so poor that a living standard even approaching that of North America is unthinkable. One of their most frequent complaints to colonial powers concerns the inadequacy of the medical services. Yet it is reported in Bolivia, Peru & Ecuador, except in large Indian villages there are no medical or pharmaceutical services of any kind. Medicine is practised by men & women generally in accordance with more or less magical & superstitious rites. These facts should be enough to destroy many of the fallacies regarding European colonialism. It is the same story in the Arab states, in Indonesia & Liberia. Colonialism is employed as a scapegoat for all the failings of the home government. Wildly inaccurate fallacies are prevalent throughout these countries & others.

At the present time the inhabitants of many independent countries & not only those under Communist rule enjoy much less freedom than do those in British colonies, less freedom of speech, of religious beliefs, of the press & less security from arbitrary arrest & imprisonment. Health, education, social services & economic development are just as difficult a problem in an independent country as in a colony. What have we done for our colonies? I will tell you. Firstly while we have undoubtedly made mistakes & in some cases have been guilty of injustice towards the people of our dependent territories, on the whole our administration has been honest & beneficial. We believe in a free capitalist society, & it has not always been possible to restrain our traders who may have been ruthless, but they have always been restrained ultimately by the British people acting through parliament.

We have put a stop to slavery & human sacrifice, & we have checked cruelty & corruption amongst native rulers. We have stamped out or reduced diseases. We have brought a measure of education to people who were generally illiterate. We have developed backward countries by constructing roads & railways. We have opened up mines & improved on the primitive agriculture of the past. We have allowed trade to develop under a firm administration. We have not interfered with religion, have allowed freedom of speech & encouraged constitutional opposition in colonial legislatures. We have laid the foundations of a good system of law & public administration. We have not exercised any monopoly of trade with British colonies which are open to the trade & commerce of all nations. We have given commercial rivals the same opportunities as our own nationals. Had other great countries in more than one continent been as liberal in their trading policies, as free from taint of aggressive economics as we have been with our colonies, the creeping paralysis of restriction & decline might not have set in contributing as it did to war.

Our colonial administration has been carried on by a service with a high tradition of integrity & efficiency which has given the colonies long years of devoted & unselfish work. Here is part of a colonial office report summing up our policy. "The central purpose of British colonial policy is simple. It is to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people concerned both a fair standard of living & freedom from oppression from any quarter." In 1923 it was stated, "His Majesty's Government exercise a trust for

"The African people & will not delegate that trust." Even today our high commission Territories like Basutoland & Swaziland want to remain under the United Kingdom.

I have said some very unpleasant things about the USA & India, but let me finish by reading two tributes to British colonialism. One is by an Indian, the other by an American. The Indian says, "Britain's colonial record is far from being a cause for shame. She has done for the peoples of these territories what no other country has done for its subject peoples." The American says, "The weak & struggling British colonies of a century ago stood in need of British capital, settlers, guidance & protection. In modern times British imperial statesmanship has been a compound of many ingredients from which a sense of duty has never been absent. Detractors of the British Empire, who from ignorance or malice condemn it, have against them the undeniable fact that no other imperial organization has voluntarily given up so many conquests or founded such great democracies!"

Today we see India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya & Ghana standing as independent nations. Soon we shall see Nigeria. Free nations who have freely elected to remain in the British Commonwealth. Could Russia give that choice to Hungary or even Georgia? Could India give to Kashmir? Since 1783 Britain has never been driven out of a colony; neither have any of her colonies descended into the chaos of San Domingo or Liberia. Here is the ultimate test. What other country could, with Britain, face such a test?

List of books consulted.

Cambridge history of the British Empire.

Dual Mandate - Lord Lugard

The expansion of the British Empire - Williamson

The British West Indies - W. Burn

In Defence of Colonies - Sir Alan Burns

Oxford history of India -

The Arabs - P. Hitti

The British Commonwealth of Nations - Sir I. Jennings.