

# The White War and the Colored Races

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[The following article was written last year while the Great War still raged. It was written for a certain well-known radical magazine; but was found to be "too radical" for publication at that time. It is given now to the Negro public partly because the underlying explanation which it offers of the root-cause of the war has not yet received treatment even among socialistic radicals, and partly because recent events in China, India, Africa and the United States have proved the accuracy of its forecasts.]

The 19th Christian Century saw the international expansion of capitalism—the economic system of the white peoples of Western Europe and America—and its establishment by force and fraud over the lands of the colored races, black and brown and yellow. The opening years of the 20th Century present us with the sorry spectacle of these same white nations cutting each other's throats to determine which of them shall enjoy the property which has been acquired. For this is the real sum and substance of the original "war aims" of the belligerents; although in conformity with Christian cunning, this is one which is never frankly avowed. Instead, we are fed with the information that they are fighting for "Kultur," and "on behalf of small nationalities." Let us look carefully at this camouflage.

In the first place, we in America need not leave our own land to seek reasons for suspecting the sincerity of democratic professions. While we are waging war to establish democracy three-thousand miles away, millions of Negroes are disfranchised in our own land by the "cracker" democracy of the southern states which is more intent upon making slaves of their black countrymen than upon freeing the French and Belgians from the similar brutalities of the German Junkers. The horrible holocaust of East St. Louis was possible only in three modern states—Russia of the Romanoffs, Turkey and the United States—and it ill becomes any one of them to point a critical finger at the others.

But East St. Louis was simply the climax of a long series of butcheries perpetrated on defenseless Negroes which has made the murder rate of Christian America higher than that of heathen Africa and of every other civilized land. And, although

our government can order the execution of thirteen Negro soldiers for resenting the wholesale insults to the uniform of the United States and defending their lives from civilian aggressors, not one of the murderers of black men, women and children has been executed or even ferreted out. Nor has our war Congress seen fit as yet to make lynching a federal crime. What wonder that the Negro masses are insisting that before they can be expected to enthuse over the vague formula of making the world "safe for democracy" they must receive some assurance that their corner of the world—the South—shall first be made "safe for democracy"! Who knows but that perhaps the situation and treatment of the American Negro by our own government and people may have kept the Central Powers from believing that we meant to fight for democracy in Europe, and caused them to persist in a course which has driven us into this war in which we must spend billions of treasure and rivers of blood.

It should seem, then, that "democracy," like "Kultur," is more valuable as a battle-cry than as a real belief to be practiced by those who profess it. And the plea of "small nationalities" is stopped by three facts: Ireland, Greece, and Egypt, whose Khedive, Abbas Hilmi, was tumbled off his throne for failing to enthuse over the claims of "civilization" as expounded by Lord Grey.

But this is merely disproof. The average American citizen needs some positive proof of the assertion that this war is being waged to determine who shall dictate the destinies of the darker peoples and enjoy the usufruct of their labor and their lands. For the average American citizen is blandly ignorant of the major facts of history and has to be told. For his benefit I present the following statement from Sir Harry Johnston, in "The Sphere" of London. Sir Harry Johnston is the foremost English authority of Africa and is in a position to know something of imperial aims.

"Rightly governed, I venture to predict that Africa will, if we are victorious, repay us and all our allies the cost of our struggle with Germany and Austria. The war, deny it who may, was really fought over African questions. The Germans wished, as the chief gain of victory, to wrest rich Moroc-

co from French control, to take the French Congo from France, and the Portuguese Congo from Portugal, to secure from Belgium the richest and most extensive tract of alluvial goldfield as yet discovered. This is an auriferous region which, properly developed, will, when the war is over, repay the hardest-hit of our allies (France) all that she has lost from the German devastation of her home lands. The mineral wealth of trans-Zambezi Africa—freed forever, we will hope, from the German menace—is gigantic: only slightly exploited so far. Wealth is hidden amid the seemingly unprofitable deserts of the Sahara, Nubia, Somaliland and Namaqua. Africa, I predict, will eventually show itself to be the most richly endowed of all the continents in valuable vegetable and mineral substances."

There is the sum and substance of what Schopenhauer would have called "the sufficient reason" for this war. No word of "democracy" there, but instead the easy assumption that, as a matter of course, the lands of black Africa belong to white Europe and must be apportioned on the good old principle:

".....the simple plan,  
That he shall take who has the power,  
And he must keep who can."

It is the same economic motive that has been back of every modern war since the merchant and trading classes secured control of the powers of the modern state from the battle of Plassy to the present world-war. This is the natural and inevitable effect of the capitalist system of what (for want of a worse name) we call "Christendom." For that system is based upon the wage relationship between those who own and those who operate the gigantic forces of land and machinery. Under this system no capitalist employs a worker for two dollars a day unless that worker creates more than two dollars worth of wealth for him. Only out of this surplus can profits come. If ten million workers should thus create one-hundred-million dollars worth of wealth each day and get twenty or fifty-millions in wages, it is obvious that they can expend only what they have received, and that, therefore, every nation whose industrial system is organized on a capitalist basis must produce a mass of surplus products over and above, not the needs, but the purchasing power of the nation's producers. Before these products can return to their owners as profits they must be sold somewhere. Hence the need for foreign markets, for fields of exploitation and

"spheres of influence" in "undeveloped" countries whose virgin resources are exploited in their turn after the capitalist fashion. But, since every industrial nation is seeking the same outlet for its products, clashes are inevitable and in these clashes beaks and claws—armies and navies—must come into play. Hence beaks and claws must be provided beforehand against the day of conflict, and hence the exploitation of white men in Europe and America becomes the reason for the exploitation of black and brown and yellow men in Africa and Asia. And, therefore, it is hypocritical and absurd to pretend that the capitalist nations can ever intend to abolish wars. For, as long as black men are exploited by white men in Africa, so long must white men cut each other's throats over that exploitation. And thus, the selfish and ignorant white workers' destiny is determined by the hundreds of millions of those whom he calls "niggers". "The strong too often think that they have a mortgage upon the weak; but in the domain of morals it is the other way."

But economic motives have always their social side; and this exploitation of the lands and labor of colored folk expresses itself in the social theory of white domination: the theory that the worst human stocks of Montmartre, Seven Dials and the Bowery are superior to the best human stocks of Rajputana or Khartoum. And when these colored folk who make up the overwhelming majority of this world, demand decent treatment for themselves, the proponents of this theory accuse them of seeking social equality. For white folk to insist upon the right to manage their own ancestral lands, free from the domination of tyrants, domestic and foreign, is variously described as democracy and self-determination. For Negroes, Egyptians and Hindus to seek the same thing is impudence. What wonder, then, that the white man's rule is felt by them to rest upon a seething volcano whose slumbering fires are made up of the hundreds of millions of Chinese, Japanese, Hindus and Africans! Truly has it been said that "the problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the Color Line." And wars are not likely to end; in fact, they are likely to be wider and more terrible—so long as this theory of white domination seeks to hold down the majority of the world's people under the iron heel of racial repression.

Of course, no sane person will deny that the white race is, at present the superior race of the world. I use the word "superior" in no cloudy,

metaphysical sense, but simply to mean that they are on top and their will goes,—at present. Consider that fact as the pivotal fact of the war. Then, in the light of it, consider what is happening in Europe to-day. The white race is superior—its will goes—because it has invented and amassed greater means for the subjugation of nature and of man than any other race. It is the top dog by virtue of its soldiers, guns, ships, money, resources and brains. **Yet there in Europe it is deliberately burning up, consuming and destroying these very soldiers, guns, ships, money, resources and brains, the very things upon which its supremacy rests.** When this war is over, it will be less able to enforce its sovereign will upon the darker races of the world. Does any one believe that it will be as easy to hold down Egypt and India and Persia after the war as it was before? Hardly.

Not only will the white race be depleted in numbers, but its quality, physical and mental, will be considerably lowered for a time. This is inevitable. War destroys first the strongest and bravest, the best stocks, the young men who were to father the next generation. The next generation must, consequently, be fathered by the weaker stocks of the race. And thus, in physical stamina and in brain-power, they will be less equal to the task of holding down the darker millions of the world than their fathers were. This was the thought back of Mr. Hearst's objection to our entering the war. He wanted the United States to stand as the white race's reserve of man-power when Europe had been bled white.

But what will be the effect of all this upon that colored majority whose preponderant existence our newspapers ignore? In the first place, it will feel the lifting of the pressure as the iron hand of "discipline" is relaxed. And it will expand, when that pressure is removed, to the point where it will first ask, then demand, and finally secure, the right of self-determination. It will insist that, not only the white world, but the whole world, be made "safe for democracy". This will mean a self-governing Egypt, a self-governing India, and independent African states as large as Germany and France—and larger. And, as a result, there will come a shifting of the basis of international politics and business and of international control. This is the living thought that comes to me from the newspapers and books that have been written and published by colored men in Africa and Asia during the past three

years. It's what I have heard from their own lips as I have talked with them. And, yet, of this thought which is inflaming the international under-world, not a word appears in the parochial press of America, which seems to think that if it can keep its own Negroes down to servile lip-service, it need not face the world-wide problem of the "Conflict of Color", as Mr. Putnam-Weale calls it.

But that the more intelligent portions of the white world are becoming distressingly conscious of it, is evident from the first great manifesto of the Russian Bolsheviki last year when they asked about Britain's subject peoples.

And the British workingmen have evidently done some thinking in their turn. In their latest declarations they seem to see the ultimate necessity of compelling their own aristocrats to forego such imperial aspirations as that of Sir Harry Johnston, and of extending the principle of self-determination even to the black people of Central-Africa. But eyes which have for centuries been behind the blinkers of Race Prejudice cannot but blink and water when compelled to face the full sunlight. And Britain's workers insist that "No one will maintain that the Africans are fit for self-government." But no one has yet asked the Africans anything about it. And on the same principle (of excluding the opinion of those who are most vitally concerned) Britain's ruling class may tell them that "No one maintains that the laboring classes of Britain are fit for self-government." But their half-hearted demand that an international committee shall take over the British, German, French and Portuguese possessions in Africa and manage them as independent nationalities (?) until they can "go it alone," would suggest that their eyesight is improving.

To sum it all up, the war in Europe is the result of the desire of the white governments of Europe to exploit for their own benefit the lands and labor of the darker races, and, as the war continues, it must decrease the white man's stock of ability to do this successfully against the wishes of the inhabitants of those lands. This will result in their freedom from thralldom and the extension of political, social, and industrial democracy to the twelve-hundred-million black and brown and yellow peoples of the world. This, I take it, is what President Wilson had in mind when he wished to make the world "safe for democracy." But, whether I am mistaken or not, it is the idea which dominates to-day the thought of those darker millions.