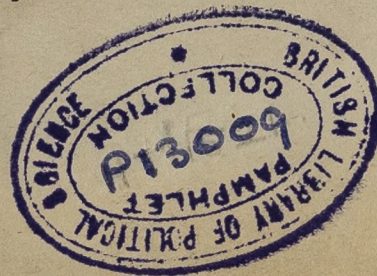


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# COLOURED TROOPS IN EUROPE.

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE.

**COLOURED TROOPS IN EUROPE.**

Report of Meeting held in the Central Hall, Westminster,  
on April 27th, 1920.

Chairman—Mrs. H. M. SWANWICK.

CHAIRMAN: I do not know if many of you here present have been—I hope you have—to those marvellous performances that were given a few weeks ago by the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in London. Ever since I heard those men sing, there has rung in my head the command, "Go down, Moses!" And when I read in the newspapers the appeals that we have seen during the last few weeks, and the letters that we got from abroad, that command seemed to be borne in upon me—that cry, "Let my people go!" In those days the ruler was one; now he is many. Now it is not one tyrant, one Pharaoh, to whom we have to speak, but it is a system, an economic system, which bears upon the oppressed peoples of this world. I know perfectly well that a great many of the people who do these things—these modern Pharaohs—believe that they are doing right. Most people, I find, the longer I live, believe that they are doing right. They have their excuses, just as the old slavers had their excuses. They can appeal to Holy Writ just like the old slavers, but that does not prevent the fact that the system we are up against is slavery, and slavery perhaps in its most terrible form. There are terrible dangers always when the material advancement of people goes faster than their spiritual and moral advancement and than their international organization. We have used our material advancement for selfish purposes, our wealth for iniquitous purposes. Our moral advancement has not gone step by step with our material advancement, and our material advancement now has taught us how to kill on a larger scale and with more cruel weapons than were ever used in the world's history. Not only so, not only are we using our chemists and our physicists for all these abominable methods of killing, but we are now using men—that most precious thing in the world—as if they were mere things, on a scale that the

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world has never seen. It is against that iniquity that we are here to protest—the use of precious human beings as if they were mere material for the greed of the materialistic, and the capitalistic, and the imperialistic spirit of the world.

I want to allude to a letter I have received in reply to a request for support. It is from Sir Harry Johnston. He supported the war with enthusiasm all through, and Sir Harry Johnston writes: "As Africa was the principal stake for which the nations of Europe were fighting"—there is an admission for you!—"it is as appropriate that negro soldiers should be fighting or keeping the peace in Europe, as that white soldiers should be engaged on African campaigns." I am not here to defend what white men have done in Africa, and I need not tell you that our chief speaker is not here to defend what white men have done in Africa. But to tell us that we have a right to kidnap, to conscript, to import African troops into Europe because forsooth we have been fighting over the loot of Africa is to my mind the most extraordinary topsy-turvy idea that I have ever seen a clever man enunciate. (Applause.)

You never get up a meeting like this without a good many people saying, "Why did you do this?" or "Why did you not do the other?" I have never been chairman at a meeting where so many members of the audience have kindly volunteered to speak. I have never been instrumental in getting up a meeting where so many people have said, "Why do you protest now? Why did you not protest before?" There is something in that. It is perfectly true that we are not at the beginning, indeed, we are scores of years from the beginning of this iniquity; but it has never been to me any argument whatever that you should not do a thing because it is a little late to begin to do it, and therefore I say, let us get on with our work now. And there are some of us—like Mr. Morel—who have spoken and written and given their lives for the black man many, many years before this particular iniquity was before us.

And then they say to us, "Do not move: the whole thing is so complicated. If you touch one race you touch another race." Don't I know that! In drafting the Resolution what enormous difficulties we had not to be misunderstood! My friends, it is very difficult to draft a Resolution which shall not be misunderstood, but I hope that all of you will have the patience to listen to the speeches and then understand the spirit in which this meeting was called. "The wrongs that are so old and so many," they said, "that you will never get to the end of them." I do not propose, and nobody proposes, that we shall talk about all the wrongs that white men have done to black men and to black women,

or of all the wrongs they have done by bringing them into conjunction with white races. We want to talk to-night about one particular instance of that wrong. The League of Nations—about which I think I can say we have very few illusions—has one good thing in its covenant, and that is that in the mandated territories the natives will not be allowed to be trained for military purposes outside their country. They will have to be used only for police and defence. What we stand for is that that principle shall be applied all round, not only to the mandated territories but to other places.

This is not a meeting directed against France. It is directed against a terrible abuse, of which Great Britain has been guilty as well. It is in the best interests of France. France, if you see far enough, will perhaps suffer more from this deed than any other country will suffer.

There is one quotation that I feel bound to make, because there has been brought against us the criticism that we have said things for which we have no voucher. That, for instance, the demand for tolerated houses for the negroes in the occupied districts has not been made. I am going to give you evidence that no one could possibly deny. It comes from a French newspaper, the "Populaire de Paris," dated September 24, 1919. In that paper they give the text of an order signed by Brissaud Desmaillet, the General commanding the 127th Division in the Saar Valley. I will read a translation. I must confess that it is not quite literal because I have left out some of *l'esprit gaulois* which informs it. This is the text of the General's order:

The General has received several anonymous letters from fusiliers, infantrymen, and cavalrymen, complaining that they can no longer obtain admission to the brothels because the riflemen are monopolizing them in great numbers. These latter remain too long and cause considerable congestion. The High Command of the Saar (that is of the Army of Occupation) and the municipal authorities are engaged in procuring a considerable increase in the effective force of prostitutes. But until these reinforcements have arrived riflemen must take less time. They will be instructed on this subject.

I think no comment is necessary. I think this is proof that what we have said about the moral dangers and the moral iniquities, and the crime that has been perpetrated in the occupied districts, needs no more remark.

I want you to realize that there is not one of us who wishes to appeal to racial hatred on any side. There is a pamphlet by Mr. Morel that we have on sale to-night, and I hope every one of you will buy and read it, in spite of its title, "The Black Scourge." It seems a little hard when men have been kidnapped and forcibly brought to a place to call them a scourge. It is rather like that other phase, "the

Yellow Peril." Who made the yellow peril except the white man? (Applause.)

The following resolution was moved from the Chair:—

That in the interests of good feeling between all the races of the world and the security of all women this meeting calls upon the League of Nations to prohibit the importation into Europe for war-like purposes of troops belonging to primitive peoples, and their use anywhere, except for purposes of police and defence in the country of their origin.

MR. E. D. MOREL: Before dealing with the particular issue which has inspired this meeting—the occupation of the towns of the Palatinate by African troops—I should like to say something on the general problem which lies at the back of it. And for this reason, if we are to appreciate to the full the immense gravity of what is at stake, we cannot treat this particular issue without taking into account the events from which it has evolved. We must examine the background out of which it has been precipitated. We must regard it not as an accidental circumstance or an isolated incident, but as the logical development of a *policy*. I want to emphasize that. That *policy* affects, on the one hand, the future of the white race in Europe, and the character of the relations between the white race and the African and Asiatic races in Africa and Asia.

Let us then begin by recalling what is so prone to be forgotten. The Europe which plunged into war five and a half years ago was not a Europe whose horizon was limited to Europe; whose ambitions, whose interests, and whose rivalries were confined to Europe: whose powers for good or evil were restricted to Europe. The Europe which plunged into war was an imperial Europe, whose subjugating will had imposed itself upon virtually the whole of the Continent of Africa and a large portion of the Continent of Asia.

The outbreak of the great war found the imperial Powers of Europe exercising dominion over hundreds of millions of Africans and Asiatics in every stage of evolution—some purely primitive in type, some highly advanced, possessing an older civilization than our own, compared with which, indeed, our civilization is crude, vulgar, and materialistic. Towards all these peoples the imperial Powers of Europe claimed to be acting as guardians and trustees: to be governing them not in the selfish interests of the home State but in the interests of their own welfare and peaceful development. That—and that alone—the statesmen of imperial Europe declared to be, and knew to be, the only moral justification which can be claimed for Empire, in so far as Empire connotes the government of communities by a State alien to those communities in race and colour.

The supreme test of the sincerity of those professions came with the war. If they had been sincere the imperial Powers of Europe would have done their utmost to prevent the war from overflowing into Africa and Asia. They might have failed; but at least they could have circumscribed the area affected by the war. They would have used every endeavour to prevent the subject peoples of their Empires from becoming involved in passions and quarrels in which they had no direct concern, and from the misery and suffering incidental thereto. They might not altogether have succeeded. But they would have reduced the participation of those peoples to the smallest possible proportion. Above all, they would have regarded with horror the extension of the war among the primitive, politically helpless peoples of tropical Africa, whom for the past quarter of a century they have repeatedly declared it to be their high mission to rescue from barbarism, and among whom hundreds of European missionaries were preaching the gospel of the Prince of Peace. Morality demanded that this should be their policy. Their oft repeated professions of altruistic and disinterested motive demanded it. Statesmanship demanded it no less.

#### THE SEARCH FOR COLOURED CANNON-FODDER.

The course they actually pursued was the exact opposite. Not only did they take early steps to involve the whole of the Asiatic and African continents in the war, directly or indirectly; they themselves carried the war into the heart of Africa. They pushed immorality and impolicy to the extent of importing hundreds of thousands of Africans and Asiatics into Europe—to labour behind the lines, to kill and be killed by white men, to die of the white man's climate and the white man's diseases, to participate in every phase of the white man's delirium, to take back to their countries the lessons they had learned. To the uttermost ends of the earth did these disinterested guardians of the non-white races pursue their search for cannon-fodder. From the slopes of the Himalayas, from the plains of Hindustan, from the palm groves of the New Hebrides, from the dim recesses of the African forests. They took the Malagasy from his rice fields, the Egyptian fellah from his cotton plantations, the Tunisian from his olive woods. The Annamite, the Moor, the Arab, the Negro—black, brown, yellow men, they took them all, drilled them, put uniforms on their backs, thrust rifles in their hands, converted them into killing machines for the glory of God and to make the world safe for democracy.

And they died these poor folk, died in heaps of unhappiness and consumption: slaughtered, too, in droves on the fields of battle. "The death wail of the black troops froze

the blood of Frenchmen with horror," Philip Gibbs records in that terrible book of his, on the occasion of one of the great French advances. The depopulation in some parts of Africa has been absolutely appalling, and I dare say some of you here to-night recalled when you read the other day the edifying squabbles between French and British statesmen as to whether British or French capitalists should have the lion's share of the oil deposits of Mesopotamia—I dare say some of you recalled the official reports of the ghastly agonies endured by our Indian troops whose bones still lie bleaching upon the burning and arid rocks covering those natural riches so precious to our modern capitalist society.

**NOTHING VILER HAS MARKED THIS WAR THAN THE MARTYRDOM IT HAS INFLICTED UPON NATIVE RACES UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE IMPERIAL POWERS OF EUROPE.**

I know it may be said, and truly said, that the native rulers of some of these peoples offered to participate in the war and to send their subjects to participate in it. I am familiar with all the arguments which it is sought to draw from that. They fail to convince me that it can under any circumstances be right from the point of view of humanity; from the point of view of the moral responsibility in which we stand towards the non-self-governing races under our flag; or from the point of view of imperial statesmanship to import members of these races into Europe—to slaughter and be slaughtered by German artisans, Russian peasants, or the subjects of any other European State with whom our ruling classes may have fallen foul. The whole policy is wicked and insane, and it is not only the duty but the obvious self-interest—as I shall make clear, I hope—of the European democracies whose governments are imperial governments in Africa and Asia to register their condemnation of it, and to oppose its perpetuation and development under new forms in so-called times of peace. So much for the background of the specific issue with which we are specially concerned to-night and to which I shall now pass.

### **MILITARIZING THE AFRICAN TROPICS.**

In approaching it I am going first of all to clear the ground of one of three criticisms—the others I will deal with presently—which I observe are being advanced in certain quarters—all three inevitable, I suppose, but all three equally without foundation. Let me repudiate, then, in advance, any attempt which may be made to distort this meeting, or any words of mine, into an attack upon France. I intend to deal faithfully with a policy which this meeting is called to condemn, and in so far as that policy may be condemned,

those in France responsible for it, are affected thereby. But it would be a great mistake and a great injustice to make the French people, and especially the French working classes, responsible for that policy. They are not. They themselves are threatened by it—formidably so. Hardly a day passes that one of the most widely read of French working-class papers does not stigmatize that policy as it deserves and in language stronger than I shall allow myself to use to-night. Indeed, I have received a number of personal messages from distinguished Frenchmen, in the last few days, which would make any such attempt as I have indicated ridiculous. I will read two of them:—

Copy of letter from M. Jean Longuet to Mr. Morel:—

I beg you to inform our British comrades at the Central Hall that we are absolutely at one with them in their protest against the crime of employing black troops in the occupied provinces on the left and right banks of the Rhine. It is one of the most odious aspects of contemporary militarism and imperialism. Just as we are at one with you in protesting against outrages in India, in Egypt, and now in Ireland, for which your governing classes are responsible, so do we entirely approve of your protest against the use of African or Asiatic troops for the occupation of European cities. The occupation by these troops of the house in which Goethe was born is a symbol which has painfully affected the whole of thinking Europe, and all those who in France desire to remain faithful to the noblest and most glorious traditions of our country. But beyond this our working-class population realizes that it is confronted with a danger affecting it particularly. To-morrow these Moroccan and Senegalese troops will be employed against French Labour when French Labour demands its rights. And that is why I desire, on behalf of our friends of the French Socialist Party, to proclaim in the most emphatic manner that your action can in no way whatsoever be considered as anti-French. On the contrary, the best way in which you can show that you remain attached to the most noble traditions of the France of Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Michelet, and Jean Jaurès, is to protest as you are doing against the outrage inflicted upon our country by our Government.

Extracts from letter of M. Romain Rolland to Mr. Morel:

European policy is reaping what it has sown for fifty years in Asia and Africa. The introduction of black troops into Europe is the logical consequence of the wars of extortion and massacre in Africa. It was inevitable that the governments should make use for their foreign wars of the peoples they have conquered. It is equally inevitable that they will make use of them in their future civil wars.

After recalling what he himself said on this subject in his famous "Above the Battlefield" and the criticisms it aroused, he goes on:

These unhappy European peoples did not understand that the weapons they were using would sooner or later be turned against them. The history of the last half-century gives us the terrible and imposing spectacle of an avenging Fate which is pushing Europe with a sort of insensate drunkenness to her own destruction. The incredible blindness of the statesmen who, without realizing it, are delivering Europe over to the black and yellow continents, which

they have armed with their own hands, is itself the unconscious instrument of destiny. I doubt whether that destiny can now be averted. But so long as there is room for hope, the man who is worthy of the name of man must struggle against destiny.

And now for the facts about the particular issue before us. They fall naturally into two parts. There is the African side. There is the European side. It is essential that we should understand both. On the African side the facts are these. France is mistress in Africa of a territory some five million square miles in extent: an area considerably larger than the whole of Europe. I beg you will bear that in mind. Of that area two million square miles—more than half the size of Europe—is situate in the tropical and sub-tropical western part of the continent. Those regions are inhabited by some twenty-five million negroes, many of them in a quite primitive stage of human development, with all the virtues—and they are many—and with all the rude savagery, using the term in no condemnatory sense, proper to uncivilized and semi-civilized man; especially marked, of course, in the degree of forest areas which cover a considerable part of the country. Some three years before the war a scheme was set on foot to raise regiments by voluntary engagement from these tribes for use outside West Africa—wherever French military requirements might suggest. In 1912 a limited form of conscription was introduced. The scheme developed rapidly. In the course of 1912 and 1913 several battalions of these recruits were shipped from West Africa to be stationed in Morocco and Algeria. Upon the outbreak of war they were among the first to be shipped to France. With the advent of the war recruiting was greatly intensified. It was extended even to the French Congo whose vast forests contain the most primitive of all the negro races inhabiting French West Africa. Soon tens of thousands of these negro troops were pouring into Europe. From the declaration of war to the end of 1915, 40,000 were so sent and many more secured. In 1916, 60,000 were shipped.

How were these men often procured? By coercion and violence; by raids and kidnapping; by compelling the unfortunate chiefs of the tribes to furnish a percentage of the men of the tribes; by punishing them if they did not; by all the methods which characterized the old slave trade. What was the result? The tribes rose in revolt. For six months the whole great Niger region was the scene of sanguinary fighting. The acting Governor-General described it as a "conflagration." He was opposed to the policy. He criticized it severely. He was removed. The Governor-General who succeeded him declined to carry out the policy. He resigned. He threw up an appointment of £4,000 a year.

He went back to the army: back to the front—and was killed. When visited by a friend of mine, and of his, in hospital, when suffering from his first wounds, he said: "Not only is the colony being drained of its able-bodied men, but the whole population is being led to believe that the slave trade has begun again." For a time recruiting flagged, until repression had done its work. Then it began again. And in 1918, 70,000 more of these unfortunate men were shipped to Europe. To cut a long story short, France used over 180,000 of these negro troops in the fighting line during the war, and when the armistice was declared 136,000 of them were under arms on the European fronts and in depôts in West Africa and in North Africa. These figures do not, of course, include the numbers raised by conscription in North Africa and in the French island of Madagascar.

#### A PERMANENT POLICY.

Now, whatever might be said about this policy during the war, one would have imagined that the terrible chapter of wrong would have closed with the war. It is not so, and the fact that it is not so, having regard to the condition of Europe to-day, to the character of the so-called Peace Treaty, and to the notorious tendencies of the militarist influences at present controlling French policy—is a fact of sinister significance. Not only is this policy not abandoned, it is being extended and made permanent. In July last, six months after the armistice, a decree was issued imposing obligatory military service upon all adult males throughout the whole enormous area of French West Africa. Last December that decree was made applicable to Madagascar. Particulars have been published as to the number of recruits which must be provided annually by the various dependencies into which the French territory in Africa is divided. It is estimated that, as from 1922, when the new system will be in complete working order, French West Africa will furnish a permanent negro army of 100,000 men. The term of service is for three years, and the technical French press informs us that the conscripts will spend two out of the three years in France—*i.e.* in Europe. To this total must be added another 100,000 who, it is reckoned, will be yielded by Madagascar, the French Somali Coast, and the old French West Indian Islands—which will give a force of 200,000 Africans, mostly negroes, for permanent service in Europe: without counting, of course, the contingents raised by conscription in French North Africa—Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco. What the last figures may be I don't know. Broadly speaking, what the world is confronted with is this—that the whole of French Africa—an area larger than Europe

—is being militarized, and that the intention appears to be to maintain, as part of the French war establishments, an African army of not less than a quarter of a million men on European soil. And this, I do not hesitate to say is, from whatever side it is examined, one of the gravest events in contemporary history.

So much for the African side of the question.

### THE OCCUPATION OF GERMAN TOWNS.

Now for the European side.

As we have seen, the coming of the armistice found large numbers of these African troops on the fronts. Under Article 420 of the Peace Treaty, all Germany west of the Rhine is to be occupied for fifteen years—with certain provisos as to the shortening of the term—as a “guarantee for the Treaty’s execution.” The French Government proceeded to move troops into the portion of the territory which fell to its share to occupy—using for that purpose masses of these conscript African levies. In making use of these levies for that purpose the French militarists committed not only a great act of impolicy, but a great outrage. It was a fitting sequel to a treaty, the terms of which put back the hands of the clock two thousand years. It has been, and is being, attended by the inevitable consequences. With the occupation of these Palatinate towns by the French a strict censorship was established; an iron military rule was introduced. Indeed, it was only the other day, when, as the result of incidents with which we are familiar, the French extended their occupation to Frankfurt and other towns on the right bank of the Rhine, that the public at large became aware that France was maintaining African regiments on the Rhine at all. It appears that they have since been withdrawn from Frankfurt. But there is nowhere any suggestion that they have been withdrawn, or that there is any intention of withdrawing them, from the area on the left bank occupied under the Treaty. According to my information there are now 38,000 French African troops in Germany.

I say the inevitable consequences have occurred. What would you have? It is no use mincing words. You cannot quarter tens of thousands of Africans, big, powerful, muscular men with fierce, strong natural passions—you cannot quarter these men upon a European countryside, without their women folk, without subjecting thousands of European women to willing, or unwilling, sexual intercourse with them. That is the bald fact which no ingenuity can set aside, or special pleading remove. You have got to make provision for such intercourse, and you have got to make the municipal authorities

help you. You cannot help yourself. The essential iniquity is not that the French military authorities should have stuck up brothels for their black legionaries in some of the most ancient seats of European civilization. The iniquity is that, being perfectly well aware of the concomitants of their policy, they should deliberately have adopted that policy. The iniquity is that they were perfectly aware, not only of this side of the business, but that they were exposing the female population of the countryside occupied by these troops to insult and to outrage. The iniquity is that they should deliberately have added to the humiliation and hardships incidental to a military occupation, a terror which cannot be adequately described.

The situation is aggravated by three circumstances. These African troops are encamped in these German towns and villages as conquerors among a people with whom they have been engaged in murderous strife for four years; and who are now a helpless, beaten people. This in itself is calculated to influence psychologically the whole attitude of these troops towards the local population. Again, it is unhappily only too obvious what is the attitude towards the beaten foe of the masters these African troops obey. It is one of studied intent to degrade and to humiliate, and the effect of that attitude, of that mentality, upon the occupying troops, whatever their colour may be, must be clear to the meanest understanding. And finally, in the economic conditions, in the hunger and despair, to which the terms of the Treaty and the general policy of the Allies since the Armistice have already reduced Germany, you have a lever for widespread demoralization. For many obvious reasons not one tithe of what is going on in the French occupied zone can reach the outer world. There is a natural shrinking from publishing experiences of this kind broadcast. There is the censorship. There is the natural unwillingness on the part of the Allied Press to deal with a subject embarrassing from every point of view. The *Herald* has had the great courage to speak out. George Lansbury has added to the debt we all owe him. But what we have to concentrate on is not the pitiable details, but the *broad fact* itself, and the vistas which this outrage opens up in Europe and in Africa.

### IS IT OUR BUSINESS?

I desire to meet and to handle two other lines of criticism as to the justification and reasonableness of the protest we are making to-night. It is said: “Yes; all this is abominable. We entirely disapprove of it. But, after all, it is not *our* business.” My answer to that is that it is very much *our* business, and for many cogent reasons. I will not dwell upon one aspect of the matter, which can be more fittingly treated

by other speakers, beyond saying this: the hopes of constructing a decent international policy and a decent international mind depends in an enormous degree upon European womanhood and the way in which European womanhood uses the increased political powers which it is acquiring, and a subject of this kind seems to me to be one upon which European womanhood can and ought to speak with one voice. But, apart from this, there are a variety of reasons why we are justified in looking upon this matter as our business. Perhaps I may be allowed to mention one or two of them. The occupation of Germany west of the Rhine for a number of years is part and parcel of a treaty for which our Government is responsible, and it is preposterous to suggest that we are not entitled to make friendly representations to France as to the conditions in which that occupation shall be carried out. That is one reason. Another reason is this: the people of this country are asked to pledge themselves and their children by treaty to defend France, for an apparently unlimited period, against German aggression—that word of many interpretations. Bluntly, what is meant by that is this: that we are to pledge ourselves to fight on the side of France if in the years to come France and Germany go to war again. But this policy, which the French militarists are pursuing, in quartering African troops in German towns and villages, coming on the top of everything else, is going to make, if it is persisted in, another Franco-German War absolutely inevitable. Surely we have enough imagination to understand what our feelings would be if the West Riding of Yorkshire, or Wales, or the West country, were occupied by German African troops from German East Africa, with the prospect of fifteen years of such occupation!

This action of the French militarists—contrary, let us insist upon this, to the wishes of the French working classes, who appear to be against the occupation of German territory altogether—is sowing seeds of furious and legitimate resentment. Are we really going to be mad and wicked enough to allow our children's lives to be sacrificed presently as an offering upon the altar of French militarism; to allow them to be mortgaged in advance to a policy which has neither vision, nor a sense of perspective, nor one solitary instinct of magnanimity?

M. Longuet and M. Romain Rolland have insisted, in the messages I have read, upon a side of this problem which must appeal to the solidarity of British labour, viz., the possible and probable use of these African troops to dragoon French labour into submission. If that policy is tried, and succeeds in France. . . well, it will not be long before it is tried elsewhere. British labour cannot remain indifferent to the issue.

### BRITISH RESPONSIBILITIES IN AFRICA.

And there is another reason of a totally different kind, but equally valid, why this matter is our business. Our British dependencies in West Africa run parallel for many hundreds of miles with the French. Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria are surrounded on all their land side by French territory. They appear as islands in a vast sea of French territory—although they are islands which exceed in size France, Italy, and the former German Empire combined. What the French do in their territory necessarily affects us intimately, the more so as the frontiers are quite arbitrary and artificial. The French are fast militarizing the tribes and communities under their rule. Their proclaimed purpose is to make every African adult in their territory into a soldier trained in all the arts of modern warfare. They are doing so. They have trained hundreds of thousands already. And here are our dependencies—Nigeria, for instance, the most thickly populated and flourishing portion of the African tropics, our largest tropical dependency after India—set in the midst of this conscripted French Africa, with nothing more than a small semi-military police force, a couple of thousand strong, to maintain internal order.

We are going to be faced—indeed, we are faced to-day—as a result of French policy, with this dilemma. Either we shall be driven to conscript the peoples under our protection, which means resistance, disturbance, and bloodshed—besides being a suicidal policy from what may be termed the standpoint of imperial statesmanship in Africa, which the French would see for themselves if they were not at present blind to the dangers of what they are doing. Or we shall have to leave these industrious communities defenceless in the event of future trouble with France—which God forbid; and defenceless in the more probable, in my humble opinion the very likely, contingency of a huge revolt of native soldiery in the French possessions, which would spread havoc far and wide in Africa, and not only ruin Nigeria for generations, but wreck the best bit of administrative work which exists in tropical Africa, to-day. The French militarists are not only creating a volcano for themselves. They are creating one for us.

### RACIAL PREJUDICE.

And now for the other line of criticism—the suggestion that we are stirring up racial prejudice, by condemning a policy which M. Longuet roundly calls a “crime.” I understand that this criticism is directed not only at the promoters of this meeting, but at me in particular. Well, I am not in the least disposed to take up the time of the meeting by defending



myself personally against this charge. In the course of the last five years I have been accused of most things on the earth and under the earth, but even the most fertile imagination has got to operate within certain bounds of sweet reasonableness, and that particular charge, so far as I am concerned, exceeds those bounds. But I should like to say this. No action it is possible for the wit of man to conceive could be more calculated to intensify and aggravate racial antipathy, and all the evils, injustices, and cruelties to which it gives rise, than this policy of bringing African levies into the heart of Europe and stationing them permanently in Europe. It is not only the immediate but the future effects which must be considered.

It is not merely that the very problem which haunts the domestic politics of the United States, and gives rise from time to time to those savage acts which every humane American condemns, is being artificially created, in aggravated form, in Europe. It is the aftermath of intensified race prejudice in Africa which is so terrible to contemplate. With the exception of Mediterranean Africa, all Africa, and especially tropical Africa, is held to-day, governed to-day, by a mere handful of white men, comparatively speaking; governed partly by the white man's superior armament and power of organization, partly by a combination of intellectual and spiritual force which you may call character or prestige, as you will. A severe shock has already been administered to the foundations of this rule through the European Governments importing the war into Africa and giving to the native population the spectacle of a governing white element destroying itself—with native help. On the top of that, into the hands of hundreds of thousands of these governed peoples one of the Imperial Powers of Europe is placing weapons of precision, training them how to use them, teaching them military discipline and combination. They have been trained to kill white men in Europe; they have been pitted against the white man's great war machine, instructed in its mechanism.

Gambling politicians and professional militarists in Europe may play with this fire; they are safe enough, but the European administrator, settler, merchant in Africa stands to be burnt by it. And he knows it. Now, fear is never absent from the white ruler in Africa—the fear which comes of the realization of enormous numerical odds. That fear is responsible for a very large proportion of the cruelties which have stained the annals of the white man in his dealings with the black. That fear the policy of the French militarists will emphasize a thousandfold. The tendency throughout French Africa, the tendency in every part of Africa—between whose peoples there is a strange and electric faculty for inter-communication and the rapid transmission of news—the

tendency in every part of Africa will be, under the influence of this fear, to harden and harshen the bonds of white rule, to quicken prejudice and suspicion born of fear, to emphasize what is callous and cruel in white rule.

And what of the corresponding effect in the militarized African, who has shot and bayoneted white men in Europe, who has had sexual intercourse with white women in Europe? Contempt, and a great awakening to the fact that the white man is, after all, rather a poor type, and that the key to his power is just that lethal instrument which he has obligingly taught the black man to use, and to use in combination.

So on one side an intensification of fear, aggravating race prejudice, begetting harshness and cruelty. On the other, contempt, loss of respect, destruction of a legend of superiority, the dawning of the question: Why, after all, do we suffer these people? These two emotions, played upon in a hundred subtle ways, combining together to make a bloody chaos of Africa.

I will tell you what lies at the end of that road—wars of extermination between the two races, from one end of the African continent to the other.

#### AN IGNOBLE POLICY.

Those who support this resolution, and who condemn the policy condemned in the resolution, are doing the greatest service that can be rendered to men of African race. So far from being inspired by race prejudice, they will contribute to prevent it from assuming a more virulent and deadly form than it has attained in the long story of contact between the two races.

One last point, and I have finished. I have tried to deal with this matter in its varied and deeper aspects, and as temperately as its character permitted. But I should like to add this in closing. Just as the occupation of the Rhine towns by African troops in peace time is the development of the *policy* of bringing African troops into Europe in war time, so it is also the supreme manifestation of a policy towards the German people: the policy of the Versailles Treaty. That policy is directed to the degradation, to the humiliation, and to the economic enslavement of a whole nation. It is an ignoble policy. It is an un-English policy. It is a senseless policy. It is a policy from which millions of men, women, and children are suffering unspeakable physical and moral distress. It is a policy which hits the vital, living, human interests of every Democracy in Europe. It is a policy which is repudiated by the French working classes, as witness the manifesto of the Confederation Générale du Travail and the message from M. Longuet which I have read to-night. It is a policy which

should be repudiated more vigorously than it has been hitherto by the British working classes. It is a policy which all decent liberal minded men and women in Britain and in France, whatever their walk in life, whatever their circumstances and position, should unite in combinedly condemning, in the name of common humanity and common sense, and with such reiterated emphasis as will compel its abandonment.

Dr. ETHEL BENTHAM reminded the audience that allowances must be made for the sufferings of France and the inevitable reaction after the war. Nevertheless, because we wished to retain the friendship of France, and to give her our friendship, we must warn her that she is raising dangers which she hardly foresees by this policy. We must say clearly and unmistakably that we will be no party to the occupation of a foreign country by troops of an entirely different race and standard of civilization.

Colonel BRUCE KINGSMILL protested against this policy in the name of the officers who had fallen in the war, and urged that the various races should be given the lands to which they belong by birth.

Mr. BEN SPOOR, M.P., said that the policy of the French Government was calculated to stir up race feeling, and make a sympathetic understanding between the black and white races impossible.

### MESSAGES.

A large number of messages of sympathy with the object of the meeting were received and some of them read. Among the writers were Mr. Robert Smillie, Mr. Robert Williams (National Transport Workers' Federation), Sir Leo Chiozza Money, Mr. Ben Turner, Miss Damer Dawson (Women Police Service), Councillor Eleanor Rathbone, J.P., Dr. Rutherford, Lady Byles, Captain E. N. Bennett, Alderman W. Leach (Bradford), Mr. W. P. Richardson (Durham Miners' Association), Mr. A. G. Cameron (Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinet Makers, and Joiners); the following members of Parliament:—Right Hon. J. R. Clynes, Mr. Charles Edwards, Mr. W. R. Smith, Mr. W. Lunn, Mr. Neil Maclean, Mr. James Wignell, Mr. A. Waterson, Mr. J. Cairns, Mr. W. S. Royce, Mr. Dan Irving, Mr. Alfred Davies, Mr. Bromfield, Mr. Jack Jones. We give the text of messages from Sir Harry Johnston, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mr. John H. Harris, and Mr. Jerome K. Jerome.

Messages were also received from the "Heidelberg Group" (including Prince Max of Baden, Prof. Brentano, Prof. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Count Max Montgelas, Prof. Walther Schücking, Prof. Thoma, Conrad Haussmann, Dr. Lepsius); from the Irish, French, Danish, and Swiss Sections of the Women's International League, and from Miss Balch at the Geneva Headquarters.

### FRENCH SECTION OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE.

Being of opinion that, out of pure respect for the rights of humanity—which should be the same for all men, whatever their colour—white governments should not consider themselves entitled to transplant men of other colours, willingly or unwillingly, in order to force them to intervene in conflicts which do not concern them, and for which they are too often sacrificed without consideration; being further of opinion that the employment of troops differing widely in their customs from those of the countries to which they are sent constitutes grave dangers for the present as well as for the future; and, further, that these troops may, in case of civil war, become terrible instruments in the hands of unscrupulous governments; the French Section demands: (1) the establishment of fraternal relations between white men and men of all other colours; (2) the total suppression of all participation by coloured troops in conflicts, whatever may be their nature, which take place outside the country of their origin.

SIR HARRY JOHNSTON.

April 23, 1920.

Whether France is or is not right at the present juncture to extend her occupation of Germany beyond the prescribed limits is a question not within my competence to answer, but, as you seek my opinion, I can only say this: that, if more soldiers are needed as reinforcements, she is not offending against propriety in employing Senegalese troops. I have had considerable experience of this negro and negroid soldiery in France (1915 and 1918) and in occupied Germany (1919), and I can only testify to their good behaviour. When not fighting they are quiet, well disciplined, and well behaved, much more sober (being Mohammedans) than most white troops, civil spoken, and honest.

A great many hysterical and unfounded accusations are afloat just now, with *ad captandum* appeals to the United States and white South Africa, as to the behaviour of black troops in France. So far as I am aware—and I have made a special study of the question in France—there is not a tittle of foundation for these sensational stories, which are really a libel on a particularly well behaved body of men. As Africa was the principal stake for which the nations of Europe were fighting, it is as appropriate that negro soldiers should be fighting or keeping the peace in Europe as that white soldiers should be engaged on African campaigns.

I hope the Women's International League will see fair play in this direction.

H. H. JOHNSTON.

JOHN H. HARRIS.

(Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society.)

April 22, 1920.

Those of us who are striving for African progress cannot but view with alarm the use which is being made of African races for European military purposes. Whatever may have been said for the use of African troops in the war—and we must not forget that there was an African side to the question—we should demand the im-

mediate repatriation of African troops and their early demobilization, in order that they may devote themselves to the supreme necessity in Africa—namely, industrial reconstruction.

The employment of African troops in Europe under present conditions is morally indefensible, and can but imperil the whole relationship of the European and African races.

I greatly regret that a previous engagement will prevent my being with you on Tuesday, the 27th instant.

JOHN H. HARRIS.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

April 20, 1920.

I shall not be in London on the 27th, and therefore cannot attend the meeting. Apart from the particular question raised by Mr. Morel, which applies to all troops on foreign service, whether black or white, and indeed to all military centres at home, the arming and military training of the millions of African natives now subject to the European powers has certain peculiar dangers. When the African traveller, Henry Stanley, made known his successes and those of the missionaries in converting the Baganda and other tribes to the sort of emotional Christianity upon which Peter the Hermit practised when he organized the Crusades, I immediately asked him whether a Baganda warrior could use a rifle. Stanley replied, "As well as you." I suggested that in that case the world might yet see armies of black Crusaders marching to rescue Europe from the hands of the Saracens of modern materialism, rationalism, and Mammon worship. This passed off as an extravagant joke; but I was in earnest. The Roman Empire was overthrown by the so-called barbarians it had itself taught and trained to fight; and now that black men are in a majority in the French Republic, and brown and black men in a much more overwhelming majority in the British Empire, it is not very cheerful to see that their rulers have not even as much sense as the Roman gladiators, who never trained their pupils without reserving one trick to kill them by in the event of their being cast against one another in the arena.

G. BERNARD SHAW.

JEROME K. JEROME.

23rd April, 1920.

To call these poor black fellows "French troops" is absurd. I used to meet them on the rain-soaked roads of France, shivering, patient, wondering like driven cattle what it was all about. They are helpless slaves, dragged from their homes and forced to fight for their French masters. I believe they have been sent to Germany expressly to exasperate the German people; and so lead to disturbances that will then be used by France as an excuse for exacting further penalties. But in demanding their recall, I think we should be careful to avoid any language likely to increase the evil of race prejudice. Personally, I have come to doubt whether there is much to chose as regards viciousness and cruelty between the black man and the white.

JEROME K. JEROME.