A. What is the National Liberation Struggle?

Expressed in purely negative terms the National Liberation movements are resistance movements to the colonial system.

a) Essential Features of the Colonial System.

1) the development of the colonial areas of the world including almost the whole of Asia as sources of raw materials, as markets, as spheres for investments and as strategic areas for the benefit of the metropolitan countries.

2) the exploitation of the colonial populations at extremely low standards of living thus allowing for the extraction of large profits by investment corporations etc. in the metropolitan countries.

3) the denial of the political aspirations for freedom, independence and democracy of the colonial peoples and the direct or indirect role of the metropolitan powers by force.

4) attempts on the part of the metropolitan powers to suppress all signs of national consciousness, political, social or cultural awareness that could have the effect of developing into mobilising points in the national movements.

b) The Revolt of the Colonial and Development Countries:

1) the history of the colonial empires is also the history of the revolt against the colonial system. Before modern imperialism came on the scene (that is in the 'laissez-faire' days of the thirteenth Century) there were great revolts against colonialism. For example: the Javanese revolt of 1825-30; the Taiping rebellion in China of 1850-64; and the Sepoy rising in India of 1851-53. The pages of history are littered with colonial wars and the barbarous repression of popular revolt.

2) since the beginning of the Twentieth Century and particularly since the end of the World War II there have been varying degrees of success achieved by national movements in India, China, Korea, Malsya, Indonesia, Burma, Siam, Vietnam, the Phillipines. In these and other countries the colonial peoples are awakening and revolting against:

i) foreign rule and intervention.

ii) racial and colour discrimination

iii) denial of democratic rights

iv) economic domination

v) plunder of natural resources

vi) retaliation of economic development

vii) mass poverty, misery and ignorance.

THEY ARE DEMANDING NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.
B. The Composition of the National Movement Alliances.

a) despite the brutal colonial wars of the last century the fight for national independence continues ever more powerful but today is altered both in form and content.

b) i) the colonial world has since the beginning of the century been completely divided between the great metropolitan powers. These now have to wage war against each other in order to redivide the spoils of colonial domination; this leads to the temporary, and in many instances even permanent weakening of the domination. The "home" countries are obliged to enter into alliances with sections of the population (and often whole colonial countries) of colonial and dependent countries in order to prosecute these wars. This results in the arming and training of decisive sections of the colonial people. Example: the French alliance with the Viet-minh against Japanese imperialism during the last war.

ii) economic development has not been confined to the metropolitan countries alone; despite many restrictions and obstacles industrialisation and trade has grown in colonial countries. Thus a local middle class has developed and sooner or later sections of this class have come into competition with their counterparts in the metropolitan countries. This class of merchants, industrialists, landlords and financiers has played a leading role in the political, social, economic and ideological fight against the colonial powers and has provided much of the impetus in the growth of national consciousness.

iii) since the vast majority of the colonial populations are peasants and they are subjected to crippling exploitation by the whole machinery of imperialist government they form the backbone of the national revolts. The colonial peasantry suffer from:

1) overcrowding of the land
2) destruction of old bodicraft industries
3) retardation of modern industrial development
4) expulsion from the most fertile areas
5) crippling taxation
6) almost non-existent land reform.

These factors have led to the ever-increasing pauperisation of the masses of peasantry in colonial and semi-colonial countries. The deepening agrarian crisis springing from these conditions is the main driving force of the popular revolt against imperialism. New forms of struggle have been developed by present organisations such as the seizure of land and subsequent sub-division - in Telengona, India, the peasants seized over two thousand square miles of land in 1947 to 1949 and heroically defended the land against large armed forces.

iv) a third force exists as a component part of the national liberation struggle. That force is the industrial working class and the landless workingclass in the rural areas. This emergence of a colonial working class has led to the strengthening of the national liberation movements in a number of ways:-

the organisational strength of working class actions such as strikes,

the militancy and consistency of the working class,
the possession of a theory of political, social and economic phenomena - the theory of socialism, the power of a continually growing class in society, the international alliance of the working class with the working class in the metropolitan countries.

v) thus a great popular front uniting groups of various interests has grown up in the colonial and semi-colonial countries to form the national liberation movements.

C. ASIA, WORLD WAR II, and after.

The war of 1939-45 was regarded by millions as a war of liberation, directed at actual and threatened fascist domination in many parts of the world. In Asia the fascism of imperialist Japan was seen as the main enemy of the peoples and they saw in the defeat of Japan by the Allies a brave new world emerging. This vision had as its basis a principle embodied in the Atlantic Charter - the principle of "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."

The colonial and semi-colonial peoples emerged from the war:

1) with the myth of invincibility of Western military power shattered - Japan, an Asian power, had threatened the might of Britain, France, Holland, and the U.S.A. Further, the European residents of the colonial countries had almost all deserted on the approach of the Japanese leaving the defense of the countries to the local populations. Also many colonial soldiers had been taken from their homes to other lands to fight in defense of European freedom.

2) with armed national movements. Abandoned by their foreign rulers the colonial peoples had been forced to build their own resistance movements and conduct guerilla warfare against the Japanese invaders. These forces fought not only against the Japanese but later continued their struggle for freedom against the returning European powers seeking to reimpose the colonial system.

3) with great ideas of freedom and independence. Millions were inspired by the propaganda that this was a war to preserve freedom and democracy and all longed for the implementation of these hopes in their own countries. These noble dreams were written into the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

4) with the example of China. The establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949 was a beacon of hope to colonially-oppressed peoples the world over.

5) with a new number of new independent states. The establishment of new Asian states in Burma, Indonesia and Siam for example was achieved by the strength of the national movements. In other lands, as in Viet-nam Republic and the Korean People's Republic the colonial peoples were forced to maintain the independence against
armed assault of imperialism.

vi) with world-wide opposition to colonialism. The enlargement of the areas of opposition to imperialism in Africa, South America and the Middle East weakened the metropolitan countries to the degree that the colonial system is nowhere firmly entrenched.

vii) with the U.S.A. - U.S.S.R. race for 'world leadership.' The struggle for 'world leadership' between the U.S.A. AND THE U.S.S.R. and their respective allies has left the colonial peoples no longer surrounded by a united hostile world of all-powerful imperialist powers.

All this has amounted to a change in the character of the national liberation movements and in the forms of struggle adopted in the various countries.

D. SOUTH-EAST ASIA - WARS OF LIBERATION.

The wars of liberation carried on in S.E. Asia are the continuation of the anti-Japanese wars. The forces that led the heroic struggles against Japanese fascism are today the forces fighting attempts to impose and maintain the colonial system. As an illustration: - Chin Peng, one of the most hostile guerilla leaders in Malaya during the war, the man who was awarded the O.B.E. and marched in the Victory Parade in London in 1945 has had the price of £ 250,000 (Malayan) put on his head — £30,000 on a former ally's head! — The Times of May 1st, 1952.

Today the forces, once called "terrorists" and "bandits" by the Japanese are referred to in like terms by their former allies and the wartime co-operation has been replaced by brutal war under the euphemism of "police action"

a) In some territories such as Indonesia, Burma and the Phillipines "independent" governments have been set up. A significant commentary on these governments is the fact that in almost all cases they are led by men who served under and collaborated with the Japanese occupation forces:

- Hatta and Soekarno in Indonesia
- Aung San and Thakin Nu in Burma
- Roxas and Quirino in the Phillipines.

By setting up nominally independent states the war against the Burmese people was ostensibly carried out by a Burmese government but actually by the British Military Mission: the war against the Indonesian people (described of course as "bandits" and "communists") by the Dutch forces: and the war against the Hukbalah liberation movement in the Phillipines was conducted in the name of the government but with "logistic support" from the U.S.

b) In other territories such as Vietnam and Malaya where such Cadres could not be found or were unable to break the unity of the liberation movements, open warfare of the most brutal nature has continued to this day.

In Vietnam and "independent government was set up under the Emperor Bao Dai (who was dragged from the night-clubs of Paris) with the purpose of carrying on the war against the Viet-minh. Soon it became obvious to all that it was the French colonial authorities who were really engaged in the war. Not only did the French forces consist of Senegalese conscripts but of former Nazi storm-trooper
mercenaries. Further, by 1953 the U.S. was financing the war to the tune of 68% of its cost.

In Malaya a direct colonial regime was imposed under the supervision of Commissioner-General Malcolm MacDonald, Without any pretense of democratic institution and the war was carried out by the British military command.

Thus Western civilization has succeeded to the role of Japanese imperialism in the colonial wars of repression and against the national liberation movements of the peoples of S.E. Asia. Former acclaimed heroes of the anti-Japanese war were now denounced as "communist-inspired bandits" and "terrorists" - the prolonged wars involving vast numbers of troops (Mr. Churchill in Parliament on Dec. 6, 1951 stated the total number of troops in Malaya to be "more than 100,000 men "apart from many part-time auxiliary police") and draining the manpower and coffer of the metropolitan countries were described as "only police action."

c) Despite all the methods of warfare used, such as napalm bombs, bacteriological warfare, total war against civilian populations etc., the colonial peoples' struggle has gone forward with the same unconquerable strength and increasing popular support as it had won in the anti-Japanese struggles.

E. CHINA.

The most outstanding expression of the new era of colonial liberation since 1945 has been the victory of the Chinese revolution which reached completion with the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949. Thirty eight years after the opening of the Chinese Revolution of 1911; thirty years after the revolutionary uprising of 1919 and twelve years after the Japanese invasion in 1937 the Chinese people have freed their land. During the period 1945-1949 the U.S.A. has spent billions of dollars, poured in arms and supplies to support Chiang Kai-shek and his corrupt Kuomintang government. The victory of 601 million Chinese people has changed the world situation and set afire the hearts of colonial and dependent peoples the world over and particularly in Asia.

Today colonialism has been driven from the vast territory of the Chinese Mainland and Chiang Kai-shek lurks as a despotic ruler on Formosa, cowering behind the guns of the U.S. 7th Fleet. Whilst on the inland according to many reliable observers and reporters (including the 1954 Labour Party Delegation under Clement Atlee) the Chinese people march forward from victory to victory of peaceful reconstruction.

F. INDIA.

For centuries the main base of the British Empire, India is experiencing great changes - considerable lack of agreement exists on the character of these changes, but one viewpoint has it that the Republics of India and Pakistan are examples of the technique of formal independence. This is advanced as a method of countering the advance of national liberation by granting "independence" but in reality continuing the old principle of divide and rule characteristic of British colonial rule.
a) contrary to popular belief in certain the political changes "greatly" by the British in India, Pakistan and Ceylon were not entirely "voluntary". In the view of many well-informed British observers these political measures were compelled by the depths of the crises and the popular upsurge following the war. They were regarded as the only means to avert or postpone revolution.

b) the characteristic feature of the new governments has been their continuity with the old imperialist regimes - the entire administrative machinery of imperialism was taken over and carried forward: the same bureaucracy, judiciary and police. The same methods of repression such as police lathi-charges, prohibition of meetings, suppression of newspapers and persecution of trade unions and political organisations.

c) the economic life of these countries is still largely controlled by foreign capital. In India British finance continues to hold 65% of the foreign holdings of Indian Government securities and 70% of private foreign investment. In 1949 foreign capital in India represented 34.7% of the total.

d) the form of imperialist domination has thus changed but the domination still exists.

e) nevertheless new tendencies are today emerging:

i) the Indian Government's desire to promote closer relations with the other great Asian power, China, and generally help preserve peace is powerfully reinforced by popular feeling in India.

ii) within India mass discontent with social and economic hardships and the need for drastic agrarian reform has led to an orientation towards the left and the sharp growth of peasant struggles. The elections of 1951-52 (the first under universal suffrage) showed a shift in political alignment - the Congress Party from an 80 to 90% majority has fallen to a minority of 42% of the total vote and the rural democratic front has emerged as the principal opposition group and a challenging alternative to Congress.

G. THE PEACE MOVEMENTS.

Throughout Asia the struggle for peace has been clearly linked in the minds and actions of the peoples with the national liberation struggle. The colonial and semi-colonial countries have learnt and are learning today that preparations for war mean:

i) increased exploitation of resources

ii) intensified recruitment for foreign service

iii) more frequent seizure of strategic bases

iv) delayed realisation of liberty

v) intervention and repression on the pretext of security.

They learn that peace and the settlement of disputes between nations peacefully creates a more favourable atmosphere for the realisation of their aspirations. The people of the metropolitan countries are also realising that their interests lie with those of the colonial peoples in the common desire for peace - for example the interests of the French people and those of Vietnam leading to the 1954 Geneva conference and its success.