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**British Colonial Policy and Imperialism through the prism of “A Hanging” by G.Orwell**

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Imperialism as a term emerged in the mid-19th century; its authorship remains anonymous, as it was published in the article “France after 1848” without a clear attribution. Since then it has been applied to numerous political practices around the globe. In the 21st century, it seems only natural to turn to the history of the 20th century and learn from its lessons to escape the vicious circle of the colonial repartitioning of the world between the East and the West.

Imperialism is built upon assertions of fundamental difference and inequality. In this ideology, one state or entity argues it has the right to exert influence over, extract resources from, or territorially occupy another because of the supposed superiority of the former in terms of military might, political organization, economic vision, biology, civilizational development, religious belief, morality, or the system of justice [1].

The first to use the term ‘imperialism’ in relation to the British policy was Charles Dilke, who wrote “Greater Britain” (1868), where there is an entire chapter devoted to India [6]. For example, Dilke, representing the imperial worldview, advanced the concept that “the Indian is mentally, morally, and physically inferior to the white man...” [2]. And such misconception was clearly evident in the British policy in Burma. Analysing the flawed logic of that policy we are going to apply a combination of historic and culturological approaches and focus on "A Hanging" by George Orwell.

To analyze his work more deeply, we will turn to the definition of imperialism and try to discover its characteristics through the author’s metaphors and hidden comparisons. From the very first lines of “A Hanging” Orwell masterfully exposes the mechanism that underlies colonial rule – the dehumanization of the “other”. Prisoners are described as “brown silent men” sitting in “small animal cages” [4]. We are not told their crime; this is unimportant. Equating the native population to animals justifies the cages, the violence, and, ultimately, the right to dispose of their lives. (This concept has often been echoed in the works of other writers. For example, Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden” (1898), which speaks of bringing law and order to “sullen people” [5].) The irony of Orwell’s essay is that it is the “animal” – the dog – that becomes the catalyst that begins to destroy this harmonious picture. The dog is a symbol of equal treatment of people; it behaves naturally and sees no difference between an executioner and a victim.

“A warder <...> charged clumsily after the dog, but it danced and gambolled just out of his reach, taking everything as part of the game” [4]. Here the author provides a vivid allegory about India not falling into the hands of the British, where the dog is a symbol of India. The practice of public executions itself was not new; according to some sources, there were 11,539 executions carried out, averaging 577 annually. Rising over time, while 346 hangings were performed in 1925, this would peak in 1943 with 789 individuals killed [3].

The essay’s key moment – the puddle episode – marks the collapse of imperial ideology in the narrator’s mind. A condemned man walks around a puddle and Orwell suddenly sees a

human being – alive, thinking, feeling. This is a symbol of the life of India, which continued to live and struggle even under British oppression, and an indicator of the political “wrongness” of imperialism which dares to decide whose world has the right to exist and whose does not.

A key means of restoring human life’s value and the Indian worldview in Orwell’s discourse is the use of local mythology. The condemned man invokes the god Rama, who, in India, is revered as a symbol of the principle that the law is the same for everyone, regardless of who they are.

However, the most terrible indictment of the empire lies in what happens afterward. “I found that I was laughing quite loudly. Everyone was laughing” [4] – the execution turns out to be just an unpleasant routine procedure.

The Eurasian boy (the author emphasizes his race) approaches the narrator, and an interesting dialogue ensues: “Do you not admire my new silver case, sir? European style” [4]. This is a demonstration of the fact that the inhabitants betray their traditions for the sake of being approved by the British. Imperialism corrupts not only the oppressed but also the oppressors. “The White man’s burden” translates into a lifelong imprisonment in a system of rules, lies, and emotional repression that this very white man sentences himself to.

The essay ends with terrifying words that leave a feeling of aching emptiness: “We all had a drink together, native and European alike, quite amicably. The dead man was a hundred yards away” [4]. This reveals the full horror of colonial policy: the injustice of executions, the permissiveness of imperialism, and the blind obedience of the oppressed. As the list of who that enemy has grown ever longer, and the threshold for societal outrage was crossed more regularly, capital punishment would become an effective political tool used to demonstrate a readiness to police the ever more exclusive boundaries governing entry into, and security within, the sovereign political nation [3].

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