

e
R. Palme Dutt

INDIA

today

and

tomorrow

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R. Palme Dutt is an acknowledged authority on Indian affairs. His book, *India Today*, published before the war, was one of the most valuable contributions to the struggle that India was then waging for her independence and freedom.

When the author revised the work in 1949, the direction of the policies of the Government of India, and therefore the role that India would play in the international scene, were yet unclear.

Now, in *India Today and Tomorrow*, the previously published material is presented in an abridged form, with a new and important section, "The Latest Phase", in which he gives a concise and accurate evaluation of the new Indian realities.

Born on 19 June 1896, Rajani Palme Dutt made his first contacts with the Socialist movement in England during his school days. A former Scholar of Balliol, he was sent down from Oxford in October 1917 for organising a Socialist meeting. A member of the Communist Party since its foundation in 1920, he is at present its Vice-Chairman. In 1921 he started the magazine *Labour Monthly*, of which he has been the editor ever since and to which he has regularly contributed his "Notes of the Month".

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INDIA

Today and Tomorrow

Revised & Abridged Edition of "India Today"

by

R. PALME DUTT

1955

LAWRENCE & WISHART LTD.

LONDON

INDIA

Today and

Tomorrow

History of the Indian People

by

R. RAJWAT

LAWRENCE & WILSON LTD.
PRINTED IN INDIA

NEW AGE PRINTING PRESS, DELHI.

P R E F A C E

THIS SHORT study of Indian problems is based on the author's previous *India Today*, which was originally published in 1940, with revised editions in 1947 and 1949.

The present abridged edition has been revised and brought up to date to the beginning of 1955. The main body of the study deals with the record of imperialism and the growth of the national movement up to the end of imperialist rule in 1947; but in addition to some later information and statistical data not previously available inserted in the earlier sections, a new final chapter has been added on the very important developments of the modern period since 1947.

I must express indebtedness to the work of Debiprasad Chatterjee and Dilip Bose in preparing the first draft of the abridged version.

It should be pointed out that this abridged version, which is about half the length of the original, should not be regarded as a replacement of the original *India Today* which alone contains the fuller analysis and evidence. The sources of quotations and other material, where omitted here for reasons of space, will be found in the original *India Today*.

July, 1955

R. P. D.

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Chapter I

INDIA AND THE MODERN WORLD

INDIA today has entered into an era of great and far-reaching changes. The character and future development of these changes is still the subject of acute controversy. The outcome will only be settled in the course of the social and political struggles which are already in progress, and which are closely bound up with the new developments all over Asia. The future of India is today one of the big questions of world politics.

The four hundred and fifty millions of the Indian peninsula (organised since 1947 in the two states of the Indian Union and Pakistan) comprise close on one-fifth of the human race. For two centuries they have been subject to foreign rule. Today direct foreign rule has come to an end, even though imperialist exploitation has not yet ended. But that also is approaching its end.

On a world scale the subjection of India has been the largest and most important basis of empire domination in the modern world. For centuries the wealth and resources of this vast territory, and the life and labour of its people, have been the object of Western capitalist penetration, aggression and expansion, and finally of absolute domination and intensive exploitation. The ending of this system will not only open up a new future for one-fifth of the human race. It will also mean a decisive change in the balance of world relations, a further weakening in the world system of imperialism, and a strengthening of the advance of freedom of the peoples throughout the world. The

liberation of India, alongside free China, will open the way for the liberation of all the peoples of Asia and of all the colonial peoples.

All the problems and conflicts of the modern world find their focus in India. Here amid the ruins of an old historic civilisation, which has been submerged and has stagnated under the crushing weight of modern conquerors, the lowest levels of primitive economy, poverty and servitude exist alongside the most advanced forms of finance-capitalist exploitation. Chronic agrarian crisis, famine, debt-slavery, the shackles of caste and of the outcaste, industrial exploitation without limit, contrasts of wealth and poverty more appalling than in any country in the world, social and religious conflict, class conflict, emergent national issues within India—all these problems reflecting in many respects the backwardness and retarded development of a country subjected for centuries to colonial domination, force themselves to the front today and complicate the conditions of the struggle for liberation.

India today is entering into an era of profound economic, social and political revolution. While the long and heroic struggle of the Indian people for national liberation reached such a height by the end of the second world war and immediately after as to compel the ending of direct foreign rule and military occupation, the grip of imperialism on the resources and life of the people of India has not yet been broken. British finance-capital still maintains a powerful hold on the economic resources of India, with the Indian landlords and monopolists as junior partners; while United States finance-capital, which has already wrested from Britain the lion's share of Indian trade, is directing the most active efforts to extend its financial, cultural and political penetration. The general social, economic and administrative structure inherited from imperialism still prevails. The people still writhe in the stranglehold of a colonial economy, with the double exploitation by the local landlords and monopolists and by foreign monopolist interests. Their poverty touches the lowest level on a world scale,

and there is evidence of deterioration. The agrarian crisis continues to develop, and has not been checked by the very limited measures of land reform so far attempted.

Thus all the conditions in India are maturing for basic changes going very far beyond the transitional compromise reached between British imperialism and the Indian upper class in 1947.

The conditions are maturing for the fulfilment of the democratic anti-imperialist revolution, the overthrow of landlordism and feudal survivals, the ending of the rule of the monopolists allied to imperialism, and the wresting of the economic resources of India from the grip of the imperialists. This conquest of the real independence of India by the victory of the popular democratic movement will open the way to gigantic tasks of economic reconstruction, development of industry, agricultural transformation, extension of democracy, and overcoming of the inheritance of past reaction, and social and cultural renovation.

The era of world history in which the Indian people enter on these tasks is one of far-reaching changes in every continent, and especially in Asia. It is the era of the weakening and approaching downfall of imperialism and advance of popular liberation throughout the world. One-third of the human race has already won complete freedom from the bonds of imperialism. In the Soviet Union the first society of completed Socialism, having fulfilled the tasks of national and social liberation since the overthrow of Tsarist imperialism over one-third of a century ago, and having raised the economic and social conditions of the people from the depths of poverty and degradation to the highest levels of economic, social and cultural advance, is now entering on the transition to Communism. In Eastern Europe the People's Democracies are laying the foundation of Socialism. In Asia the victory of the Chinese revolution, and establishment of the Chinese People's Republic, have opened a new era, carrying forward to a new stage the profound world changes opened with the victory of the Russian Socialist revolution. In South East Asia the liberation struggle from imperialism is sweeping forward. The

Middle East is in ferment; and a new political upsurge is sweeping through every part of Africa.

India's future cannot be separated from the gigantic anti-imperialist advance throughout the world. Above all, the example of the victorious Chinese democratic revolution is exercising a profound influence in India. Already the change in the balance of world power relations has brought new orientations in India's foreign policy. New currents have made themselves felt in the internal political situation in India. Old forces are weakening. The new democratic forces, with the Communist Party of India in the forefront, are advancing.

The Indian people, through the profound inner social conflicts and problems which are being brought to the front in the gathering crisis, stand before some of the most basic revolutionary tasks of any section of humanity. The deeper problems of the backwardness of India, of the task to clear away the dirt and filth of ages of subjection, arrested development and conservative social custom, will not reach their solution in the moment of national liberation, but will only reach their full amplitude and the first approach to the conditions for their solution.

By the resolution of these conflicts and problems, as the working masses of India advance to consciousness and to control of their own destiny, by the bringing forward of India from its present economic and cultural backwardness to the level of the most advanced nations, the people of India are marked out to play a foremost role in the future advance to world socialism and the final overcoming of the distinctions between East and West, between advanced and backward nations.

The people of India have already played a great part in world history, not as conquerors but in the sphere of culture, thought, art and industry. The national and social liberation of the Indian people will bring great new wealth to humanity.

Chapter II

THE WEALTH AND POVERTY OF INDIA

TWO FACTS stand out in the present situation in India.

One is the wealth of India—the potential prosperity within the reach of the existing entire population, and of more than the present population.

The other is the poverty of India—the poverty of the overwhelming majority of the people, a poverty beyond the imagination of any accustomed to the conditions of the Western world.

Between these two lies the problem of the existing social and political order of India.

1. THE WEALTH OF INDIA

India is a country of poor people. But it is not a poor country.

Not only are the natural resources of India exceptionally favourable for the highest degree of prosperity through combined agricultural and industrial development, but it is also the case that prior to British rule Indian economic development stood well to the forefront in the world scale.

It is well known that in former ages the wealth of India was considered to be fabulous in the view of inhabitants of other countries. Thus in 1757, Clive considered Murshidabad, the old capital of Bengal, to be "as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London". Such accounts need to be treated with suitable scepticism, since observers of those times looked more to the accumulation of wealth

in the hands of the rich and the powerful than to the distribution of wealth. While allowing for variation and exaggeration in such reports as are available, it is noticeable that travellers in India, like Tavernier, Manouchi, Bernier, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, frequently reported a general prosperity also in the villages, which contrasts strikingly with conditions today. Beyond controversy is the high industrial development of India, relative to the contemporary world standards, before British rule. The Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-18 opened its report with an acknowledgement of this fact and from the report of Sir Thomas Holland (1908), the Chairman of the Commission and the leading authority on Indian mineral resources, it will be observed that before the British rule iron and steel production had already reached a high degree of development; to this extent the material conditions for the advance to modern industry were present.

No less universally admitted is the fact that the natural resources exist for the highest modern economic development in India. Sir George Watt, Reporter on Economic Products to the Government of India, asserted in 1894 that "few countries in the world can be said to possess so brilliant an agricultural prospect, if judged of purely by intrinsic value and extent of undeveloped resources". Even more striking are the potential resources for industrial development. India possesses abundant supplies of coal, iron, oil, manganese, gold, lead, silver and copper. The American Technical Mission which came to India in 1942 estimated India's bauxite deposits at about 250,000,000 tons, and the coal resources in Bengal and Bihar only at about 60 billion tons, of which 20 billions are considered workable. Especially important are the iron-ore deposits, which amount according to a conservative estimate, to 3,000 million tons, as against 2,254 million tons for Great Britain and 1,374 million tons for Germany, and are only exceeded by the United States with 9,885 million tons and France with 4,369 million tons. It will be noted that "limited funds for establishment and prospecting equipment" have been allowed to prevent the Geological Survey Department from carry-

ing its investigations sufficiently far to make possible the exploitation of these vast potential resources for Indian wealth, which are thus merely recorded on paper as an astronomer might map the stars.

Even more significant are the potentialities of water-power for the electrification of India and the neglect of these potentialities. India stands second only to the United States in water-power resources, yet in 1939 used only 1.3 per cent, compared to 52 per cent in the United States, 72 per cent in Japan, or 88 per cent in France (*World Almanac*, 1939).

On every side of Indian economy the same picture is revealed of limitless potential wealth and actual neglect and failure of development up to the present. The menace of this situation was recognised by the imperialists themselves, even though they had no solution to offer. Sir Alfred Watson, the Editor of the *Calcutta Statesman*, said at a meeting of the Royal Empire Society in 1933: "Though India possessed in abundance all the conditions for a great industrial country, she was today one of the backward nations of the world economically, and was very backward in industry.... We had never tackled seriously the problem of developing India's undoubted capacity for industry.... Unless India could provide in the coming years a wholly unprecedented industrial development based on growth of demand by her vast population, the level of subsistence of the country, which was now appallingly low, would fall below the starvation point."

2. THE POVERTY OF INDIA

It is against this background of the real potential wealth of India and the failure to develop it that the terrible poverty of the Indian population stands out with ominous significance.

Indian statistics, though voluminous in quantity for all the purposes of the functioning of the administrative machine, are extremely poor and deficient in quality when it comes to the question of the condition of the people. There

was till 1951 no authoritative estimate of national income or average income (apart from incidental very conjectural figures, like the Simon Commission estimate of 1930, discussed later); and even the estimate of the National Income Committee, published in 1951, was stated to be only "provisional" and "based on material the reliability of which is not known, or in other cases on calculations involving assumptions the validity of which is uncertain". Similarly there is very great deficiency of adequate comprehensive statistics of wages, hours of work, labour conditions, health or housing.

A series of estimates of average income per head have been made and have been the subject of sharp controversy. The Simon Commission Report in 1930, whose first volume was designed for wide circulation as a general apology for imperialist rule in India, produced an inflated figure of nearly £8 a year for the average Indian income; and this estimate subsequently received wide currency. Although reporting in 1930, the Simon Commission chose for its basis the years of highly inflated prices immediately after the war, i.e., of 1919-20, 1920-21 and 1921-22, and then chose the highest of these to use this exceptional (the "most optimistic" in its own words) figure as if it were typical of the period as a whole. Even so, this "most optimistic" estimate by the official Simon Commission of the average Indian's income amounted to 5d. a day in 1921-22.

To get closer to the real facts, however, it is necessary to make corrections for the factors left out of account. The Government Index of Indian Prices fell from 236 in 1921 to 125 in 1936—a drop of nearly one half. This drop affected most acutely agricultural prices, the main basis of Indian income. Between 1921 and 1936 the index of retail prices of food grains showed a general drop of more than one half. Thus, allowing for this collapse of agricultural prices, the Simon Commission's 5d. a day for 1921-22 became for the nineteen-thirties more like two and a half pence a day. This, however, was only an average gross income, not the actual income of the overwhelming majority. From this figure it would be necessary to deduct the heavy home

charges and tribute of imperialism, (i.e. interest on debt, dividends on British capital investments, banking and financial commissions, etc.) drawn out of India without return in the shape of imported goods. This drain was estimated by Shah and Khambata at a little over one tenth of the gross national income. The two and a half pence thus became two and a quarter pence. Next, allowance has to be made for the extreme inequality of income covered in the average. Shah and Khambata showed that 1 per cent of the population gets one-third of the national income, while 60 per cent of the population get 30 per cent of the income. This means that for the 60 per cent or majority of the population any gross figure of the average national income per head must be exactly halved to represent what they actually get.

Thus, applying the statistics of the division of income to the Simon Commission's "most optimistic" estimate, after allowing for the subsequent fall of prices and the drain of home charges and tribute, we reach the conclusion that the average Indian of the majority of the population on the eve of the second world war was getting from one penny to one and a quarter penny a day. This calculation is on the basis of allowing every factor favourable to imperialism and on the basis of imperialism's own estimate. Confirmation of this general conjecture (it cannot be more, owing to the absence of exact statistics) was afforded by two later estimates from official sources, namely, the report of the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee (1931) and that of Sir James Grigg (April, 1938), Finance Member of the Government of India.

Nor do more recent estimates show an improvement. On the contrary, they point to further deterioration. Thus the National Income Committee appointed by the Government of India, in its report published in 1951, estimated the income per head for 1948-49 at £19. But the official cost of living index for Bombay, on the basis of 1934 as 100, showed an increase to 320 by 1950, and the rate of increase in other towns was higher. On the basis of such a more than threefold increase in the cost of living since the date of the Simon Commission estimate, this £19 would be equi-

valent to £6 in contrast to the Simon Commission's estimate of £8—thus indicating an actual further decline on the previous low level.

The "Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East", published by the United Nations in 1950, gives the following estimate of India's national income per head, calculated at constant prices of 1938-39 (the estimate refers to the Indian Provinces of British India, excluding the Princes' States):

	National Income million rupees	Income per head rupees	Population million
1931-32	17,120	83	206
1945-46	18,530	77	242
1946-47	18,295	75	244
1948-49	16,958	70	246

Similarly it is significant that the Five-Year Plan of the Government of India, published in 1951, set the initial aim to *restore* the pre-war standard of living—thus admitting deterioration. Similarly the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation Report on Nutrition, published in 1951, in a survey of 34 countries, indicated ten countries with an average level of nutrition of over 3,000 calories per head per day; twenty-two countries with from 2,000 to 3,000; while two countries, India and Indonesia, came at the bottom of the list with below 2,000 calories. The United Nations Statistical Yearbook for 1953 recorded the Indian level at 1,590 calories as the lowest in the world.

These figures are only important to give a preliminary conception of the depth of Indian poverty. What do these mean in living conditions? The leading Indian economists, Shah and Khambata, expressed it as follows (1924): "The average Indian income is just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population, or give them all two in place of every three meals they need, on condition that they all consent to go naked, live out of doors all the year round, have no amusement or recreation, and want nothing else but food, and that the lowest, the coarsest, the least nutritious."

As for the condition of the masses, we have an appalling picture of semi-starvation, over-crowding and no sanitation.

In 1933, Major-General Sir John Megaw, Director of the Indian Medical Service, estimated that 61 per cent of the population were under-nourished. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, appointed by the Government (1926) was immediately inundated with evidence from the Government's own officers of the terrible conditions of the peasantry; Colonel Graham told the Commission that "malnutrition is one of the outstanding difficulties in improving agriculture". Lieut.-Colonel M. McHarrison, in charge of the Deficiency Diseases Enquiry at the Pasteur Institute at Coonoor was even more emphatic: "Of all the disabilities from which the masses in India suffer malnutrition is perhaps the chief."

In 1929 the Government appointed a Royal Commission on Labour in India. It found that "in most industrial centres the proportion of families and individuals who are in debt is not less than two-thirds of the whole... in the great majority of cases the amount of debt exceeds three months' wages and is often far in excess of this amount."

In respect of housing, the average working-class family does not even enjoy one room, but more often shares part of a room. The 1931 census showed that in Bombay, one-third of the population were living more than five persons to a room; 256,379 from six to nine persons per room; 8,133 from ten to nineteen persons per room; 15,490 twenty persons and over per room.

The conditions of living have become far worse since 1931 and particularly since the second world war. The Report of the Environmental Hygiene Committee in 1948 pointed out the serious deterioration in living conditions during the previous eight years; it estimated that the urban population in the decade ending 1951 would have increased by 66 per cent, while the increase of houses would not have exceeded 20 per cent.

As for sanitation, the Whitley report found: "Neglect of sanitation is often evidenced by heaps of rotting garbage and pools of sewage, while the absence of latrines enhances the general pollution of air and soil. Houses, many without plinths, windows and adequate ventilation, usually consist

of a single small room, the only opening being a doorway too low to enter without stooping. In order to secure some privacy, old kerosene tins and gunny bags are used to form screens which further restrict the entrance of light and air. In dwellings such as these, human beings are born, sleep and eat, live and die."

The Bombay Labour Office enquiry into working-class budgets in 1932-33 found that in respect of water supply 26 per cent of the tenements had only one tap for eight tenements and less, 44 per cent had one tap for nine to fifteen tenements, and 29 per cent had one tap for sixteen tenements and over. Eighty-five per cent had only one privy for eight tenements or less; 12 per cent had one privy for nine to fifteen tenements, 24 per cent had one privy for sixteen tenements and over. Such reports and accounts can be indefinitely prolonged.

The effects of these conditions on health can be imagined. They were reflected in a recorded death rate 22.4 per thousand in 1937 (16.4 in 1949), compared with 12.4 for England and Wales (11.3 in 1952). The expectation of life for an Indian is less than half that of an inhabitant of England and Wales. They were reflected in a maternal mortality rate of 24.5 per thousand live births compared with 4.1 in England and Wales. They were reflected in an infantile death rate of 163 out of every thousand born within one year for India, during 1943, contrasting with 46 for England and Wales, and reaching to 239 in Calcutta, 248 in Bombay and 227 in Madras.

Deaths in India are mainly ascribed in the official records to "fevers"—a conveniently vague term to cover the effects of semi-starvation, poverty conditions and their consequences in ill health. That three deaths in four in India are due to "diseases of poverty" is the judgement of V. Anstey, the standard economic authority on India, a writer sympathetic to imperialism. G. Emerson, who went to live in an Indian village, found that all attempts at medical aid or other assistance to the villages broke against the basic problem of poverty (1931). Even the conservative imperialist Calcutta correspondent of *The Times* could only record the

same impression, that the view of India at close quarters is the view of "semi-starvation" which "obtrudes upon the eye" (February 1, 1927).

Has the situation changed in the latest period? The Overseas Economic Survey for India in 1952, published in 1953, gave the following picture:

"It has been estimated that at least 100 million persons in the whole sub-continent suffer from malaria every year; the annual mortality on this account is probably of the order of 1-1½ million in India. It is estimated that about 2½ million active cases of tuberculosis exist annually and that ½ million deaths take place each year from this cause alone....

"Malnutrition and under-nutrition reduce the vitality and power of resistance of an appreciable section of the population. Diet surveys have shown that the food consumed is insufficient to provide the necessary energy requirements in the case of 30 per cent of families."

It is important to note that this situation of poverty is not a static one. It is a dynamic and developing one. The Report of the Bengal Director of Health for 1927-28 recorded that "the present peasantry of Bengal are in a very large proportion taking to a dietary on which even rats could not live for more than five weeks", and that "their vitality is now so undermined by inadequate diet that they cannot stand the infection of foul diseases". Similarly in 1933 the Director of the Indian Medical Service reported, that "throughout India" disease "is increasing steadily and rather rapidly". This worsening of the situation is connected with the growing agrarian crisis under the conditions of imperialist exploitation, which is the most powerful driving force to basic social and political change. All the available evidence indicates that this deterioration has continued in the most recent period.

3. OVER-POPULATION FALLACIES

What lies behind this terrible poverty of the Indian people?

Certain superficial explanations are often made a substitute for serious analysis. Typical of these is the explanation

of Indian poverty in terms of the social backwardness, ignorance and superstition of the masses of the people. Undoubtedly these factors play a formidable role in Indian poverty, and the overcoming of all such retrogressive features is a leading part of the task of reconstruction before the Indian people. But when these factors are declared to be the explanation of Indian poverty, then the cart is put before the horse. The social and cultural backwardness is the expression and consequence of the low economic level and political subjection, and not vice versa. This backwardness can only be overcome by a change in the material basis of organisation, which is the key to open every other door. Only a powerful popular movement, by breaking the yoke of imperialist and feudal relations over the land, can open the way to simultaneous material, social and cultural advance. The truth of this analysis has been abundantly shown by the example of the Soviet Union. Once the workers and peasants combined to throw off their exploiters, they showed themselves capable of a technical and cultural progress which has left the most advanced countries behind. The same will be shown, through whatever different forms and stages of development the process may have to pass, in India.

No less widely current is the oft-repeated explanation of Indian poverty as the supposed consequence of "over-population". Of all the "easy lies that comfort cruel men" the myth of over-population as the cause of poverty under capitalism is the grossest. Its modern vogue dates from the reactionary parson Malthus, who, indeed, came out with nothing new, but produced his theory appositely in 1798 as a political weapon against the French Revolution and liberal theories, and was rewarded with a professorship at the East India Company's college. His theory "was greeted with jubilation by the English oligarchy as the great destroyer of all hankerings after human development." (Marx, "Capital," Vol. I, Ch. xxv). It remains a favourite philosophy of reaction. Its argument rested on the assumption of placing arbitrary iron limits to the possibilities of productive development at the very moment when productive

development was entering on its greatest expansion. The experience of the nineteenth century smashed it, when the expansion of wealth so glaringly exceeded the growth of population and revealed the causes of poverty to lie elsewhere. In the twentieth century, especially after the first world war and with the world economic crisis, attempts were made to revive it. The existence of international statistics, however, killed it again; the fact that, despite the wholesale destruction of the war and after, world production of foodstuffs, of raw materials and of industrial goods showed a continuous growth far exceeding the growth of world population compelled men to look for the cause of their miseries in the social system. The ruling class began to find their problem how to restrict the production of wealth, and evolved many ingenious schemes for this purpose; while in respect of population, their complaint became that the peoples of Europe and America were not producing enough babies for the supply of cannon-fodder. Less wealth and more human beings became the cry of the modern ruling class, reversing Malthus.

Driven from Europe and America, this discredited theory of old-fashioned reaction now tries to find its last lair in Asia. The poverty of India is solely ascribed, not to the social system, but to "over-population". The beneficent effects of imperialist rule, it is declared, have unfortunately removed the blessed "natural checks" to the growth of population (war, pestilence and famine) and permitted the improvident and prolific Indian people to breed beyond the limits of subsistence. "Where is the Indian Malthus," cried out a leading imperialist economic expert (Anstey) dramatically, "who will inveigh against the devastating torrent of Indian children?" "India seems to illustrate the theories of Malthus," declared another expert of Empire economics (Knowles), "as to the increase of population up to the margin of subsistence when unchecked by war, pestilence or famine". A conference on "Birth Control in Asia" was organised in 1933 at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine under the auspices of the Birth Control International Centre, to press the claims of birth control,

not merely as a medical question, but as an economic means towards the solution of the problems of poverty in Asia. The advocacy of birth control as a supposed means to combat poverty has even been officially taken up in the most recent period by the Government of India.

What are the facts?

In the first place, all the above arguments convey the picture of an enormously rapid increase of Indian population under British rule, extending far beyond the rate of increase of other countries, and therefore leading to a situation of extreme poverty owing to this abnormally rapid multiplication of population. But, the actual rate of increase of population in India under British rule has been markedly less than that of almost any European country, and is even near the bottom in the general scale of world increase. This applies equally to the period as a whole of British rule or to the last half-century.

The population of India at the end of the sixteenth century has been estimated by Moreland at 100 million. By 1951 the total for India and Pakistan was 433. The population of England and Wales in 1700 was 5.1 million. By 1951 the figure was 43.7 million. That makes an increase of over eight times in a shorter period, i.e., at a rate considerably more than double that of India.

More important is the modern period, after the special expansion in Europe associated with the industrial revolution had begun to slow down. Here are the figures for India and the leading European countries between 1870 and 1910:

INCREASE OF POPULATION, 1870-1910	
	<i>per cent increase</i>
India	18.9
England & Wales	58.0
Germany	59.0
Belgium	47.8
Holland	62.0
Russia	73.9
Europe (average)	45.4

With the exception of France, the rate of growth in India was less than that of any European country.

Coming to the period of 1871-1941, we find the increase in India was 52 per cent compared to 57 per cent for the British Isles:

"From 1871 to 1941 the average rate of increase of India's population was approximately 0.60 per cent per year. This was slightly less than the estimated rate for the whole world (0.69) from 1850 to 1940." (Professor Kingsley Davis, "The Population of India and Pakistan", 1951.)

The Central Banking Enquiry Committee, in its Report issued in 1931, was compelled to expose the fallacy of the conventional explanation of Indian poverty through over-population:

"These conditions cannot be wholly ascribed to an undue increase in population and consequent pressure on land. Let us compare the growth of population in India with that in England. Taking the three decades for which census figures are available for both countries, we find that in England and Wales the increase of population between 1891 to 1901 was 12.17%, between 1901 to 1911, 10.91%, and between 1911 to 1921, 4.8%, while the increase of population in British India during the same decades was respectively 2.4%, 5.5%, and 1.3%."

What of the density of population? It was, in 1941, for India as a whole, 246 per square mile as against 703 for England and Wales, 702 for Belgium, 639 for Holland and 348 for Germany.

Has the growth of population outstripped the growth of the volume of food produced? Despite the culpable neglect of agricultural development, and the only partial use of the cultivable area, the available figures for the modern era have indicated the contrary. The absolute volume of food produced is far from adequate; but the reasons for this inadequacy lie in the low technique of production, the system of land ownership and the crippling burdens on agriculture, not in any growth of population outstripping the growth of food production.

Between 1891 and 1921 the population increased by 9.3 per cent. In the same period the area under food grains increased by 19 per cent, or twice as fast as the growth of population. For the period 1921-31 we have the figures of Professor P. J. Thomas, according to which, while population increased by 10.4 per cent, agricultural production

increased by 16 per cent and industrial production by 51 per cent. Even Professor Radhakamal Mukherjee, a confirmed disciple of Malthus, is compelled to admit that "the increase of total agricultural production has outstripped population growth". (1938)

That is not to say that the existing production of the means of subsistence, under the existing conditions of ownership, tenure, technique, parasitism and waste of the available labour forces of the population, is adequate for the needs of the population. On the contrary it is grossly inadequate. The typical diets consumed by millions in India, according to Dr. Aykroyd (1941), give only 1,750 calories per day, whereas the daily energy requirements of an adult of either sex, living an ordinary life without manual labour, has been estimated at 2,400 calories to be derived from the food that is assimilated. In addition, there is an especially serious shortage of fats, proteins and, generally, of protective foods.

These facts are an indictment of the existing social and economic organization, which fails to utilise and develop the abundant natural resources of India to supply the needs of the population. But they are not a proof of over-population. On the contrary, it is universally admitted by the experts that a correct utilisation of Indian resources could support on an abundant standard a considerably larger population than exists or is in prospect in any near future in India. Nearly one-third of the existing cultivable area in India has not yet been brought into cultivation; the existing cultivated area is cultivated under such restricted primitive conditions as to result in a yield per acre about one-third of that obtained for a similar crop (comparing wheat yields) with less man-power in the United Kingdom.

It is here that the most glaring example of begging the question is slipped in by the imperialist economists and apologists, who declare that "under the present conditions"—i.e., assuming the existing imperialist and feudal burdens, money-lenders' exactions, thwarting of development and economic disorganisation as god-given natural necessities—the existing production is inadequate and therefore India

is "over-populated". Dr. Anstey argues along this line, and the pompous Royal Commission on Agriculture in India was forbidden to enquire into the basic questions of land ownership, tenure and revenue.

Dr. Kuczynski, "the most distinguished living authority on problems of population" (in the words of the conference chairman), mercilessly exposed this fallacy in relation to India at the Conference on "Birth Control in Asia" at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1933:

"We must not look at these things from a static view-point. We are told that today there are 200 millions of acres under cultivation in India, and that in order to feed the population well we need 353 million acres. But why do we need as many, and under what conditions do we need them? We need them if we do not apply fertilisers, if we do not improve agriculture. No person who knows anything about modern agriculture can deny that we might have plenty of food for all the Indians on 200 million acres without even any education of the Indian farmers which would go beyond what they would easily learn in a year or two. Just as it is possible to do away with the high mortality in India by hygienic measures, so it is possible to do away with the lack of food by the improvement of agriculture."

The decisive difference between India and the European countries is not in the rate of growth of population, which has been more rapid in the European countries. What makes the difference between the conditions of India and Europe is that the economic development and expansion of production which have taken place in the European countries, and have facilitated a more rapid growth of population, have not taken place in India, and have, as we shall see, been artificially arrested by the workings and requirements of British capitalism, driving an increasing proportion of the population into dependence on a primitive and overburdened agriculture. While the wealth of the country has been drained, while industrial and other outlets and development have been checked and thwarted, the agriculture which has been made the overburdened sole source of subsistence for the mass of the people has itself been placed under crippling conditions and condemned to neglect and deterioration.

Herein, and not in any natural causes outside human agency or control, nor in any mythical causes of a non-existent over-population, but in the social-economic conditions arising from imperialist rule, lies the secret of the extreme poverty of the Indian people. The evidence for this, and the political conclusions to which this evidence points, will be presented in the following chapters.

The decisive difference between India and the European countries is not in the rate of growth of population which has been rapid in the Indian countries. What makes the difference between the condition of India and Europe is that the economic development and expansion of production which have taken place in the European countries and have facilitated a more rapid growth of population have not taken place in India, and have, as we shall see, been artificially arrested by the workings and requirements of British capitalism driving an increasing proportion of the population into dependence on a privileged and overburdened class. While the wealth of the country has been drained, while industrial and other outlets and development have been checked and narrowed, the agricultural source of the overburdened class has been placed under a crushing burden and a narrowness of outlook and

Chapter III

A CONTRAST OF TWO WORLDS

BEFORE 1917 it was still possible to argue that any theoretical condemnation of imperialism for its failure to develop Indian resources or raise the standards of the people represented a criticism from a Utopian standpoint and failed to take into account the overwhelming obstacles in the conditions of an Asiatic country of extremely low technique with a vast, backward and mainly illiterate population. Today such a plea can no longer even attempt to lay claim to validity. Especially the experience of the achievement of the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union since 1917, operating in a vast country of initially backward technique, extreme disorganisation and a largely illiterate population, and uniting European and Asiatic peoples, affords a practical demonstration of what can be done, which is opening the eyes of the peoples of all countries, and not least of the people of India.

1. TWO DECADES OF SOCIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

By 1953, three and a half decades after the victory of the socialist revolution, the contrast between the economic development of the U.S.S.R. and of India is overwhelming. The Soviet Union stands in the forefront of the productive powers of the world, alongside the United States, and outstripping all other countries of much older development of modern industry. India remains on the low economic level of the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the world.

A statistical comparison of relative development for the whole period is limited by the fact that in the case of India there are no continuous comparable statistics for the different areas of undivided India before 1947 and the Indian Union and Pakistan after 1947. However, a more precise comparison of relative development under imperialism and socialism can be made over a period of two decades prior to the second world war, with an occasional forward glance to the later figures.

For the purpose of this comparison we may take Tsarist Russia, not in the condition of utter breakdown and disorganisation in 1917, as it had actually to be taken over by the socialist regime, but at its highest point of achievement in 1913-14, and compare what socialism had made of the country after twenty years of rule, by 1937. We may then take India similarly on the eve of the war in 1914, and measure the achievement of imperialism in twenty years by the nineteen thirties. Finally, an even more instructive comparison may be drawn with the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union, where all the special difficulties and problems of India were closely paralleled and the general stage of development of the people was at the outset far more backward.

Let us begin with the basic test of the development of the productive forces.

In the Soviet Union the index of industrial production rose from 100 in 1913 to 816 in 1937, (2,412 by 1951). The proportion of the industrial output to the gross national output rose from 42 per cent in 1913 to 77 per cent in 1937—that is to say, Russia was transformed from a predominantly agricultural country into a predominantly industrial country. The proportion of industrial workers to the total working population rose from 16 per cent to 31 per cent. The national income rose from 21 thousand million roubles (at 1926-27 prices) in 1913 to 96 thousand million in 1937, or a four and a half times increase. By 1951 the national income was two and a quarter times the level of 1938, representing a tenfold increase since 1913.

For India there was until the most recent period no

attempt at any general index of industrial production, or of gross national output or income. An unofficial estimate for an index of industrial production in the main industries was attempted by D. B. Meek, and reached the result on the basis of 100 for the average of the five years 1910-11 to 1914-15, of 156 for 1932-33—an increase of 56 per cent, or one-sixteenth the rate of the Soviet increase. An Industrial Census was taken in 1911 and 1921, though not in 1931; this showed an advance in the number of workers in "organised industries" or establishments employing over 20 workers from 2.1 million in 1911 to 2.6 million in 1921, or a rate of increase of 2.4 per cent per year, equivalent to 48 per cent if it were maintained over 20 years (in fact, the rate of expansion in the war years and immediately after was not maintained in the later period), or one-nineteenth the rate of the Soviet increase. The number of workers returned as employed in industries in 1911 was 17.5 million, and in 1931 15.3 million, or an absolute decrease of 12.6 per cent, despite the increase of population. This was a reflection of the continuing destruction of petty hand industry without corresponding growth of modern industry. In consequence, while the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture increased from 72 per cent in 1911 to 73 per cent in 1921, and remained at the same level in 1931, the proportion of the industrial workers to the total working population fell from 11.7 per cent in 1911 to 10 per cent in 1931 (see page 73 for later figures).

This general picture can be supplemented by a more exact comparison in respect of the most important material products. In the two decades under reference, coal output in India increased by 34 per cent compared to 340 per cent in Russia. Steel output, which had only just begun in India before the war, had not yet reached 1 million tons by 1934-35; in the Soviet Union it had reached 17½ million tons by 1937, representing an increase of over 13 million tons on pre-war. By 1952 Soviet steel output reached 35 million tons, against 1½ million tons for India in 1951. Electric power output rose in the Soviet Union from 1,900 million kilowatt-hours in 1913 to 36,500 million in 1937; no electrical

statistics were available for India during this period, though in 1935 the output was estimated at 2,500 million kilowatt-hours. By 1952 Soviet electric power output reached 117,000 million kilowatt-hours, against 6,210 million for India in 1952, or over nineteen times the Indian level.

In the sphere of agriculture the contrast is even more striking, because of the basic significance of the transformation of the overwhelming majority of the population. The poverty-stricken land-hungry peasantry of Tsarist Russia, at the mercy of the landlords, the money-lenders and the kulaks, have become the free and prosperous collective peasantry of today, cultivating their large-scale collective farms with the most advanced machinery and technique, and already trebling their money income in the first five years since the completion of collectivisation. From 1913 to 1937, the crop area showed an increase of one-third, the grain harvest an increase of one-half and the output of raw cotton an increase of three and a half times. In India, the agrarian crisis, which will be examined in detail in later chapters, has become every year more threatening; the combined pressure of the landlords, the money-lenders and the tax collector has pauperised the peasantry and expropriated growing numbers from the land; and the increase of the sown area and of the volume of crops barely exceeded the growth of population during the period under review.

Let us now turn to the social measures of the State in promoting education, health and well-being of the people.

Under Tsarism, more than 78 per cent of the population were illiterate; the Soviet decree of 1930 established universal compulsory primary education and the decree of 1934 carried this forward to the universal seven-year system of education. Universal secondary education (the ten-year system to the age of seventeen) has now been introduced in all the big towns, and is to be extended to all areas by 1960. In India, illiteracy, which in 1911 extended to 94 per cent of the population, in 1931 still extended to 92 per cent and in 1951 to 84 per cent. The number of children receiving education in primary and secondary schools in the Soviet

Union in 1937 was 17.2 per cent of the population. In India the number of children statistically recorded as receiving any sort of education in 1934-35 was 4.9 per cent of the total population; but enquiry reveals that the real figure of those receiving even the limited four-year primary education was 0.8 per cent of the population. The proportion of the total population to the number of students in the universities and higher educational institutions in British India in 1934-35 was exactly one-eighth of the Soviet proportion in 1937. In the sphere of technical training, the vital need for developing an undeveloped country, in India the number of students, proportionally to population, was one-seventy-eighth of that of the U.S.S.R.

In respect of press and publication, in the two decades under reference, the number of newspapers rose from 859 to 8,521 in the Soviet Union and from 827 to 1,748 in India; the number of copies of books published rose from 86.7 million to 673 million while in India the number of books published (no circulation figure) showed only a miniature increase of one-third in 20 years.

Expenditure on public health in the Soviet Union (measured in comparable roubles) rose from 128 million roubles in 1913 to 699 million in 1928 and 9,050 in 1937, or a seventy-fold increase. By 1952 it had risen to 22,800 million roubles. In India, the combined central and provincial expenditure on public health rose from 47.3 million rupees in 1921-22 to 57.2 million in 1935-36. In the Soviet Union, the number of hospital beds rose from 138,000 in 1913 to 543,000 in 1937; in British India it rose from 48,435 in 1914 to 72,271 in 1934. Death rate in Tsarist Russia in 1913 was 28.3 per thousand, or closely similar to the rate in India in 1914 of 30 per thousand. By 1926 this rate in the Soviet Union was down to 20.9, as against 26.7 in India for the same year. By 1953 the death rate in the Soviet Union was down to 8.9 as against 16.0 in India in 1949. Or take sanitation and its effect on contagious diseases. In the Soviet Union between 1913 and 1929 typhus showed a reduction of 72 per cent, diphtheria 80 per cent and small pox 90 per cent. For India there are no records for typhus

and diphtheria; death from small pox in India came down between 1914 and 1934 from 3.2 to 3.0 per ten thousand of the population. The number of doctors in the Soviet Union rose from 19,800 in 1913 to 97,000 in 1937. In India in 1934-35 the total number of medical graduates who graduated from the universities was 630, to which should be added the tiny number returning from training in England.

Let us finally turn to labour conditions. The Soviet Union established the universal eight-hour day in 1922, and in 1927 (until the outbreak of war) replaced this by the universal seven-hour day, with six hours for workers in dangerous trades, underground workers, brain-workers and minors between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Children under 14 are on no condition allowed to enter into employment, those between 14 and 16 years only in exceptional circumstances, and for a maximum working time of 4 hours.

In India the Factories Act of 1922 established the eleven-hour day, and the Factories Act of 1934 replaced this by the ten-hour day, with prohibition of employment for children under twelve. But the number of inspectors is kept so low (thirty-nine for all India in 1929, according to a Whitley Commission Report) as to render impossible even an annual inspection of every factory, with obvious results of evasion. In addition the Factories Act applies to only a small minority of the industrial workers (1.6 million in 1936 as against 17.7 million returned in the 1931 census as engaged in industry and transport). For the overwhelming majority of workers in India there are no limits of hours, no labour protection or limits of exploitation of the youngest children and the Whitley Report found children of five working twelve hours a day.

The contrast here set out is a contrast of hard concrete facts.

Yet on the eve of the first world war there was no such yawning gulf between the conditions of the people in Tsarist Russia and British-ruled India. Twenty years of socialist rule wrought this transformation. It is therefore evident that a corresponding transformation can be achieved in

India, given the necessary political conditions and change in the relation of class forces.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

This comparison is further confirmed by the testimony of the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union, which were twenty years ago far more backward than India today, and whose present high stage of progress achieved consequently affords a specially valuable demonstration for India. In these Republics all the special problems associated with the Asiatic economy and Asiatic social conditions, the position of women, religion, etc., were present in an extreme form. Here, therefore, we can see as nowhere else the contrast between imperialist colonial policy and the policy of socialism in relation to backward peoples. Before the revolution Central Asia was a land of semi-slave and colonial labour. Now it has become a land of equal nationalities, socialist agriculture and newly created industry.

The five Central Asian Soviet Socialist Republics comprise Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizia and Azerbaijan. Let us begin with an examination of Tajikistan, which lies within a few miles of India.

In the past the life of the Tajik people was not a happy one. Up to the revolution they were under the yoke of Tsarist Russia and the feudal theocratic despotism of the Emir of Bokhara. The civil wars which followed the break-up of the Tsarist Empire were not finally ended till 1925; in 1925 Tajikistan became an autonomous Republic and in 1929 it entered the U.S.S.R. as an independent federated Republic.

The extreme backwardness in which Tsarism had held the Tajik people can be seen from the fact that before the revolution only one half of one per cent of the population could read and write (as against 6 per cent literate in India in 1911). By 1933, 60 per cent were literate (as against 8 per cent in India in 1931), and 75 per cent in 1943. By 1936, the Republic had 3,000 schools (or 1 per 500 of the population), five higher educational institutions and over 30

technical schools. By 1939, there were 328,000 school pupils (as against 100 in 1914), with 21 higher educational institutions. By 1952 the number of full time students was 58 per 10,000 of the population as against 9 in India.

The total sown area in 1924 was 1,005,000 acres. By 1936 it was 1,626,000 acres. The overwhelming majority of the peasant households have adopted the collective method of cultivation. The processes of cotton-growing have been largely mechanised. Of special interest is the development of irrigation. In 1929 Tajikistan spent 3 million roubles in round figures on irrigation; in 1930 12 million roubles and the budget for 1931 was 61 million, i.e., 50 per inhabitant. And most of the money was obtained, not from taxing the local population, but from sums granted by the Central Government of the Soviet Union. Even more significant is the rapid industrial development where industry was unknown or the construction of modern roads where there were none.

Or take public health. In 1914, there were 13 doctors in Tajikistan; in 1939 there were 440. In 1914 there were 100 hospital beds for the whole population; in 1939 there were 3,675. In 1914, there were no maternity beds in maternity homes and hospitals, in 1937 there were 240. In 1914 there were no maternity and infant welfare centres, in 1937 there were 36.

Let us turn to Uzbekistan, the largest of these Republics, with 5½ million population. Before the revolution only 3-5 per cent were literate. By 1932 there were 531,000 pupils in elementary schools and 130,000 in secondary schools, as well as 710,000 learning in institutions for the liquidation of illiteracy. In addition to the rapid development of collective agriculture, industry was carried forward from an output of 269 million roubles in 1913 to 1,175 million in 1936, and electrical output from 34 million units in 1928 to 230 million in 1936. Between 1914 and 1937 the number of doctors increased from 128 to 2,185. Before the revolution this country had not even an alphabet of its own. This difficulty was solved by the new Latinised alphabet. By 1935 there were 118 newspapers in the Republic, in five

languages, with an annual circulation of over 100 million copies.

How was the financial cost of this gigantic transformation met? The answer to this question throws the most revealing light on the contrast between imperialist method of colonial exploitation of backward peoples and the equal cooperative relations of nations under socialism. Under imperialism a vast annual tribute is drawn from the poverty-stricken backward peoples under colonial domination to the wealthy exploiting class of the possessing Powers. Under socialism the extra cost involved in rapidly helping forward the backward peoples is met by allotting to them a disproportionate share of the total U.S.S.R. budget expenditure, so that in this transitional period they receive more than they give. The following table shows the budget expenditure per head for the various Soviet Republics in 1927-28:

SOVIET REPUBLICS' BUDGET EXPENDITURE PER HEAD IN 1927-28

(In roubles)

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>RSFSR</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>White Russia</i>	<i>Trans- Caucasia</i>	<i>Uzbeki- stan</i>	<i>Turkmeni- stan</i>	<i>Average</i>
Government	0.69	0.86	1.06	2.23	1.60	2.45	1.02
Economic-admini- strative depart- ments	1.08	0.88	1.57	1.13	1.04	1.46	1.06
Social-cultu- ral needs	2.16	1.92	2.57	3.59	2.48	3.84	2.20
Financing national economy	1.65	1.62	2.37	4.95	3.39	8.90	1.91
Transferred to local budgets	5.87	5.56	5.57	6.70	5.77	5.58	5.83
Other expenditure	0.04	—	—	0.53	0.20	—	0.06
Total	11.76	10.84	13.14	19.13	14.48	22.23	12.08

The same picture was shown by the Soviet Union Budget for 1939. While the aggregate budget for the entire

Union and Republics together showed an increase of 12.4 per cent over the previous year, the budget for Kazakhstan increased by 20.1 per cent, and that for Turkmenistan by 22.4 per cent. Social and cultural expenditure during the decade from 1928-29 to 1939 increased twenty-five times for the Soviet Union as a whole; for Turkmenistan it increased twenty-nine times, and for Kazakhstan thirty-one times. New industrial construction revealed the same special attention and at the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1923 Stalin proclaimed: "In addition to schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take all measures to create in the border regions, in the culturally backward republics—and they are not backward because of any fault of their own, but because they were formerly regarded as sources of raw materials—must take all measures to ensure the building of centres of industry in these republics."

The picture of this equality and rapid advance of the Central Asian Soviet Republics inevitably arouses bitter comparison with the stagnation and exploitation of India under imperialism. But it is a picture which also holds out glowing hope and confidence for the future advance which can be equally achieved in India, when the imperialist yoke has been thrown off and the Indian working people have become masters of their own country.

Chapter IV

THE SECRET OF INDIAN POVERTY

IN ORDER to understand the role of imperialism in India it is necessary to cover certain historical ground and examine the past in order to bring to light the dynamic forces which still live in the present. The first to bring this dynamic approach to Indian history, to turn the floodlight of scientific method on to the social driving forces of Indian development both before and after British rule, and to lay bare alike the destructive role of British rule in India and its regenerating, revolutionising significance for the future, was the founder of modern socialism, Karl Marx.

1. MARX ON INDIA

Harold Laski, the leading English Labour Party theorist, could in 1927, still put out the view that "the effort to read the problem of India in the set terms of Marxism is rather an exercise in ingenuity than a serious intellectual contribution to socialist advance."

This unawareness that Marx had continuously devoted some of his leading thought and work to India was typical of the limitations of the Western European socialist thought. In fact, the well-known articles of Marx on India, written as a series in 1853, when the renewal of the East India Company's Charter came for the last time before Parliament, are among the most fertile of his writings, and the starting

point of modern thought on the questions covered. A fuller study of Marx's writings would show how continuously he had in the forefront of attention the distinctive problems of Asiatic economy, specially in India and China, the effects of the impact of European capitalism upon it, and the conclusions to be drawn for the future of world-development as well as for the emancipation of the Indian and the Chinese peoples. This close attention is instanced by some fifty references to India in "Capital", and the considerably larger number of references in the Marx-Engels correspondence.

Immediately after the "Communist Manifesto" (in which Marx and Engels had called attention to the importance of the opening of the Indian and Chinese markets for the development of capitalist production), and the collapse of the 1848 revolutionary wave, Marx concentrated his attention on the reasons underlying that collapse, and found them above all in the new expansion of capitalism outside Europe, into Asia, Australia and California.

"We cannot deny that bourgeois society has been for a second time living through its sixteenth century, a sixteenth century which I hope will sound its death-knell as surely as the first brought it into life. The special task of bourgeois society is the establishment of the world market, at any rate in its main outlines, and of a production upon this basis. Since the world is round, this process appears to have reached its completion with the colonisation of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan. The weighty question for us now is this: On the continent the revolution is imminent, and will from the first take on a socialist character. But will it not inevitably be crushed in this small corner, since the movement of bourgeois society is still ascendant on a far wider area?"

Here, in this understanding of the significance of the extra-European expansion of capitalism for the perspective of the development of capitalism and the socialist revolution in Europe, lay the key thought which Marx had grasped in the eighteen-fifties, and which the subsequent developments of a century have abundantly confirmed.

2. THE SHATTERING OF THE INDIAN VILLAGE ECONOMY

Marx's analysis starts from the characteristics of "Asiatic economy", which the impact of capitalism for the first time overthrew. "The key to the whole East," wrote Engels in June, 1853, "is the absence of private property in land." But this absence of private property in land is not originally different from the primitive starting-point of European economy; the difference lies in the subsequent development. Marx wrote:

"A ridiculous presumption has gained currency of late to the effect that common property in its primitive form is specially a Slavonian or even exclusively Russian form. It is the primitive form which we can prove to have existed among Romans, Teutons and Celts; and of which numerous examples are still to be found in India, though in a partly ruined state. A closer study of the Asiatic, especially of Indian forms of communal ownership, would show how from the different forms of primitive communism different forms of its dissolution have developed. Thus, for example, the various original forms of Roman and Teutonic private property can be traced back to various forms of Indian communism."

Why, then, did primitive communism in the East not develop to landed property and feudalism as in the West? Engels suggests that the answer is to be found in climate and geographical conditions.

"How comes it that the Orientals did not reach to landed property and feudalism? I think the reason lies principally in the climate, combined with the conditions of the soil, especially the great desert stretches which reach from the Sahara right through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary to the highest Asiatic uplands. Artificial irrigation is here the first condition of cultivation, and this is the concern either of the communes, the Provinces or the Central Government."

The conditions of cultivation were not compatible with private property in land, and so arose the typical "Asiatic economy" of the remains of primitive communism in the village system below, and the despotic Central Government above, in charge of irrigation and public works, alongside war and plunder.

The understanding of the village system is thus the

key to the understanding of India. The classic description of the village system is contained in "Capital":

"Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down to this day, are based on possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is started, as a plan and scheme ready cut and dried. Occupying areas of from 100 up to several thousand acres, each forms a compact whole producing all it requires. The chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself, and does not take the form of a commodity. Hence, production here is independent of that division of labour brought about, in Indian society as a whole, by means of the exchange of commodities. It is the surplus alone that becomes a commodity, and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind.

"The constitution of these ancient communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form, the land is tilled in common, and the produce divided among the members. At the same time, spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the 'chief inhabitant,' who is judge, police and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper, who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official, who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water-overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin, who conducts the religious services; the schoolmaster, who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calender-Brahmin, or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed-time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber, the washerman, who washes clothes, the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. This dozen of individuals is maintained at the expense of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded, on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land.

"The simplicity of the organisation for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the

spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic States, and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economical elements of society remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky.”

This is the traditional Indian economy which was shattered in its foundations by the onset of foreign capitalism, represented by British rule. Herein the British conquest differed from every previous conquest, in that, while the previous foreign conquerors left untouched the economic basis and eventually grew into its structure, the British conquest shattered that basis and remained a foreign force, acting from outside and withdrawing its tributes outside. Herein also the victory of foreign capitalism in India differed from the victory of capitalism in Europe, in that the destructive process was not accompanied by any corresponding growth of new forces. From this arises the “particular melancholy” attaching to the misery of the Indian under British rule, who finds himself faced with “the loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one”.

“There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before. I do not allude to European despotism, planted upon Asiatic despotism, by the British East India Company, forming a more monstrous combination than any of the divine monsters startling us in the Temple of Salsette....

“All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as their successive action in Hindostan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindoo, and separates Hindostan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history.”

3. THE DESTRUCTIVE ROLE OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

How this destructive role was accomplished, Marx traced with careful attention, distinguishing between the earlier

period of the monopoly of the East India Company up to 1813, and the later period, after 1813, when the monopoly was broken and the invasion of industrial capitalist manufactures overran India and completed the work.

In the earlier period the initial steps of destruction were accomplished, first, by the Company's colossal direct plunder; second, by the neglect of irrigation and public works, which had been maintained by the previous governments and were now allowed to fall into neglect; third, by the introduction of the English landed system, private property in land, with sale and alienation, and the whole English criminal code; and fourth, by the direct prohibition or heavy duties on the import of Indian manufactures, first into England, and later also to Europe.

All this, however, did not give "the final blow". That came with the era of nineteenth-century capitalism.

The monopoly of the East India Company had been closely associated with the financial oligarchy which finally established its power with the Whig Revolution.

"It was under the ascendancy of that Dutch Prince, when the Whigs became the farmers of the revenues of the British Empire, when the Bank of England sprang into life, when the protective system was formally established in England, and the Balance of Power in Europe was definitely settled, that the existence of an East India Company was recognised by Parliament. That era of apparent liberty was in reality the era of monopolies, not created by Royal Grants, as in the times of Elizabeth and Charles I, but authorised and nationalised by the sanction of Parliament."

Against this monopoly the English manufacturing interests, who demanded and secured the exclusion of Indian manufactures, and the other English trading interests, who found themselves excluded from the lucrative Indian trade, carried on ceaseless agitation. This struggle underlay the fall of Fox's Government in 1783 over the India Bill, which sought to abolish the Courts of Directors and Proprietors of the Company, and the subsequent long-drawn battle of the impeachment of Hastings from 1786 to 1795. But it was not until the completion of the Industrial Revolution had brought English manufacturing capitalism to the forefront

that the monopoly was overthrown in 1813 and its final abolition completed in 1833.

It was only after 1813, with the invasion of English industrial manufactures, that the decisive wrecking of the Indian economic structure took place. The effects of this wrecking during the first half of the nineteenth century Marx traced with formidable facts. Between 1780 and 1850 the total British exports to India rose from £ 386,152 to £ 8,024,000, or from one thirty-second part to one-eighth of British exports; while the cotton manufacture in 1850, for which the Indian market provided one-fourth of the foreign markets, employed one-eighth of the population of Britain and contributed one-twelfth of the whole national revenue.

The village system had been built on "the domestic union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits." "The handloom and the spinning-wheel were the pivots of the structure of the old Indian society." But "it was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning-wheel." Thereby Britain produced "the greatest, and, to speak the truth, the only *social* revolution ever heard of in Asia." This revolution not only destroyed the old manufacturing towns, driving their population to crowd the villages, but destroyed the balance of economic life in the villages. From this arose the desperate over-pressure on agriculture, which has continued in a cumulative scale right up to the present day. At the same time the merciless extraction of the maximum revenue from the cultivators, without giving any return for necessary expansion and works (in 1850-1, only 0.8 per cent of the revenue was returned as spent on Public Works of any kind), prevented agricultural development.

But does Marx shed tears over the fall of the village system and the destruction of the old basis of Indian society? Marx saw the infinite suffering caused by the bourgeois social revolution, as in every country, and all the greater in India on account of its being carried through under such conditions. But he saw also the deeply reactionary character of that village system, and the indispensable necessity of its destruction if mankind is to advance. In burning

words he describes the degradation of humanity involved in those "idyllic village communities", and his words lose none of their force today for those who, in India as in Europe, seek to look backwards instead of forwards, and in India seek to fight the consequences of British rule by appealing for the revival of the vanished pre-British India of the spinning-wheel and the handloom.

"Sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious, patriarchal and inoffensive social organisations disorganised and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies.

"We must not forget the barbarian egoism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all.

"We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence provoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindostan.

"We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow."

Therefore, although Marx describes British economy in India as "swinish", he sees at the same time in the British conquest "the unconscious tool of history".

"England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is: can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revo-

lution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution."

4. THE "REGENERATING" ROLE OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

England, in Marx's view, had "a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of the old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia".

Wherein did Marx see the beginnings of such "regeneration"? He enumerates a series of indications:

1) "political unity... more consolidated and extending further than ever it did under the Great Moguls", and destined to be "strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph";

2) the "native army" (this was before its disbandment after the revolt of 1857, and the consequent deliberate strengthening of British forces to one-third of the whole, and strengthening of British military control);

3) "the free press, introduced for the first time into Asiatic society" (this was following the proclamation of the freedom of the press in India in 1835, and before the series of shackling Press Acts, begun in 1873, and steadily strengthened in the modern period of declining imperialist rule);

4) the establishment of "private property in land—the great desideratum of Asiatic society";

5) the building up, however reluctantly and sparingly, of an educated Indian class "endowed with the requirements for Government and imbued with European science";

6) "regular and rapid communication with Europe" through steam transport.

More important than all these was the inevitable consequence of industrial capitalist exploitation of India, namely the necessity of developing railways, roads and irrigation. From the consequences of this new development Marx made the prophecy which is the most famous of his declarations on India:

"I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold

it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with the railways. The railway system will therefore become in India truly the forerunner of modern industry. . . . Modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments of Indian progress and Indian power."

Does this mean that Marx saw imperialism in India as a progressive force capable of emancipating the Indian people and carrying them forward along the path of social progress? On the contrary. When Marx spoke of the "regenerating" role of British capitalist rule in India, he made clear that he was referring only to its role of laying down the material conditions for new advance. But that new advance could only be realised by the Indian people themselves on condition that they won liberation from imperialist rule, either by their own successful revolt, or by the victory of the industrial working class in Britain, carrying with it the liberation of the Indian people:

"The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether."

With this penetrating glimpse into the future Marx concluded his analysis of imperialism in India a century ago.

Chapter V

BRITISH RULE IN INDIA — THE OLD BASIS

TODAY WE can carry forward Marx's analysis for a whole further epoch of development.

Three main periods stand out in this history of imperialist rule in India. The first is the period of early capitalism, represented by the East India Company, and extending in the general character of its system to the end of the eighteenth century. The second is the period of Industrial Capital (capitalist machine industry) which established a new basis of exploitation of India in the nineteenth century. The third is the modern period of Finance-Capital, developing its distinctive system of the exploitation of India on the remains of the old, and growing up from its first beginnings in the closing years of the nineteenth century to its fuller development in the twentieth century.

1. THE PLUNDER OF INDIA

The era of the East India Company is conventionally measured from its first charter in 1600 to its final merging in the Crown in 1858. In fact, since its reconstitution and the new Charter of 1698, it was a typical monopolist creation of the oligarchy which fixed its grip on England with the Whig Revolution. Its main period of domination of India was the second half of the 18th century.

The original aim of the East India Company in its trade with India was the typical aim of the monopolist companies

of the mercantilist school, to make a profit by securing a monopoly trade in the goods and products of an overseas country. The governing objective was, not the hunt for a market for British manufactures, but the endeavour to secure a supply of the products of India and the East Indies (specially spices, cotton goods and silk goods), which found a ready market in England and Europe, and could thus yield a rich profit on every successful expedition.

The problem, however, which faced the Company from the outset was that, in order to secure these goods from India by way of trade, it was necessary to offer India something in exchange. England, at the stage of development reached in the early seventeenth century, had nothing of value to offer India in the way of products comparable in quality or technical standard with Indian products, the only important industry then developed being the manufacture of woollen goods, which were of no use for India. Therefore precious metals had to be taken out to buy the goods in India. But this was most painful and repugnant to the mercantilist outlook of early capitalism, which regarded the precious metals as the only real wealth a country could possess, and the essential object of trade as to secure a net favourable balance expressed in an influx of precious metals or increase of real wealth.

From the outset the merchant "adventurers" of the East India Company were much concerned to devise a means to solve this problem and secure the goods of India for little or no payment. One of their first devices was to develop a system of roundabout trade, and, in particular, to utilise the plunder from the rest of the colonial system, in Africa and America, to meet the costs in India, where they had not yet the power to plunder directly.

As soon, however, as domination began to be established in India, by the middle of the eighteenth century, methods of power could be increasingly used to weight the balance of exchange and secure the maximum goods for the minimum payment. The margin between trade and plunder began to grow conspicuously thin. By 1762 the Nawab of Bengal was complaining impotently to the Company about the

Company's agents, and William Bolts, in 1772, described the process thus: "The English, with their Banyans and black Gomastahs, arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver, and the prices he shall receive from them."

But when the administration of the revenues passed into the hands of the Company, with the granting of the Dewani or civil administration of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, a new field of limitless direct plunder was opened up in addition to the profits of "trade".

What was the character of the system established by the East India Company? Clive, in his letter to the Directors in 1765, puts it in a manner which is straight-forward and business-like, as a merchant's ledger, showing a "clear gain" of £ 1½ million. And in fact, during the first six years of the Company's administration, the revenues minus the expenses showed a clear gain of £ 4,037,152.

But this was by no means the total of the tribute. Enormous fortunes were made by individual officers of the Company. Clive himself, who started from nothing, returned home with a fortune estimated at a quarter of a million pounds, in addition to an Indian estate bringing in £ 27,000 a year: he reported that "fortunes of £ 100,000 have been obtained in two years." A measure closer to the full tribute is revealed by the figures of exports and imports: during the three years 1766-68, according to the report of the Governor, Verelst, exports amounted to £ 6,311,250, while imports amounted only to £ 624,375. Thus ten times as much was taken out of the country as was sent into it under the ruling care of this new type of merchant company governing a country.

The dearest dream of the merchants of the East India Company was thus realised: to draw the wealth out of India without having to send wealth in return.

The effects of this system on the population of Bengal can be imagined. The ceaselessly renewed demand for more and more and yet more spoils led to the most reckless raising of the land revenue demands to heights which in many cases even meant taking the seed-corn and the bullocks

from the peasants. In the last year of administration of the last Indian ruler of Bengal, in 1764-5, the land revenue realised was £ 817,000. In the first year of the Company's administration, in 1765-6, the land revenue realised in Bengal was £ 1,470,000. When Lord Cornwallis fixed the Permanent Settlement in 1793, he fixed it at £ 3,400,000.

In 1769 the Company's Resident at Murshidabad, Becher, reported to the Company: "This fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary Government, is verging towards its ruin while the English have really so great a share in the Administration."

In 1770 this ruinous condition was succeeded by a famine in Bengal which, in the Company's official report "exceeds all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purneah, and in other parts the misery is equal". Ten million people were estimated to have perished in this famine. Yet the land revenue was not only rigorously collected without mercy through this famine, but was actually increased. How this was achieved the grim note of Warren Hastings in 1772 records:

"Notwithstanding the loss of at least one-third of the inhabitants of this province, and the consequent decrease of cultivation, the net collection of the year 1771 exceeded even those of 1768... It was naturally to be expected that the diminution of the revenue should have kept an equal pace with the other consequences of so great a calamity. That it did not was owing to its being violently kept up to its former standard."

By 1789 rhetoric was echoed by fact when the Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, reported:

"I may safely assert that one third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."

2. INDIA AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

On the basis of the plunder of India in the second half of the eighteenth century, modern England was built up.

In the middle of the eighteenth century England was still mainly agricultural. The woollen industry was still

the main industry. Socially, in respect of the division of classes, the creation of a proletariat and the establishment of secure bourgeois rule, the conditions were ripe for the advance to industrial capitalism. The commercial basis had been laid. But the advance to the industrial capitalist stage required also an initial accumulation of capital on a much larger scale than was yet present in England of the middle eighteenth century.

Then in 1757 came the battle of Plassey, and the wealth of India began to flood the country in an ever-growing stream.

Immediately after, a great series of inventions began which initiated the Industrial Revolution. In 1764 came the spinning-jenny of Hargreaves; in 1765 came Watt's steam-engine, patented in 1769; in 1769 came the water-frame of Arkwright, followed by his patents in 1775 for carding-, drawing- and spinning-machines; in 1779 the mule of Crompton, in 1785 the powerloom of Cartwright; and in 1788 the steam engine was applied to blast furnaces.

That this series of inventions should come in a throng in this period indicates that the social conditions were ripe for their exploitation. Previous inventions were not being taken up for profitable use: "in 1733 Kay patented his fly-shuttle, and in 1738 Wyatt patented his roller-spinning machine worked by water-power; but neither of these inventions seems to have come into use."

The leading authority on English industrial history, Dr. Cunningham, pointed out that the development of the age of inventions depended, not simply on "some special and unaccountable burst of inventive genius" but on the accumulation of a sufficient body of capital as the indispensable condition to make possible the large-scale outlay for their utilisation. Cunningham, however, thinks that the "institution of the Bank of England, and of other Banks, had given a great impulse to the formation of capital". But the institution of the Bank of England in 1694 could not itself provide the primary accumulation of capital. Until the middle eighteenth century banking capital and mobile capital were still scarce. Whence came the sudden access to the accumu-

lation of capital in the second half of the eighteenth century? Marx has shown how the primary accumulation of capital of the modern world, alike in the earlier stages of bourgeois growth and in its further development, derives above all from the spoils of the colonial system, from the silver of Mexico and South America, from the slave trade and from the plunder of India. The sudden access of capital in England in the second half of the eighteenth century came above all from the plunder of India.

In this way the spoliation of India played an all-important role in helping to make possible the Industrial Revolution in England.

But once the Industrial Revolution had been achieved in England with the aid of the plunder of India, the new task became to find adequate outlets for the flood of manufactured goods. This necessitated a revolution in the economic system, from the mercantile principles of early capitalism to the free trade principles of the era of industrialisation. And this in turn involved a corresponding complete change in the methods of the colonial system.

The new needs required the creation of a free market in India in place of the previous monopoly. It became necessary to transform India from an exporter of cotton goods to the whole world into an importer of cotton goods. This meant a complete change-over from the whole previous system of the East India Company. So in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the central organs of the state had to be invoked to regulate the operations of the Company in India. All the numerous interests opposed to the exclusive monopoly of the East India Company combined to organise a powerful offensive against it. From this offensive arose a vast literature of opposition during this period against the misgovernment of the East India Company. This offensive, which had the support, not only of the rising English manufacturing interests, but of the powerful trading interests excluded from the monopoly of the East India Company, was the precursor of the new developing industrial capitalism, with its demand for free entry into India as a market, and for the removal of all obstacles, through

individual corruption and spoliation, to the effective exploitation of that market.

Significantly enough, the offensive was launched in 1776 by the father of the classical economy of free-trade, the precursor of the new era, Adam Smith.

The attack on the old basis of the East India Company and demand for change were carried forward in the Proceedings of the House of Commons Select Committee in 1782-83. In 1783 came Fox's India Bill, which sought to abolish the Courts of Directors and Proprietors and replace them by the Commissioners appointed by Parliament. This was defeated by the opposition of the Company. Its defeat resulted in the fall of Fox's Government and the succession of Pitt, who held power thereafter for the next two decades. At this critical turning-point India was revealed as the pivotal issue of English politics. In 1784 Pitt's India Act, which, although compromising on Fox's proposals by the alternative of the clumsy dual system, established the same essential principle of direct control by the State, was carried against the opposition of Hastings and the Company. In 1788 Warren Hastings was impeached. This impeachment was in reality a Government act, representing an offensive, not so much against an individual, as against a system. In 1786 Lord Cornwallis was sent as Governor-General to carry through drastic changes in administration, in order to replace the system of anarchic individual corruption and spoliation by a well-paid civil service. He sought to end the previous arbitrary continual increases of land revenue, which was turning the country into jungle and destroying the basis of exploitation, by the experiment of the Permanent Land Settlement in Bengal, which established a new landlord class as the social basis of British rule, with a permanently fixed payment to the Government.

All these measures were intended as reforms. In reality they were the necessary measures to clear the ground for the more scientific exploitation of India in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. They prepared the way for the new stage of exploitation by industrial

capital, which was to work far deeper havoc on the whole economy in India than the previous haphazard plunder.

3. INDUSTRIAL DEVASTATION

In 1813 the offensive of the industrialists and other trading interests was at last successful, and the monopoly of the East India Company in trade with India was ended. The new stage of industrial capitalist exploitation of India may thus be dated from 1813. The proceedings of the parliamentary enquiry of 1813 showed how completely the current of thought was now directed to the new aim of the development of India as a market for the rising British machine industry.

Prior to 1813 trade with India had been relatively small. But between 1814 and 1835 British cotton manufactures exported to India rose from less than 1 million yards to over 51 million yards. In the same period Indian cotton piece-goods imported into Britain fell from one and a quarter million pieces to 306,000 pieces, and by 1844 to 63,000 pieces. By 1850 India, which had for centuries exported cotton goods to the whole world, was importing one-fourth of all British cotton exports. But it was not only on the basis of the technical superiority of machine industry, but also with the direct State assistance of one-way free trade (free entry, or virtual free entry, for British goods into India, but tariffs against the entry of Indian manufactures into Britain, and prevention of direct trade between India and European or other foreign countries by the operation of the Navigation Acts) that the predominance of British manufactures was built up in the Indian market and the Indian manufacturing industries were destroyed.

While machine-made cotton-goods from England ruined the weavers, machine-made twist ruined the spinners. Between 1818 and 1836 the export of cotton twist from England to India rose 5,200 times. The same process could be traced in respect of silk goods, woollen goods, iron, pottery, glass and paper.

The effects of this wholesale destruction of the Indian

manufacturing industries on the economy of the country can be imagined. In England the ruin of the old handloom weavers was accompanied by the growth of the new machine industry. But in India the ruin of the millions of artisans and craftsmen was not accompanied by any alternative growth of new forms of industry. The old populous manufacturing towns, Dacca, Murshidabad, Surat and the like were in a few years rendered desolate under the "pax britannica" with a completeness which no ravages of the most destructive war or foreign conquest could have accomplished. "Not a year passes," wrote Sir Henry Cotton in 1890, "in which the Commissioners and District Officers do not bring to the notice of Government that the manufacturing classes in all parts of the country are becoming impoverished." And the 1911 Census Report revealed the same process to be still going on.

It was not only the old manufacturing towns and centres that were laid waste, and their population driven to crowd and overcrowd the villages; it was above all the basis of the old village economy, the union of agriculture and domestic industry, that received its mortal blow. The millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smelters, smiths, alike from the town and from the villages, had no alternative save to crowd into agriculture. In this way India was forcibly transformed, from being a country of combined agriculture and manufactures, into an agricultural colony of British manufacturing capitalism. It was from this period of British rule, and from the direct effects of British rule, that originates the deadly over-pressure on agriculture in India, which official literature tries to whitewash as a symptom of "over-population".

This policy of the industrial capitalists, namely, to make India the agricultural colony of British capitalism, supplying raw materials and buying manufactured goods, was explicitly set out by the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Bazley in 1840:

"In India there is an immense extent of territory, and the population of it would consume British manufactures to a most enormous

extent. The whole question with respect to our Indian trade is whether they can pay us, by the products of their soil, for what we are prepared to send out as manufactures."

The calculation here for the new stage of exploitation of India is as sharp and precise as the previous calculation of Clive three-quarters of a century earlier, already quoted, for the preceding stage.

The indication of the new stage of policy was the decision in 1833 to permit Englishmen to acquire land and set up as planters in India. In that same year slavery had been abolished in the West Indies. The new plantation system, which was nothing but thinly veiled slavery, was immediately developed in India, and it is significant that many of the original planters were slave drivers from the West Indies. The horrors that resulted were exposed in the Indigo Commission of 1860. Today there are more than a million workers tied to the tea, rubber and coffee plantations, or about two-thirds of the total number of workers in the textile, coal-mining, engineering, iron and steel industries combined.

The export of raw materials leapt up, especially after 1833. Raw cotton exports rose from 9 million pounds weight in 1813 to 32 million in 1833, 88 million in 1844 and 963 million in 1914. Sheep's wool export rose from 3.7 thousand pounds weight in 1833 to 2.7 million in 1844; linseed from 2,100 bushels in 1833 to 237,000 in 1844.

Even more significant was the rising export of food grains from starving India. It rose from £ 858,000 in 1849 to £ 3.8 million by 1858, £ 7.9 million by 1877, £ 9.3 million by 1901, and £ 19.3 million in 1914.

Alongside this process went a heavy increase in the number and intensity of famines in the second half of the nineteenth century. W. S. Lilley, in his "India and its Problems", gives the following approximate figures on the basis of official estimates:

Years	Famine Deaths
1800-25	1,000,000
1825-50	400,000
1850-75	5,000,000
1875-1900	15,000,000

In 1880, the Indian Famine Commission Report stated:

“At the root of much of the poverty of the people of India, and of the risks to which they are exposed in seasons of scarcity, lies the unfortunate circumstance that agriculture forms almost the sole occupation of the mass of the population, and that no remedy for the present evils can be complete which does not include the introduction of a diversity of occupations, through which the surplus population may be drawn from agricultural pursuits and led to find the means of subsistence in manufactures or some such employment.”

With these words Industrial Capital passed judgement on its own handiwork in India.

Chapter VI

MODERN IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

DURING the twentieth century the previous domination of India by British industrial capital in the nineteenth century gave place to the domination of India by British finance-capital. This brought important economic and political consequences. The understanding of the process of the transition from the era of industrial capital to the era of finance-capital and its consequences is the first necessity for the understanding of this period.

1. TRANSITION TO FINANCE-CAPITAL

The distinctive forms of nineteenth century exploitation of India by industrial capital did not exclude the continuance of the old forms of direct plunder, which were also carried forward and at the same time transformed.

The "tribute", as it was still openly called, continued and grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century alongside the growth of trade. In the twentieth century it grew even more rapidly alongside a relative decline in trade. The following table will illustrate the advance in the exploitation of India by England in the modern period:

GROWTH OF TRIBUTE FROM INDIA TO ENGLAND

(In £ million)

	1851	1901	1913-14	1933-34
Home charges	2.5	17.3	19.4	27.5
Excess of Indian Exports	3.3	11.0	14.2	69.7

This steeply accelerating curve of increase in the tribute from India to England conceals in reality the emergence of a qualitatively new form of exploitation developing out of the conditions of the period of free-trade nineteenth-century capitalism but growing into the new twentieth-century stage of the finance-capitalist exploitation of India.

The requirements of the nineteenth-century free-trade capitalism compelled new developments of British policy in India.

First, it was necessary to abolish once and for all the Company and replace it by the direct administration of the British Government, representing the British capitalist class as a whole. This was finally completed in 1858.

Second, it was necessary to open up India more completely for commercial penetration. This required the building of a network of railroads; the development of roads; the beginnings of attention to irrigation, which had been allowed to fall into complete neglect under British rule; the introduction of the electric telegraph, and the establishment of a uniform postal system; the first limited beginnings of an Anglicised education to secure a supply of clerks and subordinate agents; and the introduction of the European banking system.

But this process of active development, and especially of railway construction, necessitated by the requirements of industrial capital for the commercial penetration of India, carried with it an inevitable further consequence, which was to lay the foundations for a new stage—the development of British capital investments in India.

In the normal formula of imperialist expansion this process would be spoken of as the export of capital. But in case of India, the amount of actual export of capital was very small. Only over the seven years 1856-62 in the whole period up to 1914 was the normal excess of exports replaced by an excess of imports, totalling £ 22.5 million for the seven years—not a very large contribution for an ultimate total of capital investments estimated at close on £ 500 million by 1914. Thus the British capital invested in India was in reality first raised in India from the plunder of the

Indian people, and then written down as debt owed by India to Britain, on which she had thenceforward to pay interest and dividends.

The nucleus of British capital investments in India was the Public Debt. When the British Government took over in 1858, they took over a debt of £ 70 million from the East India Company. On a correct drawing of accounts, however, there was a balance owing to India; but this naturally did not prevent the debt being taken over and rapidly increased. In the hands of the British Government this debt, in nearly three quarters of a century, multiplied more than twelve times: by 1939, it totalled £ 884.2 million divided into £ 532.4 million of Indian debt and £ 351.8 million of sterling debt or debt in England.

Especially significant was the growth of the proportion of the sterling debt in England. As late as 1856, the debt in England was still under £ 4 million. By 1939, it had grown to £ 351.8 million.

The origin of this debt lay, in the first place, in the costs of war and other charges (often for wars and military operations of British imperialism outside India) debited to India, and later also in the costs of the railway and public works schemes initiated by the Government.

With the development of railway construction, and also with the development of tea, coffee and rubber plantations and a few minor enterprises, private capitalist investment from Britain in India began to advance rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the same period private British banking began to advance in India after the removal of the restrictions of the Company's monopoly. For 1909-10, Sir George Paish estimated the total of British capital investments in India and Ceylon at £ 365 million, but the composition of this clearly reveals that the process of the British capitalist investment in India, or so-called "export of capital", did not by any means imply a development of modern industry in India. Ninety-seven per cent of the British capital invested in India before the war of 1914 was devoted to purposes of Government, transport, plantations and finance—that is to say, the purposes auxiliary to the

commercial penetration of India, its exploitation as a source of raw-materials and markets for British goods, and in no way connected with industrial development.

2. FINANCE-CAPITAL AND INDIA

The British nineteenth-century industrial monopoly and domination of the world market began to weaken in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. Even in India the decline slowly but steadily developed from the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

In the five years 1874-79 the British share of Indian imports was 82 per cent, in addition to 11 per cent for the rest of the Empire, leaving less than one-fourteenth of the Indian market for the outside world. By 1884-89 the British 82 per cent had fallen to 79 per cent, by 1899-1904 to 66 per cent, by 1909-14 to 63 per cent.

But at the same time the profits of invested capital and the volume of home charges were steadily rising. The total trade between Britain and India in 1913-14 amounted to £ 117 million, which could be estimated to represent a maximum total of £ 28 million for British trading, manufacturing and shipping profits from India in 1913.

But the total of British capital investments in India was estimated to have reached £ 450 million by 1911, and by the eve of the war of 1914 to have stood at over £ 500 million. If the average rate of interest on this is made as low as 5 per cent, this would yield £ 25 million, to which must be added a proportionate figure for the profits and earnings of all that section of the capital representing companies other than trading companies operating in India, as well as the income from financial commissions, exchange transactions, other banking operations and insurance—and this would give a total of £ 40 million for the net return. It is evident, therefore, that by 1914 the interest and profits on invested capital and direct tribute considerably exceeded the total of trading, manufacturing and shipping profits out of India. *The finance-capitalist exploitation of India had become the dominant character in the twentieth century.*

The war of 1914-18 and the subsequent period enormously accelerated this process, showing sharp decline in Britain's share of the Indian market.

But while the old basis was thus collapsing, the new basis of profits by finance-capitalist exploitation was steadily rising and extending in volume. By 1929 the total of British capital investment in India was estimated at £ 573 million on the most conservative basis and by 1933 at £ 1000 million. This total of £ 1000 million represented no less than one quarter of the estimated total of £ 4000 million of British foreign investments throughout the world. In 1911 Sir George Paish estimated it to be only 11 per cent. The advance from one-ninth to one-quarter, from 11 per cent to 25 per cent, was a measure of the increasing importance of India to British finance-capital in the modern period, and a key to modern imperialist policy with its special provisions for safeguarding British financial interests in India.

What has been the value of the total tribute drawn from India to England? Shah and Khambata estimated it to be £ 150 million for the year 1921-22, Sir M. Visvesvaraya estimated it in 1934 to be £ 121 million (he ignored a number of important factors, which, taken into account would bring the total to at least £ 135 million), and Lawrence K. Rosinger in 1945, estimated it to be £ 135 million.

After allowing the fullest margin of variation for the factors that cannot be exactly calculated, the broad conclusion is evident and inescapable that the exploitation of India in the modern period has been far more intensive than in the old. It was estimated that in the three-quarters of a century of British rule up to the taking over by the Crown, the total tribute withdrawn from India amounted to £ 150 million. In the modern period, during the two decades before the second world war, it is estimated that the total *annual* tribute from India to England was in the neighbourhood of £ 135 million to £ 150 million. This intensified exploitation was the root cause underlying the gathering crisis and intensified revolt against imperialism in India.

3. THE QUESTION OF INDUSTRIALISATION

The view is sometimes put forward that the development of the modern finance-capitalist era of British rule in India did at any rate lead to advancing industrialisation and economic development. An examination of facts will show that this view is far from justified. A measure of industrial development took place in India in the modern period, but in no sense comparable to the other major extra-European countries in the same period. (See CHAPTER III.) Such industrial development as took place had in fact to fight its way against intense opposition from British finance-capital alike in the financial and in the political field.

Up to 1914 the opposition of imperialism to industrial development in India was open and unconcealed. The discouragement of Indian industrial development was not confined to administrative action or inaction, but was supplemented by positive tariff policy. Under these conditions industrial development up to 1914 was extremely slow and slight.

With the first world war a complete reversal of policy was proclaimed by the Government. Industrialisation was officially set out as the aim in the economic field, just as responsible government was declared to be the aim in the political field.

The reasons for this proclaimed change of policy arose from the conditions of the war. Three main groups of reasons may be distinguished.

First, military strategic reasons. Without the most elementary basis of modern industry in India there was exclusive dependence for vital military needs on long-distance overseas supplies.

Second, competitive economic reasons. Foreign competitors were beginning to break down the British monopoly in the Indian market. A system of tariffs to prevent this would serve two purposes. In the first place, in so far as the foreign industrialist was replaced by the development of industry within India, the British financial and political domination could secure a more favourable possibility to

extract the ultimate profit for British capital than if the market were lost to an independent foreign capitalist power. In the second place, the establishment of a tariff system could prepare the way for imperial preference to assist Britain to win back the Indian market.

Third, inner political reasons. To maintain control of India during the war and in the disturbed period succeeding the war it was essential to secure the co-operation of the Indian bourgeoisie, and for this purpose it was necessary to make certain concessions and promises of concessions, economic and political, of a character to win their support.

At this point the hopes of the Indian industrial capitalists in an assisting forward policy on the part of the Government were raised high. But these hopes were to receive heavy blows in the succeeding years.

4. SETBACKS TO INDUSTRIALISATION

The granting of protection and subsidies to the iron and steel industry in 1924 represented the high-water mark of Government assistance to industrial development after the war of 1914-18. Thereafter a recession could be increasingly traced.

The elaborate schemes of the Indian Industrial Commission for an Imperial Department of Industries, governing a network of provincial departments in each province, came to nothing. The central organisation was never set up, while the provincial departments were handed over, like education, to the "transferred" subjects—i.e., to be starved of funds and then made the responsibility of Indian Ministers for the consequent stagnation.

The Tariff Board received a series of applications from other industries for protection after the granting of protective duties to iron and steel in 1924. The only application endorsed was that of the match industry which represented foreign capital operating in India. Most important of all, a new principle was introduced—the principle of imperial preference or favoured rates for the entry of British manufactured goods. This imperial preference became the key-

note of the tariff system. Besides the direct help to the competitive power of British industry, the tariff system in its effects on the growth of industry in India has also mainly benefited foreign interests, most of all British. Originally proclaimed as a means of assisting Indian industries it was thus transformed into a system of imperial preference for assisting British industry.

Immediately after the war of 1914-18 the short-lived boom was even more feverish in India than elsewhere. Colossal profits were made by the cotton and jute mills. And British capital flowed into India in those immediate post-war years in the hope of sharing in those colossal profits.

But the crash followed from the end of 1920 and 1921, accentuated by the Government's exchange policy. Many of the Indian firms which were formed in the post-war boom went bankrupt in the following years. The following facts are instructive. British capital export to India and Ceylon was, in 1908-10 £ 14.7 million, in 1921-23 £ 30.2 million, in 1925-27 £ 2.1 million, in 1932-34 £ 4.2 million and in 1934-36 £ 1.0 million. The paid-up capital of companies registered in British India was in 1914-15 Rs. 744 million, in 1924-25 Rs. 2,398 million. Thus in the decade between 1914 and 1924 the increase was 222 per cent. But in the following decade between 1924 and 1934 the increase was only an annual average of 1 per cent and in the next half decade the annual average was only 1.5 per cent.

It is thus evident that the setback to Indian industrial development was strongly marked already before the world economic crisis. A powerful further blow was struck at Indian industry by the decision in 1927 to stabilise the rupee exchange at the high rate of 1s. 6d. in place of the pre-war rate of 1s. 4d. In this situation of already difficult conditions the world economic crisis fell on India with heavier force than on any other leading country, owing to India's extreme dependence on primary production. Between 1928-29 and 1932-33 the value of Indian exports of goods fell from 3,390 million rupees to 1,350 million rupees. Yet the heavy payment of tribute, interest on debt and home charges, now

doubled in weight by the fall of prices, was ruthlessly exacted. The tribute was paid by export of treasure. Between 1931 and 1935 no less than 32 million ounces of gold were extracted from India; this was more than the total British gold reserve before the crisis. During 1936 and 1937 further gold exports from India amounted to £ 38 million. This gold represented the traditional form of savings of the peasantry and poorer people in a country where banking or other forms of saving are unknown among the masses of the people. Once again, in a new form, as in the days of the Industrial Revolution, the measure of recovery of British capitalism in 1933-37 was built up on the spoliation of India.

5. THE BALANCE-SHEET OF TWENTY YEARS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the twenty years between the two wars a measure of industrial development undoubtedly took place in India, the most notable of which was the development of textile industry. Decisive, however, for industrialisation is not the development of textile industry but the development of heavy industry, of iron, steel and the production of machinery. And it is here the weakness of India stood out. This necessary order for real industrialisation has been powerfully shown in the great socialist industrial revolution in the Soviet Union, which concentrated in the first Five-Year Plan on heavy industry in order then, in the second Five-Year Plan, to carry forward the advance in light industry. *India shows the typical inverted economic development of a dependent colonial country.*

If we compare the proportion of the population in industry and agriculture during this period with the pre-1914 figures, the low level of the industrial development becomes still more apparent. According to the census returns, the numbers dependent on industry actually decreased between 1911 and 1931, while the numbers dependent on agriculture increased. Even the official returns of the actual number of workers engaged in industry records

a fall of by over 2 millions in the twenty years. Thus the real picture of India on the eve of the second world war was a picture of what has been aptly called "de-industrialisation" in place of the myth of "industrialisation" of India under imperialist rule. The rate of development since 1914, so far from being marked by rapid industrialisation was in some respects slower than before 1914. Between 1897 and 1914 the number of factory workers increased by 530,000, while between 1914 and 1931 by 480,000. Thus not only was the rate of increase in the period since 1914 markedly slower than before 1914, but even the absolute increase was less.

What is the reason for this slow advance of industrialisation in India? The main reason lies in the imperialist system itself which gives rise to contradictions hampering the development of Indian industries. These contradictions are expressed not only in imperialism's direct hostility to Indian industrial development, but also in the limitation of the home market for Indian industries through the extreme impoverishment of the agricultural population as the inevitable consequence of imperialist exploitation. *Thus the industrial question in India cannot be solved apart from the question of agriculture, which involves the foundations of imperialist exploitation.* Finally, the contradictions lie in the strategic hold of British finance-capital, which, by its command of all the decisive strategic points, is able to hold Indian enterprise at its mercy.

6. THE STRANGLEHOLD OF FINANCE-CAPITAL

Despite the advance of Indian capital, British capital remains in effectively monopolist domination in India. The whole political system—even after the end of colonial rule in 1947—works to maintain this domination. In the iron and steel industry Indian capital was forced to come to terms with British capital. Even in the cotton textile industry, the home of Indian capital, a considerable degree of control by British capital was maintained through the "managing-agency" system.

The managing-agency system developed in India under British rule as one of the leading weapons for maintaining British control of Indian industrial development. By this system a small number of managing-agency firms promote, control and to a considerable extent finance the various industrial companies and enterprises, govern their operations and output, and market their products. The cream of the profits passes, not to the shareholders, but to the managing agency.

There are both Indian and English managing-agency firms; but the most powerful and oldest established, as well as, naturally, those with the most effective connections with London, have been the English. The world economic crisis of 1929-32 enabled the managing agencies to extend their grip on the cotton textile mills, and even in some cases to expropriate the Indian shareholders, as was recorded by the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee in 1931.

The hold of British capital on Indian industry still continues. Between 1947 and the end of 1952 the repatriation of British capital invested in India amounted to £ 86 million. On the other hand quite a contrary process—new penetration of British and American capital into India—has been visible. Foreign companies have opened their subsidiaries in India, registered in India. The giant concerns like Lever Brothers, Dunlop, Imperial Chemicals have their Indian subsidiaries. During the most recent period American financial penetration has been increasingly active.

Especially important for the controlling power of British finance-capital has been the role of the foreign banking system working in conjunction with the Government's financial and exchange policy. The banking system in India on the eve of the second world war was organised through four types or groups of institutions.

(1) The Reserve Bank of India; established in 1935 (nationalised in 1949) to act as the Government's banker and control credit in the same way as the Bank of England. Its original constitution revealed that the object of setting it up was to ensure that, even if the path of constitutional

reform should eventually bring Indian representatives into the central government, the citadel of financial power should remain inaccessible, or, in the words of the *London Times* (February 11, 1928), protected from "political pressure from which credit and currency ought to be wholly free".

(2) The Imperial Bank of India; acting in unison with the Reserve Bank, while continuing commercial functions. With nearly four hundred branches and sub-agencies, and holding nearly one-third of all bank deposits in India, it dominated banking in India. Of the directorate in 1936 eleven were English and four Indian.

(3) The Exchange Banks, or private British and foreign banks in India. These are banks having headquarters outside India, and are wholly non-Indian in character. On the eve of the second world war they held nearly one-fifth of bank deposits in India.

(4) The Indian Joint Stock Banks, or private banks registered in India, came at the bottom of the pyramid. Here alone Indian capital was able to play a part, but even here some had fallen under foreign control.

A comparison of the deposits of the last three groups of banks clearly showed the dominating position of the Imperial Bank and the Exchange Banks over the entire Indian Joint Stock Banking, right up till 1943.

That the British control of banking in India was used to the detriment of Indian industrial and independent economic development, and for the benefit of British interests, was the strongly voiced complaint of Indian industrialists, as expressed by T. C. Goswami, the Minority Report of the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee (1931) and Sir M. Visvesvaraya (1934).

7. FINANCE-CAPITAL AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The second world war, and the consequent necessity of developing India as a main supply base in the East, too, brought no basic change in the imperialist attitude to the development of Indian industry. Inevitably, however, a

certain measure of increased industrial activity took place in India during the war. But, as Sir Badridas Goenka, President of the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, remarked, whatever increase in production took place in India during the war arose "from the reckless over-working of existing plant and machinery, and more man-hour shifts, without, except to a minor extent, the setting up of additional productive capacity as in other belligerent countries." Even at the risk of sabotaging the war effort no serious attempt was made at all to mobilise the vast resources of the country. The recommendations of the American Technical Mission were not accepted by the Government of India; rather the Government put a stamp of close secrecy on the report itself.

For this policy of checking India's growth, mainly the services of the Eastern Group Supply Council were utilized. This body, with its seat in India, was convened to pool and co-ordinate distribution of war supplies from various Empire countries. And it was through this body itself that, under the plea of avoiding duplication among Empire countries, the Government ensured that the cause of Indian industries should not be furthered. This retrograde aim and functioning of the Eastern Group Supply Council was duly taken account of with great relief by British vested interests as early as December 1940.

In place of any real industrial growth, during this whole period India suffered exploitation on a scale unprecedented in the history of the British rule. Even more than in previous wars, a very heavy burden was placed on the shoulders of the Indian people. The strain on Indian economy can be seen by putting together the figures of India's defence expenditure and the expenditure incurred on behalf of His Majesty's Government. What was regarded, under the 1939 financial agreement, as India's defence expenditure rose to stupendous heights, in some years to nearly one-third of the total pre-war national income. The war expenditure supposedly recoverable from His Majesty's Government ran also into a similar amount. But this amount was not available to

India for any transactions, in goods or gold. The balances went on piling up but not a fraction was available to India for import of necessary machinery, etc.

Britain made the best of her status as India's master. Unlike what happened to British investments in other countries, against these sterling balances, even the liquidation of British and foreign investments in India was not permitted.

In addition, the imperialist rulers pocketed India's dollar reserves as well. An arrangement called the "Dollar Pool Arrangement" was effected during the war, by which all countries of the "Sterling Area" were compelled to pool together the entire dollar reserves which they might earn by selling goods to the United States. India and the other countries could not buy directly from the United States on the strength of those dollar reserves which could only be utilised by the United Kingdom Government to finance war purchases.

This whole method of imperialist war finance, was based on reckless inflation. The issue of currency notes was multiplied nearly sixfold between 1939 and 1945, while the index of industrial activity rose only from 114 in 1939-40 to 132.5 in 1945. This inflation helped the industrialists and war contractors to make huge profits, but had very serious repercussions on Indian economy. The real incidence of the war burden fell on the already starving masses of the people. For six long years people in India had to bear hardships of manifold wage cuts, food and cloth scarcities and countrywide famines and destruction.

Thus mainly because of the imperialist attitude towards Indian economy, India came out of the war much poorer than she entered it. Not only the opportunity of building Indian economy was lost, but as a result of the wartime strain, the economic situation in India during the years following the second world war was marked by increasingly critical conditions, soaring inflation, rising prices and mass distress.

8. ALLIANCE OF IMPERIALIST AND INDIAN MONOPOLIES

The maintenance, defence and strengthening of British vested interests in India has formed the consistent objective of imperialist policy in India. The successive constitutional plans and political manoeuvres have always been directed to this primary objective. Even with the latest Mountbatten settlement of 1947, and the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan, an examination of actual economic relations would show that, behind the outer forms of Indian and Pakistani independence, British imperialism has sought to maintain its economic domination, and to control and limit Indian economic development in the interests of imperialism.

But in the critical years following the second world war this basic imperialist policy had to seek new forms and methods not only in the political field, but also in the economic field. Changing economic conditions, especially the weakening of British capitalism, the aggressive advance of American capitalism, and the relative growth in strength, on a very much lower level, of the Indian capitalist class, compelled new developments. The legacy of controlling and restricting Indian economic development in the best interests of imperialism has been carried forward into the post-war period along new paths and through new forms. These new forms have found typical expression in the deals with Indian industrialists for the joint flotation of Indo-British and Indo-American concerns.

Despite continuing contradictions, a measure of alliance has developed between the most powerful imperialist monopolies and leading Indian monopolies—an alliance, not of equals, but with Indian monopolists in the junior position, and not excluding antagonism, but expressing a degree of compromise in the business field and of political co-operation against the rising mass revolts. The Big Business deals, which developed from 1945 onwards, were the economic background of the new constitutional agreements which found expression in the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan.

Although the war brought great impoverishment and suffering to the people of India, it enriched enormously the top levels of Indian business men, merchants, contractors and big industrialists. Gigantic war profits were piled up. The Indian capitalist class emerged from the war with huge accumulation of capital; but this was not based on any serious productive economic development or industrial advance during the war. Hence the demand of the Indian capitalist interests for industrialisation and for new openings for investment reached extreme intensity at the close of the war. Many unofficial programmes were put forward for large-scale industrial development, of which the best known one was put forward by representatives of the Tata combine and other top-rank industrialists, commonly called the Bombay Plan. In spite of its many weaknesses it attracted countrywide attention because it reflected the strong irresistible urge for industrialisation.

Hence, imperialism sought to adapt itself to the new era. British vested interests could only be preserved in India through a compromise with the Indian big bourgeoisie; the attack on Indian industrialisation needed to be planned from within, rather than without; India could be maintained as a safe market for British manufactured goods only with the help of the Indian monopolists.

Sir Archibald Rowlands declared that whatever the future political relationship between the two countries, it would be to their mutual benefit "to draw tighter than in the past the bonds in the fields of industry, commerce and culture." Lord Wavell, who while trying to re-assure the British financial interests that the "commercial safeguards" provided in the India Act of 1935 would not be removed, expressed the desirability of Indo-British partnership as the best device for complete future safety.

A number of deals between India and British monopolies, and also between Indian and American monopolies, took place from 1945 onwards. In June 1945 an agreement was reached between Birla Brothers Limited and the Nuffield combine in England; in December 1945 a similar agreement was concluded between Tatas and Imperial Che-

mical Industries. Similar Indo-American business joint arrangements were signalled by the Birla-Studebaker deal, the Walchand-Chrysler deal, the National Rayon Corporation, etc.

Besides these deals with Indian big and middle business, British imperialists planned to develop the autocratic Indian States as their main future base. The Government of India made a special provision for industrial development of States in their statement on industrial policy issued in April 1945. Mir Maqbul Ahmed, Secretary of the Indian Chamber of Princes, declared: "There is much scope for Indo-British partnership in the development of the States."

A number of Indian States came in the field, entering into partnership with British financiers. Hyderabad announced its Godavari Valley Project and 40 to 70 per cent of the capital was offered by the British. The Travancore State, too, sold all rights for the development of its rich thorium sands to a British firm.

Thus, imperialism sought to make the future of British finance-capital in India secure by digging its ground deeper and deeper into the Indian soil. Through a compromise with Indian industrialists care was taken to see that British investment in India would always remain safe. And Mr. G. D. Birla, India's top-rank monopolist, declared, "I don't believe this will ever be expropriated. The British firms will carry on."

But these deals could in no case lead to an industrialisation of India. As is evident from the terms of the two important deals, the Birla-Nuffield and the Tata-I.C.I., as a result of these partnerships, basic heavy industries in India would not be established. Chemicals were to be manufactured in England for an indefinite period and sold to the Indian public under an Indian Trade Mark. Similarly, India was to be reduced merely to a workshop for assemblage of British manufactured tools and components. As the *Bombay Chronicle* editorially commented on December 27, 1945, the result of these deals meant that a "new type of vested interests would be created which would be a formi-

dable obstacle in the way of intensive industrialisation of this country.”

These economic agreements between India and British monopolists which began to develop on a large scale in 1945, constitute an important background to the constitutional negotiations for a corresponding political settlement in 1946, and the subsequent establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan in 1947. The further development of these measures of partial alliance between imperialist and Indian big monopoly interests could be traced in the economic policy of the new Dominion Governments and the increasing Anglo-American capitalist penetration under their aegis.

9. THE OUTCOME OF IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

When Marx spoke of British rule as “causing a social revolution” in India, he had in mind a two-fold process. First, the destruction of the old social order. Second, the laying of the material basis of a new social order. These two factors still continue operating, although their significance is today overshadowed by the characteristics of the new stages of modern imperialism, which have grown out of the preceding process. The destruction of the old hand industry is still reflected in the continuing diminution of the total number of industrial workers, and the first beginnings of modern industry have developed, although with extreme slowness.

But today a new situation has come into being as a consequence of the further development of this process. The conditions within India have fully ripened for a large-scale new advance of the productive forces to a modern level. Modern imperialism, far from performing the objectively revolutionary role of the earlier capitalist domination of India, stands out as the main obstacle to advance of the productive forces and is linked up with reactionary economic and social forces within India.

Therefore all the advancing forces of Indian society in the modern period unite in an ever more powerful national movement of revolt against imperialism as the main enemy and against the obsolete economic structure which

imperialism maintains and protects. This conflict finds expression in the agrarian crisis, which is the index of the bankruptcy of imperialist economy and the main driving force of decisive change.

Chapter VII

THE CRISIS OF AGRICULTURE

It is in the sphere of agrarian relations that are to be found the foundations of the existing social order developed under imperialism and throttling the life of the people. Herein equally are arising the most powerful driving forces to change, which are accumulating to transform the existing social order and open the way to a new system. But the agrarian problem cannot be studied in isolation from the general economy of the country. When the Royal Commission on Agriculture was appointed in 1926, it was warned by its terms of reference that "it will not be within the scope of the Commission's duties to make recommendations regarding the existing system of land ownership and tenancy or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges." This is indeed Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

The elementary basic issues underlying the present agrarian crisis are:

- (1) the over-pressure of the population on agriculture, through the blocking of other economic channels;
- (2) the effects of the land monopoly and of the burdens on the peasantry;
- (3) the low technique and obstacles to the development of technique;
- (4) the stagnation and deterioration of agriculture under the conditions of colonial and semi-colonial economy;
- (5) the increasing impoverishment of the peasantry,

sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, and dispossession of wide sections;

(6) the consequent increasing differentiation of classes, leading to the reduction of a growing proportion of the peasantry, from one-third to one-half in some regions, to the position of a landless proletariat;

Only on the basis of a survey of these factors can the question of a solution be considered.

1. THE OVER-PRESSURE ON AGRICULTURE

The contrast between the dependence of the overwhelming majority of the population in India on agriculture and the highly industrialised countries of Western Europe is commonly presented as a kind of natural phenomenon, illustrating the backward character of Indian society and the consequent necessity of extreme caution in proposing changes.

Typical was the statement in the classic Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918: "In the whole of India, the soil supports 226 millions, and 208 millions of them get their living directly by, or depend directly upon, the cultivation of their own or others' fields." The Simon Commission Report of 1930 quoted the above statement and regaled itself with the hopeful conclusion that change must in consequence come "very slowly indeed".

What is invariably omitted from this vulgar imperialist presentation of the picture is the fact that this extreme, exaggerated, disproportionate and wasteful dependence on agriculture as the sole occupation for three-fourths of the people, is in its present scale a modern phenomenon and the direct consequence of imperialist rule. The disproportionate dependence on agriculture progressively increased under British rule. This is the expression of the destruction of the old balance of industry and agriculture and the relegation of India to the role of an agricultural appendage of imperialism.

The real picture is revealed in the official census re-

turns of the past half-century. The proportion of the population dependent on agriculture rose from 61.1 per cent in 1891 to 66.5 per cent in 1901, 72.2 per cent in 1911 and 73.0 per cent in 1921. The 1931 census showed the percentage as 65.6. This was not a real reduction, but only a formal one due to a change in classification. Since the 1931 census the percentage has again increased from 65.6 to 69.8 in 1951.

Parallel to this increasing pressure on agriculture, the proportion of the population dependent on industry fell from 5.5 per cent in 1911 to 4.3 per cent in 1931, and after a wartime rise to 5.1 per cent in 1941 fell again to 4.6 in 1951. In 1911 undivided India, with a population of 315 millions had 17.5 million workers in industry, whereas in 1951 the Indian Union, with a population of 356 million, had only 16.7 million workers in industry. This reflects the continuing havoc of "deindustrialisation"—that is, the destruction of the old hand industry, without compensating advance of modern industry, with consequent continuous increase of the overcrowding of agriculture.

At the same time the production of non-food crops for export increased in relation to food-crops. Between 1892-93 and 1919-20 the area under food crops increased by 7 per cent and the area under non-food crops increased by 43 per cent.

2. CONSEQUENCES OF THE OVER-PRESSURE ON AGRICULTURE

The overcrowding of agriculture means that a continuously heavier demand is made on the existing backward agriculture in India to supply a livelihood for an increasingly heavy proportion of a growing population.

On the other hand, the crippling limits of agricultural development under the existing system, owing to the effects of land monopoly and the paralysing burdens of exploitation placed on the peasantry, makes the existing agriculture increasingly incapable of fulfilling this demand.

This is the vicious circle which holds Indian agriculture in its grip and underlies the growing crisis. Its outcome is reflected in the stagnation of agricultural development,

signs even of deterioration of the existing level of production owing to the excessive burdens placed upon it, and catastrophic worsening of the conditions of the cultivators.

The increasing over-pressure on agriculture means that the proportion of the available cultivated land to each cultivator is continually diminishing. In 1911 Sir Thomas Holderness wrote:

“Not only does the land of India provide food for this great population, but a very considerable portion of it is set apart for growing produce which is exported.... Subtracting the land thus utilised.... we shall find that what is left over does not represent more than 2/3 acre per head of the total Indian population. India therefore feeds, and to some extent clothes, its population from what 2/3 acre per head can produce.”

All the figures available give the picture of an increasing over-pressure on land throughout India. These are facts whose significance cannot be escaped. They reveal a desperate, chronic and growing land hunger. They point only in one direction, as similar facts in the agrarian history of Russia pointed.

3. STAGNATION AND DETERIORATION OF AGRICULTURE

The problem, however, is not one of absolute land shortage. It arises, first, from the failure to use the existing cultivable area, owing to restrictions and neglect of development; and, second, from the extremely low level of production in the cultivated area, owing to the paralysing burdens of the existing social system and barriers to technical improvement and large-scale organisation.

The Indian economist, R. K. Das, estimated in 1930 that 70 per cent of the available area for cultivation was wasted and only 30 per cent used for productive purposes. The official return of the “Agricultural Area of British India in 1939-40” showed that of a cultivable area of 355 million acres, only 59 per cent was sown with crops, 13.2 per cent was fallow, and no less than 27.3 per cent was cultivable land left waste. The official return for the Indian Union for 1949-50 recorded that out of a total land area of 710 million acres,

excluding forests, 283 million or 40 per cent were sown, 59 million or 8 per cent were fallow, and 233 million acres or 33 per cent were uncultivated other than fallow.

What is the character of this gigantic area of "cultivable waste other than fallow", and why is it not brought into cultivation? The answer was provided already in 1879 by the Report of Sir James Caird: "There are extensive areas of good waste land covered with jungle in various parts of the country, which might be reclaimed and rendered suitable for cultivation; but for that object capital must be employed and the people have little to spare."

This task can only be accomplished by collective organisation with governmental aid. But this responsibility was never recognised by imperialism. The original neglect of the irrigation and public works by the British Government was notorious and was noted long ago by Marx: "The British in East India accepted from their predecessors the departments of finance and of war, but they have neglected entirely that of public works. Hence the deterioration of an agriculture...." G. Thompson in 1838, Sir Arthur Cotton in 1854, Montgomery Martin in 1858 and John Bright in 1858 noted the same neglect of public works by the East India Company.

Lest it be thought that this neglect applies only to the past, and does not reach into the later period, it is worth referring to the Report of the Bengal Irrigation Department Committee in 1930, which clearly stated that the neglect of the canals and rivers, which have so decisive importance for the economic life of this part of the province, led to such deterioration that "it cannot now be checked, and that the tract in question is doomed to revert gradually into swamp and jungle." The judgement of Sir William Willcocks, the leading hydraulic engineer, in 1931 on the decay of the irrigation system in Bengal, is no less striking: "Sir William Willcocks severely criticises the modern administrators and officials, who, with every opportunity to call in expert technical assistance, have hitherto done nothing to remedy this disastrous situation, growing worse from decade to decade."

Thus the neglect and deterioration are by no means only a question of the past history of the earlier century and a half of British rule, but continued also in the modern period. In the terms of an official report in 1930, "land is going out of cultivation"—in the midst of the most desperate land shortage and over-crowding of the existing cultivated land.

The overcrowded cultivators of India have not only to raise their crops on only two-thirds of the cultivable area: even within this limited cultivated area the social conditions, the paralysing burdens placed on the cultivators, their extreme poverty and primitive technique, which they are not left with the resources possibly to develop, mean that, while the demands on the land are heavier than in any country, owing to the disproportion of the whole economy, the level of production is lower than in any country. In 1945 the yield of wheat per acre in India was 671 lbs., as against 1,033 in the United States or 1,006 in France. The yield of paddy per acre in India (including Burma) was 805 lbs., as against 1,482 in the United States or 2,307 in Japan. The over-crowding of agriculture and the low technique is also reflected in a colossal waste of labour: in India there is one person employed in cultivation for every 2.6 acres of land, as against 17.3 acres in the United Kingdom and 5.4 acres in Germany.

But the lower yield in India is not due to natural disadvantages of lower productivity of the soil. "It has been stated," reports the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee 1931 (MacDougall Memorandum), "that the soil of India is naturally poor. This is not correct. It has become poor." Besides, the same memorandum points out that allowance has to be made "for part of the land in India producing two crops per year.... This advantage should equal any loss from drought.... It is not therefore the soil that is responsible for the poverty of rural India."

Not only is the existing level low, but the whole record of imperialism revealed evidence of deterioration of productivity. The yield of food grains per acre fell from 577 lbs.

before the war (average of 1936-37 to 1938-39) to 533 lbs. in 1944-45, 520 lbs. in 1949-50 and 480 lbs. in 1950-51.

Thus from every standpoint, if we examine only the general conditions and tendencies of agricultural production in India in relation to the total economy without yet coming to the growing social contradictions, the whole record of development has revealed a growing crisis of Indian agriculture. An examination of the most recent developments since 1947 will further show that, despite the limited increase in agricultural production after 1951 under the Five Year Plan, this crisis is far from on the way to solution, and is even growing more acute.

The causes of the growing crisis are to be found, not in natural conditions, nor in any lack of skill or resourcefulness, within the limitations under which they have to work, or supposed innate backwardness of the cultivators, who are thwarted from development, but in the effects of imperialism and the social relations maintained through it, which have compelled the overburdening, stagnation and deterioration of agriculture, condemned the mass of the cultivators to lives of increasing harassment and semi-starvation, and have thereby prepared the conditions for a far-reaching revolution as the only outcome and solution. It is to these social relations in agriculture that it is now necessary to turn in order to lay bare the driving forces of the Indian revolution.

Chapter VIII

BURDENS ON THE PEASANTRY

THE CRISIS of agricultural production is only the outer expression of an inner crisis of the social relations in agriculture.

Under the conditions of imperialist exploitation there developed a host of subsidiary parasitism dependent on and integral to the whole system. This resulted, not only in the increasing burdens on the peasantry, but also in the increasing differentiation of classes and the spreading dispossession of the mass of the cultivators from their holdings. The dispossessed cultivators are reduced to a situation close to serfdom or brought down into the ranks of the swelling army of the landless proletariat. This is the process which heralds the approach of future storm.

1. THE LAND MONOPOLY

In the traditional land system of India before British rule the land belonged to the peasantry, and the Government received a portion of the produce, which under the Hindu kings varied from one-sixth to one-twelfth of the produce and under the Mogul Emperors was raised to one-third. When the British established their dominion on the ruins of the Mogul Empire they took over the traditional land basis of revenue; but they transformed its character, and they thereby transformed the land system of India. At the time when they took over, the ruling regime was in decay and disorder; the exactions from the peasantry were

extreme and extortionate; but the village community system and its traditional relationship to the land were still in the main unbroken, and the tribute was still a proportion of the year's produce, not a fixed payment on the basis of land-holding irrespective of the fluctuations of production.

The extortionate tribute of a period of disorder appeared as the starting point and customary level to the new conquerors. The evidence of contemporary writers like Dr. Buchanan, Bishop Heber, Thompson and Garratt indicates that assessments of the new rulers tended initially to show an increase, or that more efficient collection made the weight of extraction in practice heavier. Dr. Harold Mann, in his second survey of a Deccan village in 1921, found a striking contrast between the land revenue in pre-British days and after British rule: "A complete change came after the British conquest, when in 1823 an almost unheard of revenue of Rs. 2,121 was collected and village expenses went down to half what they had been in 1817."

In Bengal the land revenue in the last year of the administration of the Mogul's agents, in 1764-65, totalled £ 818,000. In the first year of the East India Company's taking over the financial administration, in 1765-66, it was raised to £ 1,470,000. When the Permanent Settlement was established for Bengal in 1793, the figure was £ 3,091,000.

The total land revenue raised by the Company stood at £ 4.2 million in 1800-1, and had risen (mainly by increase of territories, but also by increased assessments) to £ 15.3 million in 1857-58, when the Crown took over. Under the Crown the total rose to £ 17.5 million by 1900-1, and £ 20 million by 1911-12. In 1936-37 the figure was £ 23.9 million.

The later figures of land assessment in modern times showed a smaller proportion to total produce than the earlier figures of the first period of British rule. But by this time other forms of exploitation had come to play a correspondingly greater part. The simple direct tribute of the earlier period, buttressed mainly on land revenue, had given place to the network of forms of exploitation of modern finance-capital, with its host of subsidiary parasites in Indian economy. Even so, the level of the assessments

for land revenue show a continuous tendency also in the modern period to be raised at each revision, leading to movements of revolt. In Bardoli in 1928 a united movement of 87,000 peasants, led by the Congress, successfully resisted an increased assessment and compelled the Government to admit that the increase was unjust and to scale it down.

2. TRANSFORMATION OF THE LAND SYSTEM

Even more important than the actual increase in the burden of the assessments in the initial period was the revolution in the land system effected by the British conquest. The previous traditional "king's share" was a proportion of the year's produce, fluctuating with the year's production, and surrendered as tribute or tax by the peasant joint owners or self-governing village community to the ruler. This was now replaced by fixed money payments, assessed on land, regularly due in cash irrespective of the year's production, and in the overwhelming majority of settlements fixed on individual land-holders, whether directly cultivators or landlords appointed by the state. The introduction of the English landlord system and of a whole apparatus of English bourgeois legal conceptions alien to Indian economy and administered by an alien bureaucracy which combined in itself, legislative, judicial and executive functions, completed the process. By this transformation the British conquerors' state assumed in practice the ultimate possession of the land, making the peasantry the equivalent of tenants, who could be ejected for failure of payment, or alienating the lands to its own nominees as landlords, who held their titles from the state and could equally be ejected for failure of payment. The previous self-governing village community was robbed of its economic functions, as of its administrative role; the great part of the common lands were assigned to individual holders.

In this way the characteristic process of the colonial system was in fact carried out with ruthless completeness in India. From being owners of the soil, the peasants became tenants, and with the further development of the process,

an increasing proportion became landless labourers, or the new class of agricultural proletariat, constituting over one-third of the agricultural population. It is to the initial stages of this transformation that Marx made reference when he stressed the fact that "In India, the English exerted simultaneously their direct political and economic power as rulers and landlords for the purpose of disrupting these small economic organisations." To this he added the footnote: "In Bengal they created a caricature of English landed property on a large scale; in south-eastern India a caricature of small allotment property; in the Northwest they transformed to the utmost of their ability the Indian commune with common ownership of the soil into a caricature of itself."

3. CREATION OF LANDLORDISM

The introduction of the English landed system in a modified form was the first type of land-settlement attempted by the Western conquerors. This was the character of the famous Permanent Land Settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1793 for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and later extended to parts of North Madras. The existing Zemindars, who were in reality tax-farmers, or officials appointed by the previous rulers to collect land revenue on commission, were constituted landlords in perpetuity, subject to a permanent fixed payment to the Government.

At the time these terms of settlement were very onerous for the Zemindars and cultivators, and very profitable for the Government. The figure of £ 3 million in Bengal to be raised by the Zemindars for the Government represented a staggering increase on what had been raised under preceding rulers. Many of the old traditional Zemindar families who carried on the old methods of showing some consideration and relaxation for the peasants in times of difficulty broke down under the burden, and were at once ruthlessly sold out, their estates being put to auction. A new type of sharks and rapacious businessmen came forward to take over the estates, who were ready to stick at

nothing to extract the last anna from the peasantry. This was the character of the new "class of gentleman proprietors" which, according to the conceptions of the time, it was the object of the Permanent Settlement to create.

Subsequently the system worked the other way, in a direction not originally foreseen by the Government. With the fall in the value of money, and the increase in the amount rack-rented from the peasantry, the Government's share in the spoils, which was permanently fixed at £ 3 million, became relatively smaller and smaller; while the Zemindars' share became larger and larger.

Since this became clear, the Permanent Settlement in Bengal began to be universally attacked and condemned, not only by the peasantry and the whole Indian people, except the Zemindars, but also by the imperialists. The modern apologists of imperialism attempt to offer the explanation that the whole settlement was an innocent mistake, made through the simple ingenuous ignorance of the fact that the Zemindars were not landlords. But this fairy tale is plain nonsense. A consultation of the documents of the time makes abundantly clear that Lord Cornwallis and the statesmen concerned were perfectly conscious that they were creating a new class of landlords, and of their purpose in doing it. It was recognised that, with the small numbers of English holding down a vast population, it was absolutely necessary to establish a social basis for their power through the creation of a new class whose interests, through receiving a subsidiary share in the spoils, would be bound up with the maintenance of English rule. That is why, while the people of India moved forward in their struggle for independence, with peasant struggles as the main driving force of the national movement, in every province the Landholders' Federation, Landowners' Association or the like would meet to proclaim its undying devotion to British rule. As typical may be taken the Address of the President of the Bengal Landowners' Association to the Viceroy in 1925: "Your Excellency can rely on the ungrudging support and sincere assistance of the landlords."

The "mistakes" of the Permanent Settlement were not

repeated. The subsequent Zemindari settlements were made "temporary"—that is, subject to periodical revision to permit of successive raising of the Government's demand.

In the period after the Permanent Settlement an alternative method called the Ryotwari system was attempted in a number of other districts, beginning in Madras, and associated with the name of Sir Thomas Munro, who, as the Governor of Madras, put it into force in 1820. The idea was to avoid both the disadvantages of the Permanent and Temporary Settlements by making a direct settlement of the Government with the cultivators. Thereby the Government secured for itself the entire spoils without needing to share them with intermediaries. The assessment was not permanent but temporary, i.e., subject to periodical reassessment. The Madras Board of Revenue at the time fought a long and losing battle against it and urged a collective settlement with the village communities, known as Mauzawari settlement.

Thus the forms of land tenure in British India became traditionally classified under these three main groupings, all deriving from the British Government, and reflecting in fact its claim to be paramount landlord.

First, the Permanent Zemindari Settlements covering 19 per cent of the total area of British India.

Second, the Temporary Zemindari Settlements covering 30 per cent of the area.

Third, the Ryotwari Settlements covering 51 per cent of the area.

It should not be supposed from this that landlordism prevailed only in 49 per cent of the area of British India. In practice, through the process of sub-letting, and through the dispossession of the original cultivators by money-lenders and others securing possession of their land, landlordism spread extensively and at an increasing pace in the Ryotwari areas. *This extending chain of landlordism in India, increasing most rapidly in the modern period, was the reflection of the growing dispossession of the peasantry and the invasion of moneyed interests, big and small, which sought investment in this direction, having failed to find*

effective outlets for investments in productive industry. Over wide areas a fantastic chain of sub-letting grew up, even to the fiftieth degree.

In consequence, much of the tenancy legislation, designed to protect the cultivators, reached only to inferior landlords, while the majority of the real cultivators, if not already reduced to the position of landless labourers, became unprotected tenants, mercilessly squeezed to maintain a horde of functionless intermediaries above them in addition to the big parasites and the final claims of the Government. This process, carrying the whole system of landlordism to its final extreme of contradictions, has been one of the sharpest expressions of the developing agrarian crisis in India. Nor has the agrarian reform legislation of the Congress regime since 1947 availed to solve this deepening crisis.

4. IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE PEASANTRY

The consequent picture of agrarian relations in India is thus one of sharp and growing differentiation of classes.

The census of 1931 presented the following picture of the division of classes in Indian agriculture:

Non-cultivating proprietors taking rent	4,150,000
Cultivating owners, tenant cultivators	65,495,000
Agricultural labourers	33,523,000

This classification is of only limited value, since the general grouping of "cultivating owners, tenant cultivators" throws no light on the size of holdings, and in consequence makes no distinction between big peasants, middle peasants and poor peasants. In particular it gives no indication of the size of the majority group of cultivators with uneconomic holdings, whose conditions approximate to those of the labourers, and who commonly have to eke out their living as labourers. In practice the margin between the small sub-tenant and the labourer is a shadowy one. To get a truer picture it is therefore necessary to supplement the general census returns with the results of regional and local enquiries, official and unofficial. And these enquiries reveal the

growth in the number of non-cultivating landlords and the enormous growth in the number of landless labourers.

In Madras, for example, in the three decades from 1901 to 1931 the number of non-working rent-receivers increased two and a half times and the number of landless labourers increased from one-third to nearly one half. The census returns of Bengal also presented the picture of the increase in the proportions of non-cultivating rent-receivers and of landless labourers.

This growth of the landless agricultural labourers is most significant. Prior to the Census of 1881, no exact figures were available with regard to landless peasants in India. In 1882 the census estimated 7½ million "landless day labourers" in agriculture. The 1921 census returned a total of 21 millions, or one-fifth of those engaged in agriculture. The 1931 census returned a total of 33 millions, one-third of those engaged in agriculture. In 1951 the total, for the Indian Union after partition, was 35 million agricultural labourers (landless or with too little land to live on) or three-eighths of the agricultural population. (*Indian Labour Gazette*, November 1954.)

With regard to the wages of these agricultural labourers the following table is instructive:

	1842	1852	1862	1872	1911	1922
Field labourer without food (day wage in annas)	1	1½	2	3	4	4-6
Price of rice (seers per rupee)	40	30	27	23	15	5

Thus, while the cash wage had increased 4 to 6 times in this period, the price of rice had increased eight times.

In 1950-51 a government survey, published in 1954, ("Agricultural Labour — How They Work and Live") revealed an average daily wage of 17.5 annas (1s. 7½d.) for men, and 10.8 annas (1s.) for women; 100 days unemployment a year; nutrition 25 per cent below the normal minimum; and 45 per cent of the 35 millions indebted.

Descending still further in the scale, if that were still possible, we reach the dark realms of serfdom, forced labour

and debt slavery, of landless labourers without wages, existing in all parts of India, about which the statistical returns are silent. In many parts these agricultural serfs and debt slaves are representatives of the aboriginal races. But the position of the former free peasant, who has lost his land and become virtually enslaved to his creditor through debt, or who has been reduced to the bondage of share-cropping, is not far removed from legal serfdom. Akin to these in many respects is the condition of the plantation slaves, or over one million labourers on the great tea, coffee and rubber plantations, owned as to 90 per cent by European companies, which pay high dividends.

The pauperisation of the peasantry is further shown in the situation of the majority of small cultivators on un-economic holdings, of the sub-let tenants and unprotected tenants. In practice their situation is not far removed from that of the agricultural labourers, and the line of distinction between the two is an extremely shadowy one.

Evidence before the Bengal Land Revenue Commission (Floud Commission) generally gave the view that 5 acres would be the minimum area required to enable an average family to meet all their expenses. But according to the findings of the Commission, about three-fourths of the peasant families in Bengal had less than 5 acres of land, as much as 57.2 per cent of the holdings being less than three acres.

How do this preponderant majority below the lowest minimum standard eke out a living? They cannot do it. Inevitably they fall deeper and deeper into debt; they lose their land, they pass into the army of landless labourers.

5. THE BURDEN OF DEBT

As the difficulties of the peasant increase, the burden of debt descends more and more heavily upon him, and in turn increases his difficulties. This is the final vicious circle, which is only broken by the last stage—expropriation.

That the burden of indebtedness grew concomitantly with British rule, and has become an urgent and ever more

widespread problem is universally admitted. What lies behind this heavy increase of indebtedness under British rule, and specially in the modern period? Conventional apologetic treatment used to endeavour to ascribe the indebtedness to the "improvidence" and "extravagance" of the peasantry, and to find the origin of the debts in social habits of spending large sums beyond their means on marriages, funerals and similar social ceremonies, or on litigation. Cold facts do not bear out this analysis. Already in 1875 the Commission Report on the Deccan Peasant Uprising, stated: "Undue importance has been given to the expenditure on marriage and other festivals. . . . The expenditure forms an item of some importance in the debt side of his (the ryot's) account, but it rarely appears as the nucleus of his indebtedness." The Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee found that, as a result of "intensive village enquiries", the above charge could not be maintained.

An analysis of facts reveals that the causes of indebtedness of the Indian peasantry are economic—incurred for payment of rent, for capital improvement, for repayment of old debts and such other purposes—closely linked up with their exploitation. Sir T. Hope, a Bombay revenue officer, declared in 1879 that "to our revenue system must in candour be ascribed some share in the indebtedness of the ryot." "I was perfectly satisfied during my visit to Bombay," writes Vaughan Nash in 1900, "that the authorities regarded the moneylender as their mainstay for the payment of revenue."

The moneylender and debt are not new phenomena in Indian society. But the role of the moneylender has taken on new proportions and a new significance under capitalist exploitation, and specially in the period of imperialism. Previously his transactions were in practice subject to the judgement of the village. Under the old laws the creditor could not seize the land of his debtor. All this was changed under British rule. The British legal system, with the right of distraint on the debtor and the transferability of lands, created a happy hunting-ground for the moneylender, and placed behind him all the power of the police and the law,

making him an indispensable pivot in the whole system of capitalist exploitation. For the moneylender not only provides the indispensable medium for the collection of land revenue; he commonly combines in his person the role of grain merchant with that of usurer; he holds the monopolist position for purchasing the crops at harvest-time; he often advances the seeds and implements; and the peasants, usually unable to check his accounts of what they have paid and what is due to them, fall more and more under his sway; he becomes the despot of the village. As the lands fall into his hands the process is carried farther: the peasants become labourers or share-croppers completely working for him, paying over to him as combined rent and interest the greater part of what they produce; he becomes more and more the small capitalist of Indian village economy, employing the peasants as his workers. The anger of the peasants may in the first place turn against the moneylender as their visible tyrant and the apparent author of their woes; but they soon find that behind the moneylender stands the whole power of imperialism. The moneylender is the indispensable lower cog, at the point of production, of the entire mechanism of finance-capitalist exploitation.

As the ravages of the moneylender extend, attempts are made with increasing urgency by official legislation to check him from killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Volumes of special legislation have been passed for restriction of usurious interest and against the alienation of lands. But the failure of this legislation has had to be admitted and is further testified by the unchecked and even accelerating growth of indebtedness.

6. THE TRIPLE BURDEN

The cumulative effect of imperialist exploitation on the peasantry can be summarised. The peasant cultivator, if he had not fallen into the ranks of the landless proletariat, was brought under a triple burden. The claims of the Government for land revenue fell upon all. The claims of the land-

lord for rent, additional to the Government revenue, fell on the majority. The claims of the moneylender for interest fell on the overwhelming majority. What proportion of the produce of the peasant was thus taken from him? What was left him for his subsistence? No returns were available on this basic question of Indian Agriculture. Failing exact information, the Central Banking Enquiry Committee Minority Report attempted an estimate in the most general terms. Obvious calculations lead us to conclude that the real burden is heavier than even indicated by this estimate. Yet this estimate would reach a total, if the incidence of the salt tax is included, in the neighbourhood of 20 rupees per agriculturist. Against this we have the estimate of the Central Banking Enquiry Committee Majority Report that "the average income of an agriculturist in British India does not work out at a higher figure than about 42 rupees or a little over £ 3 a year."

A closer picture of the rate of exploitation is available from the detailed "Study of a South Indian Village" by N. S. Subramanian, published in 1936, which revealed that *each inhabitant of this village earned an average of 38 rupees or £ 2. 17s. for the year*. After the tax-collector, landlord and moneylender had taken their share, he was left with under 13 rupees or 19 shillings to live on for the year. He was left with one-third; two-thirds were taken.

Carlyle described the situation of the French peasantry on the eve of the Great Revolution in a famous passage:

"The widow is gathering nettles for her children's dinner: a perfumed seigneur, delicately lounging in the *Oeil de Boeuf*, has an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and name it Rent and Law."

A more mysterious alchemy was achieved in British India. One nettle was left for the peasant; two nettles were gathered for the seigneur.

Chapter IX

TOWARDS AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

ON THE BASIS of the foregoing analysis it is possible to summarise the main features of the growth of the agrarian crisis.

1. GROWTH OF THE AGRARIAN CRISIS

The first feature is the increasingly lop-sided and unbalanced situation of agriculture in the national economy, the simultaneous overcrowding and under-development, with still continuing "de-industrialisation", consequent on the colonial character of Indian economy. This general situation affects and aggravates all the remaining factors.

The second is the stagnation and deterioration of agriculture, the low yields, the waste of labour, the failure to bring into cultivation the cultivable area, the lack of development of the existing cultivated area, and even signs of deterioration of yield, of land passing out of cultivation and of net decrease of the cultivated area.

The third is the increasing land-hunger of the peasantry, the constant diminution in the size of holdings, spreading of subdivision and fragmentation, and the growth in the proportion of uneconomic holdings until these today constitute the majority of holdings.

The fourth is the extension of landlordism, the multiplication of letting and sub-letting, the rapid growth in the number of functionless non-cultivating rent-receivers, and

the increasing transfer of land into the hands of these non-cultivating owners.

The fifth is the increasing indebtedness of the cultivators still in possession of their holdings, and the astronomic rise of the total of rural debt in the most recent period.

The sixth is the extension of expropriation of the cultivators, consequent on the growth of indebtedness, and the resulting transfer of land to the moneylenders and speculators.

The seventh is the consequent ever more rapid growth of the agricultural proletariat, increasing in the single decade 1921-31 from one-fifth to one-third of the total number of cultivators, and since then developing further to a still higher proportion (36 per cent, according to the Government Ministry of Labour Enquiry in 1950-51).

This whole process of deterioration, expropriation and increasing class differentiation was carried very much further, and very much more rapidly forward as a consequence of the world economic crisis, the collapse of agricultural prices and later the impact of the second world war and the ensuing wave of countrywide famines. In 1928-29 the value of agricultural crops, taken at an average harvest price, was about Rs. 10,340 million. In 1933-34 it was only Rs. 4,730 million—a fall of 55 per cent. But land-revenue, which stood at Rs. 331 million in 1928-29, was actually maintained at Rs. 330 million in 1931-32, and had only fallen, largely through sheer inability to pay and surrender of lands in many cases, to Rs. 300 million in 1933-34, or a drop of slightly over 9 per cent.

The total value of marketable crops in Bengal fell from an annual average of Rs. 724 million for the decade 1920-21 to 1929-30, to Rs. 327 million in 1932-33, whereas monetary liabilities actually rose, from Rs. 279 to Rs. 283 million. This meant that the "free purchasing power" of the cultivators fell from Rs. 445 to Rs. 44 million.

Gold ornaments, the traditional form of savings, were drained from the peasantry to stave off bankruptcy. Between 1931 and 1937 no less than £ 241 million of gold was drained from India. But this could not serve to put off the evil

day for more than a limited period. The number of abandonments of land by tenants who could not pay rent went on reaching high figures. In Bengal, in 1930, the Committee on Irrigation reported that "land is going out of cultivation".

By 1934-35 the agricultural returns revealed an *absolute drop in the area of cultivated land by over 5 million acres*. The drop in the area under food grains was 5,589,000 acres.

The burden of agricultural debt was trebled: from £ 400 million in 1921 it went up to £ 1,350 million in 1937.

The bankruptcy of the Indian agricultural economy was revealed in all its nakedness when, after the entry of Japan into the war, the import of rice from Burma was stopped. The result was that vast parts of the country were plunged into a famine which resulted in mass deaths. In Bengal alone, according to a survey conducted by Professor K. P. Chattopadhyaya, 3½ million people died as a result of the famine. Epidemics followed in the wake of famine, and by September, 1944, 1,200,000 people in Bengal had died of various diseases. The whole life of the people was disrupted. Parents were forced to throw their children and babies on the roadside in the hope that somebody might pick them up and feed them. Husbands were forced to leave their homes and their whole family at the mercy of events. Women were forced to sell themselves and enter brothels.

The famine was a 'man-made' famine. The shortage in Bengal was only a shortage of six weeks' supplies and could have been made up by imports and equitable distribution. But over one-third of the population of Bengal was hit by the famine. The entire stocks had been cornered by the big Zemindars and traders, and the corrupt bureaucracy rather than force stocks out of their hands helped them to shoot up prices and play havoc with the lives of millions of people. The price of rice in Calcutta which was Rs. 6 per maund in January, 1942 rose to Rs. 11 in November, 1942, Rs. 24 in February-April, 1943, Rs. 30 in May, Rs. 35 in July, Rs. 38 in August, Rs. 40 in October 1943. The price rose to as high as Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per maund in the mofussil districts. Rice was available all through the famine and in unlimited quantities but at Rs. 100 per maund.

The result of this famine was a further impoverishment of the peasantry and an increased concentration of land into the hands of the richer landlords and moneylenders.

The whole village economy was disorganised. The village artisans and craftsmen, like the fisherman, the leather worker, the blacksmith, the potter and the weaver, were the worst sufferers during the famine. They were, in fact, among the first to be hit and were reduced to mere paupers.

What happened in Bengal was a most accentuated form of crisis overtaking the entire country.

2. THE NECESSITY OF THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

The Indian peasantry are thus faced with very urgent problems of existence, to which they must imperatively find their solution.

Can a solution be found within the conditions of the existing regime? It is evident and universally admitted that far-reaching changes are essential.

The abolition of landlordism has long been in principle recognised as essential. Already in 1938 the Floud Commission Majority Report recommended the abolition of Zemindari in Bengal — with compensation. In India landlordism is an artificial creation of foreign rule and has no roots in the traditions of the people. It is a purely parasitic claim on the peasantry. But the abolition of landlordism requires more than a formal change in the outward structure, while the real burdens on the peasantry continue in the new guise of payment for "compensation" to landlords. It is the burden on the peasantry exacted by landlordism which requires to be ended.

The same applies to the moneylender and the mountain of debt. Drastic scaling down and eventual cancellation are inevitable. But this alone would be useless, or only a temporary palliative, unless accompanied by alternative forms of organisation to prevent the causes of indebtedness and replace the role of the moneylender.

It must be recognised that, while temporary partial measures could afford some temporary relief, and have been

in some cases attempted in various degrees, a more basic approach involves a complete reorganisation of the whole land system. Any more systematic tackling of the evil of landlordism would accordingly require to be part of a wider economic reorganisation, which would not only fulfil the principle of "the land to the tiller", but also provide alternative means of livelihood for the millions who must eventually win freedom from being tied to the existing overcrowded agriculture. Hence the unity of the tasks of agricultural and industrial development.

The essential problem is not only a problem of landlordism, but one of reorganisation of the whole existing land system and distribution of holdings. Such redistribution, however, inevitably cutting across the thicket of individual vested interests on behalf of the claims of the majority, could not be accomplished by the bureaucratic action of a foreign government or of a government of monopoly interests linked to imperialism, even if it had the will, but could only be accomplished by the initiative and action of the mass of the peasantry themselves, in alliance with the working class and under the leadership of a government, representing them and fighting for their interests.

Redistribution alone, however, can only be the preliminary to tackling the whole problem of agricultural development, raising the technique of agriculture to modern levels, bringing in the use of agricultural machinery, and reclaiming the vast areas of uncultivated cultivable land.

3. FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT REFORM POLICIES

The record of imperialism, and also of the subsequent Governments of the Indian Union and Pakistan succeeding to the old direct imperialist rule, but still based on the old monopolist and landlord interests linked to imperialism, has demonstrated the inability of any regime on this social basis to solve the deepening agrarian crisis.

The interests of imperialism, bound up, on the one hand, with the maintenance of landlordism and feudal and semi-feudal institutions as the social basis of its rule against the

masses, and, on the other hand, with the finance-capitalist exploitation of the Indian people as a backward agricultural colony, prevented any tackling of the agrarian problem. Symbolic of this impotence of imperialism were the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India in 1927, forbidding it to touch the land system. And the practical record of bankruptcy further proved this impotence.

The failure of the various measures of agriculturalists' relief legislation to check the growth of indebtedness was already recorded in the Agricultural Commission's Report; and in the same way the numerous attempts at tenancy legislation for the protection of tenants were unable to check the rapid extension of landlordism, sub-letting and rack-renting, the privileged "protected tenants" themselves very often becoming petty landlords, exploiting unprotected tenants.

The irrigation works from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards have been commonly held up as a great achievement for agriculture. But the total irrigated area in 1939-40 was still only 23 per cent of the total sown area of British India, Government irrigation works covering only 10 per cent. For the Indian Union in 1949-50 the irrigated area was only 17.7 per cent of sown area.

The experience since 1947, under the Governments of India and Pakistan, has further demonstrated that, despite the considerable land reforms adopted, the new governments, representing the rule of the big monopolists and landlords, with close links with imperialism, have not succeeded to solve the agrarian crisis.

Formal legislation for the abolition of landlordism (Zemindari, Jagirdari, etc.) has been passed in almost all the states of the Indian Union and in Pakistan, together with the imposition of a ceiling on the size of holdings. But the effects of this legislation have been extremely limited, and have by no means abolished landlordism in practice or solved the problems of the mass of the peasantry and agricultural proletariat.

The general principle underlying this legislation for the "abolition of landlordism" has been the payment of full compensation to the landlords on the basis of existing rents. The financial burden represented by this compensation has meant that a great part of the legislation has remained inoperative in practice, and, where it has been operated, the burdens on the cultivators have only changed in form and not in substance, and in some cases have even increased, (compensation payments replacing the previous landlord's rent).

Only a minority of rich peasants have benefited. The majority of the poor peasants, tenants at will, share croppers and agricultural labourers have received no benefit. Further, even where a nominal ceiling on land holding has been imposed, the landlords have in practice been able to retain huge estates on the basis of nominally dividing their land among members of their families and through similar pretexts and evasions.

The prohibition of expropriation and the obligation to pay compensation was laid down by the Constitution of the Indian Union. In 1948 the Government of India laid down that compensation for the landlords must be paid by the impoverished State Governments, and that there could be no subvention from the Centre for this purpose. In 1949 the Government of India's Finance Minister further laid down that any "payment of compensation which is not furnished by revenue or genuine borrowing must be rejected"; in other words the compensation must not be covered by issuing interest-bearing bonds or annuities to the landlords in place of their property.

The effects of these crippling restrictions were inevitable. The Reserve Bank of India estimated in 1950 that for seven States alone the compensation required would total Rs. 4,140 million, or £ 310 million. In West Bengal the Prime Minister, Dr. B. C. Roy announced in November, 1951, that it would be useless to present a bill for the abolition of Zemindari, since the financial burden could not be met, and that such measures would in consequence bring no benefit

to the cultivators. In Uttar Pradesh, where the compensation required amounted to Rs. 1,600 million, or £ 120 million, the device was attempted of inviting voluntary contributions from the tenants to a "Zemindari Abolition Fund", whereby a tenant could obtain possession of his rented land by a payment of ten times the rent. In practice only the tiny minority of richer peasants could take advantage of this. In other cases, tenants would have to pay compensation for forty years.

It is not surprising that Professor Balogh, after a visit to India, drew the conclusion (*New York Nation*, March 12, 1955):

"The land reform, and especially the law limiting individual holdings, has been, to put it mildly, inoperative in a considerable part of the country."

The 'Bhoodan' campaign, conducted with official approval under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave, and directly originating from the fear aroused by the peasant revolt and seizures of land in Telengana, sought to check the agrarian revolt and canalise the discontent arising from the failure of the reform legislation by proposing that the landlords should voluntarily renounce a portion of their lands. Its significance lay, not so much in the inevitably very limited results achieved, which could not affect more than a tiny fraction of the real problem, as in the semi-official admission thus revealed of the failure of the so-called "land abolition" legislation.

The agrarian problem in India still awaits solution by a victorious popular revolution.

4. THE GROWTH OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT

It is in this situation that the growth of the peasants' movement in recent years is one of the most significant developments in India.

Peasant unrest and peasant uprisings can be traced with increasing frequency during the period of the British rule in India. In their first primitive and spontaneous forms the

anger and unrest of the peasants found expression in isolated actions of revenge and violence against individual moneylenders and landlords.

Outstanding episodes in the peasants' uprisings in the second half of the nineteenth century were the Santhal rebellion of 1855 and the Deccan uprising of 1875.

But it is in the modern period since the world war of 1914-18, and especially since the world economic crisis, that peasant unrest in India has advanced at a speed without previous parallel and taken on a more and more radical character. The world economic crisis knocked the bottom out of the already exhausted agrarian economy of India. The resulting process of rack-renting, debt-enslavement and expropriation found its reflection in rising movements of the peasants in all parts of India. The peasants spontaneously formed village committees to resist evictions, boycott purchases of land sold in default and to unite against the moneylenders.

The peasants were drawn into the political struggle of the Indian National Congress on the basis of their own grievances; but the political struggle was never directly linked up with the local Kisan (Peasant) Committees. The peasants came to feel the need to develop these and create their own mass organisation. The village committees of peasants were gradually linked up into district committees, and these, at first in a very loose manner, into provincial organisations.

In 1936 the first all-India peasants' organisation was formed—the All-India Kisan Sabha. The first congress was held at Faizpur in December, 1936 at the same time as the Indian National Congress. Twenty thousand peasants took part in the deliberations, many having marched hundreds of miles to attend. Simultaneously at Faizpur the Indian National Congress adopted its agrarian programme and the political solidarity of the two organisations was declared.

The fourth Congress of the All-India Kisan Sabha was held at Gaya in April, 1939, and revealed a membership of 800,000.

Within a few months of this session at Gaya, came the opening of the war. Under the "Defence of India Act" a wave of repression was let loose on the Indian people. But despite all the repression, peasants all over the country continued their determined fight against the imperialist-feudal system.

The period 1942-45 was a period of great trial for the entire kisan movement. In August 1942, a ruthless attack was launched by imperialism on the entire national movement—the arrest of the Congress leaders was followed by heavy repression.

Thus a great responsibility fell on the shoulders of the organised kisan movement. In fulfilment of this responsibility, the All-India Kisan Sabha and its Provincial Branches consistently agitated for the release of the national leaders and the setting up of a national government; bravely fought against the government repression; fought against forcible collection of war funds; and organised a self-help movement to grow more food, and defeat the bureaucrat, the horders and blackmarketeers in every village.

The whole period is full of glorious achievements of the kisans of India. Thousands and thousands of acres of fallow land were brought under cultivation in Andhra. Under the leadership of the All-India Kisan Sabha, a countrywide campaign was launched for rescuing the people of Bengal from the deadening grip of famine. Kisans all over the country rose to the occasion and organised mass collections in aid of Bengal. In their own provinces, they united themselves into food committees, exposed the blackmarketeers and unearthed the hoarded stocks to be finally distributed to the needy.

The All-India Kisan Sabha, because of its consistent fight for the freedom of the country and the rights of the common man, became an increasingly effective and popular body. Its membership rose from 225,781 in 1942 to 553,427 in 1944 and 829,686 in 1945. At the end of the war a new awakening swept the impoverished mass of Indian peasantry. The very intense and developing food crisis, the shortage and high prices of the essential commodities, the

atrocities of the Government and oppression of the landlords in the villages, roused the Indian kisans to more and more militant actions in defence of their rights. While demanding immediate agrarian legislation to end landlordism, the kisans were already taking the initiative and under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha, seizing the fallow lands belonging to the landlords and fiercely fighting back any attempts at evictions and enhancement of rents.

This developing agrarian revolt reached new heights in the most recent period, as in the Tebhaga movement in Bengal, and above all in the epic of Telengana in Hyderabad, where 2,000 villages, in self-defence against the depredations of the fascist bands of the Nizam, set up their own People's Committees, took over the land and maintained their own administration and armed defence over an area of 15,000 square miles, or roughly equivalent to the area of Denmark. These portents revealed the maturing of the conditions and the speeding of the advance towards the agrarian revolution in India.

Chapter X

RISE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

IN THE PREVIOUS chapters we have dealt mainly with the unhappy record and situation of the Indian people as the object of history. A more cheerful view now opens before us—the Indian people as the subject of history.

1. UNITY AND DIVERSITY

At the outset the apologists of imperialism used to pose a special question: Is there a people of India? Can the diversified assembly of races and religions, with the barriers and division of caste, of language and other differences, and with the widely varying range of social and cultural levels, inhabiting the vast sub-continental expanse of India, be considered a "nation", or ever become a "nation"?

The older school of imperialists dismissed with contempt any conception of an Indian nation as an illusion. "There is not and never was an India," was the firm declaration of Sir John Strachey in 1888. In the twentieth century the growing strength of the national movement led to a wider recognition, at any rate by the liberal imperialist school, of the existence of the Indian nation; and the alternative argument won favour that this development was a triumphant achievement and vindication of British rule and the inculcation of British liberal ideals. In the most recent period there developed the special propaganda presenting the theory of Hindus and Moslems as two nations.

The argument from diversity continued to be widely

current up to the last days of British rule. It is still to be found in all its glory in the principal propaganda piece of modern British imperialism about India, the "Survey Volume" of the Simon Report. This memorable document of State began by coolly declaring that "what is called the 'Indian Nationalist Movement'" in reality "directly affects the hopes of a very small fraction of the teeming peoples of India." The brilliant insight of this judgement was immediately afterwards proved by the character of the civil disobedience movement of 1930-34 and the results of the elections of 1937. Thereafter the report proceeded—always in the name of a purely scientific, impartial and objective presentation of pure facts for knowledge—to endeavour to terrorise the reader with the customary picture or the "immensity and difficulty" of the Indian "problem", the "immensity of area and population", the "complication of language" with no less than "222 vernaculars", the "rigid complication of innumerable castes", the "almost infinite diversity in its religious aspect", the "basic opposition" of Hindus and Moslems, this "variegated assemblage of races and creeds", this "conglomeration of races and religions", this "congeries of heterogeneous masses", and similar polite expressions in abundance.

In truth this approach, despite all its air of impartial and statesman-like recognition of unwelcome facts, was propaganda, and bare-faced propaganda. It was a conscious and deliberate selection of facts with a purpose, and distortion even of all that underlies those facts. It suppressed all that is cardinal for the real understanding of the present position of India and dwelt lovingly on whatever facts could be made to appear unfavourable to the people of India and to sustain the official principle of "Divide and Rule."

The spirit in which the Simon Report approached its task of the survey of the conditions of India was admirably parodied by R. Page Arnot: "The sub-continent of the United States is characterised by the greatest diversity of climate and geographical features, while its inhabitants exhibit a similar diversity of race and religion..." Indeed, it

is worth noting that similar profound "analyses" and "proofs" of the impossibility of unity of the American people were equally current in English expression on the very eve of the American Revolution.

The question of the historical degree of unity of India in the past can be left to the historians. It is worth noting that the modern school of historical research, even on the side of imperialism, no longer endeavours to uphold the downright denials of half a century ago. Vincent A. Smith, in 1919, wrote: "The political unity of all India, although never attained perfectly in fact, was always the ideal of the people throughout the centuries."

The present degree of unity and differentiation is more important to consider; and here something needs to be said on those divisions which were so prominently displayed and emphasised by imperialist propaganda as obstacles to self-government and justifications for the necessity of continued British rule.

2. QUESTIONS OF CASTE, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

Undoubtedly the Indian people has a heavy heritage of burdens, survivals from the past, divisions and inequalities to overcome, as every people has its own inheritance and special problems. One of the strongest reasons for the necessity of full independence from imperialism is in order that the progressive leaders of the people of India shall have the opportunity to tackle and solve these problems and carry forward the Indian people along the path of democratic and social advance. For the experience of the past half-century especially has already shown that, in the modern phase of imperialist decay, the offensive against these evils is more and more actively led by the representatives of the Indian liberation movement, while imperialism has maintained an obstructive role against innumerable projects of reform and has worked in such a way as to sustain and even intensify these evils.

A policy which in practice fosters and maintains the division and backwardness of a subject people, and even

by its administrative methods intensifies these evils, while in public it loudly proclaims these evils as a melancholy proof of the incapacity of the people for unity and self-government, condemns itself.

Indeed, the Simon Report itself was compelled to admit that the Hindu-Moslem antagonism was a special feature of the territories under direct British rule and had increased under British rule. The reasons for this were bound up with political factors, expressed in the establishment of communal electorates, and culminating in the partitioning of India.

With regard to caste restrictions and untouchability, it is impossible not to appreciate the benevolent desire of the representatives of imperialism to magnify and multiply the number of the depressed classes and untouchables. A generation ago, when the political situation was not so acute, the number of 30 millions was commonly given; in 1910 Valentine Chirol raised the figure to 50 millions; in 1929 Anstey raised it to 60 millions.

The fight against untouchability has been led, not by the British Government, but by the progressive national movement. Indeed, the incident will be recalled when certain famous temples in Southern India which had been traditionally closed to the untouchables were, under the inspiration of Gandhi's crusade, thrown open to them; and police were thereupon dispatched to prevent access of the untouchables, on the grounds that such access would be offensive to the religious sentiments of the population, which it was the sacred duty of the Government to protect.

The British Government was certainly concerned to organise a separate electoral roll of the untouchables or depressed classes, with guaranteed separate representation, in order to introduce a new element of division and weaken the National Congress. For the opinions of the untouchables themselves on this loving care, the evidence of the leader of the Scheduled Castes Federation, Dr. Ambedkar, who was accepted by the Government as their leader and spokesman, may be taken:

"I am afraid that the British choose to advertise our unfortunate conditions, not with the object of removing them, but only because

such a course serves well as an excuse for retarding the political progress of India."

The interests of the depressed classes and their liberation are inevitably linked up with the common national movement of liberation.

The crippling institutions of caste will only be overcome not by preaching and denunciation, but by the advance of modern industry and political democracy, as new social ties and common interest replace the old bonds. As Marx wrote: "Modern industry will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power." The Census Report of 1921 bears witness to the beginning of realisation of this prediction of Marx a hundred years earlier: "In places like Jamshedpur where work is done under modern conditions, men of all castes and races work side by side in the mill without any misgivings regarding the caste of their neighbours."

With regard to the division of languages, if we compare the total reached by the 1901 Census with the 1921 Census, used by the Simon Report, we reach the interesting result that, whereas the population increased from 292 millions in 1901 to 316 millions in 1921, the number of languages spoken increased from 147 in 1901 to 222 in 1921.

But a more detailed examination will throw still further light on this heroic mythology of the "222 separate languages". It includes a list of 134 Indo-Chinese languages and the Imperial Gazetteer of India (1909) gives the number of speakers of each of these different languages, and we find, for example the following figures: Kabuli is spoken by 4, Andro by 1, Kasui by 11, Bhranu by 15, Aka by 26, Tairong by 12 and Nora by 2. It is clear that the philosophical conception of language as a means of communication between human beings will have to be revised in the light of Andro, spoken by 1 person; Nora, with a grand total of 2 speakers, just scrapes through.

Since then the 1931 Census has reduced the total to 203. It is evident that some of the speakers of the languages spoken by one, two or four persons had unfortunately died

in the interval, thus weakening by their thoughtless action the imperialist case against Indian self-government. The separation of Burma from India since 1937 caused a still heavier mortality, since the majority of the languages (128) used to prove divisions of the Indian people belong to Burma.

The problem of languages in India is in practice a problem of 12 or 13 languages of which the nine North Indian languages are extremely closely allied, so that even the Census Report of 1921 had to admit:

"There is no doubt that there is a common element in the main languages of Northern and Central India which renders their speakers without any great conscious change in their speech mutually intelligible to one another, and this common basis already forms an approach to a *lingua franca* over a large part of India."

The real existence of the Indian nation was not to be proved or disproved in the chambers of statisticians or the debating halls of parliaments. It was proved, in the light of the experience of the twentieth century, in the field of action. For, the problems of diversity, or of the multinational character of the Indian people, do not contradict this basic unity. They are problems which can only be settled by the Indian people themselves.

3. BEGINNINGS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

In the modern period the reality of the Indian national democratic consciousness could in practice no longer be denied. In consequence the alternative argument came into general favour with the more sophisticated spokesmen of imperialism to the effect that the Indian national consciousness must be regarded as the proud achievement of imperialism, which had brought it into existence and planted the seeds of British democratic ideals in India. "The politically minded portion of the people of India...are intellectually our children." (Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918.)

These patronising claims of modern imperialism are by no means mere harmless self-delusions and self-consolations

of a declining Power. The practical significance of this line of argument was evident. It was that in that case a "sane" and "constructive" Indian Nationalism would cease to regard imperialism as its enemy, would abandon the struggle for national independence and replace it by conciliation and co-operation with imperialism, and in the final resort even maintain India behind a fig-leaf of formal "independence", in association with or directly inside the British "Commonwealth" or Empire.

Is it correct to see the Indian national struggle as the offspring and outcome of British rule? There is undoubtedly a sense in which this claim is correct. In so far as the Indian national movement has come into being and grown up in struggle against imperialism, imperialism can claim to be its precedent condition and starting-point, just as Tsarism was the starting-point of the victory of the working class in Russia, or Charles I of Cromwell. The Japanese invaders in China could no doubt claim that by their invasion and aggression they were helping to forge the national unity of the people of China.

This is not, however, what the modern imperialist apologists wish to imply. "English history taught the lesson of the gradual acquisition of popular liberties, English political thought as expressed by Burke and Mill reinforced the lesson. Educated Indians, essentially keen intellectually, and readily stirred to enthusiasm, perceived a new revelation." (L. F. Rushbrook Williams, "What About India?", 1938.)

What is the measure of truth in this claim?

The democratic revolution of the modern age, which developed in many lands, including England as one of its earliest homes, is not the peculiar patent of England. Nor is it correct that it requires the alien domination of a country in order to implant the seeds of the democratic revolution. The American Declaration of Independence, and still more the great French Revolution, far more than the already ageing English parliamentary-monarchical compromise, were the great inspirers of the democratic movement of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century the

Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, have taken over this role as the main inspiration of the movements for national liberation and social and economic emancipation throughout the world.

That the Indian awakening developed in unison with these world currents can be demonstrated from the stages of its growth. Ram Mohun Roy, the father of Indian bourgeois nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, when he made the voyage to England in 1830, insisted, at considerable inconvenience, in travelling on a French ship to demonstrate his enthusiasm for the principles of the French Revolution. The National Congress, which was originally instituted under official inspiration as an intended instrument against the rising movement of the people and to safeguard British rule, slept for 20 years, and first awakened from its slumbers in the great popular ferment and stirring after 1905; then again, when the wave of unrest had subsided, settled down to placid loyalist moderation; and once again, on a still more overwhelming scale, swept forward with the world movement of advance after 1917.

Did the Indian national movement arise because the educated class in India were taught by their masters to read Burke, Mill and Macaulay and to delight in the parliamentary rhetoric of a Gladstone and a Bright? So runs the familiar legend. The legend is too simple, and on a par with the derivation of modern France from the will of a Napoleon, or the Catholic derivation of Protestantism from the personal idiosyncrasies of Luther. The Indian national movement arose from social conditions, from the conditions of imperialism and its system of exploitation, and from the social and economic forces generated within Indian society under the conditions of that exploitation; the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie and its growing competition against the domination of the British bourgeoisie were inevitable, whatever the system of education.

When Macaulay, on behalf of imperialism, imposed the system of Anglicised education, and defeated the Orientalists, his object was not to create Indian national conscious-

ness, but to destroy it down to the very deepest roots of its being. The fact that this system of education, imposed in the interests of imperialist administration, opened the avenues at the same time to the great stream of English democratic and popular inspiration and struggle, of the Miltons, the Shelleys and the Byrons—fighting against the self-same types of tyranny, and even sometimes against the same figures of the ruling-class oligarchy, the Pitts and the Hastings and the Wellingtons, as were enslaving and exploiting India—was a characteristic contradiction of the whole system of imperialism conducted by the ruling class of a country in which simultaneously the people were themselves pressing forward to their freedom.

There is no need to minimise the historical significance of British rule in India, or the contribution of that rule, however unwillingly, to the forces which have gone to mould the Indian nation. Marx showed the two main elements of that achievement, whereby British rule in India, although actuated by “the vilest interests”, nevertheless fulfilled the role of “the unconscious tool of history” in the development of India.

The first and most important achievement, or *destructive* role was the ruthless destruction of the foundation of the old order of society in India. Such a destruction was the necessary precedent to any new advance. It does not necessarily follow from this that such a destruction would have been impossible without the British conquest. On the contrary, there is some reason to judge that the traditional Indian society in decomposition at the moment of the British conquest was trembling on the verge of the first stage of the bourgeois revolution on the basis of its own resources, when the already mature British bourgeois revolution overtook it in the phase of disorder and transition and was able to establish its domination. But in the actual historical record this destruction was the achievement of British rule.

The second achievement, less completely carried out, was the laying of the material basis for the new order.

But these achievements could not in themselves bring

either liberation or any improvement in conditions for the mass of the Indian people.

The third step still to be achieved, whereby the Indian people should come into possession of the new forces to organise them in their own interests, could only be achieved, as Marx insisted, by the action of the Indian people themselves in struggle against imperialism and developing their strength to "throw off the English yoke altogether."

In the earlier period of British rule, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British rulers—in the midst of, and actually through all the misery and industrial devastation—were performing an objectively revolutionary role in certain respects. A policy of ruthless annexation was wiping out many princedoms and filling the remaining rulers with alarm. This was the period of partial reforms, of such measures as the abolition of suttee (carried out with the whole-hearted co-operation of the progressive elements of Indian society), the abolition of slavery (a more formal measure in practice), the war on infanticide and thuggism, the introduction of Western education and the freeing of the Press. Rigid in their outlook, unsympathetic to all that was backward in Indian traditions, convinced that the nineteenth-century British bourgeois and Christian conception was the norm for humanity, these early administrators nevertheless carried on a limited work of innovation, representing the spirit of the early ascendant bourgeoisie of the period. The deepest enemies of the British were the old reactionary rulers who saw in them their supplanters. The progressive elements of the nascent Indian bourgeoisie at that time, represented by Ram Mohun Roy and the reform movement of the Brahma Samaj, looked with unconcealed admiration to the British as the champions of progress, gave unhesitating support to their reforms, and saw in them the vanguard of a new civilisation.

The rising of 1857 bore a twofold character. On the one hand, it revealed the depth of potential mass revolt, and the unstable basis of imperialist rule. But on the other hand, it represented in the dominant character and leader-

ship the revolt of the old conservative and feudal forces and dethroned potentates for their rights and privileges which they saw in process of destruction. This reactionary character of the rising prevented a wider measure of popular support and doomed it to failure. Nevertheless, even so the rising laid bare the depth of mass discontent and unrest beneath the surface, and created an alarm in the British rulers, the tradition of which governed all their subsequent actions. "All India is at all times looking out for our downfall," Lord Metcalfe, Governor-General in 1835-36, had written already in the preceding period. "The people everywhere would rejoice, or fancy they would rejoice, at our destruction. And numbers are not wanting who would promote it by all means in their power."

After 1857 a significant shift took place in British policy and the character of British rule. From this point British policy shifted its centre of gravity increasingly to winning the support of reaction in India against the masses; while its relationship to the new progressive forces, who represented the rising Indian bourgeoisie, passed from the former cordial closeness to coolness and suspicion, and even hostility mitigated only by attempts here also to form temporary alliances of convenience against the masses. An abrupt end was made of the system of annexation of the Indian States into British India. Henceforth the remaining Princes were zealously preserved in possession of their puppet powers as allied "sovereign" rulers, with every form of degenerate feudal oppression and misrule protected, and even intensified, by their now completely parasitic role. The consequent political map of India was maintained as a senseless patchwork of petty principalities and divided administrations. In the latest period of British rule these same Princes, now for the most part completely corrupt tools of their imperialist master, were brought into the forefront of constitutional development as makeweights against the forces of national independence. The path of social reform was no longer actively pursued, but gave place more and more markedly to zealous protection of every reactionary religious survival and custom (the Age of Consent Act of 1891 being

almost the solitary exception in this later period). The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, while making a show of granting racial equality between Indians and English (with regard to which the subsequent Viceroy, Lord Lytton, frankly declared that "these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled"), emphasised the determination of the Government to "abstain from all interference with religious belief or worship" and gave the pledge to the conservative forces of Indian society that "due regard will be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India." The Royal Titles Act of 1876, by which the Queen was proclaimed Empress of India the following year, was declared by the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, to represent the beginning of "a new policy by virtue of which the Crown of England should henceforth be identified with the hopes, the aspirations, the sympathies and interests of a powerful native aristocracy". From this period the methods of playing off Hindus and Moslems against one another, and of utilising other forms of sectional division, began to be more and more attentively studied, until, with the modern technique of communal electorates, this issue was successfully brought into the forefront of Indian politics. At the same time an increasing alienation grew up since 1857 between the British rulers and the progressive elements in Indian society; all tradition on both sides agrees on the transformation of relations that took place.

Thus the change which developed in the general character of capitalism in Britain and on the world scale, from its earlier ascendant progressive period, to a more and more reactionary and declining role, and finally to full decay in the period of imperialism, was accompanied by a corresponding change in the character of British rule in India. With the development into the final phase of modern imperialism or decaying capitalism this reactionary role has become especially emphasised.

On the other hand, while the role of British rule in India was thus becoming increasingly reactionary by the later decades of the nineteenth century, new forces were growing up within Indian society.

During the second half of the nineteenth Century the Indian bourgeoisie was coming to the front. In 1853 the first successful cotton mill was started in Bombay. By 1880 there were 156 mills employing 44,000 workers. By 1900 there were 193 mills employing 161,000 workers. From the outset the new cotton textile industry was financed and controlled mainly by Indians; and it had to make its way against heavy difficulties. At the same time was appearing the new educated middle class, trained in the principles of Western education, developing as lawyers, doctors, teachers and administrators, and advancing to the claims of nineteenth-century democratic conceptions of citizenship. These beginnings, both in the field of capitalist industry and the new Westernised intelligentsia, were still relatively small. But the new class was appearing which was inevitably to find in the British bourgeoisie its overshadowing competitor and obstacle to advance, and was therefore destined to become the first articulate expression and leadership of Indian national claims.

The basic economic conflict between the new Indian bourgeoisie and the British bourgeoisie was already revealed when in 1882 all duties on cotton imports into India were removed by the Government in response to the demands of the Lancashire manufacturers against the rising Indian industry. Three years later the Indian National Congress was formed.

Finally, the growing impoverishment and desperation of the peasantry, consequent on the cumulative process of British capitalist penetration, were beginning to reach serious proportions by the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially during its last three decades, and to find expression in mass unrest. It has already been noted that, while in the first half of the nineteenth century there were seven famines with an estimated total of 1½ million deaths, in the second half of the nineteenth century there were twenty-four famines with an estimated total of 28½ million deaths, and eighteen of these twenty-four famines fall into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Deccan peasant risings of 1875 were the warning signal of

this growing unrest, and the anxiety of the Government was revealed in the appointment of the Deccan Riots Commission in 1875, which conducted an exhaustive enquiry into the whole agrarian situation and the causes leading to the unrest, and of the Famine Commission in 1878.

Thus by the last quarter of the nineteenth century the conditions were now present, which had not existed in the first three quarters, for the beginning of the Indian national movement.

4. RISE OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885.

The story of its origin has often been used to substantiate the claim of British imperialism to be the foster parent of Indian Nationalism. In fact, however, the story of this origin and the contradiction of its subsequent history, afford a striking demonstration of the strength of the forces of Indian national awakening and of the inevitable growth of the struggle against imperialism.

The National Congress was brought into existence as an organisation through the initiative of an Englishman and under the guidance of direct British governmental policy, on a plan secretly pre-arranged with the Viceroy, as an intended weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.

But its subsequent history and development, moving beyond all the original aims of imperialism, was a testimony to the sweeping advance of the forces of the national movement and to the impossibility of confining these forces within the narrow channels which imperialism would have sought to mark out for them. In fact, the conception of an Indian National Congress had been maturing from the initiative and activity of the Indian bourgeois representatives themselves (from the establishment of the Brahma Samaj in 1828 to the National Conference of 1883 held under the presidency of Ananda Mohan Bose) when the Government intervened to take a hand. The Government did not

found a movement which had no previous existence or basis. The Government stepped in to take charge of a movement which was in any case coming into existence and whose development it foresaw was inevitable.

The formation of the National Congress represented from the point of view of the Government an attempt to defeat, or rather forestall, an impending revolution.

The official founder of the National Congress was an English administrator, A. O. Hume, who had been in Government service until 1882, when he retired and took up the work of the formation of the Congress. Hume in his official capacity had received possession of the voluminous secret police reports which revealed the growth of popular discontent and the spreading of underground conspiratorial organisation. The period of the seventies was a period of heavy famines and distress, and the growing unrest had been demonstrated in the Deccan peasant risings. The disastrous famine of 1877 coincided with the costly durbar, at which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, and with the Second Afghan War. Unrest was met by repression. The freedom of the Press was removed by the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. In the following year the Arms Act left the villagers without even the means of defence against the raids of wild animals. The right of public meeting was cut down. The biographer of Hume, Sir William Wedderburn, writes:

“These ill-starred measures of reaction, combined with Russian methods of police repression, brought India under Lord Lytton within measurable distance of a revolutionary outbreak, and it was only in time that Mr. Hume and his Indian advisers were inspired to intervene.” He further explains: “Mr. Hume became convinced that some definite action was called for to counteract the growing unrest.”

The measures of repression preceded the foundation of the Congress with official blessing. The two processes were not contradictory, but complementary. It was not until the potential revolutionary movement had been struck down that the way was judged open for the formation of a legal movement under docile leadership as the next step to “counteract the growing unrest”. This double or alternating

method of repression and conciliation, of seeking to strike down the stubborn fighters and make an alliance with the "loyalist" moderates, is the familiar dialectic of imperialist statesmanship, destined to be many times repeated in the ensuing period.

What was the nature of the evidence which brought Hume to the conclusion that, as he wrote, "I could not then, and do not now, entertain a shadow of doubt that we were then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution"? The evidence may be usefully given in his own words.

"I was shown seven large volumes... containing a vast number of entries; English abstracts or translations—longer or shorter—of vernacular reports or communications of one kind or another... said at the time to be communications from over thirty thousand different reporters.' Many of the entries reported conversations between men of the lowest classes, 'all going to show that these poor men were pervaded with a sense of the hopelessness of the existing state of affairs, that they were convinced that they would starve and die, and that they wanted to do *something*. They were going to do something, and stand by each other, *and that something meant violence*.' Innumerable entries referred to the secretion of old swords, spears and matchlocks, which would be ready when required. It was not supposed that the immediate result in its initial stages would be a revolt against our Government. 'In the existing state of the lowest half-starving classes, it was considered that the first few crimes would be the signal for hundreds of similar ones, and for a general development of lawlessness, paralysing the authorities and the respectable classes. It was considered also... that very soon after the bands obtained formidable proportions, a certain small number of the educated classes, at the time desperately, perhaps unreasonably, bitter against the Government would join the movement, assume here and there the lead, give the outbreak cohesion, and direct it as a national revolt'."

Hume established contact with the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, an experienced politician, in the early part of 1885, to place the situation before him. It was at this interview, in the headquarters of imperialism at Simla, that the plan of the Indian National Congress was hatched. The first President of the Congress, W. C. Bonnerjee, has published his account of this origin:

"It will probably be news to many that the Indian National

Congress, as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India. Mr. A. O. Hume, C.B., had in 1884 conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussion. . . . Lord Dufferin had made it a condition with Mr. Hume that his name should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country."

Similarly the more recent historians (Andrews and Mookerjee) of the early national movement have described the episode:

"The years just before the Congress were among the most dangerous since 1857. It was Hume, among English officials, who saw the impending disaster and tried to prevent it. . . . The time was fully ripe for this all-India movement. In place of an agrarian revolt, which would have had the sympathy and support of the educated classes, it gave the rising classes a national platform from which to create a New India. It was all to the good in the long run that a revolutionary situation based on violence was not allowed to be created once again."

It will be seen that the official role of the National Congress as the organ of opposition to a "revolutionary situation based on violence" by no means dates from Gandhi; this principle was implanted in it by imperialism at the outset as its intended official role.

Hume's own conception of the role of the Congress may here be quoted:

"A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised."

Lord Dufferin's aim to build up through the Congress a basis of support for the Government, by separating the "loyalist" elements from the "extremists", was very clearly set out in his speech on the demands of the educated classes in 1886, the year following the foundation of the Congress:

"Amongst the natives I have met there are a considerable number who are both able and sensible, and upon whose loyal co-

operation one could undoubtedly rely. The fact of their supporting the government would popularise many of its acts which now have the appearance of being driven through the legislature by force; and if they in their turn had a native party behind them, the government of India would cease to stand up, as it does now, an isolated rock in the middle of a tempestuous sea, around whose base the breakers dash themselves simultaneously from all the four quarters of the heavens."

The calculation is here perfectly clear, and in the immediate outcome it looked at first as if it would be fully successful. The First Congress was most dutiful to imperialism; its nine resolutions cover only detail administrative reform suggestions; the nearest approach to a national democratic demand was the request for the admission of some elected members to the Legislative Councils. Mr. Hume's successful conduct of his flock was demonstrated in the closing episode recorded in the official report of the First Congress:

"Mr. Hume, after acknowledging the honour done him, said that, as the giving of cheers had been entrusted to him, he must be allowed to propose—on the principle of better late than never—giving of cheers, and that not only three, but three times three, and if possible thrice that, for one the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to loose, one to whom they were all dear, to whom they were all as children—need he say, Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress.

"The rest of the speaker's remarks was lost in the storm of applause that instantly burst out, and the asked-for cheers were given over and over."

It is a far cry from this servile beginning (the lowest depths, however, it will be noted, of servility came, not from the Orientals, but from the Englishman) to the time when the Congress was a proscribed organisation, hunted down by the Government, and enlisting the devotion of millions of Indian fighters for freedom.

This twofold character of the National Congress in its origin is very important for all its subsequent history. This double strand in its role and being ran right through its history so long as it functioned as the organ of the national movement: on the one hand, the strand of co-operation with imperialism against the "menace" of the mass movement; on

the other hand, the strand of leadership of the masses in the national struggle. This twofold character, which can be traced through all the contradictions of its leadership, from Gokhale in the old stage to his disciple, Gandhi, in the new (the differences between these two deriving mainly from the difference of stage of the mass movement and consequent necessity of different tactics), was the reflection of the twofold or vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, at once in conflict with the British bourgeoisie and desiring to lead the Indian people, yet fearing that "too rapid" advance may end in destroying its privileges along with those of the imperialists.

This contradiction reached its culmination in the period of revolutionary upsurge after the second world war, when the leadership of the National Congress reached what they declared to be a final settlement with imperialism by the acceptance of the Mountbatten Award for the partition of India and the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan. From this point the National Congress became the governmental party of the new Dominion Government of the Indian Union, subsequently Republic of India under the Crown as the "Head of the Commonwealth". The Indian freedom struggle developed along new paths. But a long period of successive struggle and retreat, of advancing challenge and renewed compromise, under the leadership and through the forms of the National Congress as the main organ of the broad national movement, preceded this outcome, and constituted the governing road of development of the Indian national movement during these decades.

Chapter XI

THREE STAGES OF NATIONAL STRUGGLE

THE HISTORICAL development of the Indian national movement is marked by three great waves of struggle, each at a successively higher level, and each leaving its permanent marks on the movement and opening the way to a new phase. In its earliest phase the Indian national movement, as we have seen, reflected only the big bourgeoisie—the progressive elements among the landowners, the new industrial bourgeoisie and the well-to-do intellectual elements. The first great wave of unrest which disturbed these placid waters, in the period preceding 1914, reflected the discontent of the urban petty bourgeoisie, but did not yet reach the masses. The role of the masses in the national movement, alike of the peasantry and of the new force of the industrial working class, emerged only after the war of 1914-18. Two great waves of mass struggle developed, the first in the years immediately succeeding the war, the second in the years succeeding the world economic crisis. All these were the prelude to the decisive tests which opened with the second world war and its sequel.

1. THE FIRST GREAT WAVE OF STRUGGLE, 1905-1910

For twenty years the National Congress developed along the path laid down by its founders. During these twenty years no basic claim for self-government in any form—that is, no basic national claim—was formulated in its resolutions, but only the demand for a greater degree of Indian repre-

sentation within the British system of rule. The outlook of the early moderate leaders may be found expressed in the statement of one of the ablest—and most moderate—of their number, Romesh Chandra Dutt, President of the Congress in 1890, who formulated the demand of “the people of India” in the following terms in 1901:

“The people of India are not fond of sudden changes and revolutions. . . . They desire to strengthen the present Government, and to bring it more in touch with the people. They desire to see some Indian members in the Secretary of State’s Council, and in the Viceroy’s Executive Council, representing Indian agriculture and industries. They wish to see Indian members in an Executive Council for each Province. They wish to represent the interests of the Indian people in the discussion of every important administrative question. They seek that the administration of the Empire and its great provinces should be conducted with the co-operation of the people.”

The moderation of these demands correctly reflected the position of the early Indian bourgeoisie. The Congress of those days was exclusively representative of the upper bourgeoisie, and especially of its ideological representatives, the educated middle class. “The four thousand gentlemen sitting round me,” wrote an English Member of Parliament, W. S. Caine, who attended the 1889 Congress, “are picked men of the legal, medical, engineering and literary professions all over India.” The early moderate leaders were well aware that they did not represent the masses, and that, while they might endeavour to speak as interpreters in the name of the people, they could not claim to speak as its voice. “The Congress,” declared Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the principal guiding leader of the Congress in its earlier years, “was indeed not the voice of the masses, but it was the duty of their educated compatriots to interpret their grievances and offer suggestions for their redress.”

The early Indian bourgeoisie of that time understood very well that they were in no position to challenge British rule. On the contrary, they looked to British rule as their ally. For them the main enemy was not British rule as such, but the backwardness of the people, the lack of modern development of the country, the strength of the forces of obscurantism and ignorance, and the administrative short-

comings of the "bureaucratic" system responsible for the situation. In their fight against these evils they looked hopefully for the co-operation of the British rulers. "The educated classes," declared Ananda Mohan Bose, President of the 1898 Congress, "are the friends and not the foes of England—her natural and necessary allies in the great work that lies before her." "I have no fears," affirmed Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in 1899, "but that British statesmen will ultimately respond to the Call." Dadabhai Naoroji, the Father of the Congress, when presiding over the Second Congress, appealed to the British rulers "not to drive this force (the educated Indians) into opposition instead of drawing it to your side." Surendra Nath Banerjea, the "silver-tongued orator" of the older Congress leaders, proclaimed the ideal to "work with unwavering loyalty to the British connection—for the object was not the supersession of British rule in India, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalising of its spirit, the ennobling of its character and placing it on the unchangeable foundation of a nation's affections."

It should not be assumed from the tone of these declarations that these early Congress leaders were reactionary anti-national servants of alien rule. On the contrary, they represented at that time the most progressive politically organised force in Indian society. So long as the nascent working class was still completely without expression or organisation, and the peasants were still an unorganised mass, the Indian bourgeoisie was the most progressive organised force in India. They carried on work for social reform, for enlightenment, for education and modernisation against all that was backward and obscurantist in India. They pressed the demand for industrial and technical economic development.

But their faith and hope in British imperialism as their ally in this work were doomed to disappointment. British imperialism understood very clearly—more clearly than they did themselves—the significance of this progressive role, and the inevitable conflict that it would mean with the interests of imperialist rule and exploitation. Therefore

from an early period the original patronage of the Congress turned to suspicion and hostility. Within three years of its foundation, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, its original inspirer, was speaking with contempt for the "microscopic minority" represented by the Congress. In 1887, a delegate who attended the Congress in defiance of his district officer was called on to give a security of Rs. 20,000 to keep the peace. In 1890 the Government issued a circular forbidding Government officials to attend the Congress even as visitors. In 1900 Lord Curzon wrote in a letter to the Secretary of State: "The Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise."

Frustration of their hopes in British imperialism was consequently the fate of the older school of Indian Nationalism. In his last years, Gokhale, the veteran leader of the Moderates, bitterly complained that "the bureaucracy was growing frankly selfish and openly hostile to National aspirations. It was not so in the past."

As the failure of the old policy became clear, it was inevitable that a new school should arise, criticising the "Old Guard", and demanding a more positive programme and policy which should represent a definite breaking of the ties with imperialism. This new school, associated especially with the leadership of B. G. Tilak, came to the front already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, but was not able to play a decisive rôle until the situation became ripe in the following decade. Alongside Tilak, whose base was in Maharashtra in the Bombay Presidency, where the agrarian revolt had been most marked in the seventies, the best known of the newer leaders were Bepin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose in Bengal, and Lajpat Rai in the Punjab.

The new school termed themselves "Nationalists", also "Integral Nationalists" and "Orthodox Nationalists", and came to be widely known as "Extremists" in opposition to the "Moderates". It would be a mistake to regard these terms as the expression of a simple difference between a radical left wing and a conservative-minded right wing. In

fact the situation bore a contradictory character, which reflected the still immature development of the national movement.

The starting-point of the opposition leadership, as against the Old Guard, was undoubtedly the desire to make a break with compromising policies of conciliation with imperialism, and to enter on a path of decisive and uncompromising struggle against imperialism. To this extent they represented a force of advance. But this desire was still a subjective desire on their part. There was no basis yet of the mass movement to make such a decisive struggle possible. Their appeal reached to the discontented lower middle class and to the hearts of the literate youth, especially to the poorer students and the new growing army of unemployed or poorly paid intellectuals, whose situation was becoming increasingly desperate in the opening years of the twentieth century, as it became manifest that there was no avenue of advance or fulfilment for them under imperialist conditions, and who were little inclined to be patient with the slow and comfortable doctrines of gradual advance preached by the solidly established upper-class leaders. Such elements can provide in periods of social transition and the impending break-up of an old order, very considerable dynamic forces of unrest and energy for struggle; but they are by the nature of their situation incapable of realising their aspirations, until they find their role in relationship to the mass movement, and can only seek satisfaction either in exalted verbal protest, or in anarchist individualist and ultimately politically ineffective forms of action.

Cut off from any scientific social and political theory, the new leaders sought to find the secret of the compromising ineffectiveness of the Moderate leaders in their "de-nationalised" "Westernising" tendencies, and concentrated their attack against these tendencies. Thus they fixed their attack against precisely those tendencies in respect of which the older Moderate leaders were progressive. Against these, they sought to build the national movement on the basis of the still massive forces of social conservatism in India, on

the basis of Orthodox Hinduism and the affirmation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu or "Aryan" civilisation to modern "Western" civilisation. They sought to build the national movement, the most advanced movement in India, on the basis of the most antiquated religion and religious superstitions. From this era dates the disastrous combination of political radicalism and social reaction in India, which has had such a maleficent influence on the fortunes of the national movement, and whose traces are still far from overcome.

The alliance of radical nationalism with the most reactionary forces of Orthodox Hinduism was signalled by Tilak when he opened his campaign in 1890 with a fight against the Age of Consent Bill, which sought to raise the age of consummation of marriage for girls from ten years to twelve years. This Bill was supported by Ranade and the older progressive national leaders. Tilak led a ferocious campaign against it, voicing the demands of the most reactionary forces of Hinduism. Later, he organised the "Cow Protection Society". National festivals were organised, not only in honour of Shivaji, the national hero of the Mahrattas, but equally in a religious form in honour of the elephant-headed god, Ganesh. In Bengal the cult of Kali, the goddess of destruction, was actively developed by some of the more ardent groups.

It is necessary to recognise the national patriotic purpose which underlay these religious forms. Under conditions of severe imperialist repression of all direct political agitation and organisation, before the national movement had reached any mass basis, the use of such forms was understandable. It was not a question, however, only of the formal cover, or of the historical form of growth, of a political movement. The insistence on orthodox religion as the heart of the national movement, inevitably retarded and weakened the real advance of the national movement and of political consciousness, while the emphasis on Hinduism must bear a share of the responsibility for the alienation of wide sections of Moslem opinion from the national movement.

These conceptions are so important for the subsequent

development of Indian Nationalism—for they reappear during the modern period in a more refined form in Gandhism—that it is worth while to analyse them with some care. For these conceptions are the expression of the belief that the path to Indian development and freedom lies, not along the line of social development, of overcoming old weaknesses and divisions and harmful traditions, but along the line of social retrogression, of stimulating and reviving the outlooks and relics of the past.

The Orthodox Nationalists could not see with critical understanding the workings of capitalism alike on its positive side and its negative side. In consequence they could not see that the so-called “British” culture they were denouncing was in reality the culture of capitalism; that the national movement, in so far as it was led by the bourgeoisie, could not yet transcend that basis; and that the only final progressive opposition to that culture could come from the working class. They could not, on the basis of experience then in India, have any conception of the rising working-class outlook and culture which alone can be the alternative and successor to bourgeois culture, going beyond it, taking what is of value and leaving the rest.

Therefore, against the overwhelming flood of British bourgeois culture and ideology, which they saw completely conquering the Indian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, they sought to hold forward the feeble shield of a reconstructed Hindu ideology which had no longer any natural basis for its existence in actual life conditions. All social and scientific development was condemned by the more extreme devotees of this gospel as the conquerors’ culture: every form of antiquated tradition, even abuse, privilege and obscurantism, was treated with respect and veneration.

So it came about that these militant national leaders of the people, devoted and fearless as many of them were, appeared in practice as the champions of social reaction and superstition.

The Orthodox Nationalists believed that in this way they were building up a mass national movement of opposi-

tion to imperialism. Only so can be explained that a man of the intellectual calibre of Tilak should have lent himself to such agitations as his campaign in defence of child-marriage or his Cow Protection Society.

But this policy was, in fact, not only vicious in principle, but mistaken in tactics. It not only inevitably weakened the advance of the political consciousness and clarity of the movement, (nearly all the best-known leaders of Extremism moved later in varying degree to co-operation with imperialism, or to speculative abstraction from politics, and found themselves out of sympathy with the subsequent advance of the movement), but also divided the advancing forces. The programme of social reaction alienated many who would have been ready to support a more militant national policy, but were too clear-sighted to accept the reactionary and metaphysical rubbish which was being offered as a substitute for a left-wing programme.

In the practical struggle the Orthodox Nationalists, while building on this religious basis for their argument, could derive no weapon or plan of action therefrom save the universal weapon of desperate, but impotent, petty-bourgeois elements divorced from any mass movement—individual terrorism. Even here the fruits of the very vague general religious incitation and exaltation, and formation of secret societies, were very meagre, and played no part of importance until later the ripening of the situation for a new stage of struggle brought also this aspect to the front as an accompaniment.

When by 1905 the situation was ripe for a new stage of struggle, the main weapon which was found was one which was remote from all the previous religious and metaphysical speculations and bore an essentially modern and economic character—the weapon of the economic boycott. In the choice of this weapon, which was the only possible effective weapon at the time, was expressed the bourgeois character of the movement; and indeed support of this weapon was taken up by the Moderate leaders.

The forces which gathered for a new stage of struggle in 1905 reflected the wave of world advance at that time

following the defeat of Tsarism by Japan (the first victory in modern times of an Asiatic over a European Power having its own profound repercussions in India) and the initial victories of the First Russian Revolution. The immediate issue which precipitated the struggle in India was the Partition of Bengal, then the centre of political advance in India, a plan devised by Lord Curzon and carried out under his successor. Against this Partition, which aroused universal indignation, the boycott of foreign goods was proclaimed on August 7, 1905.

The rapid swing forward of the national movement followed. The 1905 session of the Congress still gave only conditional support to the boycott. But the Calcutta Congress in 1906, strongly under the influence of the Extremists, adopted a complete new programme, sponsored by the old Father of the Congress himself, Dadabhai Naoroji. This programme proclaimed for the first time the aim of Swaraj or Self-Government, defined as colonial self-government within the Empire ("the system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies"), support of the boycott movement, support of "Swadeshi" or the promotion of indigenous industries, and National Education. Swaraj, Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education became now the four cardinal points of the Congress programme.

A year later, in 1907, the Surat Congress saw a split between the Moderates, led by Gokhale, and the Extremists, led by Tilak. Thereafter the two sections developed in separation until the reunion in 1916; in 1918 the Moderates finally left the Congress to form the Liberal Federation.

The hand of Government repression rapidly followed the new awakening of the movement. In 1907 was passed the Seditious Meetings Act, and a new and drastic Press Act followed in 1910 (the previous Press Act of 1878 had been repealed under the liberal administration of Lord Ripon in 1882). On the basis of a regulation of 1818 the method of deportation without trial was brought into play against the Extremist leaders. All this took place under the "Liberal" Lord Morley as Secretary for India. In 1908 Tilak, the man whom the Government most feared was sentenced to six

years' imprisonment for an article published in his newspaper, and was held in prison in Mandalay until the month before the outbreak of the war of 1914. The arrest of Tilak led to a general strike of the Bombay textile workers—the first political action of the Indian proletariat, and hailed by Lenin at the time as a portent of the future. Most of the other prominent leaders were either sentenced or deported, or passed into exile to escape sentence. Between 1906 and 1909 there were 550 political cases before the courts in Bengal alone. Police action was carried out with great rigour; meetings were broken up; agrarian riots were ruthlessly suppressed in the Punjab; school-children were arrested for singing national songs.

As in the previous period, repression was followed and accompanied by concessions to "rally the Moderates". The very limited Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909 gave a grudging extension to the system of representation initiated in the Indian Councils Act of 1892, by permitting a minority of indirectly elected members in the Central Legislative Council, and a majority of indirectly elected members in the Provincial Councils; the Councils were advisory bodies and had no effective powers. The Moderate leaders, now in sole control of the Congress, seized the occasion of these reforms to proclaim their unity with the Government; the new Viceroy, arriving in 1910, was received with a loyal Address; and when in 1911 the revision of the Partition of Bengal was announced in a Royal Proclamation, the spokesman of the Congress declared that "every heart is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the British Throne, overflowing with revived confidence in and gratitude towards British statesmanship."

The revision of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 represented a partial victory of the boycott movement. The wave of struggle which had developed during the years 1906-11 did not maintain its strength during the immediately succeeding years; but the permanent advance which had been achieved in the stature of the national movement was never lost. Despite all the limitations of the Extremist leaders of those pre-1914 years, they had achieved a great and lasting

work: the Indian claim to freedom had for the first time during those years been brought to the forefront of world political questions; and the seed of the aim of complete national liberation, and of determined struggle to achieve it, had been implanted in the political movement, and was destined in the subsequent years to strike root in the masses of the people.

2. THE SECOND GREAT WAVE OF STRUGGLE (1919-1922)

It was the shock of the first world war, with its lasting blow to the whole structure of imperialism, and the opening of the world revolutionary wave that followed in 1917 and after, which released the first mass movement of revolt in India.

Just as the awakening of 1905 reflected the world movement, even more so was this the case with the great mass movement which shook the foundations of British rule in India in the years succeeding 1917. This unity of the development of the struggle in India with the world struggle is of especial importance to realise, in view of the subjective and isolationist tendencies frequently prevalent in some of the conventional schools of Indian political thought to interpret profound movements simply in terms of the personalities or particular groups which in varying degree sought or failed to give them leadership. There is no doubt that the transformation of the political movement in India from relatively restricted sections of the population to reach out to the masses of the people took place in the years succeeding 1917. But this transformation was not limited to India.

The war of 1914, following the lesson of the defeat of Russian Tsarism by Japan a decade earlier, completed the shattering of the myth of the invincibility of Western imperialism in the eyes of the Asiatic peoples. The spectacle of the suicidal conflict of the imperialist Powers aroused hopes in the breasts of millions of the subject peoples that the hour of collapse of the existing Empires was at hand.

Imperialism took firm measures from the outset to hold the situation in hand, by the adoption of special legislation and powers, notably the Defence of India Act, and by the imprisonment or internment of the most irreconcilable fighters or members of the revolutionary groups. In this task it was assisted in the earlier period of the war by the willing co-operation of the upper sections of the political movement. The Congress, under control of the Moderate leaders, proclaimed its loyalty and support of the war in resolutions adopted at each of its four annual sessions during the war, and even at the Delhi session in 1918 at the close of the war passed a resolution of loyalty to the King and congratulations on "the successful termination of the war." In return, the Congress was treated with official favour; the 1914 Congress was attended by Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras; the 1915 Congress by Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, and the 1916 Congress by Sir James Meston, Governor of the United Provinces, the Government representatives being received with ovations. Representative Indian leaders in London at the time of the outbreak of war hastened to offer their support to the Government. The Congress deputation then in London, including Lajpat Rai, Jinnah, Sinha and others, sent a letter to the Secretary of State proclaiming their conviction that "the Princes and people of India will readily and willingly co-operate to the best of their ability and afford opportunities of securing that end by placing the resources of their country at His Majesty's disposal" for "a speedy victory for the Empire."

Gandhi, newly arrived in London from South Africa, in a reception at the Hotel Cecil, urged his young Indian friends to "think imperially" and "do their duty"; and in a letter from himself and other signatories to the Secretary of State offered his services. His subsequent work in raising a volunteer ambulance corps of Indians in London is well known. On returning to India, he repeated his offer of service to the Viceroy, proposing to raise a corps of stretcher-bearers for service to the Mesopotamian campaign. He responded to the Delhi War Conference called by the Viceroy in 1917, and as late as July 1918, he was conducting

a recruiting campaign in which he urged the Gujarati peasants to win Swaraj by joining the army.

These demonstrations of "loyalty" by the Moderate leaders were regarded by British official opinion as an expression of gratitude and enthusiasm for the blessings of British rule. In fact, however, the calculation of these leaders, as they themselves subsequently explained, had been by these services to imperialism at war to open the door most rapidly to Indian self-government. Thus Gandhi declared, in his speech at his trial in 1922:

"In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality for my countrymen."

They were later to express their disillusionment.

The docility of the upper political leadership did not prevent the growth of mass unrest from the conditions of the war. The very heavy burdens of crippling financial contributions exacted from the poverty-stricken people of India for the service of the war, the rising prices and the reckless profiteering created conditions of mass misery and impoverishment, which were reflected in the unparalleled toll of the influenza epidemic at the end of the war, killing 14 millions. The growth of unrest was reflected in the Ghadr movement in the Punjab, and in mutinies in the army, which were suppressed with ruthless executions and sentences. In 1917 the Rowlatt Committee was appointed, under a Judge of the King's Bench, to enquire into "the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movements in India" and recommend new repressive legislation.

The growing unrest began to find a reflection in the political movement, in which new stirrings appeared from 1916 onwards. In 1916 Tilak founded the Home Rule for India League. His campaign was joined by the English theosophist, Mrs. Besant, who sought to guide the national movement in channels of "loyalty" to the Empire and was later to take an active part in the fight against non-co-operation. Reunion between the Extremists and Moderates was

achieved at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. Even more important, the plans for alliance between the Congress and the Moslem League (founded in 1905), which had been originally prepared at the Karachi Congress in 1913, reached fruition in 1916. One of the reasons for this closer understanding was that Moslem feeling had been strongly aroused by the war against Turkey, and the Moslem League Conference of 1915 had already revealed this discontent. In 1916 the Lucknow Pact of the two bodies reached agreement on a common scheme for reforms in the direction of partial self-government within the Empire (elected majorities in the Councils, extended powers of the Councils, half the Viceroy's Executive to be Indians), which became known as the Congress-League scheme. At the same time the aim was proclaimed of India becoming "an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions."

This was the position when the rapid transformation of the world situation in 1917, following the Russian Revolution, affected the whole tempo of events and found its speedy reflection in the relations of Britain and India. The issue of national self-determination was brought to the forefront by the Russian Revolution in a manner highly embarrassing to the imperialist Powers on both sides. Within five months of the fall of Tsarism the British Government hastened to issue a declaration (known as the Montagu declaration, from the name of the Secretary of State at the time, but in fact planned and prepared by Curzon and Austen Chamberlain), which proclaimed the aims of British rule in India to be "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire", and promising "substantial steps in this direction as soon as possible." The hasty character of this declaration was shown by the fact that only after it was made was the work begun to endeavour to find out what it was intended to do; the consequent Montagu-Chelmsford Report was only ready a year later; the Reforms (along the lines of so-called "Dyarchy" in the Provinces, or divisions of portfolios between British and

Indian Ministers) were not enacted until the end of 1919 and only came into operation in 1920. By that time the whole situation in India had changed.

The Reforms were partially successful, as with the Morley-Minto scheme a decade earlier, in creating a division in the upper-class national camp; but the support of the Moderates thus secured was of far less weight in the political situation at this more advanced stage of development. Mrs. Besant, presiding over the Calcutta Congress at the end of 1917, was able to secure the adoption of a resolution "that the Congress, speaking on behalf of the united people of India, begs respectfully to convey to His Majesty the King-Emperor their deep loyalty and profound attachment to the Throne, their unswerving allegiance to the British connection and their firm resolve to stand by the British Empire at all hazards and at all costs". But when the Report came out in the summer of 1918, a special session of the Congress at Bombay condemned the proposals as "disappointing and unsatisfactory". It was after this Special Congress that the principal Moderate leaders, other than Gandhi, left the Congress, later to found the Indian Liberal Federation, representing those bourgeois elements which wished to co-operate with imperialism. As late as December, 1919, the Congress still went on record for acceptance of the Reforms; but this was only after a sharp division in which Gandhi, supported by Mrs. Besant, led the fight for co-operation, while the opposition was led by C. R. Das. The final resolution reiterated the criticism of the Reforms, and the demand for "early steps to establish full Responsible Government in accordance with the principle of self-determination", but added, on the basis of an amendment moved by Gandhi, that "pending such introduction, this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government".

Gandhi's view, as late as the end of 1919, in favour of co-operation and working the Reforms was expressed in an article in his weekly journal at the end of the year:

"The Reforms Act coupled with the Proclamation is an earnest

of the intention of the British people to do justice to India and it ought to remove suspicion on that score.... Our duty therefore is not to subject the Reforms to carping criticism, but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success."

This declaration is important, since it was made after the Rowlatt Acts, after Amritsar and martial law in the Punjab—that is, after those issues which are subsequently declared to be the cause of non-co-operation—and thus shows that it was different calculations which led to the decision in the following year to inaugurate the non-co-operation movement.

For in fact, despite the still-continuing co-operation of the Congress, the whole situation in India had changed in 1919, and the basis for co-operation was disappearing from under the feet of the Congress. The year 1919 saw a wave of mass unrest spread over India. Already the closing months of 1918 and the first months of 1919 saw the opening of a strike movement on a scale never before known in India. In December, 1918, the Bombay mill strike began, which by January, 1919, extended to 125,000 workers. The Rowlatt Acts, introduced in the beginning of 1919 and enacted in March, with the purpose to continue after the lapse of war-time legislation the extraordinary repressive powers of the Government, for dispensing with ordinary court procedure, and for imprisonment without trial, aroused widespread indignation as demonstrating the iron hand of imperialism beneath the velvet glove of Reform. Gandhi, utilising his South African experience, sought to organise a passive resistance movement against the Rowlatt Bills, and formed a Satyagraha League for this purpose in February. A hartal, or general day of suspension of business, was called for April 6. The response of the masses startled and overwhelmed the initiators of the movement. Through March and April a mighty wave of mass demonstrations, strikes, unrest, in some cases rioting, and courageous resistance to violent repression in the face of heavy casualties, spread over many parts of India. The official Government Report for the year speaks with alarmed amazement of the new-found unity of the people and the

breakdown of all official conceptions of Hindu-Moslem antagonism:

"One noticeable feature of the general excitement was the unprecedented fraternisation between the Hindus and the Moslems. Their union, between the leaders, had now for long been a fixed plan of the nationalist platform. In this time of public excitement even the lower classes agreed for once to forget the differences. Extraordinary scenes of fraternisation occurred."

Extraordinary measures of repression followed. It was at this time that the atrocity of Amritsar occurred, when General Dyer fired 1,600 rounds of ammunition into an unarmed crowd in an enclosed place without means of exit, killing (according to the official figures) 379 and leaving 1,200 wounded without means of attention, the object being, according to his subsequent statement, to create "a moral effect from a military point of view, not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab"—i.e., to terrorise the population. It is a measure of the thick pall of repression which lay over India that any detailed news of this massacre only crept through even to the leaders of the Congress Committee four months later, and that for nearly eight months all news of it was officially suppressed and withheld from parliament and the British public. For diplomatic reasons, in face of agitation and a Congress enquiry, a committee had to be set up by the Government to enquire into and condemn this outrage; but General Dyer received the plaudits (and a purse of £ 20,000) from the imperialists for his brave stand, and his action was officially approved by the House of Lords. Martial law was proclaimed in the Punjab; and the record of the wholesale shootings, hangings, bombing from the air, and extraordinary sentences perpetrated by the tribunals during this reign of terror, is still only available in fragmentary form from the subsequent enquiries.

"The movement," in the view of British official opinion, "assumed the undeniable character of an organised revolt against the British raj." Gandhi took alarm at the situation which was developing. In view of sporadic cases of violence of the masses against their rulers which had appeared in

Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and elsewhere, he declared that he had committed "a blunder of Himalayan dimensions which had enabled ill-disposed persons, not true passive resisters at all, to perpetrate disorders." Accordingly, he suspended passive resistance in the middle of April, within a week of the hartal, and thus called off the movement at the moment it was beginning to reach its height, on the grounds, as he subsequently explained in a letter to the Press on July 21, that "a civil resister never seeks to embarrass the Government." This initial experience of "Satyagraha" (literally, "persistence in truth," used for the method of passive resistance) was to be subsequently repeated on an extended scale.

In December, 1919, as has been seen, the Congress was deciding for working the Reforms, and Gandhi was urging that the task of the national movement was "to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success." But the situation left no room for such dreams to be realised. The tide of rising mass unrest, which had swept forward in 1919, was still advancing in 1920 and 1921, and was to be further intensified by the economic crisis which began to develop in the latter part of 1920. The first six months of 1920 saw the greatest height of the strike movement, with no less than 200 strikes involving one and a half million workers. Such a rising tide made a mockery of the sage counsels of "settling down quietly." The President of the Congress, Lajpat Rai, declared at its special session in September, 1920:

"It is no use blinking the fact that we are passing through a revolutionary period. . . . We are by instinct and tradition averse to revolutions. Traditionally, we are a slow-going people; but when we decide to move, we do move quickly and by rapid strides. No living organism can altogether escape revolutions in the course of its existence."

The analysis of the President of the Congress was in its essential point correct. The declaration of the spokesman of the Congress was in fact a declaration that in the midst of "a revolutionary period" a leadership "by instinct and tradition averse to revolution" was faced with the problem

of leading the rising movement. Herein lay the contradiction of the post-war situation in India, as indeed in many countries at that time wherein the political movement had not yet reached a maturity corresponding to the opportunities unloosed by the war.

It was in this situation that in 1920 Gandhi and the main body of the Congress leadership (now deserted by the former Moderates) executed a decisive change of front, threw over co-operation with the Reforms, determined to take the leadership of the rising mass movement and for this purpose evolved the plan of "non-violent non-co-operation." Henceforward the mass struggle was to be led by the Congress; but the price of the leadership was to be that the struggle must be "non-violent".

The new plan of non-violent non-co-operation was adopted at the Calcutta Special Congress in September, 1920. It was carried, not without opposition, by the alliance of Gandhi and Motilal Nehru with the militant Moslem leaders, the Ali brothers, at the head of the then powerful Khilafat agitation (in form the protest against the injustices of the Treaty of Sevres to Turkey, the leading Moslem Power, but in practice the rallying point of Moslem mass unrest). The resolution proclaimed the policy of "progressive non-violent non-co-operation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swaraj is established." The policy envisaged successive stages, beginning with the renunciation of titles bestowed by the Government, and the triple boycott (boycott of the legislatures, lawcourts and educational institutions), together with "reviving hand-spinning in every house and hand-weaving", and leading up at some future date to the final stage of non-payment of taxes. It will be seen that the immediate measures were measures of boycott to be adopted by the middle-class elements, officials, lawyers and students, with the only role for the masses the constructive task of "hand-spinning and hand-weaving"; the active participation of the masses, through non-payment of taxes (which inevitably meant a No-Rent campaign), was reserved for later.

The boycott of the elections to the new legislatures,

which took place in November, was markedly successful, two-thirds of the electors abstaining. The boycott of educational institutions had a considerable measure of success, masses of students sweeping with enthusiasm into the non-co-operation movement. The lawyers' boycott was less successful, except for a few outstanding examples, such as those of Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das.

At the annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December, 1920, the new programme was finally adopted with practical unanimity. The Creed of the Congress was changed from the previous proclamation of the aim of colonial self-government within the Empire, to be attained by constitutional means, to the new aim of "the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means". The organisation of the Congress was carried forward from its previous loose character to the machinery of a modern party, with its units reaching down to the villages and localities, and with a standing Executive ("Working Committee") of fifteen.

The new programme and policy inaugurated by Gandhi marked a giant's advance for the National Congress. The Congress now stood out as a political party leading the masses in struggle against the Government for the realisation of national freedom. From this point the National Congress won its position (a position at which the militant nationalists of the earlier years would have rubbed their eyes) as the central focus of the national movement.

But the new programme and policy contained also another element, an element alien to the mass struggle, an element of petty-bourgeois moralising speculation and reformist pacifism, which found its chosen expression in the innocent-seeming term "non-violent". That term was intended by Gandhi to represent a whole religious-philosophical conception, preached by him with eloquence and devotion, akin in certain respects to older schools of Indian speculative thought, but more closely related to and deriving from late Western schools of thought associated with Tolstoy, Thoreau and Emerson, which had had their vogue and influence during Gandhi's earlier years in the West and in the formation of his thought. That same term

was accepted by many of Gandhi's associates, who were far from sharing his philosophical conception, as an apparently common-sense rule of expediency for at any rate the earlier stages of struggle of an unarmed people against a powerfully armed ruling enemy. *But in fact, as the subsequent experience of events and the ever-developing interpretation of that term were to demonstrate, that seemingly innocent humanitarian or expedient term contained concealed within it, not only the refusal of the final struggle, but the thwarting also of the immediate struggle by the attempt to conciliate the interests of the masses with the big bourgeois and landlord interests which were inevitably opposed to any decisive mass struggle.* Herein lay the contradiction which was to lead to the collapse of the movement, despite great achievements, both in this first trial and in the extended trial a decade later, and the failure to win that speedy victory of Swaraj which was freely promised as the certain and rapid outcome of the new policy.

A great sweep forward of the mass movement followed the adoption by the Congress of the new militant programme of struggle against the Government for the speedy realisation of Swaraj. Gandhi freely declared as a firm and certain prophecy (which, despite its naive character, was confidently believed by his followers in the flush of enthusiasm of those days) the rash promise that Swaraj would be achieved within twelve months, that is—for the date was definite—by December 31, 1921. He even went so far as to declare, at a conference in September, 1921, "that he was so sure of getting Swaraj before the end of the year that he could not conceive of himself as living beyond December 31 without having won Swaraj." However, he had still many years of political activity before him, in which he continued the twofold aspects of his role to the last.

Gandhi's plan of campaign was less clear than the date of victory. The official "History of the Indian National Congress" writes:

"Mass civil disobedience was the thing that was luring the people. What was it, what would it be? Gandhi himself never defined it, never elaborated it, never visualised it even to himself."

Subhas Bose relates his disheartenment when, as an eager young disciple in his first interview with the Mahatma in those fateful days of 1921, he sought to obtain "a clear understanding of the details—the successive stages—of his plan, leading on step by step to the ultimate seizure of power from the foreign bureaucracy," and failed to get an answer:

"What his real expectation was, I was unable to understand. Either he did not want to give out all his secrets prematurely or he did not have a clear conception of the tactics whereby the hands of the Government could be forced."

Jawaharlal Nehru writes of the "delightful vagueness" of Gandhi:

"It was obvious that to most of our leaders Swaraj meant something much less than independence. Gandhiji was delightfully vague on the subject, and he did not encourage clear thinking about it either."

However, he explains:

"We all felt that he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him we gave him an almost blank cheque, for the time being at least."

The advance of the movement in 1921 was demonstrated, not only in the enthusiastic development of the non-cooperation movement, but in the accompanying rising forms of mass struggle in all parts of the country, as in the Assam-Bengal railway strike, the Midnapore No-Tax campaign, the Moplah rebellion in Malabar in the South, and the militant Akali movement against the Government-defended rich Mahants in the Punjab.

Towards the closing months of 1921 the struggle leapt to new heights. The Government, in deep alarm and anxiety over the whole situation, played their hoped-for Ace of Trumps against Gandhi by bringing in—not merely the Duke of Connaught, as earlier in the year—but the Prince of Wales himself to tour India, not so much in any vain hopes of conciliating the people, as to test out the feeling of the population in relation to this royal image understood by every Anglo-Saxon expert of the mysterious

East to represent the deepest object of veneration and adoration of the Oriental heart. The result exceeded their exceptions—in the reverse direction. The hartal all over India which greeted the Prince of Wales on his arrival on November 17 was the most overwhelming and successful demonstration of popular disaffection which India had yet known. The hostility of the people and the angry repression by the Government led to sanguinary struggles, which Gandhi sought vainly to check and which led him to declare that Swaraj stank in his nostrils.

From this point the National Volunteer movement began to consolidate its ranks. They were still organised within the framework of the Congress or of the Khilafat movement on the basis of "non-violent non-co-operation"; but many wore uniform, drilled and marched in mass formation to organise hartals and the boycott of foreign cloth by picketing and peaceful persuasion.

The full force of Government repression was turned against the National Volunteers. The Governmental Press, such as the *Statesman* and the *Englishman*, howled that the National Volunteers had taken possession of Calcutta and that the Government had abdicated, and demanded immediate action. The Government proclaimed the Volunteers illegal organisations. Arrests spread in thousands. Thousands of students and factory workers replenished the ranks of the Volunteers.

By the end of December all the best-known Congress leaders, except Gandhi, were imprisoned. Twenty thousand political prisoners filled the jails. At the highest point of of the struggle, at the beginning of the following year, 30,000 were in jail. Enthusiasm was at fever heat.

The Government was anxious and perplexed, and began to lose its nerve. If the infection of universal defiance of the Government spread from the towns and began to reach the millions of the peasantry, there was no salvation left for British rule; all their guns and aeroplanes would not avail them in the seething cauldron of rebellion of 300 millions. The Viceroy proceeded, through the intermediary of Pandit Malaviya, to negotiate with the political leaders

in jail. He offered legalisation of the National Volunteers and release of the prisoners in return for the calling off of civil disobedience. The negotiations proved abortive.

In this situation the Ahmedabad Congress was held at the close of the year, with Gandhi now almost alone in the leadership. Failing C. R. Das, the valiant leader of Bengal, who was to have presided and was in prison, Gandhi introduced an English clergyman at the opening of the proceedings to deliver a religious message to the Congress, who took the opportunity to deliver a homily against the burning of foreign cloth.

Amid enthusiasm the Ahmedabad Congress passed resolutions proclaiming "the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the campaign of non-violent non-cooperation with greater vigour... till Swaraj is established and the control of the Government of India passes into the hands of the people", calling on all over eighteen years of age to join the illegal National Volunteers, pledging the aim "to concentrate attention upon Civil Disobedience, whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character", and placing full dictatorial powers for this purpose in the hands of "Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress".

Gandhi was now Dictator of the Congress. The movement was at its highest point. Full powers had been placed in his hands to lead it to victory. The moment had come for the final trial of strength, for the launching of mass civil disobedience. The whole country was looking to Gandhi. What would he do?

In the midst of this ferment of national enthusiasm and hope one man on the Congress side was unhappy and alarmed at the development of events. That man was Gandhi. His movement, the movement that he had envisaged, was not developing at all in the way that he had intended. Something was going wrong. This was not the perfect idyllic philosophic "non-violent" movement he had pictured. He had unchained a monster. Ugly elements were creeping in. Reckless men, especially among his Moslem colleagues, were even beginning to demand the abandon-

ment of the "non-violence" clause. More and more openly, already in those closing weeks of 1921, when the tens of thousands of fighters were going to prison with his name on their lips, he was expressing his alarm and disgust, as in his revealing cry that Swaraj stank in his nostrils.

At Ahmedabad the retreat began. Not yet too openly, in the midst of the tense atmosphere of impending battle and expectant thousands. But the small signs were there. The Ahmedabad Congress was itself the historic moment and the ideal occasion for launching the call to mass civil disobedience throughout the country, the call to the final struggle and victory, for which the people were waiting. The Manifesto of the young Communist Party of India to the Ahmedabad Congress declared:

"If the Congress would lead the revolution, which is shaking India to the very foundation, let it not put faith in mere demonstrations and temporary wild enthusiasm. Let it make the immediate demands of the Trade Unions its own demands; let it make the programme of the Kisan Sabhas (peasant unions) its own programme; and the time will soon come when the Congress will not stop before any obstacle; it will be backed by the irresistible strength of the entire population consciously fighting for their material interests."

The call to open the struggle was not made at Ahmedabad. Instead, careful observers noted that all reference to non-payment of taxes had disappeared from the Ahmedabad resolution. The references to mass civil disobedience were hedged round with ifs and ans: "under proper safeguards", "under instructions to be issued", "when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in methods of non-violence" Then came the episode of the Republican Moslem leader, Hasrat Mohani, who wished to move a resolution defining Swaraj as "complete independence, free from all foreign control". Gandhi struck hard in opposition ("it has grieved me because it shows lack of responsibility"), and secured its rejection.

The Government of India, watching with straining eyes, saw the small signs at Ahmedabad and breathed a sigh of

relief. The Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State in London:

"During Christmas week the Congress held its annual meeting at Ahmedabad. Gandhi had been deeply impressed by the rioting at Bombay, as statements made by him at the time had indicated, and the rioting had brought home to him the dangers of mass civil disobedience; and the resolutions of the Congress gave evidence of this, since they not only rejected the proposals which the extreme wing of the Khilafat party had advanced for abandoning the policy of non-violence, but, whilst the organisation of civil disobedience when fulfilment of the Delhi conditions had taken place was urged in them, omitted any reference to the non-payment of taxes."

What would Gandhi do? The Ahmedabad Congress had dissolved without a plan. All was left in Gandhi's hands. Like the Parisian people in the siege of Paris, who endeavoured to comfort themselves with the belief that "General Trochu has a plan", the Indian people, under the hammer-blows of imperialist repression, looked hopefully to Gandhi to unfold his strategy.

Gandhi's action was peculiar. He waited a month. During this month districts approached him, pleading to begin a No-Tax campaign. One district, Guntur, began without permission. Gandhi sent an immediate note to the Congress officials to see that all taxes were paid by the date due. Then he decided to make a beginning with one tiny district where he had taken special care to ensure perfect "non-violent" conditions—the district of Bardoli, with a population of 87,000—or one four-thousandth part of the Indian people that was awaiting his leadership to act. On February 1 he sent his ultimatum to the Viceroy to declare that, unless the prisoners were released and repressive measures abandoned, "mass civil disobedience" would begin—in Bardoli exclusively. Hardly had he done this when, a few days later, news arrived that at a little village, Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, angry peasants had stormed and burned the village police station resulting in the death of twenty-two policemen. This news of the growth of unrest among the peasantry immediately determined Gandhi that there was no time to be lost. At a hasty meet-

ing of the Working Committee at Bardoli on February 12, the decision was reached, in view of the "inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura", to end, not only mass civil disobedience, but the whole campaign of civil disobedience through volunteer processions, the holding of public meetings under ban and the like, and to substitute a "constructive" programme of spinning, temperance reform and educational activities. The battle was over. The whole campaign was over. The mountain had indeed borne a mouse.

To say that the Bardoli decision created consternation in the Congress camp would be to fall short of any power of language to describe the feelings that were aroused. The nearest approach for English readers would be the effect of the calling off of the general strike in 1926 as some parallel to India's Bardoli in 1922. Subhas Bose wrote:

"To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity. The principal lieutenants of the Mahatma, Deshbandu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai, who were all in prison, shared the popular resentment. I was with the Deshbandhu at the time, and I could see that he was beside himself with anger and sorrow."

Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and others sent from prison long and indignant letters to Gandhi protesting at his decision. Gandhi coldly replied that men in prison were "civilly dead" and had no claim to any say in policy.

The entire movement, which had been organised on the basis of complete discouragement of any spontaneous mass activity and mechanical subordination to the will of one man, was inevitably thrown into helpless confusion and demoralisation by the Bardoli decision. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who endeavours to defend the decision on the grounds that the movement would have otherwise got out of hand and certainly entered into the paths of violence and bloody struggle with the Government, in which the Government would certainly have won, admits that the manner of the decision

"brought about a certain demoralisation. It is possible that this sudden bottling up of a great movement contributed to a tragic de-

velopment in the country. The drift to sporadic and futile violence in the political struggle was stopped, but the suppressed violence had to find a way out, and in the following years this perhaps aggravated the communal trouble."

After the movement had been thus paralysed and demoralised from within, the Government struck with confidence. On March 10 Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Not a ripple followed in the mass movement. Within less than two years Gandhi was released. The crisis was over.

Great controversy has raged over the Bardoli decision and its bitter consequences for the national movement in the six years' subsequent ebb that followed. Defences have been put forward that the real cause and justification of the decision must be sought deeper than in the alleged issue of Chauri Chaura, officially given as the reason for the decision, and that in reality the time had come when it was essential to stop the movement because "our movement, in spite of its apparent power and widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces." It may be asked in what sense the movement was "going to pieces." If by this is meant that the reformist-pacifist control of the movement was weakening, this is undoubtedly correct. But this advance was inherent in the advance of the movement and the condition of its future victory (Nehru's assumption of the inevitability of the Government's victory in the face of an all-India popular revolt would not have been as cheerfully assumed by the Government). If, on the other hand, it might be taken to mean that the effective strength of the mass struggle had in reality passed its highest point and was weakening, such a claim would certainly not be correct, and is, indeed, not intended to be suggested even by the apologists. The clearest evidence of this is afforded by the Government's own grave estimate of the actual forces of the situation three days before the Bardoli collapse. On February 9, 1922, the Viceroy telegraphed to London:

"The lower classes in the towns have been seriously affected by the non-co-operation movement... In certain areas the peasantry have been affected, particularly in the parts of the Assam

Valley, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and Bengal. As regards the Punjab, the Akali agitation... has penetrated to the rural Sikhs. A large proportion of the Mohammedan population throughout the country are embittered and sullen... grave possibilities... The Government of India are prepared for disorder of a more formidable nature than has in the past occurred, and do not seek to minimise in any way the fact that great anxiety is caused by the situation."

This was the Government's picture of the situation three days before the whole campaign was cancelled by the Bardoli decision on February 12.

The discipline of the mass movement and readiness for decisive struggle were shown by the example of Guntur, where, in despite of Gandhi's orders, through a misunderstanding the No-Tax campaign was inaugurated. Not five per cent of the taxes were collected—until Gandhi's countermanding order came. On a word of command from the Congress centre this process could have undoubtedly been unleashed throughout the country, and would have turned into a universal refusal of land revenue and rent. But this process would have meant the sweeping away, not only of imperialism, but also of landlordism.

That these considerations were the decisive considerations behind the Bardoli decision is proved by the text of the decision itself. The text of the resolution adopted by the Working Committee at Bardoli on February 12 is so important as to deserve reproduction, and repays careful study for the light it throws on the forces and contradictions of the Indian national movement. The essential clauses run:

"Clause 1. The Working Committee deploras the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura in having brutally murdered constables and wantonly burned police thana (station).

"Clause 2. In view of the violent outbreaks every time mass civil disobedience is inaugurated, indicating that the country is not non-violent enough, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience... be suspended, and *instructs the local Congress Committees to advise the cultivators to pay land revenue and other taxes due to the Government*, and to suspend every other activity of an offensive character.

"Clause 3. The suspension of mass civil disobedience shall be continued until the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure the

non-repetition of atrocities such as Gorakhpur or of the hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras on the 17th of November and the 13th of January....

"Clause 5. All volunteer processions and public meetings for the defiance of authority should be stopped.

"Clause 6. *The Working Committee advises Congress workers and organisations to inform the ryots (peasants) that withholding of rent payment to the Zemindars (landlords) is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country.*

"Clause 7. *The Working Committee assures the Zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances, the Committee desires that redress be sought by mutual consultation and arbitration.*"

The resolution shows that it was not an abstract question of non-violence which actuated the movers. It will be noted that no less than three clauses (italicised) deal specifically, emphatically and even urgently with the necessity of the *payment of rent* by the peasants to the landlords or Government. There is here no question of violence or non-violence. There is simply a question of class interests, of exploiters and exploited. The non-payment of rent could not be suggested by any one to be a "violent" action: on the contrary, it is a most peaceful (though also most revolutionary) form of protest. Why, then, should a resolution, nominally condemning "violence", concentrate so emphatically on this question of the non-payment of rent and the "legal rights" of landlords? There is only one answer possibly. The phraseology of "non-violence" is revealed as only in reality a cover, conscious or unconscious, for class interests and the maintenance of class exploitation.

The dominant leadership of the Congress associated with Gandhi called off the movement because they were afraid of the awakening mass activity; and they were afraid of the mass activity because it was beginning to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were still in fact closely linked.

Not the question of "violence" or "non-violence", but the question of class interest in opposition to the mass

movement, was the breaking-point of the national struggle in 1922. This was the rock on which the movement broke. This was the real meaning of "Non-Violence".

3. THE THIRD GREAT WAVE OF STRUGGLE (1930-1934)

For half a decade after the blow of Bardoli the national movement was prostrated. The Congress fell to a low ebb. By 1924 Gandhi was declaring that, in place of the proclaimed aim of 10 million members, they could not claim more than 200,000: "We politicians do not represent the masses except in opposition to the Government." The "spinning franchise", introduced by Gandhi that year (requiring members of elected Congress organisations to send in 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn every month), had only produced a roll of 10,000 members by the autumn of 1925, when it was withdrawn as an obligatory condition and made optional. The *Bombay Chronicle* in 1925 spoke of a "general paralysis and stagnation". Lajpat Rai in the same year spoke of "chaos and confusion". "The political situation," he declared, "is anything but hopeful and encouraging. The people are sunk in depression. Everything—principles, parties and politics—seem to be in a state of disintegration and dissolution." In this depression of the national movement the sinister symptom of communal disorders was able to spread over the land. The Moslem League separated itself again from the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha conducted a narrow and reactionary counter-propaganda.

A section of the leadership of the Congress, represented by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, sought after Bardoli to make a decisive turn away from what they regarded as the sterile and unpractical policies of Gandhi by forming a new party, while remaining within the Congress, to contest the elections and carry forward the fight on the parliamentary plane within the new legislatures. This new party was named the Swaraj Party.

The decision to end the boycott of the elections and of the legislatures was undoubtedly, in view of the weakness of the mass movement, a step in advance. It was opposed by

the impotent and conservative "No-Changers" in the Congress, who clung to Gandhi's "constructive programme" of spinning, temperance, removal of untouchability and similar social reforms as the only path of salvation; but they were powerless to prevent sanctioning of its adoption by that section of the Congress which desired a more positive policy. By 1925 the Congress made its complete and unconditional surrender to the Swaraj Party, which held the majority and whose leaders took over decisive control, while Gandhi passed for the time being into the background.

The Swaraj Party leaders, however, in seeking to turn away from the policies of Gandhi which had landed the movement in an *impasse*, also turned away still farther from any basis in the masses. The only real advance from the policy of Gandhi could have been an advance from the domination of those upper-class interests which had betrayed the national struggle to the new basis of the interests of the main body of the nation, the workers and peasants, who alone had no ground for compromise with imperialism. In abstract principle the new Swaraj Party took a step towards recognising this; C. R. Das, in a phrase which won wide echoes, spoke of "Swaraj for the 98 per cent"; and the new programme spoke in general terms of the necessity of workers' and peasants' organisations. But in practice the Swaraj Party was the party of the progressive-upper bourgeoisie; its existence depended on the support of these elements, just as its main leaders came from among them; and, however much they might talk sentimentally of the workers and peasants, to win the support of the upper-class elements they had to make perfectly clear that their party was "sound" on the essential basis of landlordism and capitalism. So their foundation programme of aims specifically included the clause that "private and individual property will be recognised and maintained, and the growth of individual wealth, both movable and immovable, will be permitted"; while the accompanying explanatory statement of the programme rebutted the "slander" that the Swaraj Party was alleged to be opposed to the landlords by declaring: "True it is that the Party stands for justice to the

tenant, but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord."

In practice, therefore, the Swaraj Party, though intended to represent a step in advance, was no more than the reflection of the ebb of the tide of mass struggle. The Swaraj Party was the party of the progressive bourgeoisie moving to co-operation with imperialism along the inclined plane of parliamentarism. From its inception it slid downwards ever closer to the supposed enemy. At the outset the aim of entry into the Councils was declared to be "uniform and consistent obstruction". On this basis a considerable victory was won in the elections of 1923, and the Party entered the Central Assembly as the strongest single Party, able by collaboration with the Independents or Liberals (former Moderates) to establish a precarious majority. Already on entry, C. R. Das, as leader, declared: "His party had come there to offer their co-operation. If the Government would receive their co-operation, they would find that the Swarajists were their men." By 1925 C. R. Das was declaring, in a famous statement at Faridpur, that he saw signs of a "change of heart" in the Government (a statement hardly borne out by the attitude of the then Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, who referred with unconcealed contempt in a public speech to "the unsubstantial ghost of Indian Nationalism"), and made a formal offer of co-operation on conditions, part of those conditions being a common fight against the revolutionary movement. The spokesmen of the Liberals now affirmed that no difference of importance remained between them and the Swarajists. In the spring of 1926 the Sabarmati Pact contemplated acceptance of office, but was turned down owing to opposition of the rank and file. At the new elections in the autumn of 1926 the Swaraj Party suffered a marked setback, except in Madras.

But the hopes of the bourgeoisie for harmonious co-operation with imperialism were destined to end in disillusionment. As soon as it was clear that the forces of the national struggle had weakened, and that the Swarajists, divorced from the mass movement, were reduced to pleading for terms, imperialism reversed the engines, began to go back

on the partial economic concessions granted to the Indian bourgeoisie during the previous years, and opened an economic offensive to re-establish full domination, through the Currency Bill of 1927, the establishment of the rupee ratio at 1s. 6d. (in the face of universal Indian protests), and the new Steel Protection Bill of 1927, which undermined the protection of the 1924 Act by introducing preferential rates for British steel. Towards the end of 1927 the Simon Commission was announced, to settle the fate of the future constitution for India, with a complete exclusion of Indian representation.

Thus the Indian bourgeoisie, however unwillingly, found themselves once again forced to turn aside from their hopes of co-operation and to look towards the possibility of harnessing the mass forces once more in their support, if they were to have any prospect of driving a successful bargain. But the conditions were now far more difficult and complicated than a decade ago. For in the interval the mass forces had begun to awaken to new life of their own, to independent political expression and aims, and to active struggle, not only against imperialism, but against the Indian exploiters. The triangular character of the contest, or rather the deeper contest between imperialism and the Indian masses, with the hesitant and vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, was now coming far more clearly to the front. Hence the peculiar character of the new stage of struggle which now opened out, developing from its first signs in the latter part of 1927 to its full strength in 1930-34: on the one hand, the far more widespread, intensive and prolonged character of the struggle; on the other, the spasmodic, interrupted tempo of development, the zigzag vacillation of aims, the repeated accompanying negotiations, and sudden truces without settlement, until the final collapse.

The new factor which developed for the first time in the middle years of the nineteen-twenties, and gave the decisive impetus to the new wave of struggle, though not yet its leadership, was the emergence of the industrial working class as an independent force, conducting its own

struggle with unexampled energy and heroism, and beginning to develop its own leadership. With this advance the new ideology of the working class, or Socialism, began to develop for the first time as a political factor in India, and the influence of its ideas began to penetrate the youth and the left sections of Indian Nationalism, bringing new life and energy and wider horizons. The Cawnpore conspiracy trial of 1924 showed the sharp look-out of imperialism to stamp out the first signs of revolutionary working-class politics. The growth of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which came to the front during 1926 and 1927, preceded the great advance of trade unionism and the strike movement in 1928. The colossal strike movement of 1928, with a total of 31,647,000 working days lost, or more than during the previous five years put together; the growth of the new fighting Girni Kamgar Union or Red Flag Union of the Bombay textile workers to an officially returned membership of 65,000 within a year, and increase of trade-union membership by 70 per cent; the foremost political role of the working class in the demonstrations against the Simon Commission during that year; the rising militant consciousness of the trade unions and the victory of the left wing in the Trade Union Congress in 1929—these were the harbingers and the driving force that led to the new wave of struggle of the Indian people.

The reflection of this advance began to appear in the emergence of a new left wing in the Congress and the national movement. Towards the end of 1927 Jawaharlal Nehru returned from a prolonged tour of over a year and a half in Europe, where he had made contact with socialist circles and ideas. The Madras Congress, at the end of 1927, showed the advance of new leftward tendencies, especially among the youth. A resolution for complete independence as the aim of the national movement—always previously opposed by the leadership—was unanimously carried (in the absence of Gandhi, who later condemned it as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed"). Boycott of the Simon Commission was determined; at the same time participation in an All-Parties Conference was approved to

evolve an alternative constitutional scheme. The Congress affiliated to the newly founded International League Against Imperialism. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, the principal leaders of the youth and of the developing leftward tendencies in the Congress, were appointed General Secretaries.

The apparent victory of the left at the 1927 Congress was superficial and based on lack of opposition. But as 1928 unfolded its events, with the success of the demonstrations against the Simon Commission, with the advance of the strike movement, and with the growth of the newly founded Independence League and of youth and student organisations, it was clear to the older leadership that the left was developing as a force which might rapidly sweep the Congress. At the All-Parties Conference the older leadership, in collaboration with the moderate or reactionary elements outside the Congress, evolved a scheme (known as the Nehru Report, from the Chairman, the elder Nehru) for a constitution based on responsible government within the British Empire, thus shelving the demand for independence. But in face of the rising tide of feeling, there was doubt whether this scheme would be accepted by the Congress.

In this critical balance of forces, with the certainty of big new struggles ahead in a far more advanced situation than a decade previously, the right-wing leadership once again turned to Gandhi, whom they had previously thrust aside, and whose star now once again rose. At the Calcutta session at the end of 1928 Gandhi returned to active leadership of the Congress. Whatever the views of the moderate leaders might be with regard to his personal idiosyncrasies, there was no question that he was the most subtle and experienced politician of the older group, with unrivalled mass prestige which world publicity had now enhanced as the greatest Indian figure; the ascetic defender of property in the name of the most religious and idealist principles of humility and love of poverty; the invincible metaphysical-theological casuist who could justify and reconcile anything and everything in an astounding tangle of explanations and arguments which in a man of common clay might have been

called dishonest quibbling, but in the great ones of the earth like MacDonalld or Gandhi is recognised as a higher plane of spiritual reasoning; the prophet who by his personal saintliness and selflessness could unlock the door to the hearts of the masses where the moderate bourgeois leaders could not hope for a hearing—and the best guarantee of the shipwreck of any mass movement which had the blessing of his association. This Jonah of revolution was the mascot of the bourgeoisie in each wave of the developing Indian struggle. So appeared once again the characteristic feature of this entire period of Indian politics, the unwritten law of every successive Indian campaign—the indispensability of Gandhi (actually the expression of the precarious balance of class forces). All the hopes of the bourgeoisie (the hostile might say, the hopes of imperialism) were fixed on Gandhi as the man to ride the waves, to unleash just enough of the mass movement in order to drive a successful bargain, and at the same time to save India from revolution.

At the Calcutta Congress in December, 1928, Gandhi had difficulty in securing acceptance of the Nehru Report. The resolution he drafted promised that this Report should not be regarded as in any way withdrawing the aim of complete independence, and that if this Report were not accepted by the Government by December 31, 1929 (Gandhi had originally drafted 1930, giving two years' respite, but 1929 was carried), then the Congress would revive the campaign of non-violent non-co-operation, and this time begin with non-payment of taxes. Even this resolution was only carried by a relatively narrow majority, with a vote of 1,350 against 973 for the left amendment, sponsored by Bose and the younger Nehru, insisting on the immediate aim of complete independence as against the Nehru Report. Action was thus delayed for twelve months at a moment when the events of 1928 had shown the highest level of mass unrest. Twelve months' notice was given to imperialism to prepare. "The temporising resolution of the Calcutta Congress," remarks Subhas Bose, "only served to kill precious time." Meanwhile, a warning signal of the situation appeared in the demonstration of 20,000 Calcutta workers (50,000,

according to the official History of the National Congress), who presented themselves to the Calcutta Congress with slogans for national independence and for the "Independent Socialist Republic of India", and took possession of the pandal for two hours, while the national reformist leaders had to make way for them and hear the demand of the working class for irreconcilable struggle for national independence.

The twelve months of delay secured time for imperialism to act. Imperialism did not waste its opportunity. In March, 1929, all the most prominent leaders of the rising working-class movement were arrested from all parts of India, and brought to the remote court of Meerut for trial (where they could be tried without jury); the trial was dragged out for four years, while they were held in prison, during all the succeeding wave of struggle, before even sentence was pronounced. Besides representing the decisive leadership of the trade unions and of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, three of the leaders arrested were also members of the All-India Congress Committee or elected Executive of the National Congress. Thus the working class was decapitated, and the strongest and most clear-headed and determined leaders of the left, with a real mass basis, removed, before the struggle in the hands of the Congress leadership was allowed to begin. At the same time was put into force the Public Safety Ordinance by decree of the Viceroy, directed against the militant forces.

On the eve of the critical approaching Congress and year of struggle, Gandhi was elected President. He showed, however, his skilful appreciation of the existing situation and relation of forces by standing down and nominating for election in his place the leader of the youth and of the Independence League, who had expressed socialist sympathies, Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi justified his choice by the following characterisation of his nominee:

"No one can surpass him in his love for his country; he is brave and passionate, and at this moment these qualities are very essential. But, although passionate and resolute in struggle, still he possesses

the reason of a statesman. An adherent of discipline, he has proved in deeds his capability to submit to decisions with which he is not in agreement. He is modest and practical enough not to run to extremes. In his hands the nation is perfectly secure."

One last effort was made by the moderate leadership to reach an agreement with imperialism. Following a very vague statement by the Viceroy on October 31, 1929, which made a reference to the "goal of Dominion status" to be reached at some unknown future date (a statement which, as *The Times* declared on the following day, "contains no promises and reveals no change of policy"), the party leaders in India united to issue a response, known as the Delhi Manifesto, wholeheartedly offering co-operation: "We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declaration.... We hope to be able to tender our co-operation with His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme for a Dominion constitution suitable to India's needs." The statement was signed by Gandhi, Mrs. Besant, Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jawaharlal Nehru and others; the latter disapproved of it, and later judged it "wrong and dangerous"; but at the time he was, as he states, "talked into signing" it on the grounds that, as President-elect, he would otherwise be breaking unity; a "soothing letter from Gandhiji" helped to calm his doubts. The Delhi Manifesto was received with delight by imperialism as a sign of weakening ("What last night's statement means is the scrapping of the programme on which Congress was to have met at Lahore"—*The Times*, November 4, 1929). It produced no practical result save to confuse the Congress ranks; the subsequent meeting with the Viceroy on the eve of the Congress was fruitless.

At the Lahore Congress, accordingly, at the end of 1929 the decision for action was taken. The Nehru Report, embodying Dominion Status, was declared to have lapsed and "Purna Swaraj" or Complete Independence was adopted as henceforth the Creed of the Congress. The Congress authorised the All-India Congress Committee "whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes". At midnight, as

1930 was ushered in, the Flag of Indian Independence (red, white and green—later, the red was withdrawn and substituted by saffron) was unfurled. On January 26, 1930, the first Independence Day was celebrated throughout India in vast demonstrations at which the pledge to struggle for complete independence was read out, proclaiming it “a crime against man and God to submit any longer” to British rule, and declaring the conviction that “if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes, without doing violence even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured.”

What was to be the aim of the struggle that now opened? What was to be the plan of campaign? What were to be the minimum conditions which would be regarded as justifying a settlement? In what way was such irresistible pressure to be brought on the British Government as to compel “the end of this inhuman rule”? On all these questions there was from the outset no clearness.

Complete independence might appear to have been the defined aim of the campaign, and was probably so regarded by the majority of the Congress membership and by the masses who responded to the Congress call. Indeed, the recorded last dying words of Motilal Nehru, who died on the eve of the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement, appear to suggest that this had been his conception of the struggle: “Let me die, if die I must, in the lap of a free India. Let me sleep my last sleep, not in a subject country, but in a free one.”

This was not, however, the conception of Gandhi. Immediately after Lahore he published a statement, through the *New York World* of January 9, that “the independence resolution need frighten nobody” (repeated in his letter to the Viceroy in March), and on January 30, through his paper *Young India*, he made an offer of Eleven Points, covering various reforms (rupee ratio of 1s. 4d., total prohibition, reduction of land revenue and military expenditure, protective tariff on foreign cloth, etc.) in return for which civil disobedience would be called off. The publication of the Eleven Points on the eve of the struggle served to intimate to the other side that the claim for independence was

to be regarded as only a bargaining counter, a kind of conventional maximum at the opening of a traditional bazaar haggling, which could be placed on one side in return for substantial concessions.

The strategy of the campaign was equally unclear. Once again the Congress Committee meeting at Sabarmati in February, 1930, placed power in the hands of "Mahatma Gandhi and those working with him" (not any elected organ of the Congress) to lead and control the campaign, on the grounds that "civil disobedience must be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence... *as an article of faith*". But what were to be the lines of the campaign which was thus handed over without directives from the elected Congress leadership? Subhas Bose writes, referring to the Lahore Congress:

"On behalf of the left wing a resolution was moved, by the writer, to the effect that the Congress should aim at setting up a parallel Government in the country, and to that end should take up the task of organising the workers, peasants and youths. This resolution was defeated, with the result that though the Congress accepted the goal of complete independence as its objective, no plan was laid down for reaching that goal—nor was any programme of work adopted for the coming year. A more ridiculous state of affairs could not be imagined."

Jawaharlal Nehru writes:

"Still we were vague about the future. In spite of the enthusiasm shown at the Congress session, no one knew what the response of the country would be to a programme of action. We had burned our boats and could not go back, but the country ahead of us was an almost strange uncharted land."

The official Congress History rebukes those who demanded to know the plan of campaign:

"Those gathered at Sabarmati inquired of Gandhi about his plans. It was but right that they should do so, although nobody would have asked Lord Kitchener or Marshal Foch or von Hindenburg to unfold their plans on the eve of the Great War. Plans they had, but they might not reveal them. It was not so with Satyagraha. There was no privacy about our plans. But they were not clear-cut either. They would unfold themselves, much as the path on a misty morning reveals itself to a fast-moving motor, almost

from yard to yard. The Satyagrahi carried a searchlight on his forehead. It shows the way for the next step."

Everything thus depended on Gandhi's conception of the campaign. The country and its fortunes were handed over to his guidance.

It is evident that two opposing conceptions of the campaign were possible, according to the conception of the aim. Either it was to be a decisive struggle of all the forces of the Indian people for the ending of British rule and the establishment of complete independence ("A Fight to the Finish" in the terms of the official Congress History's chapter-heading for the struggle), or it was intended to be a limited and regulated demonstration of mass pressure with a view to securing better terms and concessions from British rule. The former was clearly the conception of the Lahore Congress, and what the masses of the people in India were expecting. But if this were the aim, to undertake so gigantic a task and reduce to impotence a formidable opponent, it is evident that any hope of success depended on rapidly throwing the maximum forces into the offensive with a view to overwhelming the opposing forces before any effective counter-measures could be taken: the calling of a General Strike, with the entire weight of the Congress and working-class movement behind it, the calling of the entire peasantry to a No-Tax and No-Rent campaign, and the setting up of a parallel National Government with its organs, courts, Volunteer Corps, etc., throughout the country. Such a campaign, in the then heightened state of national and mass feeling, could have, if conducted with extreme speed and resoluteness, stood a reasonable chance of mobilising the mass of the people, isolating imperialism (the Garhwali mutiny, and the experience of Peshawar and Sholapur showed the great possibilities of this), and winning independence.

This was not the conception of Gandhi. Indeed, it is clear from all his expressions at the time and after that his main problem was how to prevent such a development of the struggle. In an article in May, 1931, he explained that

he preferred defeat to victory if the price of victory should be infringement "by a hair's breadth" of his doctrine of non-violence:

"I would welcome even utter failure with non-violence unimpaired, rather than depart from it by a hair's breadth to achieve a doubtful success."

In his letter to the Viceroy on March 2, 1930, Gandhi made clear his analysis of the forces underlying the struggle, and his purpose in undertaking its leadership:

"The party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt It is my purpose to set in motion that force (non-violence) as well against the organised violence force of the British rule as the unorganised violence force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned."

Thus on the eve of rising mass struggle Gandhi proclaimed the fight on two fronts, not only against British rule, but against the internal enemy in India. This conception of the fight on two fronts corresponds to the role of the Indian bourgeoisie, alarmed as it sees the ground sinking beneath its feet with the growing conflict of imperialism and the mass movement, compelled to undertake leadership of the struggle, despite the "mad risk" (in Gandhi's phrase in his letter to the Viceroy), in order to hold it within bounds ("to sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned"), and seeking to conciliate both with the magic wand of "non-violence". However, "non-violence", like the notorious "non-intervention" of later days practised by the democratic Powers in relation to Spain, was "*one-way non-violence*". It was "non-violence" for the Indian masses, but not for imperialism, which practised violence to its heart's content—and won the battle.

Gandhi's strategy corresponded to this conception of the struggle. Given this understanding, that it was not a strategy intended to lead to the victory of independence, but to find the means in the midst of a formidable revolutionary wave to maintain leadership of the mass movement and yet place the maximum bounds and restraints upon it, it was a skilful and able strategy. This was shown already

in his brilliant choice of the first objective of the campaign and the method of conducting it. He decided to lead the fight against the salt monopoly of the Government. This diverted the fight from the possibility of participation by the industrial working class, the one force which Gandhi has made clear in every utterance that he fears in India; it was capable of enlisting the support and popular interest of the peasantry, while diverting them from any struggle against the landlords. To make assurance doubly sure, Gandhi intended at first to confine the campaign to himself and a small band of chosen disciples:

“So far as I am concerned, my intention is to start the movement only through the inmates of the Ashrama and those who have submitted to its discipline and assimilated its methods.”

So followed the march to Dandi, on the seashore, by Gandhi and his seventy-eight hand-picked followers, dragging on through three precious weeks, with the news-reel cameras of the world clicking away, while the masses were called on to wait expectant. The enormous publicity which was given to this Salt March through the Press, the cinema and every other device, was regarded by the Congress leadership as a triumph of strategy for awakening and mobilising the masses; but, while it is undoubtedly true that it did help to perform this function for the more backward elements among the masses, the free encouragement and permission given by the imperialist authorities for this publicity, in striking contrast to their later attitude (and to their very alert arrest of Subhas Bose, regarded as the leader of left nationalism, even before Independence Day, before the struggle opened), was evidently not simple naïveté and failure to understand its significance, but, on the contrary, very sharp understanding of its significance and direct help to ensure the diversion of the mass movement into the channels which were being prepared for it by Gandhi.

Nevertheless, the moment the three weeks were completed with the ceremonial boiling of salt by Gandhi on the seashore on April 6 (not followed by arrest), the overwhelming mass movement which broke loose throughout

the country took the leadership on both sides by surprise. The official instructions given were confined to the most limited and relatively harmless forms of civil disobedience; violation of the Salt Law, boycott of foreign cloth, picketing of the foreign cloth shops and Government liquor shops. Gandhi's conception of the movement was shown in the instructions given by him on April 9:

"Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village fetch or manufacture contraband salt, sisters should picket liquor-shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops. Young and old in every home should ply the takli and spin and get woven heaps of yarn every day. Foreign cloth should be burnt. Hindus should eschew untouchability. Hindus, Mussulmans, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians should all achieve heart unity. Let the majority rest content with what remains after the minorities have been satisfied. Let students leave Government schools and colleges, and Government servants resign their service and devote themselves to the service of the people, and we shall soon find that Purna Swaraj will come knocking at our doors."

The mass movement which developed already in April went considerably beyond these simple limits, with rising strikes, powerful mass demonstrations, the Chittagong Armoury Raid in Bengal, the incidents at Peshawar, which was in the hands of the people for ten days, and the beginnings of spontaneous no-rent movements by the peasants in a number of localities, especially in the United Provinces, where the Congress vainly sought to mediate on a basis of 50 per cent payment of rents.

Most significant for the whole future was the refusal of the Garhwali soldiers at Peshawar to fire on the people. Following the arrests of local leaders, armoured cars were sent to cow the angry mass demonstrations; one armoured car was burned, its occupants escaping; thereupon wholesale firing on the crowds was followed by hundreds of deaths and casualties. Two platoons of the Second Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles, Hindu troops in the midst of a Moslem crowd, refused the order to fire, broke ranks, fraternised with the crowd, and a number handed over their arms. Immediately after this, the military and police were completely withdrawn from Peshawar; from April 25

to May 4 the city was in the hands of the people, until powerful British forces, with air squadrons, were concentrated to "recapture" Peshawar; there was no resistance. The Government subsequently refused all demands for an enquiry into the incident. Seventeen men of the Garhwali Rifles were subjected by court-martial to savage sentences, one to transportation for life, one to fifteen years' rigorous imprisonment, and fifteen to terms varying from three to ten years.

The example of the Garhwali soldiers, who refused to fire upon their fellow-countrymen, might have been thought to put it at its lowest, at least a triumphant demonstration of "non-violence", which should have been dear to the heart of Gandhi. This was not, however, Gandhi's view. This was a non-violence which really threatened the foundations of British rule. In the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement the clause for the release of prisoners specifically excluded the Garhwali men. The official Congress History records in detail many petty terrorist acts and the national sentiment aroused by them. But the Garhwali episode finds no place in the official record. Through the years the Garhwali men were left to serve their sentences; and it was not until the latter part of 1937 that they were at last released through the influence of the Congress Ministers. Their memory lives in the hearts of the people, and will rank high in the future annals of free India, when the memory of many of the politicians will have sunk lower. Gandhi subsequently explained to a French interviewer, during his visit to the Round Table Conference in London, his reasons for disapproving of the Garhwali men:

"A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks the oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience. I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power, I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power."

This sentence (which may be recommended to the study of every pacifist admirer of Gandhi), no less clearly than the

previous Bardoli decision, throws a flood of light on the real meaning of "non-violence".

When it became clear that the power of the mass movement was exceeding the limits set it, and that the authority of Gandhi, who had been left at liberty, was in danger of waning, on May 5 the Government arrested Gandhi. The official justification for the arrest was stated in the Government *communiqué*:

"While Mr. Gandhi has continued to deplore these outbreaks of violence, his protests against his unruly followers have become weaker and weaker, and it is evident that he is unable to control them.... Every provision will be made for his health and comfort during his detention."

The response to the arrest was shown in the wave of hartals and mass strikes all over India. In the industrial town of Sholapur in the Bombay Presidency, with 140,000 inhabitants, of whom 50,000 were textile operatives, the workers held possession of the town for a week, replacing the police and establishing their own administration, until martial law was proclaimed on May 12. "Even the Congress leaders had lost control over the mob, which was seeking to establish a regime of its own," reported the correspondent of *The Times* on May 14, 1930. "They took charge of the administration," reported the *Poona Star*, "and tried to establish their own laws and regulations." Contemporary evidence bears witness to the complete order maintained.

Imperialist repression was limitless. Ordinances followed one another in rapid succession, creating a situation comparable to martial law. In June the Congress and all its organisations were declared illegal. Official figures recorded 60,000 civil resisters sentenced in less than a year up to the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement in the spring of 1931. These figures are certainly an under-estimate, since they omit the masses sentenced for offences of intimidation, rioting, etc., and cover only those recognised by the Government as political prisoners. The very detailed nationalist records place the total at 90,000: "in 1930-31 within a short interval of ten months, ninety thousand men, women and children were sentenced". All this took place under a "Labour"

Government. Well might the reactionary *Observer* declare on April 27, 1930, that it was a "providential chance" that Labour was in power and that "in view of India the overriding public necessity is to keep the Labour Ministry in power."

Imprisonment was the least of the forms of repression. The jails were filled to overflowing, and it was clear that wholesale imprisonment was powerless to check the movement. Therefore the principal weapon employed was physical terrorism. The records of indiscriminate lathi charges, beating up, firing on unarmed crowds, killing and wounding of men and women, and punitive expeditions made an ugly picture.¹ The strictest measures were employed to cast a veil of censorship over the whole proceedings; but the careful records of the Congress provide volumes of certified and attested facts and incidents which throw some light on the brutality employed.

Nevertheless, the power of the movement during 1930, exceeding every calculation of the authorities, and growing in spite of repression, began to raise the most serious alarm in the imperialist camp, which already found open expression by the summer of 1930, especially in the British trading community, who were hard hit by the boycott. This was especially noticeable in Bombay, where was the centre of strength of the industrial working class, where repression was most severe, but where the movement was strongest, and again and again held possession of the streets, despite repeated police charges, in mass demonstrations which the Congress leaders vainly begged to disperse, and in which the red flags were conspicuous beside the Congress flags, or even predominated. "Visitors here from Calcutta and other big cities," wrote the *Observer* correspondent on June 29, "are frankly amazed at the state to which Bombay has been reduced." "But for the presence of troops and armed police," declared "A letter from Bombay", published in the *Spectator* of July 5, "the Government of Bombay would be

¹ According to an official answer in the Legislative Assembly on July 14, 1930, in 24 cases of firing on the public from April 1 to that date there were 103 killed and 420 wounded.

overthrown in a day, and the administration would be taken over by the Congress with the assent of all." The British business men in Bombay joined with the Indian business men, through the Millowners' Association (with a one-third European element) and the Chamber of Commerce, in demanding immediate self-government for India on a Dominion basis. The amazing spectacle was witnessed of the *Times of India* (Bombay) clamouring for responsible parliamentary Government at the Centre. By July 6 the *Observer* was reporting with alarm the "demoralisation of the Europeans" in India:

"Except in the columns of the *Calcutta Statesman* defeatism prevailed, and only too well-informed rumours circulated of negotiations between British business men of Calcutta and Bombay and Congress elements for permanent political surrenders in return for immediate alleviation of the boycott and other temporary evils.... The demoralisation of Europeans.... But this demoralisation is by no means general, and in Calcutta there is a strong public opinion against it."

By August the Calcutta correspondent of the *Observer* was reporting under the heading "Weakness in Bombay":

"The news from Bombay that some of the British-managed mills have had to accept the Congress terms and that a prominent citizen is therefore resigning his commission in the Bombay Light Horse has shocked opinion here. So has the collapse of the Bombay branch of the European Association, which by a substantial majority declined to commit itself to the Simon Report because it was not acceptable to Indian opinion. The Bombay branch has also withdrawn its candidate for the Round Table Conference."

Thus a situation of "defeatism" and "demoralisation" bordering on panic, despite all the bluster and repression, was beginning to show itself in the imperialist camp; and it became essential for imperialism at all costs to negotiate a settlement. On the basis of the struggle and sacrifices of the Indian people the Congress leadership held a strong hand. The only hopes of imperialism for salvation were now placed in the moderate national leadership, whose alarm at the extension and unknown possibilities of the mass struggle they knew to be genuine. After an interview

with Gandhi in September, Professor H. G. Alexander, Professor of International Relations at Selly Oak College, Birmingham, reported the views of Gandhi:

“Even in the seclusion of his prison he is acutely conscious that such embitterment is developing, and for that reason he would welcome a return to peace and co-operation as soon as it could be honestly obtained. . . . His influence is still great, but more dangerous and uncontrollable forces are gathering strength daily.”

Thus the alarm grew on both sides; and on the basis of this mutual alarm there was the possibility of a settlement—against the Indian people.

Negotiations were begun in the autumn of 1930, but without result. On January 20, 1931, MacDonald as Prime Minister made the declaration at the Round Table Conference:

“I pray that by our labours India will possess the only thing which she now lacks to give her the status of a Dominion among the British Commonwealth of Nations—the responsibility and the care, the burdens and the difficulties, but the pride and the honour of Responsible Self-Government.”

The bait was thus held out in a rotund phrase which in hard practice committed the Government to nothing, as subsequent events were to show. The Round Table Conference was then adjourned to enable the Congress to attend.

On January 26 Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee were released unconditionally and given freedom to meet. Gandhi declared that he left prison with “an absolutely open mind.” Prolonged negotiations followed. On March 4 the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement was signed, and the struggle was declared provisionally suspended.

The Irwin-Gandhi Agreement secured not a single aim of the Congress struggle (not even the repeal of the Salt Tax). Civil Disobedience was to be withdrawn. Congress was to participate in the Round Table Conference, which it had sworn to boycott. Not a single concrete step to self-government was granted. The basis of discussion at the Round Table Conference was to be a Federal Constitution with “Indian responsibility”—but there were to be “reser-

vations of safeguards in the interests of India." The Ordinances were to be withdrawn and political prisoners released—but not prisoners guilty of "violence" or "incitement to violence" or soldiers guilty of disobeying orders. Freedom of boycott of foreign goods was to be allowed—but not "exclusively against British goods," not "for political ends," not with any picketing that might be regarded as involving "coercion, intimidation, restraint, hostile demonstration, obstruction to the public." And so on with the clauses, which gave with one hand and took away with another. The maximum gain was the right of peaceful boycott of foreign cloth—the one positive element which very clearly pointed to the decisive interests on the Indian side behind the agreement.

The fact that the British Government had been compelled to sign a public Treaty with the leader of the National Congress, which it had previously declared an unlawful association and sought to smash, was undoubtedly a tremendous demonstration of the strength of the national movement. This fact produced at first a widespread sense of elation and victory, except among the more politically conscious sections, who understood what had happened and saw that all the struggle and sacrifice had been thrown away at the negotiating table. Only slowly, as the meaning of the terms began to be understood, the realisation dawned that nothing whatever had been gained. All the aims of complete independence and no compromise with imperialism, so loudly proclaimed at Lahore, had gone up in smoke. Even Gandhi's Eleven Points, which had previously been an offer of a compromise surrender behind the back of the Congress, had now vanished; not one had been conceded. The Congress was now reduced to accepting the Round Table Conference, which it had previously refused, and in which it could have participated anyway without a struggle (save that it could have obtained far better representation, had it chosen to demand this at the start).

The Irwin-Gandhi Agreement thus repeated the Bardoli experience on an enlarged scale. Once again the movement was suddenly and mysteriously called off at the moment

when it was reaching its height ("the suggestion of the impending collapse of our movement is entirely false; the movement was showing no signs of slackening"—Gandhi, interview to *Monde*, February 20, 1932, on the situation at the time of the Agreement). "Such a victory has seldom been vouchsafed to any Viceroy," jubilated *The Times* on March 5. "The Congress has never made any bid for victory," explained Gandhi in his statement to the astonished pressmen on March 5 justifying the Agreement, and in this respect expressing certainly the truth of his strategy. Later, he explained his thought further. "We should give up the attempt to secure a Swaraj Constitution at the present moment," he wrote in *Young India* in June, 1931; "we can gain our end without political power." Alternatively, he explained, in an interview to the Press on March 6, that Purna Swaraj really means "disciplined self-rule from within" and by no means excludes "association with England" ("association" is delicate—especially when it means "association" with the sharp end of a bayonet). So the phrases were poured out, by Gandhi on the one side as by MacDonald on the other, to confuse the plain aim of independence as proclaimed at Lahore ("complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism") in a wealth of legal interpretation and theological casuistry, until it was difficult to know whether to award the palm to Gandhi or to MacDonald, both masters of the art of the bewildering phrase and the higher spiritual appeal to conceal the realities of capitulation and slavery.

The Karachi Congress, hastily convened the same month, unanimously endorsed the Agreement. Jawaharlal Nehru was given the task of moving it, "not without great mental conflict and physical distress." "Was it for this," he thought, "that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this?" He felt, however, that it would only be "personal vanity" to express his dissent. Subhas Bose, who was sharply critical, felt that it was not possible to oppose the Agreement at the Congress, on the grounds that this might appear as a breach of national unity. The Agreement was "not popular",

according to Jawaharlal Nehru's account; but few voices were found to oppose it at the Congress. One delegate said that if anyone but Gandhi had brought forward such an Agreement, he would have been thrown into the sea; but such an expression in the public sessions was exceptional. The fatal breach between the rigid Congress machinery and the wider mass movement revealed itself at Karachi: Subhas Bose noted that the opponents of the Agreement "would not have much support from the elected delegates who alone could vote at the Congress, though among the general public, and particularly the youths, they had larger support." There was no one to voice this "larger support" inside the Congress. This collapse of Left Nationalism at the Karachi Congress underlined the strength of Gandhi's position.

In return, a concession was made to the left elements by the adoption of a progressive social and economic programme, embodied in a "Fundamental Rights" resolution, which included a basic democratic charter of an advanced type, nationalisation of key industries and transport, labour rights and agrarian reform. This programme, which remains valid, marked an important step forward for the Congress. It was not, however, compensation for the capitulation embodied in the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement.

Outside the Congress, sharp criticism of the Agreement was expressed from the youth and from the working-class movement. This was shown in numerous resolutions from youth organisations and conferences, and in the hostile demonstrations of Bombay workers against Gandhi on his departure for the Round Table Conference. Such demonstrations, *The Times* noted, would have been unthinkable ten years earlier.

Disillusionment rapidly spread to wider circles. The role of Gandhi at the Round Table Conference in London during 1931 (and among the devotees of higher ethical thought in England who crowded round him in the intervals in innumerable little receptions and gatherings to hear the message of the World Teacher) was an unhappy farce, over which a veil is best drawn. The honour of the Con-

gress was lowered by its inclusion as an item in this motley array of Government puppets brought like captives to imperial Rome to display their confusion and division for the amusement of Westminster legislators. Gandhi returned, meeting Mussolini on the way. He brought back no fruits from the Round Table Conference.

On his way back Gandhi expressed the hope that there would be no need to renew the struggle; from Port Said he cabled the India Office that he would do all in his power for peace. He drafted a resolution to this effect immediately on return. But he reckoned without his host.

Imperialism, once it had secured the whip-hand, was determined to use its advantage to the utmost. The "truce" from the outset had been one-sided; repression had continued. Gandhi returned in the last days of 1931 to hear a pitiful tale from his colleagues. He cabled at once to the Viceroy, begging for an interview. It was refused. Imperialism had utilised every day of that nine months' truce (while the comedy had been enacted in London) to complete its grim preparations for a decisive battle. Sir John Anderson, with experience of the "Black and Tan" regime in Ireland, had been nominated Governor of Bengal to take in hand the arrangements. There was to be no surprise this time. The Congress was to be taught a lesson. It was to be a fight to a finish, with unconditional surrender as the only terms.

Swift and sharp the blow fell on January 4, 1932. On the same day negotiations were broken; the Viceroy issued his Manifesto; Gandhi was arrested; Ordinances appeared in a batch (no dribbling out this time, one by one, as they were thought of, as in 1930, but straight from the pigeon-holes on the first day); all the principal Congress leaders and organisers were arrested all over the country; the Congress and all its organisations were declared illegal, their Press banned, their premises, funds and property confiscated. A triumph of organisation.

The Government made clear that the object was a knock-out blow. Sir Samuel Hoare informed the House of Commons that the Ordinances were "very drastic and

severe" and that there was to be no "drawn battle" this time. Sir Harry Haig, Home Member of the Government of India, stated that "we are not playing a game with artificial rules," and that so far as the Government was concerned there was no time limit. The spokesmen of the Bombay Government informed the Legislature that "war is not fought with gloves on."

The Congress leadership was taken by surprise. This was such a sudden change from the atmosphere of the Round Table Conference. They had made no preparations. In 1930 the Congress had been on the offensive. Now it was thrown on the defensive. They had not realised the price of the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement. Dr. Syed Mahmud, of the Congress Working Committee, informed the India League Delegation:

"The world does not know anything about the resolution that Mahatma Gandhi drafted and proposed before the Working Committee. The Mahatma was bent on co-operation. . . . The Government did not want co-operation. From my own inside knowledge I can say that the Congress was not prepared for the conflict. We had hopes that the Mahatma would bring peace somehow on his return from London."

He added "that he and his colleagues had definite information that the Government's plans for repression were ready in November while Gandhi was still in London, and that the Government's sudden blow at first staggered the Congress."

Repression this time, in 1932-33, far exceeded the level of 1930-31. In the first four months, according to the public report of Pandit Malaviya on May 2, 1932, there were 80,000 arrests. After fifteen months, by the end of March, 1933, according to the report to the illegal session of the Congress at Calcutta in April, 1933, the total had reached 120,000 arrests. Some record of the accompanying wholesale violence, physical outrages, shooting and beating up, punitive expeditions, collective fines on villages and seizure of lands and property of villagers can be found in the India League Delegation Report, "Condition of India", issued in 1933.

The Government had counted on a fight to a finish in six weeks. The toughness of the national movement was

such that the battle, despite the unfavourable conditions, dragged on for twenty-nine months before the final surrender. But it was a soldiers' battle without strategic leadership. Under the conditions of illegality and violent repression the task of leadership was in any case sufficiently difficult. But it was not rendered easier by the actions of Gandhi and the High Command, whose role amounted, not merely to abdication, but to repudiation of leadership. Orders were actually issued against secrecy (under illegal conditions!) as a perversion of Congress principles. A resolution was issued to the Zemindars (landlords) to assure them that no campaign would be approved against their interests. By the summer of 1932 Gandhi abandoned all public interest in the national struggle, and devoted himself to the cause of the Harijans (untouchables). His dramatic "fast unto death" in September was directed, not against the repression, not to any object of the life-and-death struggle of the national movement going on, but to prevent the scheme of separate representation for the "depressed classes". It ended, neither in death nor in the attainment of its objective, but in the Poona Pact, by which the number of reserved seats for the "depressed classes" was doubled. The episode served to divert attention from the national struggle, of which he was still supposed to be the responsible leader.

In May, 1933, Gandhi began a new fast, directed, not against the Government, but to change the heart of his countrymen. He described it as a "heart-prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause." The delighted Government released him unconditionally. Immediately the Acting-President, on the recommendation of Gandhi, announced the suspension of civil disobedience for six weeks, not on the basis of any terms reached with the Government, or even hopes of terms, but on the grounds that, as Gandhi said, the country would be in "a state of terrible suspense" during his fast, and it would be therefore better to hold up the campaign for it (even if the Government did not hold up its repression).

In July, 1933, after a request by Gandhi for an interview with the Viceroy had been refused unless civil disobedience were first finally ended, the Congress leadership decided to end mass civil disobedience and replace it by individual civil disobedience. At the same time the Acting-President issued orders dissolving all Congress organisations. The Government showed no response save to increase its repression against the individual civil resisters. In August Gandhi was arrested anew, but also released before the end of the month, following a fast. During the autumn, having decided to abstain from political activity for a period on conscientious grounds, he devoted himself to a Harijan tour. Meanwhile the struggle dragged on, neither ended, nor led.

It was not until May, 1934, that the final end came to the struggle which had opened with such magnificent power in 1930. In April Gandhi had issued a statement explaining his view of the reasons for the failure of the movement. The fault lay with the masses. "I feel that the masses have not yet received the message of Satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media... The indifferent civil resistance of many... has not touched the hearts of the rulers." Even the transition from mass civil disobedience to individual civil disobedience had not solved this problem of the uncontrollable character of any mass movement. The conclusion was drawn with faultless logic. "Satyagraha needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time." "In the present circumstances only one, and that myself, should for the time being bear the responsibility of civil disobedience." Such was the final *reductio ad absurdum* of the Gandhist theory of "non-violent non-co-operation" as the path of liberation for the Indian people.

In May, 1934, the All-India Congress Committee was allowed to meet at Patna to end civil disobedience unconditionally (with the solitary exception recommended by Gandhi). There were no terms and no concessions from the Government. At the same time decisions were taken, for which the preliminary steps had already been prepared,

for the new stage of contesting the coming elections directly on behalf of the Congress.

In June, 1934, the Government lifted the ban on the Congress, but not yet on many of its subsidiary organisations, youth organisations, peasants' unions and the Red Shirts of the North-West Frontier Province. In July, 1934, the Government proclaimed the Communist Party of India illegal. The new stage was opening.

In the autumn of 1934 Gandhi resigned from membership of the Congress, his work for the time being accomplished. In a parting statement he explained that "there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself." It was clear that for "the majority of Congressmen" non-violence was not "a fundamental creed", but only "a policy". Socialist groups were growing in the Congress in numbers and influence: "if they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress." The new stage was making itself felt; and it was unwelcome to the old ideas.

Gandhi left the Congress. But he did not leave until he had bequeathed to it a reactionary revision of its Constitution and organisation, which considerably hampered its further progressive development. And he remained the most powerful guiding influence behind the scenes, ready in case of need to assume direct leadership anew. In the crisis of 1939-40 and again in 1942 he assumed direct leadership.

The unhappy final ending of the great wave of struggle of 1930-34 should not blind us for a moment to its epic achievement, its deep and lasting lessons and its gigantic permanent gains. The reasons, in the tactics and methods pursued, for the temporary failure of a movement which had at its command such limitless resources of popular support, enthusiasm, devotion and sacrifice, and which was undoubtedly within reach of success, constitute a lesson which needs to be learned and studied again and again for the future. Those reasons have been implicit in this narrative. But the national movement can be proud of the record of those years. Imperialism dreamed in those years

by every device in the modern armoury of repression to smash and cow the people of India into submission to its will, and to exterminate the movement for independence. It failed. Within two years, after all those heavy blows, the national movement was advancing again, stronger than ever. The struggle had not been in vain. The furnace of those years of struggle helped to forge and awaken a new and greater national unity, self-confidence, pride and determination.

The British Government, in its determination to suppress the Indian National Congress, resorted to a series of measures. It passed the Government of India Act, 1919, which provided for a system of dyarchy, and the Government of India Act, 1935, which provided for a system of provincial autonomy. The British Government also resorted to a policy of repression, and the Indian National Congress was banned in 1931 and 1932. The British Government also resorted to a policy of repression, and the Indian National Congress was banned in 1931 and 1932.

The Indian National Congress, however, continued to work for the independence of India. It organized the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920, and the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. The Indian National Congress also organized the Quit India Movement in 1942. The Indian National Congress was finally granted independence in 1947.

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Chapter XII

RISE OF THE WORKING CLASS

LENIN ALREADY in 1908 had greeted the emergence of "the Indian proletariat" as "matured sufficiently to wage a class-conscious and political mass struggle," basing this judgement on the Bombay millworkers' political strike in protest against the imprisonment of Tilak in that year, and had drawn therefrom the conclusion that this heralded the doom of British rule in India.

Today the truth of this insight is being borne out by the power of events. The history of the Indian national struggle has shown, with each succeeding stage, the increased weight and importance of the role of the working class; while questions of socialism or communism are now in the forefront of Indian political discussion.

In the pre-1914 period this role of the working class was still in the background; it followed, rather than preceded the national movement; the only outstanding political action was the Bombay general strike against the six years' sentence on Tilak.

In the new period of awakening at the close of the first world war, the great strike movement of 1918-21 was the harbinger of the national wave, which finally brought the Congress into movement in the non-co-operation campaign of 1920-22.

By a decade later the working class was already an independent and organised force, with its own ideology playing a direct role, although not yet the leading role; the great strike movement of 1928, led by the militant class-

conscious section of the proletariat, carried with it the awakening of the youth and of the petty bourgeoisie, and led to the new wave of national struggle; and in that new wave of struggle, during 1930-34, the bourgeois leadership openly expressed its conception of the struggle as a fight on two fronts, as much against a mass uprising from below as against imperialism.

Since the second world war, the working class stands out more clearly than ever before as the decisive force of the future in Indian politics.

1. GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS

In estimating the strength of the Indian working class, it is necessary to distinguish between the very large number of propertyless proletarians and the narrower grouping of industrial wage-earners in modern industry, who constitute the decisive, organised, conscious and leading force of the Indian working class.

In the broadest sense, the number of wage-workers in India was estimated at 60 millions in 1938. The I.L.O. Report for 1938 gives the following figures:

"The total number of agricultural labourers, which was given as 21.5 million in 1921, was shown by the census of 1931 to be over 31.5 million, of whom 23 million were estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee in 1931 to be 'landless', while the total number of non-agricultural labourers, as estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee was 25 million. There are, therefore, about 56.5 million wage labourers out of 154 million persons in all occupations in the whole of India, or in other words, over 36 per cent of the people in all occupations depend upon wage labour as a means of livelihood."

In the narrower sense of the industrial proletariat in modern or other than petty industry, the Industrial Census of 1921 reached a total of 2.6 millions employed in establishments employing ten or more workers. There was no later Industrial Census; but the estimate of the 1931 Census, placed the total at about 3½ millions. The only exact records are those of the Factories Act administration; the

1934 Factories Act covered power-driven factories employing twenty or more, or, in some cases, ten or more workers; that total in 1938 was 1,737,755 workers. To these should be added 299,003 workers returned as employed in "large industrial establishments" in the Indian States, giving a full total of 2,036,758 workers in modern large-scale industry in India in 1938.

Taking this as basis, we reach the following:

Factory workers in medium and larger factories	
(on the above basis)	2,036,758
Miners	413,458
Railwaymen	701,307
Water Transport (Dockers, Seamen) *	361,000
Total of above groups	3,512,523

* 1935 figure.

These 3½ million represented the kernel of the industrial proletariat in modern large-scale industry in India in 1938. Excluded from this total were all the workers in petty industry (establishments under ten workers), as well as in larger enterprises without power-driven machinery (e.g. cigarette-making, with, in some cases, over fifty workers). To estimate the potential strength of the organised labour movement, we should add the over 1 million workers employed on the plantations, who are employed in fully large-scale enterprise under the most scientific slave-driving conditions, and have already shown a high degree of militant activity in periods of unrest, although so far cut off from all organisation and held under conditions of complete isolation and subjection; and a proportion of the workers in petty industry and in the larger unregulated enterprises. The effective organisable strength of the Indian working class certainly represented over five million workers by the eve of the second world war.

In 1952 the total "industrial labour power, including factories, plantations, mines, transport and communications" was estimated at 6½ to 7 million, or with the addition of miscellaneous employed, such as building, municipal work, local transport and cottage industries, an outside total figure of 12 million.

2. CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS

Of the conditions of the industrial working class in India some general picture has been given in Chapter II. It may be useful to recall the conclusions reached by the British Trade Union Congress delegation to India which reported in 1928:

"All enquiries go to show that the vast majority of workers in India do not receive more than about 1s. per day."

The same delegation reported with regard to the housing of the workers:

"We visited the workers' quarters wherever we stayed and had we not seen them we could not have believed that such evil places existed."

In 1938 the Indian Workers' Delegate, S. V. Parulekar, reported to the International Labour Conference at Geneva:

"In India the vast majority of workers get a wage which is not enough to provide them with the meanest necessities of life. The report of an enquiry into the working class budgets in Bombay by Mr. Findlay Shirras in 1921 states that the industrial worker consumes the maximum cereals allowed by the Famine Code but less than the diet issued to criminals in jails under the Bombay Prisons Code. The conditions have deteriorated since the publication of that report, as the earnings are lower today than that they were in 1921....

"The level of wages in unorganised industries, whose number is very large in India, can better be imagined than described....

"The workers of India are unprotected against risks of sickness, unemployment, old age and death....

"In the census report for 1931 it is stated that the housing conditions in the city of Bombay, the most industrialised centre in India, are a disgrace to any civilised community....

"The following table showing infantile mortality in Bombay per thousand births for 1933-34 discloses a staggering contrast of infantile mortality in the ranks of the working class and the rest:

1 room and under	..	..	524.0
2 rooms	..	..	394.0
3 rooms	..	..	255.9
4 rooms and over	..	..	246.5

"Conditions have not changed for the better since then."

There are no general wage statistics for India, nor any uniform rates, even for the same type of work in the same industrial centre. Light on the average rates of semi-skilled industrial workers was afforded by the returns of cases under the Workmen's Compensation Act, which were analysed in the Whitley Commission's Report for the five years 1925-29. These returns would exclude the unskilled workers, or lower-paid workers who would be too helpless, and even ignorant of the existence of the Act, to claim compensation. Even so, these favourable figures, officially put forward as representing "a general impression of wage-levels for the semi-skilled operatives in organised industry" (excluding children, excluding unskilled workers, excluding the badly paid workers in unorganised industry), revealed that over one-quarter of the adult semi-skilled workers in the United Provinces earned under 4s. 6d. a week, and over one-half under 6s. a week; over one-half in the Central Provinces, and nearly one-half in Madras and in Bihar and Orissa, under 6s. a week; in Bengal one-half under 7s. 9d. a week; and even in Bombay, with its higher cost of living, over one-half earned less than 9s. 6d. a week.

These were favourable figures for relatively better-placed workers, not general figures for all workers. In the nineteen-thirties a series of enquiries into working-class family budgets were conducted under the Provincial Labour Departments, and the results showed an average *family* income (not individual income): in Bombay amounting to Rs. 50 a month, or 17s. 4d. a week; in Ahmedabad, Rs. 46 a month, or 15s. 11d. a week; in Sholapur, Rs. 40 a month, or 13s. 10d. a week; and in Madras, Rs. 37 a month for workers in organised industries, or 12s. 10d. a week, and for workers in unorganised industries and occupations, Rs. 20 to 27 a month, or 7s. to 9s. 3d. a week. The average family (according to the Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad enquiries) numbered four persons, of whom one and a half to two persons were wage-earners. Since the second world war the steep rise in prices has meant a fall in real wages.

It is necessary to recognise that the nominal wage figures are still further reduced by the numerous deductions, com-

missions, fines, customary bribes to foremen and the heavy burden of indebtedness at exorbitant rates of interests (an indebtedness made almost compulsory by the institution of paying wages monthly in the majority of cases, in the more favourable cases fortnightly, and with the actual payment often deferred ten days or a fortnight after the completion of the month, thus exacting six week's credit from the worker). The Whitley Commission estimated that "in most industrial centres the proportion of families or individuals who are in debt is not less than two-thirds of the whole," and that "in the great majority of cases the amount of debt exceeds three months' wages and is often far in excess of this amount." Subsequent enquiries have shown that the estimate of two-thirds was an under-statement. In the Bombay Enquiry quoted above, 75 per cent of the families were found to be in debt. The Madras Report found that 90 per cent of the families in organised industries were in debt, and that the amount of debt averaged six months' wages.

The conditions of the plantation workers reached the lowest levels. According to Shiva Rao, "In the Assam Valley tea-gardens (Assam and Bengal produce by far the greater bulk of the tea in India) the average monthly earnings of men workers settled in the gardens are about Rs. 7-13-0 a month, of women and children about Rs. 5-14-0 and Rs. 4-4-0 respectively." This is equivalent to 2s. 8d. a week for men, 2s. a week for women and 1s. 5½d. for children. The addition of free "housing", medical treatment and other concessions only emphasises the slave conditions.

The fantastic profits extracted on the basis of this rate of exploitation are notorious, and reached the most colossal heights in the boom after the first world war. The delegation of the Dundee Jute Trade Unions to India reported in 1925 with regard to the jute industry:

"When Reserve Funds and Profits are added together the total gain to the shareholders in the ten years (1915-1924) reached the enormous total of £300 million sterling, or 90 per cent per annum of the capital. There are from 300,000 to 327,000 workers employed at an average wage today of £12. 10s. per annum. A profit of £300

million taken from 300,000 workers in ten years means £1,000 per head. That means £100 a year from each worker. And as the average wage is about £12. 10s. per head, it means that the average annual profit is eight times the wages bill."

With regard to the cotton industry the Tariff Board Enquiry reported in 1927:

"An examination of the balance sheets of the Bombay mills shows that for 1920, 35 companies comprising 42 mills declared dividends of 40 per cent and over, of which 10 companies comprising 14 mills paid 100 per cent and over and two mills paid over 200 per cent. In 1921 the number was 41 companies comprising 47 mills, out of which 9 companies comprising 11 mills paid dividends of 100 per cent and over."

Cases were reported of dividends as high as 365 per cent. The souvenir booklet issued on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Empress Mills at Nagpur in 1927 proudly boasted:

"In general it is interesting to note that the total profits of the Empress Mills up to the 30th June, 1926, aggregate over Rs. 92,214,527, which is nearly 61.47 times the original ordinary share capital; and up to the same date the company has paid Rs. 59,431,267 in dividends on ordinary shares which works out to 80.86 per cent per annum on the originally subscribed capital...."

Labour and social legislation in India is no less backward; and the reality is far below the appearance on paper. Factory legislation of a kind was initiated in 1881, largely under the pressure of Lancashire employers alarmed at the growth of the Indian mill industry. For decades it was to a considerable extent a dead letter, even in the very limited respects in which it was directed, owing to lack of provision for enforcement. Shiva Rao wrote in 1939:

"Taking all labour legislation into account, affecting factories, mines, plantations, docks, railways, harbours, etc., it is doubtful whether more than seven or eight millions at the outside come within its protective influence. The rest who constitute by far the greater majority of the industrial workers are engaged in small or what is known as unregulated industries."

The main factories' legislation proper extended in 1944 to only 2,522,753 workers, or a minute fraction of the Indian

working class. Even here the weakness of machinery for enforcement impairs its effectiveness. With 14,071 factories registered under the Factories Act in 1944, only 11,713 or 83.2 per cent were inspected. 2,358 factories, or 16.8 per cent, were not inspected at all during the year and a very high proportion was inspected only once. The consequences for the effectiveness of the regulations can be imagined. Even in the 1,775 convictions obtained under the Act, the fines imposed were extremely light, and a virtual incitement to violation. The report from the United Provinces (1948) expressed the view that the "imposition of such fines will not induce offenders to improve their ways when the benefit of breaking the law is more remunerative than the fine to be paid."

The main body of industry in India is unregulated. Here child labour, even of the tenderest years, is rampant; hours are unlimited; the most elementary provisions for health are lacking. The Madras Report of 1938 found that child labour was on the increase in the unorganised industries. In the tanneries, the carpet factories and the cigarette-making factories the children normally began work at five or six years of age, the hours were ten to twelve hours a day without a weekly rest day; the wages earned by these children for their ten- to twelve-hour day were two annas, or 2d. a day.

Social legislation in the modern sense is almost completely absent. There is no health insurance, no sickness benefit, no provision for old age, no provision for unemployment and no general system of education. In 1948 the Employees' State Insurance Act was passed to cover perennial factory workers (a very restricted minority of the total working class); but by 1952 it had only been brought into operation in two areas, Kanpur and Delhi.

3. FORMATION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The beginnings of the labour movement in India go back half a century; but its continuous history as an organised movement dates only from the end of the first world war.

Once the conditions of factory industry were established by the eighteen-seventies, it was inevitable that strikes should take place, even though at first in an elementary and unorganised form. There is record of a strike in 1877 at the Empress Mills at Nagpur over wage rates. Between 1882 and 1890 twenty-five strikes were recorded in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies.

The conventional history of the labour movement in India commonly derives its starting-point from the meeting of Bombay mill-workers in 1884, convened by a local editor, N. M. Lokhande, who drew up a memorial of demands for limitation of hours, a weekly rest day, a noontime recess and compensation for injuries, to present to the Factories Commission as the demands of the Bombay workers. Lokhande described himself as "President of the Bombay Millhands' Association."

This picture of the activity of Lokhande, which had its important role in Indian labour history, as the starting-point of the Indian labour movement is a misleading one. The "Bombay Millhands' Association" was in no sense a labour organisation; it had no membership, no funds and no rules. Lokhande was a philanthropic promoter of labour legislation and of workers' welfare, not a pioneer of labour organisation or of labour struggle.

For the early history of the Indian labour movement it would be necessary to piece together the records of the strike movement from the eighties onwards in the documents of the period. Although there was not yet any organisation, it would be a mistake to underestimate the growth of solidarity in action and elementary class-consciousness of the Indian industrial workers during the decades preceding the war of 1914. The Directors' Report of the Budget of the Budge Budge Jute Mill in 1895 stated that they "regret that a strike among the work-people, by which the mills were closed for nearly six weeks, occurred during the half year". At Ahmedabad in 1895 a strike of 8,000 weavers against the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association is recorded (Bombay Factory Report, 1895).

"Despite almost universal testimony before Commissions between 1880 and 1908 to the effect that there were no actual unions, many stated that the labourers in an individual mill were often able to act in unison and that, as a group, they were very independent. The inspector of boilers spoke in 1892 of 'an unnamed and unwritten bond of union among the workers peculiar to the people'; and the Collector of Bombay wrote that although this was 'little more than in the air' it was 'powerful'. 'I believe', he wrote to the Government, 'it has had much to do with the prolonged maintenance of what seems to be a monopoly or almost a monopoly wage'... Mr. Barucha, lately Director of Industries in Bombay Presidency, stated that 'the hands were all-powerful against the owners, and could combine, though they had not got a trade union'. If there is some degree of exaggeration in these statements, the word of the British deputy commissioner at Wardha certainly overshot the mark when he said that 'the workers were masters of the situation; and the millowners were really more in need of protection than the workers'." (D. H. Buchanan, "The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India", 1934, p 425.)

These words already breathe the masters' fear of the incipient class-consciousness of the Indian workers.

During 1905-09 there was a notable advance, parallel to the militant national wave. A strike in the Bombay mills against an extension of hours, serious strikes on the railways, especially the Eastern Bengal State Railway, in the railway shops, and in the Government Press at Calcutta characterised this period. The highest point was reached with the six-day political mass strike in Bombay against the sentence of six years' imprisonment on Tilak in 1908.

Any stable organisation was not yet possible. But this was a reflection of the utter poverty and illiteracy of the workers and lack of any facilities, rather than of backwardness or lack of militancy.

It was the conditions of the close of the first world war, of the sequel of the Russian Revolution and the world revolutionary wave, that brought the Indian working class at a bound into full activity and opened the modern labour movement in India. Economic and political conditions alike contributed to the new awakening. Prices had doubled during the war; there had been no corresponding increase

in wages; fantastic profits were being amassed by the employers. In the political field new demands were in the air; Congress-Muslim League unity had been achieved on the basis of a programme of immediate self-government; the first waves of revolutionary influence were reaching India.

The strike movement which began in 1918 and swept the country in 1919 and 1920 was overwhelming in its intensity. The end of 1918 saw the first great strike affecting an entire industry in a leading centre in the Bombay cotton mills; by January, 1919, 125,000 workers, covering practically all the mills, were out. The response to the hartal against the Rowlatt Acts in the spring of 1919 showed the political role of the workers in the forefront of the common national struggle. During 1919, strikes spread over the country. By the end of 1919 and the first half of 1920 the wave reached its height. R. K. Das writes:

"Some conception of the intensity and extent of the strikes of this period may be had from the following data: November 4 to December 2, 1919, woollen mills, Cawnpore, 17,000 men out; December 7, 1919, to January 9, 1920, railway workers, Jamalpur, 16,000 men out; January 9-18, 1920, jute mills, Calcutta, 35,000 men out; January 2 to February 3, general strike, Bombay, 200,000 men out; January 20-31, millworkers, Rangoon, 20,000 men out; January 31, British India Navigation Company, Bombay, 10,000 men out; January 26 to February 16, millworkers, Sholapur, 16,000 men out; February 2-16, Indian Marine Dock workers, 20,000 men out; February 24 to March 29, Tata iron and steel workers, 40,000 men out; March 9, millworkers, Bombay, 60,000 men out; March 20-26, millworkers, Madras, 17,000 men out; May, 1920, millworkers, Ahmedabad, 25,000 men out."

In the first six months of 1920 there were 200 strikes, involving 1½ million workers.

These were the conditions in which Indian trade unionism was born. Most of the Indian trade unions in the main industries and centres derive from this period, although, from the inevitable conditions, organisation has seldom been continuous. This great period of militancy was the birth of the modern Indian labour movement.

Trade unions were formed by the score during this period. Many were essentially strike committees, springing

up in the conditions of an immediate struggle, but without staying power. While the workers were ready for struggle the facilities for office organisation were inevitably in other hands. Hence arose the contradiction of the early Indian labour movement. There was not yet any political movement on the basis of socialism, of the conceptions of the working class and the class struggle. In consequence, the so-called "outsiders" or helpers from other class elements who came forward, for varying reasons, to give their assistance in the work of organisation, and whose assistance was in fact indispensable in this initial period, came without understanding of the aims and needs of the labour movement, and brought with them the conceptions of middle class politics. Whether their aims were philanthropic, as in some cases, careerist, as in others, or actuated by devotion to the national political struggle, as in others, they brought with them an alien outlook, and were incapable of guiding the young working-class movement on the basis of the class struggle which the workers were in fact waging. This misfortune long dogged the Indian labour movement, seriously hampering the splendid militancy and heroism of the workers; and its influences still remain.

The starting-point of Indian trade unionism is commonly derived from the Madras Labour Union, formed by B. P. Wadia, as associate of the theosophist Mrs. Besant, in 1918. This picture is to a certain extent misleading in relation to the living history of the Indian working class. First attempts at trade-union organisation were being made all over India during this period; there is trace of the Warkers in the Ahmedabad cotton mills forming a union in 1917. But the basis of organisation was still very weak, and far behind the level of militancy and activity of the working class. The Madras Labour Union was certainly the first systematic attempt at trade-union organisation, with regular membership and dues, of the mass of Indian workers in an industrial centre. For this initiative all credit must be paid to its founders. But the appearance of this initiative in a relatively weak industrial centre (during the whole period 1921-33 the number of strike days in Madras was 2.8 million against

20 million in Bengal and 60 million in Bombay) reveals its accidental personal character; and it would not be correct to exaggerate its influence in the general development of the Indian labour movement. The limitations of the outlook of its founder, B. P. Wadia, were revealed when the Madras workers, having formed their union under his presidency in April, 1918, and having presented their demands to the employers, received no satisfaction and demanded a strike; Wadia opposed any strike on grounds of devotion to the cause of British imperialism (a role thus parallel to that of Mrs. Besant in the national movement) in a speech on July 3, 1918:

"If by going on strike you were affecting the pockets of Messrs. Binny and Co., I would not mind, for they are making plenty of money; but by such a step you will injure the cause of the Allies. Our soldiers, who have to be clothed, will be put to inconvenience, and we have no right to trouble those who are fighting our King's battle, because a few Europeans connected with the mills and this Government are acting in a bad manner. Therefore we must have no strikes."

He was successful in preventing any strike; but Messrs. Binny and Co., undeterred by Wadia's "patriotic" arguments then declared a lock-out, and the workers, caught unprepared, and having been persuaded to forego the strike weapon, were compelled at the moment to give way to their demands. The main contest in Madras came in 1921 with a lock-out followed by a strike; the company used the method of the injunction; the High Court imposed a fine of £ 7,000 on the union, and, as the price of the company consenting not to prosecute the judgement, Wadia was compelled to sever his connection with the labour movement. This was a very powerful demonstration of the methods used to crush the early labour movement in India.

In other centres many types of helpers, sometimes closely connected with the employers, came forward to take charge of labour organisation. In Ahmedabad Gandhi, in close association with the mill-owners, organised a separatist form of labour organisation on a basis of class peace; and the

Ahmedabad Labour Association remained isolated from the Indian labour movement.

It was in this period that the Indian Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920. The inaugural session was held in Bombay in October, 1920, with the national leader, Lajpat Rai, as President, and Joseph Baptista as Vice-President. In its early years this body was mainly a "top" organisation, and many of its leaders had very limited connection with the working-class movement. The main impetus to its founding was to secure a nominating body for representation at the International Labour Conference at Geneva. N. M. Joshi, one of its earliest leaders, in his pamphlet on "The Trade Union Movement in India" (p. 10) derives the foundation of the Trade Union Congress from the effects of the Washington Labour Conference: "This brought out clearly the necessity of not only starting labour organisations, but also of bringing about some sort of co-ordination amongst them in order that they should be able to make their recommendations with one voice." At the fourth session in 1924 the President was the leader of the Swaraj Party, C. R. Das. The official addresses mainly inculcated the principles of class peace, moral and social improvement of the workers and uplift, and voiced demands for labour legislation and welfare provisions. As characteristic of the old outlook of the middle class leadership of the early years of the Trade Union Congress, we may take the following passage from the Chairman V. V. Giri's Address to the Sixth Trade Union Congress in 1926:

"I heartily commend to you the good work of the Purity Mission started by the Central Labour Board, Bombay. . . . The mission was started with the object of helping the labourer to give up his habits of vice and encourage him to live an honest, peaceful and contented life. . . . Social workers visit the localities and explain the evils of drink, gambling and other vices. This is the sort of education that a labourer wants, and this is what will make him a better man both socially and economically."

The attitude to strikes was expressed in the General Secretary's (N. M. Joshi's) Report to the Eighth Trade Union

Congress at Cawnpore in 1927:

"During the period under report no strike was authorised by the Executive Council; but owing to very acute industrial conditions obtaining in different trades and different parts of India there occurred some strikes and lock-outs in which the officials of the Congress had to interest themselves."

Up to 1927 the Trade Union Congress had a very limited practical connection with the working-class struggle. Nevertheless it formed the ground on which the leaders of the newly forming trade unions came together, and it was therefore only a question of time for the breath of the working-class struggle to reach it. This new period opened in 1927. By 1927 the Trade Union Congress united fifty-seven affiliated unions, with a recorded membership of 150,555.

4. POLITICAL AWAKENING

Despite the character of the early nominal leadership in the Indian labour movement, the Government was under no illusions as to the significance of the emergence of the working class movement in the last two decades. Their concern was shown in the appointment of the Bengal Committee on Industrial Unrest in 1921, the Bombay Industrial Disputes Committee of 1922, and the Madras Labour Department in 1919-20, followed by the Bombay Labour Department. A Trade Union Bill was prepared in 1921, although it was not finally passed until 1926. From 1921 regular statistics of industrial disputes were recorded. The record is significant for the picture it affords of the advance of the movement (see Table, p. 1954). Of this total, up to 1937 considerably over half, in the measure of working days, was in cotton textiles, and considerably more than half in Bombay.

The Government were sharply aware, as their many committees and commissions of enquiry throughout this period, revealed, of the menace to the whole basis of imperialism once the rising working-class movement, whose power of struggle was demonstrated throughout these years, should reach political awakening and firm organisation

under class-conscious leadership. Their problem was to find the means to direct the movement into "safe" channels, or what one of their reports termed the "right type" of trade unionism—a more difficult task in a colonial country than in a imperialist country. This purpose underlay the Trade Union Act of 1926, with its special restriction of political activities. This understanding equally governed the sharp look-out against any signs of political working-class awakening.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

Year	Number of strikes and lock-outs	Number of workpeople involved	Number of working days lost
1921	396	600,351	6,984,426
1922	278	433,434	3,972,727
1923	213	301,044	5,051,704
1924	133	312,462	8,730,918
1925	134	270,423	12,578,129
1926	128	186,811	1,097,478
1927	129	131,655	2,019,970
1928	203	506,851	31,647,404
1929	141	532,016	12,165,691
1930	148	196,301	2,261,731
1931	166	203,008	2,408,123
1932	118	128,099	1,922,437
1933	146	164,938	2,168,961
1934	159	220,808	4,775,559
1935	145	114,217	973,457
1936	157	169,029	2,358,062
1937	379	647,801	8,982,000
1938	399	401,075	9,198,708
1939	406	409,189	4,992,795
1940	322	452,539	7,577,281
1941	359	291,054	3,330,503
1942	694	772,653	5,779,965
1943	716	525,088	2,342,287
1944	658	550,015	3,447,306
1945	820	747,530	4,054,499
1946	1593	1,951,756	12,678,121
1947	1811	1,840,784	16,562,666
1948	1639	1,332,956	7,214,456

Nevertheless, despite all obstacles, through whatever initial confusions, the beginnings of political working-class awakening, of socialist and communist ideas, were slowly reaching India in the post-war years. From 1920 onwards the literature of the still very weak Communist Party of India had begun to make its way. From 1924 a journal, the *Socialist*, was appearing in Bombay under the editorship of S. A. Dange, who was to become Assistant Secretary and later, President of the Trade Union Congress. The Government lost no time to strike. In 1924 (under a Labour Government in England) the Cawnpore Trial was staged against four of the communist leaders, Dange, Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad and Das Gupta. All four were sentenced to four years' imprisonment. This was the baptism of the political working-class movement in India.

Repression could not check the advance of awakening. By 1926-27 socialist ideas were spreading widely. A new initial form of political working class and socialist organisation began to appear in the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, which sprang up and united militant elements in the trade-union movement with left elements in the National Congress. The first Workers' and Peasants' Party was formed in Bengal in February, 1926; others followed in Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab. These were united in 1928 in the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party, which held its first Congress in December, 1928. This political expression, still suffering from many forms of initial confusion, but revealing the growing new forces, accompanied the new wave of working-class awakening, the first signs of which began to appear in 1927.

At the Delhi session of the Trade Union Congress in the spring of 1927 (which was attended by the British Communist M.P., Shapurji Saklatvala), and still more markedly at the Cawnpore session later in the year, the emergence was revealed of challenging militant voices within the leadership of trade unionism. It became speedily clear that the new working-class leadership had the support of the majority of Indian trade unionists, although the slow procedure of registration of actual voting strength delayed the final

official recognition of the majority until 1929. The First of May in 1927 was for the first time celebrated in Bombay as Labour Day—the symbol of the opening of a new era of the Indian labour movement as a conscious part of the international labour movement.

1928 saw the greatest tide of working-class advance and activity of any year of the post-war period. The centre of this advance was in Bombay. For the first time a working-class leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and operating as a single force in the economic and political field. The response of the workers was overwhelming. The political strikes and demonstrations against the arrival of the Simon Commission in February placed the working class for the moment in the vanguard of the national struggle; for both the Congress leadership and the reformist trade-union leadership had frowned on the project and were startled by its success. Many of the Bombay municipal workers were victimised and discharged for their participation; a further strike compelled their reinstatement.

Trade-union organisation shot up. According to the Government's figures trade-union membership in Bombay, which in the three years 1923-26 had only advanced from 48,669 to 59,544, reached 75,602 by 1927, leapt forward to 95,321 by March, 1928, and to 200,325 by March, 1929. Foremost in this advance was the famous Girni Kamgar (Red Flag) Union of the Bombay mill-workers, which started during the year with a membership of only 324, and, according to the Government's *Labour Gazette* returns, had reached 54,000 by December, 1928, and 65,000 by the first quarter of 1929. Meanwhile the older Bombay Textile Labour Union, founded in 1926, which stagnated under the reformist leadership of N. M. Joshi, Secretary of the Trade Union Congress, and which had the official encouragement of the Government and the employers, moved, according to the same official returns, from 8,436 in October, 1928, to 6,749 in December, 1928. The choice of the workers was evident. The strength of the Girni Kamgar Union lay in its system of mill committees, close to the workers.

The strike movement during 1928 totalled 31½ million working days, or more than the previous five years together. Although the Bombay textile workers were the centre, the movement was spread over India. Of the 203 disputes, 111 were in Bombay, 60 in Bengal, 8 in Bihar and Orissa, 7 in Madras and 2 in the Punjab; 110 were in the cotton and wool textile industry, 19 in jute, 11 in the engineering workshops, 9 on the railways and in the railway workshops, and 1 in coal-mining. Towering over all the rest was the Bombay textile strike, the greatest strike in Indian history, in which the entire labour force of 150,000 workers stood united for six months from April to October against every form of pressure and Government violence. The strike was originally directed against measures of rationalisation and a 7½ per cent wage cut, and was extended, as it developed, to a wide series of demands. The reformist leadership originally opposed the strike, N. M. Joshi describing their position as that of "lookers-on," but were drawn into the movement. After every attempt to break the strike had failed, the Government appointed the Fawcett Committee, which recommended the withdrawal of the 7½ per cent wage cut and conceded certain other demands of the workers.

A critical point had thus been reached by the opening of 1929. The working-class movement was advancing in the forefront of the economic and political scene. The old reformist leadership was being thrust aside. The mission of the British Trades Union Congress in 1927-28, in which imperialism had placed great hopes ("the interest which the British Trades Union Congress has lately taken in Indian labour conditions may be very beneficial, if it leads to the better organisation of Indian labour unions and the expulsion of the communist elements," *London Times*, June 14, 1928), had failed in its objective of securing the affiliation of the Indian Trade Union Congress to the reformist Trade Union International in Europe. The alarm of the Government was unconcealed. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in his speech to the Legislative Assembly in January, 1929, declared that "the disquieting spread of communist doctrines has been causing anxiety," and announced that the Govern-

ment would take measures. "The growth of communist propaganda and influence," records the Government annual report on "India in 1928-29," "especially among the industrial classes of certain large towns, caused anxiety to the authorities." Liberalism in England echoed the alarm. "Experience of the past two years," stated the *Manchester Guardian* in August, 1929, "has shown that the industrial workers in the biggest centres are peculiarly malleable material in the hands of unscrupulous communist organisers." The Indian national Press joined in the outcry. "Socialism is in the air," proclaimed the *Bombay Chronicle* in May, 1929; "for months past, socialistic principles have been preached in India at various conferences, especially those of peasants and workers." The Reformist leaders, feeling the ground slipping from under their feet, demanded drastic action. "The time has come," declared Shiva Rao, Chairman of the Executive of the Trade Union Congress, already in May, 1928, "when the trade union movement in India should weed out of its organisation mischief-makers. A warning is all the more necessary because there are certain individuals who go about preaching the gospel of strike."

In 1929 the Government acted and turned its full offensive to counter the rise of the working-class movement. The Public Safety Bill had been introduced in September, 1928, with the object, according to the official report, "to curb communist activities in India", but had been rejected by the Legislative Assembly; in the spring of 1929 it was issued as a special Ordinance by the Viceroy. The Whitley Commission on Labour was appointed. The Trades Disputes Act was passed to provide conciliation machinery, prohibit sympathetic strikes and limit the right to strike in public utility services. The Bombay Riots Enquiry Committee was set up, and recommended that "the Government should take drastic action against the activities of the communists in Bombay"; it further raised the question whether the Trade Union Act should not be so amended "as to exclude communists from management in registered trade unions."

5. THE MEERUT TRIAL

In March, 1929, the Government's main blow fell. The principal active leaders of the working-class movement were arrested from all over India and brought to the small inland town of Meerut, far from any industrial centre, for trial. One of the longest and most elaborate state trials in history opened.

Thirty-one leaders were originally arrested, and one more was subsequently added. Their names may be recorded: for, whatever their varying subsequent roles or activities, they stand as pioneers of the Indian working-class movement; and many of them are still today among the best leading forces of the Indian working class. They were:

S. A. Dange,
Kishorilal Ghosh,
D. R. Thengdi,
S. V. Ghate,
K. N. Joglekar,
S. H. Jhabwalla,
Shaukat Usmani,
Muzaffar Ahmad,
Philip Spratt,
B. F. Bradley,
S. S. Mirajkar,
P. C. Joshi,
A. A. Alve,
G. R. Kasle,
Gopal Basak,

G. M. Adhikari,
M. A. Majid,
R. S. Nimbkar,
Vishwa Nath Mukherji,
Kidar Nath Sehgal,
Radha Raman Mitra,
Dharani K. Goswami,
Gouri Shankar,
Shamsul Huda,
Shib Nath Banerjee,
Gopendra Chakravarty,
Sohan Singh Josh,
M. G. Desai,
Ayodhya Prasad,
Lakshman Rao Kadam,
Dharamvir Singh.

The thirty-second, subsequently arrested, was Lester Hutchinson, an English journalist, who after the arrests, took on the editorship of the *New Spark*, and was thereon also charged in the trial.

Three Englishmen were included. When these three representatives of the English working-class movement stood in the dock with Indian workers, and eventually went to prison with them, this was a historic demonstration of living international working-class unity, shattering the old barriers and constituting a landmark of deep significance for

the future fraternal relations of the British and Indian peoples.

The arrested leaders of the Indian working-class movement bore themselves in a manner which revealed that the Indian working-class movement, even though still only in an initial stage of organisation, had reached full consciousness and dignity of its role. The speeches of the defence remain among the most valuable documents of the Indian labour movement. A new India was revealed in them.

By its role in this trial the Indian labour movement lived up to the highest standards of the international labour movement, and gave an example and an inspiration for those who have today the responsibility to carry forward the flag of labour and socialism in India.

The Government dragged out the trial for three and a half years—four critical years of India's history, during which the best leaders of the working class were thus removed. It was admitted that no act could be brought forward to prove the charge. Thus the High Court Judge summed up:

"It is conceded that the accused persons have not been charged with having done any overt illegal act in pursuance of the alleged conspiracy."

The Prosecutor declared:

"The accused were not charged with holding communist opinions, but with conspiring to deprive the King of his sovereignty of India. It was unnecessary for the purposes of the case to prove whether the accused did actually do anything; it would suffice if only conspiracy could be proved."

There was no "conspiracy." The socialist principles of the accused were open and openly proclaimed; the work of labour organisation was equally open. There was no "criminal force." There was only the organisation and leadership of the labour movement.

The real charge was revealed in the indictment, which charged the prisoners with "the incitement of antagonism between capital and labour," "the creation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, Youth Leagues, Unions, etc." and "the

encouragement of strikes." The entire weight of the evidence was concerned with this activity, especially trade-union activity. Of one of the prisoners, the Secretary of the Bengal Jute Workers' Union, the Prosecutor declared that his "career in the conspiracy began when he participated in the Calcutta Scavengers' strike." The dominant motive of the trial was laid bare by the judge when he declared in his summing up:

"Perhaps of deeper gravity was the hold acquired over the Bombay textile workers, illustrated by the 1928 strike, and the revolutionary policy of the Girni Kamgar Union."

Yet this trial, as historic a trial for the suppression of a rising labour movement as that of the Dorchester Labourers a century ago in British labour history, was conducted under a Labour Government, which accepted "full responsibility" for it ("We accept full responsibility.... The Secretary of State is energetically backing up the Government of India": Dr. Drummond Shiels at the Labour Party Conference at Brighton in 1929). "The machinery of the law must operate," was the judgement of the *Daily Herald* on June 25, 1929. "The trial should be expedited as quickly as possible," wrote Sir Walter Citrine on October 1, 1929, in answer to the appeal of the Indian Trade Union Congress to the British Trades Union Congress; "the offence with which the accused are charged is a political offence and one which in the opinion of the General Council does not directly affect the Indian trade-union movement as such." Later, after the trial was over and the Labour Government out of office, in 1933 the National Joint Council of the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party issued a pamphlet stating that "the whole of the proceedings from beginning to end are utterly indefensible and constitute something in the nature of a judicial scandal."

In January, 1933, savage sentences were awarded: transportation for life for Muzaffar Ahmad; twelve years' transportation for Dange, Ghate, Joglekar, Nimbkar and Spratt; ten years' transportation for Bradley, Mirajkar and Usmani; and so down to the lightest sentence of three years'

rigorous imprisonment. The international agitation which followed was successful in securing drastic reduction of these sentences on appeal.

6. WORKING CLASS RECOVERY AFTER MEERUT

The first years after the Meerut arrests were a difficult period for the Indian labour movement. The Meerut trial, although, as in every such case, sowing deep the seeds for the future strength and victory of the movement, dealt a heavy immediate blow.

The Indian working class, at such an early stage of development, could not easily at once replace the leadership which had been removed. The strike movement of these years of economic crisis met with heavy defeats. In the critical years of the national struggle which followed, the political role of the working class was weakened—as had been the intention of imperialism.

Difficulties in the trade-union movement also followed. The victory of the left-wing majority in the Trade Union Congress, on the basis of superior strength and practical work of organisation achieved in the preceding two years, was finally realised at the Nagpur Trade Union Congress at the end of 1929. The old reformist leadership finding themselves in a minority, refused to accept the democratic decision of the majority and split the Trade Union Congress, carrying away the unions supporting them to form the Trade Union Federation. "The proceedings of the Executive Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress have revealed beyond doubt that the majority of its members are determined to commit the Congress to a policy with which we are in complete disagreement" declared the statement issued in the names of N. M. Joshi, Shiva Rao, Giri, Dewan Chamanlal and others, who further affirmed: "We have no doubt that they will be carried by a large and decisive majority in the Congress. Under these circumstances, we have to dissociate ourselves completely from the resolutions of the Executive Council and we further feel that no useful

purpose will be served by continuing our participation in the proceedings of the Congress."

The left leadership, however, which came into control of the Trade Union Congress lacked coherence, being composed of very diverse elements and a further split took place mainly on the question of the independent political role of the working class. The Communist section which held this view formed the Red Trade Union Congress.

These splits seriously weakened the trade-union movement but the working class fought on through separate strike struggles not only for its economic demands but also against victimisation, that is, for the democratic right of association. This can be seen from the increase in the number of strikes from 141 in 1929 to 148 in 1930 and 166 in 1931, involving more than 100,000 workers every year. The Communists of the Red Trade Union Congress led these struggles and by the year 1933, the Government had to admit with chagrin that though the Meerut leadership was still kept in jail, the Communist "menace, however, remains and has intensified" (*India*, 1932-33).

All these separate strike struggles laid the basis for the big strike wave in 1934 directed against the "rationalisation" scheme of the millowners—the system of intensifying labour and greater exploitation. The sweep and intensity of the wave could be seen from this that while in 1933 there were 146 strikes involving 164,938 workers and resulting in 2,168,961 working days being lost, in the year 1934 there were 159 strikes involving 220,808 workers and covering 4,775,559 working days, that is more than twice the figure for the previous year. The textile general strike in Bombay lasting from April to June and in Sholapur from February to May, despite intense repression, was clear proof that the working class had resurrected its scattered forces, reforged its unity and thrown up a new crop of militant leadership.

The Government struck again. An Emergency Powers Ordinance was brought into operation and Communists and trade-union leaders were detained without trial. The Communist Party was declared illegal. More than a dozen legally registered trade unions were declared illegal, the

Young Workers' League was banned, firing was employed to crush the militant and revolutionary organisation of the working class.

It was out of this mighty strike struggle that the move began to re-unite the working class organisations. The Red Trade Union Congress and the All-India Trade Union Congress came together in 1935, and S. H. Jhabwalla, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress, declared in his Report to the 15th Session in Bombay in May 1936:

"From my personal experience I can easily say without fear of exaggeration, that it has been a pleasure for me to work with the 'Reds' in whom I have found some of the most persistent defenders of unity and the day-to-day interests of the working class."

From the platform of this session an appeal was made to the reformist leaders of the National Federation of Trade Unions to agree to unite the central leadership of the workers because "nothing but a nation-wide offensive of the working class" could fight back the offensive of the owners and the Government. They were assured that, in the interests of unity, all their conditions would be met provided they agreed to two basic principles: first, acceptance of class struggle as the basis of trade-union movement; secondly, internal trade-union democracy. The leaders of the Federation resisted immediate structural unity. So a joint board was set up in 1936 and it was only in 1938 at Nagpur that the National Federation of Trade Unions affiliated itself to the All-India Trade Union Congress with equal representation to the two sections in the governing body of the Congress. The Trade Union Congress once again became the uniting body of Indian trade unionism as a whole; only the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad under Gandhist inspiration remaining outside.

In the political field also new developments took place. The Workers' and Peasants' Parties which in view of their two-class character, could only form a transitional stage of growth, and no permanent basis for political working-class organisation, passed out of the picture after Meerut. Though

the Communist Party was declared illegal in 1934, such measures could not check the growth of socialist and communist influence and of Marxist ideas. New accessions of strength were won after the close of the national Civil Disobedience struggle of 1930-34, as the younger national elements proceeded to draw the lessons of that struggle.

In 1934, a group of younger left nationalist elements, who had come partially under the influence of Marxist ideas in this period, formed the Congress Socialist Party. The special character of the Congress Socialist Party was that its membership was made conditional on membership of the National Congress; the party thus constituted a wing within the Congress and discouraged mass membership. The objective effect of this programmatic and constitutional basis (whatever the intentions of the progressive elements among its founders) inevitably represented an attempt to subordinate the independence of the working-class movement to the control and discipline of the existing dominant leadership of the National Congress, which meant—in practice—of the bourgeoisie. This contradiction at the root of the Congress Socialist Party showed itself throughout its history in its role at every critical stage of the working-class struggle. The contradiction showed itself further in the conflict between the left-wing of the party, which sought co-operation with the Communist Party and the working-class forces, and the dominant reactionary right-wing, which was hostile to the Communist Party and to all independent working-class activity.

7. UPSURGE ON THE EVE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Alongside the National Congress election victories and the formation of the Congress Provincial Ministries, there was a new upsurge of trade-union activity resulting in the big strike wave of 1937-38, part of the world strike wave consequent on the temporary capitalist revival due to the armament race.

The trade-union movement spread, leading to the formation of several new unions and powerfully influencing even

the workers in seasonal factories and unorganised industries. The number of registered unions which was only 29 in 1928, 75 in 1929 and 191 in 1934 rose to 296 by 1938 with a recorded membership of 261,000, but these trade unions were really centres which could mobilise many times that number.

In 1937, the number of strikes reached 379 or the highest number since 1921 and within seventeen of the 1921 record; 647,801 workers participated in strikes, or the highest number on record and over thrice the recorded trade-union membership; and the total number of working days covered was 8,982,000, or the highest since 1929.

In 45 per cent of the strikes, the workers were successful in securing concessions.

The peak was the Bengal Jute Strike which soon developed, despite intense repressive measures, into a general strike in the jute industry, drawing in 225,000 workers in all. The discontent had been gathering since the depression of 1929 when 130,000 workers were thrown out, wages were cut and the most intense "speed-up" and exploitation was resorted to through "rationalisation" measures. Between 1931-36, though the number of looms increased only by 13 per cent, the production of jute yardage increased by 65 per cent. "When the world-wide depression set in, they were able to maintain a reasonable margin of profits," declared Sir Alexander Murray, one of the jute capitalists of Bengal. The jute industry was entering a period of revival since 1936 and the jute workers began their strike in February for restoration of wage-cuts and adequate wages. It lasted till May, despite the measures taken by the reactionary Ministry under Fazlul Huq to crush it on the plea that it had no economic basis and that it was "being used by Communist leaders to pave the way to a revolution in India." The workers held on unitedly, secured the solidarity of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee which made an appeal to the public to contribute to the Strike Fund of the jute workers, and finally won recognition of their union and acceptance of the principle of restoration of wage-cuts by the owners.

A notable feature of the strike wave was its extension to Ahmedabad, the previous stronghold of Gandhist class-

peace unionism; here the Bombay Congress Government brought into operation the hated Section 144 of the Penal Code, prohibiting meetings of five or more, a section against which the National Congress had consistently protested.

The high water-mark of the strike wave was the Cawnpore Textile Strike which, beginning in 1937, developed into a general strike drawing in 40,000 workers and also those of other industries in sympathy, such as those of the Match Factory, Iron Foundry and Burmah Shell Depot. The award of the Congress Enquiry Committee was accepted by the workers but the owners refused to implement it and a general strike was launched in 1938 to compel the owners to implement the award. Here a model of Congress-Labour unity was achieved, the United Provinces Congress Committee declaring in a resolution "The workers of Cawnpore are fighting not only for themselves but for the entire working class of India. . . . (and) are fighting for human rights" and calling on the public "to give every assistance to the strikers in the great struggle that they have begun." After a fifty-five days' struggle in which Hindu and Moslem workers unitedly foiled the attempts of the owners' agents to foment communal riots, a notable victory was achieved, including recognition of the union.

The Bombay Protest Strike of November 1938 of over 90,000 workers, with the full support of the United Trade Union Congress against the dangerous Industrial Dispute Bill (imposing conciliation machinery with a four months' delay on the right to strike, as well as imposing regulations in respect of registration of unions, favourable to company unions) was a powerful demonstration of working-class consciousness and a warning to the Bombay Congress Government to implement the Congress election pledges in respect of trade-union rights.

In the ranks of railway labour also, a powerful revival was seen despite the reformist leadership at the top. The Bengal Nagpur Railway Strike involving 40,000 workers lasted for a month and won the sympathy of the Faizpur Congress. The All-India Railwaymen's Federation dominated by reformist leaders had quietly watched the

retrenchment of 17 per cent of the workers, wage-cuts, greater intensification of labour leading to a 50 per cent rise in accidents and greater profits to the railway companies. But the wave of trade-union activity led to unification of the reformist and Red Flag Unions on the Great Indian Peninsular Railway and to a mass membership of over 20,000. A similar revival was seen on the Bombay Baroda and Central Indian, the Madras and Southern Maratha and the South Indian Railways. An example of the tactics adopted by the railway management to fight the growing menace of militant trade unionism was the offer to recognise the reformist union on the Bombay Baroda and Central Indian Railway "as long as Mr. Jamnadas Mehta was associated with it and so long as Communists were excluded from it." But the unification of the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Federation of Trade Unions, and the unmistakable urge of the railway workers to unite rival unions on the railways laid the basis for fighting such disruptive moves.

By 30th October 1938, the foundation anniversary day of the Trade Union Congress, it had a membership of 325,000 organised workers. The working class, through its powerful political protest actions against imperialist misdeeds, in support of national demands and by its daily battles against imperialist repression, already stood out as a strong, organised section of the anti-imperialist forces.

Alongside these developments and because of them the political role and influence of the labour movement was felt inside the national movement. A wide campaign supported by several trade unions and led by radical Congressmen, developed behind the demand for lifting the ban on the Communist Party. Despite the ban, the widened civil liberties under the Congress Ministries made it possible for the Communist Party to bring out the *National Front*, a weekly in English and *Kranti* in Marathi, the language of the majority of the working class in Bombay. These served to popularise the ideas of the United National Front against imperialism and the growing menace of Fascism. It canvassed support of all sections of the people for the struggles of

workers, peasants and the States peoples. Communists were elected to important executive posts in various Congress Committees and there were no fewer than 20 in the All-India Congress Committee, the highest elective body in the Congress. Repeated attempts to achieve left unity as between Communists and Congress Socialists to fight the compromising policies of the dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress, met with limited success due to the heavy opposition of the reactionary section of the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party.

8. THE WORKING CLASS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

With the outbreak of war in September, 1939, a decisive period opened for the national liberation movement in India and the Indian working class.

While the national leadership temporised, it was the labour movement that opened the offensive with a one-day political protest strike on October 2, 1939, when 90,000 workers in Bombay downed tools—the first anti-war strike in the world labour movement. From a strong, organised section, the working class was coming forward as the vanguard of the anti-imperialist forces in India.

The sharp rise in the cost of living in consequence of the war, without a corresponding rise in wages, was admitted by Dr. T. E. Gregory, Economic Adviser to the Government of India, who said that by December "the general index of primary commodity prices had risen to 137" if September prices were taken as 100.

Against these economic burdens of war, the working class opened the offensive with the Dearness Allowance Strike of 175,000 textile workers in Bombay on 5th March, 1940. The strike was complete and lasted for 40 days despite wholesale arrest of the strike leaders and terrorisation of workers when police entered working-class houses and beat up the inmates. All sections of workers demonstrated their solidarity when in response to the call of the Trade Union Congress 350,000 workers went on a one-day strike on March 10.

The Bombay strike unleashed a wave of strikes all over the country; 20,000 textile workers of Cawnpore, 20,000 municipal workers in Calcutta, jute workers of Bengal and Bihar, oil workers of Digboi in Assam, coal-miners of Dhanbad and Jharia, iron and steel workers of Jamshedpur and workers in scores of other industries, struck work demanding dearness allowance. It was clear that the working class as a whole was on the move.

The Government took the offensive once more. The *National Front* and *Kranti* were banned. Defence of India Rules were brought into operation. A country-wide round-up of Communists and other radical elements took place and in January 1941 Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, declared that of the 700 who were detained in jail without trial "about 480 persons were almost without exception, either acknowledged Communists or else active supporters of the Communist programme of violent mass revolution." There were 6,466 convicted of offences and over 1,664 restricted, externed or interned.

Alongside this onslaught by the authorities against the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist leadership also opened an offensive against the Communists and expelled from its party those suspected of being Communists or in sympathy with Communism, on the grounds that they failed to accept the Gandhist theory of non-violence. "There are irresponsible people... thoughtless and reckless enough to foster the spirit of violence... he (Gandhi) was able to see that our (Congress Socialist) influence was exercised on the side of peaceful and ordered mass struggle" (circular of the General Secretary, Jaya Prakash Narayan, to members of the Congress Socialist Party). During this period the majority of the militant members of the Congress Socialist Party left it to join the illegal Communist Party, being acutely dissatisfied with a socialist leadership which thus abandoned the basis of class struggle to surrender to Gandhist theories of non-violence. The Congress Socialist Party remained mainly a group of leaders without any mass organisation or real basis in the working class.

The attack of the authorities did not succeed in breaking

the organisation or active role of the Communist Party. Although deprived of almost its entire leadership, the Party continued to function; a few successfully evaded the vigilant police hunt; and illegal revolutionary propaganda was combined with legal mass action. Numerically small and placed under severe handicaps, it could not decisively influence events; but it stood out unmistakably as the dominant party of the working class and a vital force in Indian politics.

At the same time the country-wide united action of the working class led to the completion of unity in the central trade-union organisation. The National Federation of Trade Unions completely merged with the All-India Trade Union Congress, but not until it had insisted on and secured a clause in the constitution that "all political questions as well as questions of strikes and affiliation with any foreign organisation be decided by a three-fourths majority." This clause was accepted by the militant section of trade unionists in the interests of unity though it seriously hampered the organised trade-union movement from reaching a clear-cut political lead in the ensuing period.

The disadvantages of this limitation were shown in relation to the new problems which arose with the further development of the war, following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the Japanese entry into the war and overrunning of South East Asia, the establishment of the United Nations alliance, and the increasing Japanese menace to India.

The Cawnpore session of the All-India Trade Union Congress met in February, 1942. Conditions of life had in the meanwhile considerably worsened for the working class. The Japanese armies were overrunning Malaya and Burma and threatening India.

The central leadership of the trade-union movement, however, failed to give a clear united lead. The majority supported a Communist resolution advocating unconditional support to the war in the interests of national defence, and calling on the working class to fight for a Charter of National Demands to make national defence effective. But this resolution, though supported by the majority failed

to secure the requisite three-fourths majority. Each political group in the trade-union movement was accordingly left free to advocate its own policies.

The period 1942-45 was a period of great trial for the working class and the country as a whole. The Government's resort to unrestricted inflationary measures to pay for the war, the hoarding and blackmarketing of vital necessities, the rise in the cost of living by 200 per cent; the arrest of the national leaders and the intense brutal country-wide repression that followed; the national anger roused by the Government policy, were such that any one of them taken singly would have sufficed to goad the working class to go on strike. But it was a striking tribute to the sound class instinct and advanced international consciousness of the working class and of the Communist Party that led them, that it realised the changed situation, arising from the war of anti-fascist liberation, with the participation of the Soviet and Chinese peoples, against Axis fascist aggression, and held back from strikes, though instances were numerous of provocations and attempts at bribing a section of workers to bring about a strike. It is significant also that the only strikes of any real magnitude were those at Ahmedabad, the stronghold of Gandhian trade unionism, and at the Jamshedpur Iron and Steel Works, which were at least as much due to the owners as to the workers.

During this period, the working class led by the Communist Party came forward resolutely against imperialist repression. The Trade Union Congress gave a call to observe September 25, 1942, as Anti-Repression Day. It popularised the ideas of national defence and launched a vigorous campaign for the daily needs of the people such as price control and rationing, the fight against black-marketing and hoarding, and warned the people against falling a prey to imperialist provocation or Japanese fascist blandishments.

This led to a growth in the trade-union movement and to the influence of the Communist Party in the trade-union movement. The legalisation of the Communist Party in 1942 after 8 years of illegality, was a gain for the working-class movement. The growth of the trade-union move-

ment can be seen from the following figures of membership of the All-India Trade Union Congress:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Trade Unions</i>	<i>Registered Membership</i>
1938	188	363,450
1940	195	374,256
1941	182	337,695
1942 (February)	191	269,803
1943	259	332,079
1944	515	509,084
1947	608	726,000

The many-sided activity of the Communists during the period of crisis in 1942-45, despite the heavy odds, led to a signal growth in the membership of the party. Starting with a bare 4,000 in July 1942, it had jumped to 15,000 by May 1943, 30,000 by January 1944 and over 53,000 by the summer of 1946.

An unsuccessful attempt to split the unity of the trade-union movement was made during the war by the adherents of M. N. Roy, who passed over to complete identification with British imperialist interests. His adherents established in 1941 the so-called "Indian Federation of Labour" which was subsidised by the Government with a monthly grant of Rs. 13,000, but—despite lavish publicity—failed to win any effective basis in the working class. A Government Enquiry in September 1946, finally estimated that the All-India Trade Union Congress, with 700,000 members, was the decisive representative organisation of Indian trade unionism.

The Congress Socialist Party, which after 1940 consisted mainly of a group of leaders, endeavoured to build its underground organisation after the August 1942 resolution of the Congress and the arrest of the Congress leaders and on this basis sought to organise the spontaneous popular upsurge which followed the arrest of the Congress leaders. In these endeavours they were not successful in winning the support of the working class. Notwithstanding this, the fact that they brought out a stream of illegal literature glorifying the

spontaneous heroism of the people, and organised in some measure acts of sabotage, won for them a measure of influence over the younger nationalist sections, particularly students, though not among the working class. After the war they developed a very sharp anti-Communist and anti-Soviet line of propaganda.

The achievement and advance of the working-class movement during the war represented a memorable stage of development. By the close of the war and victory over fascism the labour movement stood out as the most organised, most disciplined and most relentless fighter against imperialism, as the great post-war mass struggles further demonstrated. It had succeeded in uniting and keeping united within its ranks Hindus, Moslems, and Untouchables, despite the sharpening of conflict among the top leadership in the general political movement. The working class had won its place as the fighting vanguard in the further battles for national and social liberation.

In the stormy period that followed the second world war, with the great national upsurge and extending mass strike movement, this advance of the working class and of its political role as the vanguard of the nation entered into a new stage, giving rise to new problems. There was a serious setback to working-class unity, following the establishment of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, favoured by the Government and the big employers, and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, sponsored by the Congress Socialist Party, alongside the All-India Trade Union Congress. Nevertheless, the movement for united action won increasing support among the adherents of all three organisations.

In the political field, the Communist Party established its decisive leadership, demonstrated in the first general election on the basis of universal suffrage, at the beginning of 1952, when the Communist Party and its allies emerged as the second political force in the country. The Socialist Party (which had ended the previous organisational connection with the Congress after the Congress became the government party) merged with the Praja Party, a dissident grouping which had broken away from the Congress, to

form the Praja-Socialist Party in order to combat the influence of the Communist Party. The programme of the Praja-Socialist Party replaced the aims of socialism by a reversion to Gandhian social doctrines, and in the tactical field sought to counter the peasants' revolt by supporting the *Bhoodan* campaign (appeals to landlords on ethical grounds to make gifts of land to poor and landless peasants). The right-wing leadership of the Praja-Socialist Party, closely linked with European Social-Democracy and with American penetration of India, failed to gain ground, and met with increasing opposition from the rank and file membership. Important sections of the left wing membership broke away, and eventually merged with the Communist Party. The test of State elections, municipal elections and parliamentary bye-elections, as well as the developing mass struggles, revealed that the Communist Party and its allies of the developing Democratic Front continued to win extending support.

The Programme of the Communist Party of India, first adopted in 1951, constituted a significant development of the present period, marking the path forward for the advance of the Indian people, under the leadership of the working class in alliance with the peasantry, to full independence from imperialism and to the establishment of people's democracy in India.

Chapter XIII

PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

THE LEGACY of imperialist rule in India has left many problems and obstacles in the path of development of democracy in India. Imperialist policy, especially in the period of the decline and downfall of its direct rule, deliberately fostered every reactionary social force to provide a buttress for its rule, and promoted every division and antagonism among the people in order to disrupt the forces of national revolution.

This policy was signally manifested in two spheres: the maintenance of the Indian Princes, and the fostering of communal division, especially in the form of Hindu-Moslem antagonism.

1. THE PRINCES

There were 563 States with a total area of 712,000 square miles and a population of 81 million (in the 1931 census) or nearly one-quarter (24 per cent) of the Indian population. They ranged from States like Hyderabad, as large as Italy, with 14 millions of population, to petty States like Lawa with an area of nineteen square miles, or the Simla Hill States, which are little more than small holdings. The variety of their status and jurisdiction defies any generalised description. There were 108 major States whose rulers were directly included in the Chamber of Princes. There were 127 minor States which indirectly returned twelve representatives to the Chamber of Princes. The remaining 328

States were in practice special forms of landholdings, with certain feudal rights, but with very limited jurisdiction. In the more important States a British Resident held the decisive power; the lesser States were grouped under British Political Agents, who managed bunches of them in different geographical regions.

While plenty of petty despotism, tyranny and arbitrary lawlessness was freely allowed, all decisive political power lay in British hands. As Marx wrote already in 1853:

"The native Princes are the stronghold of the present abominable English system and the greatest obstacles to Indian progress."

This policy of assiduous preservation of the Princes as puppets was by no means consistently followed until the modern period. In the first half of the nineteenth century, while the British domination was still vigorous and confidently advancing, a policy of expanding absorption of the decaying States into British territory, under any and every pretext, was actively followed. But the turning point came with the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt of 1857 was in respect of its leadership the last attempt of the decaying feudal forces, of the former rulers of the country, to turn back the tide of foreign domination. The Revolt was crushed; but the lesson was learned. From this point the feudal rulers no longer presented the main potential rivals to British rule, but the main barrier against the advance of the awakening masses. The policy was consciously adopted of building more and more decisively on the feudal elements, on the preservation of the Princes and their States, as the bulwark of British rule.

The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 proclaimed the new policy: "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes as our own." The purpose of the policy was frankly described by Lord Canning, in 1860:

"It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillahs (or British Districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States without political power, but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion

I have no doubt; and the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever."

The preservation of the Indian States from the dissolution which would have been sooner or later their fate was thus an instrument of modern British policy, and by no means an expression of the survival of ancient institutions and traditions in India. As Professor Rushbrook-Williams, the principal Government propagandist on behalf of the Princes, declared in 1930:

"The rulers of the Native States are very loyal to their British connection. Many of them owe their very existence to British justice and arms. Many of them would not be in existence today had not British power supported them during the struggles of the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain in the present troubles and in the readjustments which must come. . .

"The situation of these feudatory States, checker-boarded all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful loyal Native States."

The Butler Committee Report in 1929 laid down in formal terms the obligation of the British power to maintain the Princes against "rebellion or insurrection":

The promise of the King Emperor to maintain unimpaired the privileges, rights and dignities of the Princes carries with it a duty to protect the Prince against attempts to eliminate him and to substitute another form of government."

It is doubtful whether there has been any regime in history to parallel that of the Indian puppet Princes under British protection. There were a few of the Indian States administered on levels above the low levels of British India, and which even carried out partially realised schemes of compulsory education or established very rudimentary forms of restricted advisory representative bodies. But these were exceptions. In the majority the servitude, despotism and oppression exceeded description. Corruption and oppression have been sufficiently familiar in the history of Asiatic despotisms. But these have at any rate had to face the self-

acting checks of the fear of external aggression or internal risings. Both these checks were removed by the British protection; the power of supervision to control or remove rulers in case of flagrant misgovernment was in practice used, not to check misgovernment, but to check disloyalty.

British rule not only preserved and artificially perpetuated this regime over two-fifths of India, but as the national movement of liberation advanced, so imperialism increasingly threw the weight of its policy on the alliance with the Princes, and sought to make the Princes its counter-force against the national movement. In 1921 the Chamber of Princes was instituted. The role of the Princes was the corner-stone of the Federation Constitution projected by the Act of 1935. The Princes were given over two-fifths of the representation in the Upper House, and one-third of the representation in the Lower House.

The advance of the national democratic movement began more and more powerfully to sweep past the rotten barriers of the puppet States. The States People's Conference, which organised the popular movement in the States, rapidly grew in strength. Active struggles for elementary civil rights developed in a whole series of States.

This advance of the popular movement in the States was also reflected in changes in the policy of the National Congress. Until a late stage the National Congress refrained from taking up directly agitation and activity in the Indian States. The policy of "non-interference" was deliberately followed, in the alleged hope of attaining some kind of solidarity with the puppet Princes instead of with the 80 million Indians oppressed under them. "Up to now," Gandhi declared at the Round Table Conference, "the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes by refraining from any interference in their domestic and international affairs."

This disastrous policy was defeated by events. The violent repression conducted by the Princes against the most elementary beginnings of a popular movement or sympathy with the national cause, aroused ardent demands that the National Movement should awaken and take up the fight. The question of the support of the civil disobedience move-

ment in the States became a burning issue in the National Congress.

The Haripura Session of the National Congress in 1938 had declared the general principles of Congress policy in relation to the States:

"The Congress therefore stands for full responsible Government and the guarantee of civil liberties in the States and deplors the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of the States."

At the same time the Haripura resolution laid down a measure of self-limitation of Congress activity in the States:

"The internal struggle of the people in the States must not be made in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organisations should be started and continued, where they exist already in the States."

By 1939 the Tripuri Session of the Congress partially revised this position:

"The Haripura policy was conceived in the best interests of the people in order to enable them to develop self-reliance and strength. This policy was dictated by the circumstances but it was never conceived as an obligation. The Congress has always possessed the right, as it is its duty, to guide the people of the States and lend them its influence. The great awakening that is taking place among the people may lead to a relaxation or a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress has imposed upon itself, thus resulting in the ever increasing identification of the Congress with the States peoples."

Pursuant to this policy, national leaders took an active part in the States peoples' movements. The Ludhiana Session of the All-India States Peoples' Conference was held in February 1939 and Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as President and Pattabhi Sitaramayya as Vice-President. The Conference welcomed the progress made by the States people in their struggle for "responsible Government" and declared that:

"the time has come when this struggle should be coordinated with the wider struggle for Indian independence of which it is an integral part. Such an integrated all-India struggle must necessarily be carried on under the guidance of the Congress."

After the war, the All-India States Peoples' Conference met in Udaipur in December 1945 and adopted the goal of "attainment by peaceful and legitimate means of full responsible Government by the people of the States as an integral part of a free and Federated India." Nehru declared in his Presidential address:

"It is inevitable that the vast majority of States which cannot possibly form economic units, should be absorbed into neighbouring areas. . . . The rulers of such small States may be given some kind of pensions and may be further encouraged to serve in a different capacity if they are fit enough for this.

"Of other States, which may be fifteen to twenty in number and which will form autonomous units in the Federation, the Rulers *can remain as constitutional heads* under a democratic system of Government. Some of these Princes and Rulers belong to ancient Houses intimately connected with history and tradition."

The policy of compromise with the Princes placed the Congress leadership in opposition to the popular movement of revolt against princely rule which developed with overwhelming force in the revolutionary upsurge following the second world war. During these years the Indian States became storm-centres of the Indian political situation. Spontaneous struggles against feudal autocracy in the States developed, and were met with the most violent repression, the high water mark being reached with the struggle of the people of Kashmir in 1946 against the Dogra dynasty under the clear and categorical slogan "Quit Kashmir."

In the Mountbatten Settlement of 1947 the Princes were placed in a specially privileged position. The doctrine of paramountcy was declared to have lapsed, so that the supposed transfer of power to the new Dominion Governments did not include transfer of control of the Princes. The Princes became in juridical form sovereign independent States, with perfect liberty to enter or not enter the new Dominions on their own terms. This formal independence could not in practice be maintained. Within a year all the States had acceded, on the basis of agreements negotiated by their rulers, to one or the other Dominion, with the exception of Hyderabad, which finally acceded to the Indian

Union after military operations; a conflict also continued between the two Dominions with regard to Kashmir. The majority of the smaller States were grouped together to compose larger units (a plan which had been already projected by imperialism); but the structure of the States as a special sector covering two-fifths of India, and cutting across all natural and national boundaries, remained, and the integrity of the major States was maintained.

Thus the Dominion Governments completed the policy of compromise with the Princes, and of maintaining the Princes at the head of their States, under cover of a facade of constitutional reforms. In a speech on March 16, 1948, V. P. Menon, Secretary to the States Ministry, outlining the policy adopted "to retain the Princely Order, functioning as Constitutional Rulers", declared:

"Though the overwhelming majority of the people desired the Rulers to be eliminated, the States Ministry under Sardar Patel, guided by Gandhi's views, had agreed to accord to the Rulers this status."

In a further Press statement on March 28 he reiterated that there was no intention to "exterminate" the Princes, adding that in fact, should any of them die childless, the title would not be allowed to lapse, and that in such a case a relative, or a citizen of the State or Dominion distinguished by public service, would be "raised to the peerage." Thus the Princes were not only to be accepted as a temporary concession, they were to be maintained in perpetuity.

Such a policy runs completely counter to the necessities of democratic development in India.

The complete abolition of the Indian States, the wiping out of the relics of feudal oppression and the unification of the Indian people in a real Federation, based on the natural geographical-economic-cultural divisions and groupings of the people, is vital for the unity of the Indian nation, for the progressive development of India and for the realisation of democracy in India.

2. COMMUNAL DIVISIONS

The imperialist policy of division of the Indian people through the instrument of the Princes was closely paralleled by the policy in relation to the Hindus and Moslems.

It is necessary here to distinguish between the general question of communal divisions and the special political forms which this question has assumed in the recent period with the formation of the separate state of Pakistan. The latter raises important political questions which will be considered in the next section; but it is first necessary to examine the general problem of communal and especially Hindu-Moslem antagonism.

The type of question here arising, known as the "communal" problem or question of the relations between the different religious "communities", mainly the Hindus, representing nearly two-thirds of the population of the former undivided India, the Moslems, representing nearly one-fourth of the population, and other minor religious groupings, totalling one-tenth of the population, has special features in India. But it is by no means a type of question peculiar to India.

Under certain conditions the mingling of diverse races or religions in a single country can give rise to acute difficulties, sometimes even riots and bloodshed. Orangemen and Catholics in Northern Ireland; Arabs and Jews in Palestine under the Mandate; Slavs and Jews in Tsarist Russia; so-called "Aryans" and Jews in Nazi Germany; these are familiar issues of the twentieth-century world, without needing to go back to earlier examples. Anti-semitism in Europe, "Apartheid" in South Africa, "Jim Crow" in the United States, or the colour bar in the British Empire illustrate varying types of these racial-religious divisions and antagonisms.

Historical experience makes it possible to define very precisely the conditions under which this type of problem arises.

In Palestine before the British Mandate, Arabs and Jews lived peacefully together for centuries. Since British

rule was established, violent conflicts continuously grew and developed to the point of open war, with imperialist intrigues assisting now one side and now the other to maintain division and prevent common co-operation against imperialism.

In Tsarist Russia, especially during the later years of the decline and impending fall of Tsarism, pogroms of the Jews blackened the pages of its history and sickened the conscience of the world. These pogroms were widely regarded as uncontrollable outbreaks of the ignorant and savage Russian masses. Only the subsequent publication of the secret-police records, finally proved what had long been a matter of accusation, and had been sufficiently visible from the peculiar relations of the Government with the "Black Hundreds" or hooligan "patriotic" organisation, that the pogroms were directly inspired, initiated and controlled by the Government. From the day that the Russian people won power over their own country, the pogroms completely ceased. In the Union of Soviet Republics the most diverse races and religions live happily together.

In Germany under the Weimar Republic, Germans and Jews lived peacefully together. Under Nazi Germany the pogrom regime transferred its old base from Tsarist Russia to Central Europe.

There is thus no natural inevitable difficulty from the cohabitation of differing races or religions in one country. The difficulties arise from social-political conditions. They arise, in particular, wherever a reactionary regime is endeavouring to maintain itself against the popular movement. They are the surest sign of the impending downfall of a regime.

In India a similar type of problem developed under the rule of British imperialism.

In India before partition (1941 Census) there were over 254 million Hindus, representing 65.93 per cent of the population, of whom 190 millions were in British India, where they were 64.5 per cent of the population, and 65 millions (70.57 per cent of the States population) were in the States. There were 92 million Moslems or 23.81 per cent of the

population of whom the proportions in British India were 79 millions or 26.84 per cent and in the States over 12 millions or 13.93 per cent.

Prior to British rule there was no trace of the type of Hindu-Moslem conflicts associated with British rule, and especially with the latest period of British rule. There were wars between States which might have Hindu or Moslem rulers; but these wars at no time took on the character of a Hindu-Moslem antagonism. Moslem rulers employed Hindus freely in the highest position, and vice versa.

The survival of this traditional character of pre-British India could still be traced in the Indian States, where the Simon Report had occasion to refer to "the comparative absence of communal strife in the Indian States to-day". In fact, however, as the popular movement began to extend and grow in strength in the Indian States, the familiar methods of reactionary division of the people began to show themselves also in the Indian States.

The Simon Report, as we have seen, in dealing with the Hindu-Moslem antagonism, had to refer to two peculiar facts: first, its predominance in directly ruled British territory and comparative absence in the Indian States, although the intermingling of populations occurred equally in both, and the boundaries between the two were purely administrative; second, to the fact that in British territory it had grown in the recent period and that "in British India a generation ago... communal tension as a threat to civil peace was at a minimum". *Communal strife is thus a special product of British rule, and, in particular, of the latest period of British rule, or of the declining imperialist ascendancy.*

In the earlier period the principle of "Divide and Rule" used to be more openly proclaimed than in the more careful later days. As far back as 1821, a British officer writing under the name of "Carnaticus" in the *Asiatic Review* of May, 1821, was declaring that "*Divide et impera* should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military". Gandhi has related how Hume, the joint founder of the Congress, frankly confessed to him that the

British Government was "sustained by the policy of Divide and Rule."

In 1910 J. Ramsay MacDonald wrote with reference to the foundation of the Moslem League:

"The All-India Moslem League was formed on December 30, 1906. The political successes which have rewarded the efforts of the League... have been so signal as to give support to a suspicion that sinister influences have been at work, that the Mohammedan leaders were inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and that these officials pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and the Mohammedan communities by showing the Mohammedans special favour."

Subsequent evidence has become available which has more than confirmed the "suspicion."

In 1926 Lord Olivier, after he had held office as Secretary of State for India, and had had access to all the records, wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

"No one with a close acquaintance with Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialism in India in favour of the Moslem community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy, but more largely as a makeweight against Hindu nationalism."

In more recent times the same basic outlook has been expressed in a more subtle form. Thus *The Times* wrote in 1941:

"To emphasise the essential importance of Hindu-Moslem agreement does not imply that the British are pursuing a policy of 'divide and rule'. *The divisions exist and British rule is certain as long as they do.*"

The evidence for the official policy is thus based on very authoritative statements of leading official representatives.

It is in the modern period, however, that this general policy was turned into an administrative system. Parallel with the advance of the national struggle and the successive stages of constitutional reforms went the process of promoting communal divisions through the peculiar electoral system adopted in connection with the reforms. This new

departure was initiated in 1906—that is, exactly at the time of the first wave of national unrest and advance.

In order to understand the background of this development it is necessary to recognise the seeds of social-economic rivalry which affect, not the Hindu and Moslem masses, but the rising middle class. The growth of trade, commerce and education had begun much earlier in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, that is, in the Hindu-majority areas, than in the Moslem areas of the North. The Hunter Commission Report in 1882 found that the Moslem average in University education was only 3.65 per cent. To this day the percentage of literacy is considerably higher among the Hindus than among the Moslems. Hence, with the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie, conditions of sectional rivalry existed which could easily assume a communal guise. The great landlords who formed the main basis of the Moslem upper class, viewing with displeasure the advance of the trading and industrial bourgeoisie, regarded that advance as “Hindu”—the menace of the “Hindu bania”, etc. In the rising middle class a basis for communal antagonism existed in the conflict between rival trading groups, with the greater backwardness of the Moslem sections; in the competition for administrative posts, based on educational qualifications where the Moslems found themselves at a disadvantage; and, as the beginnings of representative institutions began to develop, in the restricted electoral qualifications, based on property and education, which weighted the balance against the Moslems and stimulated the demand for separate representation. This was the soil which made it easy for official policy to play on the latent antagonisms and build upon them a whole political system.

Already as far back as 1890 a Moslem group under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, close to the Government, had made proposals for special privileges and places for Moslems. The project was, however, opposed by responsible Moslem opinion; the *Moslem Herald* condemned it as something sure to “poison the social life of districts and villages and make a hell of India.” Nothing more was heard of the project at the time.

In 1906, however the British Government, in face of the first widespread popular national movement in India, took the responsibility of inaugurating a policy which was indeed destined to "poison the social life of districts and villages and make a hell of India." A Moslem deputation presented themselves to the Viceroy and demanded separate and privileged representation in any electoral system that might be set up. The Viceroy, Lord Minto, immediately announced his acceptance of the demand:

"You justly claim that your position should be estimated, not merely on your numerical strength, but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service that it has rendered to the Empire. I am entirely in accord with you."

It was subsequently revealed by the Moslem leader, Mohamed Ali, in the course of his Presidential Address to the 1923 National Congress that this Moslem deputation was "a command performance", arranged by the Government. That the scheme originated with the Government authorities was indicated by Lord Morley's letter to Lord Minto at the end of 1906:

"I won't follow you again into our Mahometan dispute. Only I respectfully remind you once more that it was *your* early speech about their extra claims that first started the M. (Moslem) hare."

In this way the system of communal electorates and representation was inaugurated, striking at the roots of any democratic electoral system. It would be difficult to imagine a device more calculated to promote separatist communal organisation and antagonism. And, indeed, the organisation of the separate Moslem League dates from December, 1906.

The purpose of driving a wedge between the two communities was most sharply shown, not only by the establishment of separate electorates and representation, but by giving specially privileged representations to the Moslems. A most elaborate system of weighting was devised. Thus, to become an elector under the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Moslem had to pay income tax on an income of 3,000 rupees a year, the non-Moslem on an income of 300,000 rupees; or the Moslem graduate was required to have three years'

standing, the non-Moslem to have thirty years' standing. The volume of representation showed a similar method of weighting. By this means it was hoped to secure the support of a privileged minority, and to turn the anger of the majority against the privileged minority, instead of against the Government.

This system was successfully extended and elaborated in the subsequent constitutional schemes and reached the climax in the 1935 Constitution. By the 1935 Act separate representation was provided, not only for the Moslems, but for the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians, and the Depressed Classes, as well as for Europeans, Landholders, Commerce and Industry, etc. In the Federal Assembly, out of 250 seats, 82, or one-third, were reserved for the Moslems, representing under one-fourth of the population, while the "general seats" for the overwhelming majority of the population were cut down to 105 or two-fifths, and out of these 19 were reserved for the "scheduled castes" (depressed classes). Such was the apotheosis of electoral gerrymandering devised by imperialism.

The effect of this electoral policy, expressing a corresponding policy in the whole administrative field, was to give the sharpest possible stimulus to communal antagonism.

Behind the communal antagonisms, which were promoted to protect the system of exploitation and imperialist rule, lay social and economic questions. This is obvious in the case of the middle-class communalist competing for positions and jobs. It is no less true where communal difficulties reach the masses. In Bengal and the Punjab the Hindus include the richer landlord, trading and moneylending interests; the Moslems are more often the poorer peasants and debtors. In other cases big Moslem landlords will be found among Hindu peasants. Again and again what is reported as a "communal" struggle or rising conceals a struggle of Moslem peasants against Hindu landlords, Moslem debtors against Hindu moneylenders, or Hindu workers against imported Pathan strike-breakers. No less significant has been the sinister appearance of communal riots (fomented by unknown hands) followed by police

firing and deaths, in any industrial centre where the workers achieved an advance, as in Bombay in 1929 after the great strike movement, or in Cawnpore in 1939 after the great strike victory of 1938. The weapon of reaction, and its social economic purpose to break the solidarity of the workers is visible.

The Hindu and Moslem masses in India have not and cannot have different objectives. There is no such things as a separate Moslem poverty and servitude and a Hindu poverty and servitude, but an Indian poverty and servitude. In the hundreds of thousands of Indian villages, the overwhelming majority of Hindus and Moslems live under the same burdens of landlordism, the same exactions of money-lenders, under the same grinding imperialism, and the attempt to promote divisions between them is only the attempt to protect this system of exploitation.

The final solution of the communal question lies along the lines of social and economic advance. In the trade unions and the peasant unions, Hindus and Moslems unite without distinction or difference (and without feeling the need of separate electorates); and common bonds of class solidarity, of common social and economic needs destroy the artificial barriers of communal as of caste divisions. Herein lies the final positive path to the solution of the communal question. Communal antagonisms will only be finally and completely overcome by the advance of the mass movement on the basis of the interests of the masses and by the advance of the general democratic movement.

But at the same time a complete democratic solution requires to take into account the newly emerging questions of regional or national claims to autonomy or self-determination, which in the recent period become temporarily confused and entangled with the Hindu-Moslem issue. These questions were reflected in the growth of the Moslem League to a mass organisation and the emergence of the demand for a separate State of Pakistan, culminating in the partition of India by the Mountbatten Award and the formation of the Dominion of Pakistan.

3. MULTI-NATIONALISM AND PAKISTAN

Before coming to the latest questions of multi-nationalism and Pakistan, it will be necessary to examine shortly the background of the development of the Moslem League and of Congress-League relations.

The Moslem League was founded in December, 1906. As in the case of the original foundation of the National Congress, British official policy played a considerable part also in the foundation of the Moslem League. In the words of a British official reporting to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, at the time:

"I must send your Excellency a line to say that a very, very big thing has happened today. A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of 62 millions of people (Moslems) from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition (Congress)."

Lady Minto adds (in her *India, Minto and Morley*) that very much the same view was taken at Whitehall.

During its early years the Moslem League was a narrow communal organisation, appealing primarily to the upper-class Moslem landowners. But as in the case of the Congress, the currents of national anti-imperialist feeling soon began to make themselves felt also within the Moslem League. By 1913 the Moslem League had adopted the aim of "self-government within the Empire" for India and "co-operation with other communities" for this object. Negotiations between the Congress and the Moslem League were opened, and by 1916 the Lucknow Pact of Congress-League unity was signed. This Pact, while accepting the system of separate electorates, proclaimed the common aim of Dominion Status to be striven for by both organisations. A joint session of the Congress and the League was held at Lucknow. At the Congress session the veteran leader Tilak declared:

"It has been said, gentlemen, by some that we Hindus have yielded too much to our Mohammedan brethren. I am sure I represent the sense of the Hindu community all over India when I say that we could not have yielded too much... when we have to

fight against a third party, it is a very great thing, a very important event, that we stand on this platform united, united in race, united in religion, united as regards all different shades of political creed."

Similarly the League leader, M. A. Jinnah, who had been most active in promoting Congress-League unity, presiding over the League session declared:

"I have been a staunch Congressman throughout my life and have been no lover of sectarian cries. But it appears to me that the reproach of separatism sometimes levelled at the Mussalmans is singularly inept and wide of the mark when I see this great communal organisation rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of a united India."

In the stormy upsurge following the first world war, the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity were forged still closer. The alliance of the Congress led by Gandhi and the Khilafat Committee of the militant Moslem leaders with the Ali brothers in the forefront, developed a powerful joint front of struggle against the Government for the aim of Swaraj. Enthusiastic crowds demonstrated in the streets hailing Hindu-Moslem unity. The official Government Report for 1919 was compelled to record the "unprecedented fraternisation between the Hindus and Moslems... extraordinary scenes of fraternisation."

During this great period of national upsurge the Moslem leaders and masses proved their militancy alongside the Congress. The Moslem leaders, the Ali brothers and Hussein Ahmed Madani boldly preached political consciousness to the army and were sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment for it. The Moplah peasants of Malabar, rising spontaneously against landlord and imperialist oppression, battled fearlessly, showing marvellous heroism and capacity for struggle and sacrifice.

The Khilafat leaders were the first to demand that Swaraj be defined as complete independence. It was at Ahmedabad in 1921, that Maulana Hasrat Mohani made this demand. It is worth noting that it was Gandhi who led the opposition to it, saying that "the demand has grieved me because it shows a lack of responsibility."

Similarly the Moslem League at its Amritsar Session

as early as 1919 passed a resolution calling on the Moslems in India not to join the Indian army.

In June 1922 a joint session of the Khilafat and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema at Lucknow passed a resolution that the best interests of India and the Moslems demand that in the Congress creed the term "Swaraj" be substituted henceforth by the term "complete independence".

Unfortunately the Congress leadership in those days opposed this proposal on the ground that it involved a "fundamental change in the Congress constitution."

The unity achieved in the Congress-Khilafat struggle was not maintained. The abrupt calling off of the struggle by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership led to a rift. When Gandhi called off the Non-co-operation movement in February, 1922, all the Khilafat leaders protested against this abandonment of the struggle.

The subsequent period of frustration opened the way for the renewal of Congress-League separation and Hindu-Moslem antagonism. The imperialists utilised this favourable development to the full. In the succeeding years formidable communal riots replaced the previous united mass struggle for freedom. Communal reaction came to the forefront. In opposition to the Moslem League, the Hindu Mahasabha was organised on an all-India basis in 1925 under the presidency of Lajpat Rai. The National Congress and the Moslem League united in boycotting the Simon Commission in 1927; but renewed attempts to reach an agreement in the All-Parties Conference of 1928 ended in failure.

Thus, the 1937 elections, the first elections under a relatively wider franchise for the Provincial Assemblies under the new Constitution of 1935, found the Congress and the Moslem League in full opposition. The Congress won an overwhelming majority in the general seats and nearly half the total of all the seats in the Provincial lower houses (715 out of 1,585 seats) but made little headway in Moslem seats, contesting only 58 of the 482 Moslem seats and winning 26 (15 in the North-West Frontier Province and only 11 in all the rest of the country). On the other hand owing to the sharp division among different sections and groups, the

Moslem League made a very poor show and won only 4.6 per cent of the total Moslem votes (total Moslem votes 7,319,445: Moslem League votes 321,772).

Following the 1937 elections the Moslem leadership made unofficial approaches to the leadership of the Congress for an agreement in relation to the Provincial ministries to be formed and the allocation of seats. The Congress, however, at this point felt in a strong position to reject the Moslem League approach, repudiate its claims to any political role and establish the claim of the Congress to represent the Indian nation as a whole. In a letter to Jinnah in January 1937 Nehru declared:

“In the final analysis there are only two forces in India to-day—British imperialism and the Congress representing Indian nationalism.... the Moslem League represents a group of Moslems, no doubt highly estimable persons, but functioning in the higher regions of the upper-middle classes and having no common contact with the Moslem masses and few with the Moslem lower middle class.”

From this stage conflict between the Congress and the Moslem League became increasingly sharp. The Moslem League under the skilful leadership of Jinnah set itself to strengthen its organisation, extend its basis of support among the Moslem masses and consolidate the various dissident Moslem groups and organisations so as to make the Moslem League the main organisation of the Moslems in India. Nor was this policy without success. During the period 1937-45 a decisive change took place in the position and relative strength of the Moslem League as it won increasing mass support among the Moslems. The membership of the Moslem League which had only totalled 1,330 by 1927 increased in 1938, according to its claim, to hundreds of thousands, and by 1944 to an officially claimed figure of some 2 millions. The 1946 elections reveal the changed position. In the Central and Provincial Legislative Assembly elections the Moslem League won 460 out of the 533 Moslem seats. There can be no doubt that during this period the Moslem League had established its position as the major political organisation among the Moslems in India.

What were the reasons which led to the mass growth

in the following of the Moslem League during this period? Several factors may be discerned.

First, the political ferment of the past decade had drawn new masses, including previously backward sections, into the first forms of political consciousness. Both the Congress and the Moslem League grew rapidly in strength during this period. Between 1935-36 and 1938-39 the Congress membership multiplied ninefold to 4.4 millions. But only a small portion of these were Moslems. In January, 1938, according to a press statement issued by Nehru, out of 3.1 million members of the Congress only 100,000 or 3.2 per cent were Moslems. The overwhelming majority of the newly awakened sections of the Moslems turned to the Moslem League as their political organisation.

Second, within the Moslem League there developed a younger, radical section, pressing forward a democratic programme against the resistance of the older reactionary leadership on top. In certain districts and provinces, as in the Punjab and Bengal, these younger sections conducted an active campaign for social and economic mass issues, winning mass support among the poorer Moslems. The success of this policy was demonstrated in the 1946 elections in the Punjab, with the collapse of the old previously dominant Unionist Party before the assault of the Moslem League.

Third, this mass growth of the Moslem League and poor representation of the Moslems in the Congress undoubtedly also reflected certain political, organisational and tactical weaknesses in the Congress approach. It had been the original aim of the Congress to include equally Hindus and Moslems. But in practice this aim was never realised in the proportions of membership won. We have already seen how the abandonment of the mass Non-co-operation movement in 1922 at the height of the struggle dealt a blow to the unity which had been forged in the Congress-Khilafat alliance. In the period of the Congress provincial ministries the rejection of the Moslem League offer for an agreement represented an underestimation of its strength on the part of the Congress and provided a lever for the subsequent

intense anti-Congress agitation of the League. In the complex situation during the war and immediately preceding it, the degree of confusion, conflicting trends and vacillation of the political leadership of the Congress during this period (election of Bose as President and expulsion of Bose; passivity during the imperialist phase of the war; policy of neither helping nor opposing the war effort; individual satyagraha; the ill-starred August Resolution at the moment of the Japanese advance, followed by arrest of the leadership; difficult conditions of illegality, and sporadic disorders, disclaimed at the time by the leadership and subsequently acclaimed as a national struggle) and neglect of leadership in the war conditions of economic difficulty and famine, led to a measure of political disorganisation and demoralisation during the later stages of the war, weakening the appeal of a united national movement during this period.

Above all, the growth of the Moslem League reflected the failure of the Congress to make any serious consistent effort to reach out and appeal to the Moslem masses. The complete contrast of the situation in the North-West Frontier Province where the Khudai Khidmatgars led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan conducted serious mass work among the Moslems and held them firmly for the Congress, illustrated this. The Moslem masses were not attracted by the undeniably strong Hindu religious flavour of much Congress propaganda, especially of the right-wing leadership and Gandhi, despite the public non-communal platform of the Congress and the presence of outstanding patriotic Moslems in its ranks.

Here a serious share of responsibility has to be laid at the door of the dominant leadership of the national movement. We have already seen how, in the first great wave of national awakening in the pre-war years, the leaders of the militant national movement, Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose and others, sought to build on a basis of Hindu religion for their agitation and to identify the national awakening with a revival of Hinduism. By this act they cut off the Moslem masses from the national movement, and opened the way

to the Government's astute counter-move with the formation of the Moslem League in 1906.

Nor was this disastrous error confined to the Nationalists or so-called "Extremists" of the older period. It continued in the modern period, and was most prominent in the entire agitation and propaganda of Gandhi. In all Gandhi's propaganda the preaching of Hinduism and his religious conception and preaching of the general political aims were inextricably mixed. At the very height of the national Non-co-operation movement of 1920-22 when Gandhi stood as the leader of the united national movement and had the responsibility to make his every utterance as the leader of a united movement, he was publicly proclaiming himself "Sanatanist Hindu" (a kind of extremist, as it were "ultra-montane" Hindu):

"I call myself a Sanatani Hindu, because—

- 1) I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avatars and re-birth.
- 2) I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma, in a sense in my opinion strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense.
- 3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular.
- 4) I do not disbelieve in idol-worship."

In order to understand what the term "Sanatanist" conveys to a wider public, it is sufficient to recall Nehru's description:

"The Hindu Mahasabha... is left far behind in this backward moving race by the Sanatanists, who combine religious obscurantism of an extreme type with fervent, or at any rate loudly expressed loyalty to British rule."

Even when appealing for Hindu-Moslem unity, Gandhi made the appeal not as a national leader appealing to both sections, but as a Hindu leader: the Hindus were "we"; the Moslems were "they":

"We shall have to go in for *tapasya*, for self-purification, if we want to win the hearts of Mussalmans."

At any moment throughout the modern national struggle Gandhi could pass from Congress politics to a Hindu reform

movement (as in the crisis of the struggle in 1932-33) and vice versa.

Thus the chosen leader of the National Congress and its principal representative in the public eye, appeared throughout as the active leader of Hinduism and of Hindu revival. Is it any wonder that under these conditions (and while the principal crime in this respect was that of Gandhi, the same methods were characteristic of a host of lesser lights in the Congress camp, especially those belonging to the Gandhist inspiration and tendency), with such an officially recognised leadership and propaganda, the National Congress should be widely stigmatised, not only by enemy critics, but even by a considerable body of general opinion, as a "Hindu movement"? It spoke much for their national devotion that a select body of Moslem leaders faithfully stood by the Congress under these conditions. But these methods could not win a mass Moslem following.

The British Government, in its exploitation of communal divisions, undoubtedly used an infamous weapon against the people's movement. But Tilakism and Gandhism helped to place that weapon in its hands.

There was, however, a further special factor which needs to be recognised in the growth of the mass following of the Moslem League especially after the adoption of the programme of Pakistan from 1940 onwards. The programme of Pakistan, which it will be necessary to consider in detail later, originally called for the establishment of separate sovereign states in Moslem-majority regions in north-western and north-eastern India. Subsequently the demand was developed to a claim for a separate sovereign Moslem State in six provinces. There were very strong grounds for criticism of this programme. But the emergence of this programme to the political forefront during the most recent period, and the wide mass support which it won among Moslems in these regions, revealed that it was to some extent reflecting, in however confused a form, genuine mass sentiments and aspirations. Behind the programme of Pakistan and the mass support which it obtained could be discerned a new element appearing in Indian national life.

The wider mass expansion of the national movement was bringing to the surface new forms of national consciousness reflecting the varying national elements of the Indian people. In the case of those national groups, especially in north-west and north-east India where the Moslem religion had a predominant position among the population, the slogan of Pakistan to a certain extent reflected, although in a distorted form, and gathered up this newly developing national consciousness. This clearer emergence of the multi-national character of the Indian people, with the advance of the national movement had been foreseen by Stalin when he wrote in 1912:

"In the case of India, too, it will probably be found that innumerable nationalities, till then lying dormant, would come to life with the further course of bourgeois development."

Unity of the Indian people in their struggle for freedom against imperialism and the undeniably progressive aim of economic and political unity of a future free India does not mean that the Indian people must therefore be regarded as a single homogeneous whole. On the contrary, there are strong grounds for recognising the multi-national character of the Indian people. The National Congress had already partially recognised these groupings with its demarcation of the cultural, linguistic groups of the Indian people in place of the existing arbitrarily divided provinces and with its recognition of the fullest autonomy for these groupings in the Constitution of a future free India. But the Congress during this period stopped short of recognising the national character of these groupings and opposed the full right of self-determination.

It is, however, necessary to draw a sharp distinction between this question of the multi-national character of the Indian people and the programme of Pakistan as put forward by the Moslem League.

The demand for Pakistan (though not yet the name) was originally adopted by the Moslem League in 1940. Previously, when the proposal had been originally put forward by a few individuals during the thirties (the poet Iqbal in

1930 and some students at Cambridge in 1933) the political leaders of the Moslem League, in their evidence to the Joint Committee on Constitutional Reform in 1933, had rejected it as a "student's dream" and "chimerical and impracticable." As late as 1937 the annual session of the Moslem League proclaimed the aim of "the establishment in India of full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic states." But the Lahore session of the Moslem League in 1940 adopted the resolution:

"Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Moslem League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Moslems unless it is designed on the following basic principles: viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into Regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Moslems are numerically in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."

Subsequently this very vague resolution received sharper definition. In an interview on December 10, 1945 Jinnah defined the Moslem League claim in the following terms:

"The deadlock in India is not so much between India and the British. It is between the Hindu Congress and the Moslem League . . . Nothing can or will be solved until Pakistan is granted. . . . There will have to be not one, but two constitution-making bodies—one to frame and decide on the constitution of Hindustan and the other to frame and decide on the constitution of Pakistan.

"We could settle the Indian problem in ten minutes if Mr. Gandhi would say: 'I agree that there should be Pakistan. I agree that one-fourth of India, composed of six provinces—Sind, Baluchistan, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Bengal and Assam—with their present boundaries, should constitute the Pakistan State.'

"It is possible there will have to be an exchange of populations if it can be done on a voluntary basis. There will also doubtless have to be frontier adjustments. . . . All that can come, but first it is necessary to take the present provincial borders as boundaries of the future Pakistan. Our Pakistan Government will probably be a Federal Government modelled on the lines of autonomous provinces. . . .

"I personally do not doubt the sincerity of the British Govern-

ment. But I do doubt the sincerity of those who profess to see any hope of a settlement outside the granting of full Pakistan to the Moslems of India."

Finally the Moslem Legislators' Convention in April, 1946, defined Pakistan in the following terms:

"That these zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East and Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West India, namely Pakistan zones where the Moslems are in a dominant majority be constituted into a sovereign independent State."

The theory of Pakistan was based on the conception of Hindus and Moslems as two "nations." Hindus and Moslems might be intermingled all over India and in every region of India; Hindus and Moslems might be members of a single family; but they were proclaimed to be two "nations." It is obvious that this attempt to base nationality on religion (together with the degree of common culture associated with religion) runs contrary to every accepted historical and international experience of the character of a nation. It would be as practical to regard the Catholics of Europe as a "nation". And indeed the logic of this argument would imply that, if the definition of a nationality coincides with being a Moslem, then all Moslems from North Africa to India would be a single "nation" and the theory of Pakistan would find its final completion in Pan-Islamism.

The teaching of Marxism on the question of what constitutes a nation was summarised by Stalin in the well-known definition in his *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*: "A nation is a historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." To this Stalin added the important negative point: "It must be emphasised that none of the above characteristics is by itself sufficient to define a nation. On the other hand it is sufficient for a single one of the characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation."

By this test it is evident that the Moslems of India could not be called one "nation". Their languages are different, territories are different and cultures are different. Ethnically

they are different. Between the Pathan and the Bengali Moslem, the only common feature is religion and some relics of old culture. But this is not sufficient to constitute a nation. The Jews in the old Russian empire inhabited different territories and spoke different languages, Stalin refused to call them a nation on the following grounds:

"If there is anything common to their life, it is their religion, common origin and certain relics of national character. All this is beyond question; but can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics affect the fate of these Jews more powerfully than the living social, economic and cultural environment that surrounds them?"

The question here involved is not a mere formal question of the definition of a nation. If it were merely a question of terminology, the controversy would be profitless. But the false starting-point of the attempt to base a nation on religion leads to a very serious political significance. Since in hard prosaic fact a nation can only exist on a definite territory, this theory created by political theorists and not sprung from the soil, resulted in the attempt artificially to carve out a territory for the supposed "nation". As soon as the geographical character of the original Pakistan demand of the Moslem League is examined, the weakness of this theory becomes manifest.

The six provinces designated to constitute Pakistan "with their present boundaries" included a total population of 107 millions. Of these the Moslems constituted 59 millions or 55% and the non-Moslems 48 millions or 45%. Thus the non-Moslems would constitute nearly half of this Moslem State, while some 30 million Moslems, or nearly two-fifths of the Moslems in India would remain outside it. This illustrates the obvious limitations of any attempt to settle the communal question of the closely intermingled Hindu-Moslem population on the arbitrary territorial basis.

When the Dominion of Pakistan was established by the Mountbatten Award in 1947, the partition of India which it carried out involved also the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Even so some 20 millions, or between one quarter and one-third of the new "Moslem State," were non-Mos-

lems, while some 30 million Moslems, or nearly two-fifths of the total number of Moslems in the previous undivided territory outside the States, remained outside Pakistan. This situation gave rise to murderous conflicts and massacres on both sides of the new frontiers, and to mass migrations resulting in millions of refugees.

The partition of India into the Dominions of the Indian Union and Pakistan was, therefore, in no sense a step forward of national liberation or national self-determination. Both States represented in fact a compromise of the national bourgeois leadership, in the one case, of the Congress, and in the other, of the Moslem League, with imperialism. The device of partition served to weaken and divide the democratic movement in India, to exacerbate communal antagonism throughout both Dominions, and to encourage mutual antagonism between the two Governments formed. Its blood-strained harvest was revealed in the murderous riots and massacres which followed the act of partition, and accompanied the flight of millions of refugees from their former homes.

These considerations should not, however, blind us to the degree of genuine national content which lay concealed behind the original Pakistan demand. The wide measure of popular support won for the Pakistan demand, and expressed in acclamation of the establishment of the Pakistan Dominion, revealed, not only response to communal agitation or the distortion of social and economic issues of mass discontent into communal forms, but also the emergence of new forms of national consciousness with the wider mass development of the national movement. The issue of Pakistan brought to the forefront the necessity of recognising the national question within India in the general programme of Indian liberation.

Any final solution of this question will need to be along democratic lines. The democratic principle of self-determination recognises that, where there exists a clear national demand in a given territory for self-determination, that is, where the majority of the people of a given territory clearly demand separate political institutions on the ground of their

distinctive national character and culture, then, provided this is geographically and economically possible, they have a right to such separate political institutions, since it would be indefensible to attempt to impose on them political institutions against their will. The consistent application of this democratic principle of self-determination offers the most fruitful lines for solving the multi-national problem of India and would provide the most favourable conditions for a voluntary union. Such a solution would conform to that already demonstrated with signal success in the treatment of the national question within the multi-national Soviet Union, and more recently in the Chinese People's Republic.

The recognition of this principle would mean that every section of the Indian people which has a contiguous territory, has its common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognised as having a just claim to play its part within a free India as a distinct nationality, with the right to exist as an autonomous state if it so wishes within the free Indian Federation (including the right to secede).

Thus, the free India of tomorrow might take the form of a federation or union autonomous states of the various nationalities such as the Pathans, Punjabis, Sindhis, Hindustanis, Rajasthanis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Assamese, Biharis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamils, Kannadigas, Maharashtrians, etc. Where there are interspersed minorities in the new states thus formed, their rights regarding their culture, language, education and so on would be guaranteed by statute and their infringement would be punishable by law. All disabilities, privileges, and discriminations based on caste, race or community would be abolished by statute and the infringement would be punishable by law.

The recognition of the right of self-determination, including secession, does not imply the desirability of separation. On the contrary, the interests of progressive democratic development in India powerfully require the unity of India. The unity of India is especially important for the most rapid advance of all its parts through common co-operation,

and for adequate all-India economic planning and development and the raising of social standards. But the union needs to be a voluntary union.

This policy has been put forward by the Communist Party of India, originally in a resolution of 1942 which represented the first serious study of the new problems of the multi-national character of the Indian people. It received a fuller definition in the Programme of the Communist Party of India adopted in 1951:

"The right of all nationalities to self-determination. The Republic of India will unite the peoples of the various nationalities of India not by force but by their voluntary consent to the creation of a common state.

"The present boundaries of the states in the Indian Union shall be recast and states shall be reconstituted according to the principle of common language. Princely states, where existing, shall be dissolved into the appropriate adjoining national states, and the foreign possessions shall be restored to the country and reconstituted on the same principle. The tribal area or areas where the population is specific in composition and is distinguished by specific social conditions or constitutes a national minority will have complete regional autonomy and regional governments, and full assistance for their development."

This line of approach offers the most favourable path towards a solution of these problems.

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Chapter XIV

INDIA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

THE DEVELOPMENT of the Indian national movement since the great mass struggles of 1930-34 up to the second world war fell into three clearly marked stages. First, there was the re-building of organisation after the heavy blows of repression, and the hammering out of new lines of policy, followed by the advance through the election victory of 1937, which was utilised by the right-wing leadership to establish Congress Provincial Ministries in the majority of the Provinces of British India. This was the achievement of the years 1934-37. Then followed growing crisis, sharp differentiation of right and left, consequent on disillusionment with the experience of the Congress Provincial Ministries, and the advance to new struggles, already visible in preliminary forms in the years 1938-39. This was accelerated and complicated by the conditions of the war and the profound crisis which the war brought for India and for the Indian national movement, and culminated in the great revolutionary upsurge after the second world war.

The course of the second world war brought India into the full stream of international politics.

1. BRITISH WORLD STRATEGY AND INDIA

Before coming to the special questions of the second world war it will be useful to touch briefly on the previous development and the role of India in British world strategy and

the attitude of the national movement to questions of foreign policy.

The concentration of British world strategy around the pivot of the domination of India can be traced with increasing clearness through the past two centuries. The eighteenth-century wars of Britain and France revolved primarily, not so much around the kaleidoscope of the shifting European constellations which appeared as their immediate cause, but around the struggle for the New World and for the domination of India. The loss of the United States increased the importance of India. When Napoleon directed his expeditions to Egypt and the Near East, he had before him visions of the advance to India. Through the nineteenth century Russia appeared as the bogey extending ever farther over Asia and threatening India. When Britain abandoned isolation at the beginning of the twentieth century, the first step in the abandonment of isolation was the alliance with Japan, and the revised Anglo-Japanese Treaty, when it was renewed, contained the formula for Japanese assistance in maintaining British domination in India. The conflict with Germany turned especially on the control of the Middle East, opening up the way to India.

India throughout provided the inexhaustible reservoir for Britain, alike of material and of human resources, not only for its own conquest, but for the whole policy of Asiatic expansion. A great part of the public debt of India was built up on this basis through wars conducted for the aims of British policy in other Asiatic countries, or even beyond the confines of Asia, and charged to India.

The size of the Indian Army and the enormous scale of expenditure upon it have been largely governed, not only by the needs of holding in subjection the people of India, but by the calculations of its use for wars and expansion beyond the frontiers of India.

The strategic importance of India to Britain increased in the period between the two world wars. The new Middle Eastern Empire and system of influence was built up on the basis of India. The concentration on the Cape route with the new naval base of Simonstown, to balance the possible

loss of effective control of the Mediterranean, and on the supposedly impregnable naval base of Singapore to command the gateway from the Pacific into the Indian Ocean, alike reflected the central concentration on the control of India and of the roads to India as the pivot of the Empire. As the passage through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal became increasingly precarious, the Imperial Air Line linking Britain with Australia through Baghdad, Karachi, Calcutta and Singapore, and with the Far East through India and Siam, became increasingly important as the life-line of the Empire. As Japan extended its hold on the Pacific and on the coast and riverways of China, the land route through Burma assumed a new importance.

Between the two key areas of British imperialist domination and influence, the Middle East and South East Asia, India has represented the pivot, and, from the standpoint of British policy, the indispensable base. In its critical battle against the colonial movements in Asia, British imperialism used India as its main military base, its source of supplies and even its recruiting ground for troops (until resistance of the national movement brought this to an end in the case of the war on Indonesia) for the purposes of reimposing colonial rule and suppressing the liberation movements in the neighbouring Asiatic countries in Burma, Malaya and Indonesia.

2. INDIA AND THE WAR (1939-42)

When Britain declared war on Germany in 1939, British policy in relation to India sought to follow the same lines as in 1914. India was to be a passive pawn of British policy, automatically dragged behind Britain without any attempt at consultation of its people. Within a few hours of the declaration of war, the Viceroy proclaimed India as a belligerent.

Events soon showed the difference of the situation in India from 1914. On September 14, the Working Committee of the National Congress issued its statement on the war. This statement laid down that "the Committee cannot asso-

ciate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere." Accordingly the National Congress posed the direct challenge to the British Government:

"The Working Committee, therefore, invites the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism. . . . Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?"

To this direct question the British Government issued a reply which was in fact a negative. This led to the resignation of all the Congress Ministries in October, 1939. In the summer of 1940, following the Nazi advance in Europe, the Congress made a new offer of co-operation conditional on the recognition of Indian independence and the establishment of a "Provisional National Government at the centre". Once again, however, this offer met with a negative reply from the British Government. This led the Congress to adopt an individual civil disobedience campaign under the leadership of Gandhi, which was inaugurated in October, 1940.

While the leadership of the Congress was engaged in these diplomatic interchanges with the Viceroy, the masses were already entering into movement. On October 2, 1939, 90,000 Bombay workers carried out a one-day political strike against the war and the repressive measures of imperialism. This was the first anti-war mass strike in any of the countries involved in the war. The resolution unanimously passed at the mass meeting on the Kamgar Maidan at the close of the strike proclaimed:

"This meeting declares its solidarity with the international working class and the people of the world, who are being dragged into the most destructive war by the imperialist powers."

The growth of the forces pressing for a decisive struggle against imperialism found its reflection not only in the ruthless Governmental attack on working class and peasant

forces and the radical nationalist elements from 1939-40 but also in the extremely limited and severely circumscribed nature of the struggle started by Gandhi in October, 1940. Lists of civil resisters were to be sent to him for scrutiny and sanction. Persons approved by him were required to inform the police beforehand where and when they proposed to offer a symbolic opposition to the war. Despite this, extensive arrests and imprisonments followed in the succeeding months.

Such was the situation of deadlock when the events of the latter half of 1941, the German attack on the Soviet Union, the British-Soviet Pact and the Japanese attack in the Far East and the extension of the British-Soviet Alliance into the wider alliance of the anti-fascist war front under the leadership of Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and China brought a profound change in the character of the war. Indian national opinion, though not in all its sections, was quick to respond to this. Nehru declared in 1941: "The progressive forces of the world are now aligned with the group represented by Russia, Britain, America and China." Thus a new opportunity confronted the British Government from the second half of 1941 to reach a wartime agreement with the national leadership.

The first reaction of the British Government was negative. Premier Churchill specifically excluded India, Burma and other parts of the Empire from the operation of the Atlantic Charter. This angered Indian national opinion and strengthened the tendencies hostile to the anti-fascist war alliance.

Nevertheless, the Government's release of the principal Congress leaders in December, 1941, represented the first step which was intended to open the way to new negotiations. By the end of December, 1941, the Bardoli resolution of the National Congress declared for the principle of armed resistance to the Axis as an ally of the United Nations, provided India could mobilise under a National Government. From outside India there developed the official American-Australian-Chinese pressure for a new policy, demonstrated by President Roosevelt's declaration that the Atlantic Char-

ter applied to "the whole world", the urging of self-government for India even during the war made by the Australian Minister for External Affairs and Chiang Kai-shek's visit to India in 1942.

By the spring of 1942 the question of co-operation of the National Congress in the anti-fascist war on the basis of the establishment of an Indian National Government had thus come to the forefront. If there was still resistance from British official quarters, the arrival of the Japanese at Rangoon in March helped to supply an urgent impetus.

On March 8, Rangoon fell.

On March 11, the Cripps Mission was announced.

But the Cripps proposals broke down on the crucial point of the refusal of a war-time National Government with effective powers. On the breakdown, even the *Calcutta Statesman* gave its verdict:

"The blame lies with the India Office and the official section of the Government of India."

3. THE AUGUST RESOLUTION AND AFTER (1942-45)

The National Congress, frustrated in its desire to co-operate, after a period of hesitancy and divided counsels, moved over towards non-co-operation as the weapon to enforce the national demand.

The Congress resolution on non-co-operation was put out in July and finally adopted in an amended form on August 8 (against an opposition vote of 13, led by the Indian Communist Party, whose restoration of legal rights on July 22 was a sign of its growing influence and strength).

This resolution reaffirmed sympathy for the United Nations and the demand for recognition of India as a free ally under a National Government for armed resistance to fascism in co-operation with the United Nations. But the concluding section laid down the programme of non-co-operation in the event of refusal of the national demand:

"The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on the widest possible scale so that the

country may utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle."

Intense controversy has raged round the August resolution. Before any criticism is made of it, it is necessary to understand that the Congress leaders felt driven to accept this desperate course because every effort to win co-operation on a free basis had failed. Nevertheless, the August resolution was undoubtedly ill-judged alike in its effects within India and in its effects on world democratic opinion. Politically the resolution revealed a fatal contradiction which betrayed the confusion of purpose that had led to its adoption. Between the preamble and the conclusion, there was a clear discord which no explanation could bridge. On the one hand, the character of the war since 1941 was recognised as no longer an imperialist war of rival imperialist camps, the outcome of which could be regarded with indifference, but as a war in which India was vitally concerned in the success of the camp of the United Nations, so that the aim of the resolution was declared to include "the success of the cause of the United Nations" and that India should become "an ally of the United Nations". The resolution specifically laid down the concern of the Congress "not to weaken in any way the defence of China or Russia" or "to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations". The final conclusion contemplated a course of action which, if carried, could only mean intense internal conflict and disorganisation in a major country of the Alliance, such as in practice would jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations and would facilitate an Axis victory, a course of action, which be it noted, was judged impermissible in 1939-40, when, the war was being fought "for imperialist aims" (in the words of the Congress), and when every proposal for a mass movement or for mass civil disobedience was rigidly opposed on the grounds that it would embarrass the war effort of British imperialism!

It is true that there was no serious intention of launching such a struggle, for which no preparation whatever was made by the leadership, but only for issuing a threat of struggle in order to negotiate. This fact which has been

again and again pleaded by the leadership in defence of their policy only emphasises the frivolity and bankruptcy of an approach that sought to meet a critically serious war situation with a policy of empty bluff which could at best be no more than a gamble.

Tactically, the resolution was no less ill-judged. The resolution provided the pretext for which imperialist reaction had been eagerly waiting in order to launch its attack. So long as the Congress stood out, with its unchallengeable anti-fascist record, as the decisive political force seeking to mobilise the Indian people for the common struggle of the peoples of the world against fascism, while imperialism, with its dubious pro-fascist record was revealed as the main obstacle to the mobilisation, the tactical position of imperialism was at a disadvantage. The moment the resolution was passed, the opportunity was seized by imperialism to claim that it stood for the defence of India against the threatened invasion by Japanese fascism, in contrast to the Congress attempts at disrupting that defence, to slander the Indian national movement as pro-fascist, pro-Japanese and as sabotaging the war effort of the peoples of the United Nations, and to make this the political basis for carrying out its policy of reactionary suppression against the national movement. The resolution was thus not a short cut to Indian freedom; it was capitulation to imperialist provocation, and its adoption meant walking straight into the imperialist trap.

The minority in the Congress (the Communist Party of India) which opposed the resolution had consistently given warning of this outcome. The anti-fascist working-class sections of the national movement represented by the Indian Communist Party had from the outset put forward a clear and consistent line in relation to the war of liberation through a positive response to the tasks and responsibilities raised by the war. They set out their positive alternative programme to non-co-operation in the critical situation:

1. To build up the United National Front in India, including the unity of the Congress, the Moslem League and all other political sections, on a common platform of resistance to fascism;

2. On the basis of such a National Front to press the demand for a settlement and for a national Government with the united support of all sections;

3. While pressing the just political demand, to participate wholeheartedly in the war effort and the mobilisation of the people, and to initiate unofficial measures of popular mobilisation under the leadership of the national movement in order to strengthen the popular war effort and capacity of national resistance to fascism;

4. Resolute rejection of all policies of non-co-operation as fatal to the interests of the Indian people.

But with the existing embitterment of national feeling, and the reactionary refusal by British ruling circles of the demand for a National Government, this policy was not yet able to win the support of the bulk of the national movement.

The Congress resolution was adopted on August 8. On the morning of August 9, all the principal Congress leaders were arrested. This provoked nationwide demonstrations and disorganised partial conflicts and disorders, which were met with violent and brutal repression by police and military action with wholesale firing and many killed and wounded.

Between August 9, 1942 and December 31, 1942, according to the summary of official statements, 62,229 persons were arrested; 18,000 detained under the Defence of India Regulations; 940 killed by police or military firing; and 1,630 injured through police or military firing.

The mass protests and national indignation following the arrests of the national leadership were spontaneous and wide-spread. But the sporadic disorders, unrest and confused and conflicting directives of individual groups and sections did not represent an organised Congress struggle. They were never authorised by the Congress and were publicly disowned by Gandhi in whose hands alone was placed the authority to launch a struggle. It was only later that the somewhat disingenuous attempt was made for the purpose of a temporary sectional political manoeuvre to treat the confused leaderless events of August 1942 and subsequent months as the "August Struggle".

The disorganisation of the national movement following the August events, the absence of any organised leadership

and absence of any clear line of policy, led to a period of frustration and confusion in the ensuing years alongside the political deadlock. It was during this period that the Moslem League rapidly grew in strength.

On May 6, 1944, Gandhi was released from confinement on grounds of health. He lost no time thereafter in announcing that the mass Civil Disobedience portion of the resolution of August 8, 1942, stood automatically cancelled since in 1944 he could not go back to 1942. But the deadlock continued.

One more attempt was made to resolve the deadlock in the summer of 1945. A provisional agreement was reached between the two parliamentary leaders in the Central Legislative Assembly of the Congress Party and of the Moslem League, for the formation of a Provisional National Government on the basis of parity between the Congress and the Moslem League. This proposal was placed before the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who flew to London for advice and returned with a new statement of policy announced by the British Government with a subtle change in the formula for representation from the terms agreed by the Congress and League representatives. In place of Congress-League parity the British plan laid down "Caste Hindu-Moslem parity". This modification, forcing the issue to a communal plane, guaranteed a breakdown. The Simla Conference of the representatives of the Congress, Moslem League and others which met in June, 1945, ended in a breakdown.

So it came about that by the end of the war, when all over the world peoples were advancing to liberation, India emerged from the war still completely subject as at its onset. Nevertheless, the conditions had matured for a gigantic new upsurge of the Indian people which was to shatter the foundations of the old system of British rule in India.

Chapter XV

THE END OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

THE VICTORY of the war of liberation over fascism unloosed a mighty wave of popular advance throughout the world.

In Europe the end of Nazi occupation was followed by the formation of progressive democratic governments based on the militant resistance forces, with the participation of the Communist Parties; even in the slower development of Britain, Toryism was swept from power by the electorate returning the first absolute Labour majority. While in Western Europe American intervention, through the Marshall Plan and subsidies, inflicted a check on this democratic advance by 1947, in the new democratic states of Eastern Europe the peoples sped forward to the establishment of people's democracy, embodying the rule of the working people and the ending of landlordism and big capitalism, and advanced to the building of Socialism.

In Asia the tide of revolutionary national liberation rose to heights never before paralleled. The Chinese Revolution achieved final and complete victory in 1949, with the sweeping out of imperialist domination and its satellites from the entire mainland of China. In South East Asia new liberated States were established by the popular liberation movements and their armies. These had fought and driven out the Japanese occupying armies, before the imperialist troops of the Western powers arrived to begin the long-drawn colonial wars of the subsequent years in order to attempt to destroy the newly-won freedom of the peoples and re-install the colonial system, either directly, or under

the transparent disguise of pliant puppets . But in Vietnam Malaya and Burma the liberation front of the peoples continued to maintain itself in the field against the assault of the imperialist and satellite armed forces; and the combined imperialist invasion of Korea, led by the United States to make the whole of Korea an American colony, ended in failure after three years of heavy warfare and barbarous mass destruction of civilians by the American invading forces.

In India the advance towards independence proceeded through more complex forms. There had been no Japanese occupation, as with China and South East Asia, and no armed liberation movement of the people. The upsurge of national revolt swept through India as in all countries at the end of the war. On the other hand, the unbroken continuity of the imperialist machine through the war, and the continuing domination of the representatives of the big bourgeoisie in the national movement, who actively opposed the revolutionary upsurge at the end of the war and even co-operated with the imperialist military chiefs and governors against it, created the possibility of a special kind of settlement in 1947. This settlement of 1947 ended British colonial rule in India, but established an alliance of the upper class forces on both sides in order to stem the advance of the popular revolution in India.

1. THE NATIONAL UPSURGE OF 1945-46

The Simla Conference breakdown in the summer of 1945 had revealed the impasse which British imperialist policy had reached. But it had also revealed the deep and seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the Congress and the Moslem League leadership. Among the masses, however, the desire for unity in the struggle against imperialism was overwhelming. This was shown in the great demonstrations of Calcutta, Bombay and other leading cities, where Congress and Moslem League flags, and in many cases also Communist Party flags, were carried in unity by the crowds. Unfortunately this unity below found no responding unity at the top.

Nevertheless the movement swept forward not only among the civilian population but also among the armed forces. This was a new development for India, whose revolutionary significance was not lost on the ruling authorities of British imperialism or on the upper-class leadership of the national movement. Previously there had been the refusal of the Garhwalis to fire in 1930. But now widespread strikes in the armed forces and especially in the Air Force and Navy, revealed the disintegration of the British authority in the very basis and machinery of its power.

The rising of the Indian Navy in February, 1946, laid bare in a flash all the maturing forces of the Indian Revolution. The memories of the *Potemkin* in Russia in 1905, of Kronstadt in Russia in 1917, or Kiel in Germany in 1918 have all deeply impressed the significance of the Navy in the vanguard of great revolutions. The Naval rising in February 1946, the mass movement of support within India and the heroic stand of the Bombay working people constituted the signal of the new era opening in India and one of the great landmarks of Indian history. In those February days the friends and foes of Indian popular advance stood revealed.

From the outset the Naval ratings in revolt had made contact with the Congress and Moslem League leadership but received no support or practical help. They elected a Central Naval Strike Committee, and perfect discipline was maintained. Support from the Bombay people (the Naval revolt was centred in Bombay) who brought food to the ships was overwhelming. The British authorities, completely taken by surprise by the extent of the movement, resorted to violent measures of suppression. Heavy naval and military reinforcements were hastily despatched to Bombay and Karachi. When the Indian soldiers refused to fire, British troops were called in and a seven-hour battle ensued on February 21 outside the Castle Barracks. In the afternoon on the 21st, Admiral Godfrey broadcast his ultimatum that "Overwhelming forces at the disposal of the Government will be used to the utmost. . . . even if it means the destruction of the Navy." The Central Naval Strike

Committee replied with an appeal to the civilian population for a peaceful strike and hartal. Despite the urgent need of help to defeat this threat and save the lives of the Naval ratings, Vallabhbhai Patel on behalf of the Congress leadership refused to countenance the strike and hartal and issued instructions against it. Nevertheless the call of the Central Naval Strike Committee, which was supported by the Bombay trade unions and the Communist Party, received a universal response from the Bombay working people on February 22. The British authorities sought to smash the popular movement with indiscriminate police and military firing on the people. Over the three days, February 21-23, the official figures reported 250 killed.

Finally, on February 23, under the pressure of Vallabhbhai Patel who gave the advice to surrender and promised that "the Congress will do its level best to see that there is no victimisation", followed by a similar assurance from the Moslem League, the Central Naval Strike Committee decided to surrender. Within two days the leaders were arrested. The last statement of the President of the Strike Committee declared: "We surrender to India and not to Britain."

The Naval rising and popular struggle in the February days in Bombay revealed with inescapable clearness the alignment of forces in the explosive situation developing in India in the beginning of 1946. It showed on the one hand the height of the movement, the courage and determination of the people and the overwhelming mass support for Hindu-Moslem unity and Congress-League unity. It showed that the movement had reached to the armed forces and that therefore the basis of British rule was no longer secure. But it showed, on the other hand, the upper-class leaderships of the Congress and Moslem League in opposition to the mass movement and aligned with British imperialism as the representative of law and order against the people. A whole series of statements and denunciations were issued condemning the "violence", not of the imperialist authorities whose ruthless firing had slaughtered hundreds in three days, but of the unarmed people who had been the objects of military

firing. The Congress president Azad declared:

"Strikes, hartals and defiance of temporary authority of the day are out of place. No immediate cause has arisen to join issue with the foreign rulers who are acting as caretakers."

Gandhi in a significant statement condemned what he called the "unholy combination" of Hindus and Moslems in defiance of the creed of non-violence.

Thus the breach between the top national leadership, representing the big bourgeoisie, and the mass movement, which had already revealed itself after Chauri Chaura in 1922, and in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact of 1931, was revealed anew on a still higher plane.

The British rulers were quick to see this weakness in the national front and to take full advantage of it. As the subsequent proceedings of the Cabinet Mission showed, the entire tactics of British imperialism were now directed towards the Congress and Moslem League leadership, simultaneously to play on their hope of a peaceful transfer of ruling authority into their hands, their fears of the popular masses and their mutual division and antagonism.

On February 18, the Bombay Naval Strike began.

On February 19, Mr. Attlee in the House of Commons announced the decision to despatch the Cabinet Mission.

2. THE CABINET MISSION AND THE MOUNTBATTEN SETTLEMENT

While the interminable negotiations between the representatives of imperialism (the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, taking over from the Cabinet Mission after their departure) and the leadership of the Congress and the Moslem League dragged on during the latter part of 1946 and the early months of 1947, the crisis in India continued to rise higher.

The growth of the industrial strike movement of the workers showed a continuously rising curve. During 1945 the number of workers involved was returned as 747,000, and the number of working days lost as 4,054,000. During 1946 the number had risen to 1,951,000 workers and 12,678,000 working days, or more than three times the total of 1945. During the first eight months of 1947 the number of workers

involved was 1,323,000 and the number of working days lost 11,195,863, or nearly the total of 1946 in two thirds of a year. Thus, while the general body of the national movement was paralysed and disorganised by the compromising tactics of the leadership passing over to agreement with imperialism, the working-class fight continued to advance.

At the same time the States peoples' fight against princely rule rose to new heights. This was shown especially in the struggles in Travancore and Hyderabad, and above all in Kashmir, where the "Quit Kashmir" movement led by Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference for the ending of the rule of the Maharaja was met by violent repression, imprisonment of the leaders, military firing and a reign of terror.

On the other hand, the effects of disorganisation of the national movement through the capitulation of the leadership to imperialist intrigue showed themselves in the simultaneous advance of reactionary and disruptive forces. In place of the communal unity which had characterised the great national upsurge at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946 before the arrival of the Cabinet Mission, the disruptive tactics of the Cabinet Mission, playing ceaselessly on the division of Hindus and Moslems, and aided and abetted by the compromising and fiercely competitive tactics of the leaderships of the Congress and Moslem League, lit once more the flames of communal conflict. Communal conflict raised its ugly head anew in June, 1946—a grim commentary on the work of the Cabinet Mission. By the autumn of 1946 communal conflict flared up to new murderous heights never before known, with the Moslem League "Direct Action" Day in Calcutta in August, followed by the riots in East Bengal in October, and the anti-Moslem riots in Bihar, all resulting in thousands of killed, many more thousands wounded and rendered homeless, wholesale massacre, arson, looting and horrors beyond record.

The gospel of "non-violence", which had only served to stifle and paralyse the revolutionary energy of the masses from being turned against imperialism, was now bringing its terrible nemesis in unexampled violence and carnage as

the energies of the masses were twisted and distorted under the guidance of reaction away from their true enemies to mutual fratricidal strife and suicidal self-destruction. Communal passion spread from the Moslem League to the ranks of the Congress, with the rapid growth of the Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu communal organisations, and powerfully affected the proceedings of the Meerut session of the Congress in November, where Patel preached amid acclamation the new gospel "to meet the sword by the sword"—not as a call to Indians against imperialism, but as a call to Hindus against Moslems.

Faced with this deepening crisis, signalled equally in the advance of the working-class and peasant struggle and popular revolt against princely rule, and in the growth of political disintegration and reactionary communal conflict and anarchy, imperialism sought to hasten the time-table for reaching the new political settlement. In August, 1946, a new Interim Government was formed (still within the formal framework of the Viceroy's Executive Council), on the basis of the Congress and Sikh leadership, with Nehru at its head. In October Moslem League representatives were brought into the Interim Government. The Interim Government, however, failed to function as a coalition; the two leaderships continued in open opposition; and a paralysis at the centre threatened.

In December, 1946, a Conference was called in London of Indian leaders and the British Government, with the participation of Attlee, Wavell, Nehru and Jinnah. This Conference did not produce any solution of the deadlock. But in the statement that was issued by the British Government on the outcome of the Conference a significant final clause was added:

"Should a Constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented His Majesty's Government could not of course contemplate forcing such a Constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country."

The significance of this declaration was clear. The reference to "a large section of the Indian population" as "not

represented" did not of course refer to the disfranchised three quarters of the adult population in British India, who had had no share in the voting for the Provincial Assemblies which were the indirect basis for the proposed "Constituent Assembly". It referred, and was universally understood to refer, solely to the Moslem League and to the refusal of the Moslem League to accept majority decisions of a Constituent Assembly in which its representatives would be in a minority. This statement was thus the first clear indication that British policy was moving to the partition of India as its "solution". The statement placed in the hands of the Moslem League an absolute veto, and guaranteed in advance that, if the Moslem League chose to exercise this veto, the British Government would impose partition.

As the crisis continued to deepen in the beginning of 1947, measures of repression were intensified. In January, 1947, wholesale raids and arrests of hundreds of leaders were conducted against the Communist Party all over India. While these arrests were carried out by the ordinary imperialist police machinery, responsibility for them was finally accepted, after some preliminary prevarication, on behalf of the Central Government by the Home Member, Patel, who admitted in a statement in the Central Assembly on February 21 that 1,950 Communists were under arrest. Reports from British representatives to London emphasised that the situation was getting out of hand, and that the administrative services were in danger of disintegrating, and pressed urgently the necessity of reaching a speedy political settlement.

In February, 1947, the British Government took new decisions to speed the settlement. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, was recalled and was replaced by Lord Mountbatten, who had already served as Supreme Allied Commander in South East Asia during the war (in his younger days he had also served with the Prince of Wales tour to India in 1921), and who was sent out with new instructions for a speedy settlement, which in practice was to be based on the partition of India. Simultaneously the Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, made a new declaration of policy in the House of

Commons on February 20, which was published as a White Paper. The Declaration laid down that

"His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948."

At the same time the Declaration warned that no Constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly would be accepted by Britain unless it were drawn up "in accordance with the proposals" of the Cabinet Mission Plan and "by a fully representative Constituent Assembly", i.e., with the assent of the Moslem League; and that failing such assent of the Moslem League, or if a majority of representatives of the Indian Constituent Assembly should dare to draw up a Constitution not approved by Britain,

"His Majesty's Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people."

With regard to the States the Declaration laid down:

"In regard to the Indian States His Majesty's Government do not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under paramountcy to any Government of British India. It is not intended to bring paramountcy as a system to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power; but it is contemplated that for the intervening period the relations of the Crown with individual States may be adjusted by agreement."

3. CHARACTER OF THE 1947 COMPROMISE

Since this Declaration of February, 1947, is the key guiding statement of policy for the conditions of inauguration of the new regime, it is worth noting the very definite character of its formulation. There was no question of a free choice by the Indian people of the kind of government under which they might wish to live. There was no question of a free

Constituent Assembly, freely elected by universal suffrage of the Indian people, being entrusted with sovereign powers on behalf of the Indian people to draw up a Constitution, without external interference. All these normal characteristics of the genuine establishment of a sovereign independent democratic State were completely absent.

On the contrary, the most explicit regulations were laid down beforehand by the overruling British Power as to what kind of Constitution would be permitted. Failing compliance with these regulations and requirements laid down unilaterally by the ruling imperialist Power, it is the ruling imperialist Power which holds sole decision and determines unilaterally to what "responsible Indian hands" the so-called "transfer of power" shall be made. In other words, there was here at this initial stage *not yet the establishment of a sovereign independent State, but a delegation of authority by imperialism to such forms of administrative authority in India as imperialism might judge expedient in its own interests.* Thus the ending of British colonial rule through the Mountbatten Settlement was only the beginning of India's advance to independence.

The new Mountbatten Plan, replacing the former Cabinet Mission Plan, was evolved rapidly and published in June. By August, 1947, it was put into effect. This acceleration of the original date of June, 1948, laid down in the White Paper reflected the increasing urgency of the crisis and the official recognition of the need for the utmost speed if the collapse of imperialist authority and a revolutionary outcome of the crisis in India were to be averted. As the *Sunday Times* correspondent reported on May 4, 1947, British official opinion had to recognise the "risk that chaos may overtake India long before June, 1948."

The Mountbatten Plan laid down detailed measures for the partition of India and the speedy transfer of responsibility in the form of Dominion Status to two separate Governments for the sections of a divided India.

The Mountbatten Plan received the assent of the leadership of the major political organisations in India. The poli-

tical leaders of the Congress and the Moslem League declared their acceptance of the proposals, though with considerable misgivings.

Indian left-wing opinion, equally among Socialists, Communists and left nationalists, sharply criticised the Plan as involving the dismemberment of India and as not representing a real transfer of power to the people. The Communist Party of India stated:

"The new British Plan for the dismemberment of India is a desperate move against the freedom movement which stands for the complete independence of the whole of the country... Mountbatten's Plan is not a genuine "Quit India" plan, rather one which seeks to keep in British hands as many economic and military controls as possible."

In Britain, Tory-Labour unity was proclaimed in support of the Plan.

Internationally, the Plan received high praise in the American official press, and in the right-wing press of most countries. On the other hand, Reuters noted that "left-wing newspapers have been unfavourable in all countries." Soviet comment was provided by the statement of Zhukov:

"Britain is being forced to take a page from America's book and copy her policy in the Philippines—to give a nominal false freedom. In other words, to clear out so as to remain."

The central new feature of the Mountbatten Plan—which in other respects only carried forward the principle of the alliance of imperialism and the Indian big bourgeoisie already proposed in the Cabinet Mission Plan—was the partition of India.

For many decades the main boast of British rule in India had been its unification of India. At the end of two centuries of British rule the India which had been united under Asoka and Chandragupta over two thousand years ago and under Akbar three and a half centuries ago was handed back to subordinate Indian rulers, split into discordant fragments, and needing to tread a toilsome and painful path to overcome this vicious legacy of imperialist "divide and rule."

Partition on the lines laid down in the Mountbatten Plan brought great evils to India.

First, it divided State boundaries, not on lines of linguistic, cultural or national divisions, but on lines of religious division. This not only meant that the frontiers were arbitrary and disputable, opening the way to further conflict, but that large minorities of an opposing religious faith were included in States whose basis was declared to be the predominance of a given religious faith. It not only meant the division of India into two States on the basis of religious division; since religious division was made the basis of political division, it meant the reproduction and multiplication of this division in every town and village and area of India. No more potent specific to promote chronic internal conflict could be found. The introduction of the Mountbatten Plan let loose the most hideous communal conflicts, massacres, and flight of millions of refugees, without parallel in Indian history.

Second, the transfer of governmental responsibility, not to a united Indian Government, but to two Indian Governments counter-posed against each other, alongside the further complication of the Princes' States, with open competition for the adhesion of States, created the conditions for chronic inter-governmental discord and conflict. Within a year the two Dominions were engaged in direct military operations against each other, and on each side invoking the support of the imperialist authorities through the United Nations against the other. The fact that both Dominions' armies had British Commanders-in-Chief and many British officers did not smooth the conflict, but only increased the complications. As the *Manchester Guardian* had to note on August 3, 1948:

"Pakistan's official participation in the Kashmir campaign raises serious problems for the whole British Commonwealth. This is the first time the armies of the two Dominions have fought against each other. . . .

"Moreover, the fact that both the Pakistan and Indian armies have British Commanders-in-Chief and British advisers, while the former has several hundred British officers as compared with the

latter's few score, means in effect that Britons are ranged on opposing sides."

Third, the division cut across economic and political links, divorced mutually interdependent agricultural and industrial areas, cut indiscriminately across railway and irrigation systems, and this placed a barrier in the way of all-India economic development and planning, of vital importance for the future prosperity of India. Similarly it placed the maximum difficulties in the path of the democratic movement and working-class and peasant movements, which had grown up and built organisations on a united basis, and were now separated and organisationally split by the new State divisions, as well as having to combat the devil's brood of communal discord let loose by the imperialist plan.

The Mountbatten Plan was pushed through with extreme haste. On August 15, 1947, the new Dominions of India and Pakistan were proclaimed.

The settlement of 1947 undoubtedly represented a historic landmark in India's advance to freedom. It brought the end of two centuries of British colonial rule in India—not through the benevolence of the British rulers, but through the strength of the Indian mass struggle. Nevertheless, the settlement bore heavy negative features, through the partition of India, the transfer of governing power to the Indian upper class closely associated with imperialism, and the continued economic and strategic domination of imperialism. Hence the subsequent years were still to see further great changes in the advance of the Indian people on the path to full liberation.

Chapter XVI

THE LATEST PHASE

THE FREEDOM struggle of the Indian people, to end every form of bondage to imperialism, and to tackle the problems of political, economic and social emancipation, has continued to advance and has entered into new conditions since 1947.

Events of recent years have abundantly shown that the compromise settlement of 1947 between British imperialism and the Indian upper class, with the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan within the British Empire, did not represent the end of the battle of Indian liberation, but on the contrary, a temporary phase of transition to a new and higher stage, in which the Indian working class led by the Communist Party, moves increasingly to the forefront to take over the leadership of the nation from the hands of the big bourgeoisie and its associates in order to advance to final victory.

The Dominions of India and Pakistan were established formally as independent sovereign states within the British Empire; and by 1950 the Dominion of India became the Republic of India, recognising the British monarch as the "Head of the Commonwealth". But in practice the economic and strategic grip of imperialism on the sub-continent was not yet broken. To the stranglehold of British finance-capital on India's resources and on the labour of the people was added increasing American finance-capitalist penetration; and the standards of the masses remained on the lowest levels of colonial exploitation.

These limitations on full independence from imperialism

led to the description of India after 1947 in the Programme of the Communist Party of India published in 1951, as a "semi-colony", ("the last biggest dependent semi-colonial country in Asia") and its constitution, despite the partial measure of democratic rights achieved, as the constitution of a "landlord-capitalist state tied to foreign imperialist interests—mainly British". Such a description applied still more to Pakistan, where even the most limited democratic rights were continually curtailed by arbitrary dictatorial measures, while the U.S.-Pakistan Military Alliance of 1954 brought it within the direct orbit of American imperialism.

Nevertheless, the battle of the people for freedom against imperialism, both British and American, and elementary economic, social and political demands, and for peace, continued to press forward especially during the years after the final victory of the Chinese People's Revolution in 1949. New currents developed in the alignment of India in world politics, with India fulfilling an increasingly active world role for peace; and new trends in the internal political situation were marked by the weakening of the older Congress leadership and the advance of the democratic forces of the people led by the Communist Party of India. In Pakistan also the democratic forces advanced in strength, as shown in the elections in East Pakistan in 1954, although having to battle against conditions of severe repression.

1. THE NEW REGIMES

In the initial phase the characteristic feature of the new governments established by the Mountbatten Settlement of 1947 was continuity with the old imperialist regime. The entire administrative machinery of imperialism was taken over and carried forward: the same bureaucracy, judiciary and police; the same methods of repression, police firing on unarmed crowds, lathi-charges, prohibition of meetings, suppression of newspapers, detentions without charge, persecution of trade unions and peasant organisations and crowding of the jails with thousands of left-wing political prisoners. The vast assets, investment holdings and financial

interests of imperialism in India were zealously protected, and the even flow of imperialist exploitation continued. Military control remained in practice in the hands of the imperialist High Command. In the early stages even the British Governor-General was retained in the same position as the head of the Union, British Governors were maintained for the key Provinces in both Dominions, and British Commanders-in-Chief, military advisers and superior officers for both armies.

Repression of the popular movement, and especially of the working class, reached extreme heights in the first years of the new regime. In 1948 a general offensive was let loose against the Communist Party and the All-India Trade Union Congress, against the peasants' and students' organisations and against the left-wing Press. In West Bengal and subsequently also in Madras, the Communist Party was banned; in other provinces conditions of semi-illegality were imposed. Arrests and detentions or warrants for arrest reached to practically all prominent working-class leaders. Police violence in the jails as well as outside firing on unarmed demonstrators resulted in many deaths. Repressive laws taken over from imperialism were intensified by new special legislation. By 1949 it was reported by the All-India Trade Union Congress that no less than 25,000 workers' and peasants' leaders were in jail, the overwhelming majority without charge or trial. According to official figures published by the new Indian Government, during the first three years of its rule, between August 15, 1947, and August 1, 1950, its police or armed forces opened fire on the people no less than 1,982 times, killed 3,784 persons and wounded nearly 10,000, jailed 50,000 and shot down 82 prisoners inside jails.

Only after this initial period of severe repression did a shift follow in India to a greater extension of democratic rights, with the new Constitution (despite many undemocratic features) established in 1950, and the first elections on the basis of universal suffrage in January 1952; but even so, democratic rights continued precarious, with frequent

resort to emergency powers, special repressive legislation and violent police action.

In Pakistan methods of dictatorship were in practice maintained, with heavy repression against democratic, political and trade-union organisations. The device of a secret "conspiracy" trial was utilised to hold in prison and subject to long sentences the leading Communist, trade-union and left-wing democratic representatives. When in the East Pakistan elections in 1954, the anger of the people routed the discredited Moslem League leadership and returned the United Front on the basis of a progressive programme with 93 per cent of the votes, the ministry thus elected was immediately deposed from office by fiat from above (under section 92 of the Government of India Act of 1935, the act passed by the British Tory Government of Baldwin) and a military dictatorship was established.

No less significant was the course of economic policy. The original programme of the Indian National Congress had provided for nationalisation of all key resources and industries. Such large-scale nationalisation was recognised as essential, not only for progressive reconstruction, but for eliminating the dominant hold of foreign capital in Indian economy. But after the formation of the Dominion Governments this programme was placed in cold storage.

On February 17, 1948, Prime Minister Nehru declared:

"There will not be any sudden change in the economic structure. As far as possible, there will be no nationalisation of existing industries."

Reuter's Trade Service Financial Section reported on April 1 from New Delhi:

"Large-scale nationalisation of existing industries is ruled out in the Government of India's industrial and economic policy for the next ten years."

On April 6, 1948, the Government's Resolution on Economic Policy, substantiating these predictions, was published. The Resolution laid down that Government ownership would be confined to munitions, atomic energy and the railways (where it already existed); that in respect of coal,

iron, steel and other leading industries "the Government have decided to let existing undertakings in these fields develop for a period of ten years"; that there would be state control of electricity; and that "the rest of the industrial field will normally be open to private enterprise." Nationalisation was thus abandoned in favour of the existing big monopolies, including the imperialist big monopolies.

The Explanatory Memorandum published with this Resolution on Economic Policy is of especial interest. The Memorandum declared:

"The apprehension recently felt in Indian markets that the Government might experiment in nationalisation over a wide field of industries, thereby jeopardising their efficiency and credit, has been completely allayed. The expected result of the announcement of the policy will be the restoration to their former level the prices of Government securities.

"It is expected in knowledgeable quarters that the way is now clear for the Government to float big loans for purpose of reconstruction now that confidence has returned."

The Memorandum then proceeded to give assurances to allay the fears of any possible limitation or control of profits:

"Markets were touchy about the possibility of the Government stepping in to regulate and limit profits in private enterprise. The policy as announced contains no hint of this, and share values are bound to go up. Private enterprise therefore receives encouragement."

Nor was any room left for doubt as to the type of "private enterprise" to which this appeal was especially directed, i.e., to imperialism, to Anglo-American capital. The official Memorandum accompanying the Government Resolution laid down the aim in its final clause:

"The Resolution contemplates full freedom for foreign capital and enterprise in Indian industry while at the same time assuring that it should be regulated in the national interest. This part of the Resolution reveals the Indian Government's recognition of the need for foreign aid both in management and technical training and investment, and of the wisdom of welcoming foreign capital and skill to supplement Indian enterprise."

"Full freedom for foreign capital"—the Mountbatten Settlement was in truth realising rich dividends for imperialism.

Not without reason the *Economist* wrote already at the time of the Mountbatten Settlement, in the issue of June 7, 1947:

"Something may remain even of the formal ties if Dominion status is not renounced: and in any case the essential strategic and economic ties between Britain and India will remain, even if it is under different political forms."

The measure of continued association of India with imperialism was further shown in the sphere of military, strategic and foreign policy—though subsequent events were to bring increasing divergence.

The military structure and strategic planning of the Dominions of India, Pakistan and Ceylon continued under British control and guidance. Even the Commanders-in-Chief remained British in the initial period, together with hundreds of British officers functioning in the Indian and Pakistan Armies. This control was especially close in the case of the Indian Navy and Air Force. Military and naval training, staffing and equipment were linked up with Britain, and the operation of air bases with the R.A.F. In Ceylon the naval base of Trincomalee continued to be developed as a main Empire base. Gurkhas continued to be recruited in British recruiting depots on Indian soil for use in the war against the Malayan people.

In foreign policy the alignment of Indian big business with imperialism found open advocacy in the leading organ of Indian financial interests, the *Eastern Economist*, on December 31, 1948:

"In practice—whatever political quibbling may say—our foreign policy has now been given a definite orientation. It is towards a foreign policy which will keep us primarily on friendly terms with the Commonwealth. . . . Association with the Commonwealth which is more friendly to the U.S.A. than to the U.S.S.R. implies that we are in effect leaning towards the U.S.A. The logical consequence of this political fact should be clear. We cannot in the United Nations or elsewhere take a line except on a minor issue which is contrary to that taken by the Commonwealth and the U.S.A."

A new stage was reached with the London Declaration of the Dominion Premiers' Conference in April 1949. By this Declaration India won recognition as an independent Republic (formally proclaimed in January, 1950) within the British Commonwealth, recognising the Crown as "the Head of the Commonwealth", but not as reigning over India. The official communique declared:

"The Government of India has declared and affirmed India's desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the King as the symbol of the free association of the independent member nations and as such for Head of the Commonwealth."

The London Declaration was welcomed by the imperialists as continuing to link India in practice with the British Empire. The hopes of the Anglo-American imperialists received further expression during Nehru's visit to the United States in the autumn of 1949. The *New York Times* wrote in October 1949:

"Washington's hopes for a democratic rallying-point in Asia have been pinned on India, the second biggest Asiatic nation, and on the man who determines India's policy—Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru."

And again in August 1950:

"He (Nehru) is in a sense the counter-weight on the democratic side to Mao Tse-tung. To have Pandit Nehru as ally in the struggle for Asiatic support is worth many divisions."

The association with Anglo-American imperialism reached an extreme point in the summer of 1950, with the Indian Government's support of the American illegal resolution at the United Nations justifying the American armed aggression against Korea. But from this point the intensity of popular feeling in India against association with Western imperialist invasion and devastation of Asiatic countries, and the new balance of forces in Asia, following the victory and strength of the Chinese People's Republic, gave rise to new contradictions and a significant new alignment in Indian foreign policy.

The measure of temporary success achieved on this basis

stimulated the further plans of the British and American imperialists to endeavour to utilise India, Pakistan and Ceylon as a main bastion and base for counter-revolution in Asia and for the offensive against the popular liberation movement in other Asiatic countries.

Nor was this conception without response in some leading circles of the Indian big capitalists, who saw with panic alarm the advance of popular revolution in Asia, and were also actuated by their own economic interests and drive to expansion to nurture hopes of an Indian hegemony in Southern Asia. Such dreams of a new open counter-revolutionary alignment, extending beyond India to other countries of Asia, found powerful expression in the broadcast of the late Deputy Premier, Sardar Patel, on August 15, 1948:

“China, which at one time was expected to be the leading nation of Asia, had serious domestic troubles... Again the conditions in Malaya, Indo-China and Burma were disturbing... If the undesirable elements in the country were not put down with a firm hand immediately, they were sure to create the same chaos as they found existing in some other Asiatic countries.”

“Undesirable elements” — “a firm hand” — the wheel had indeed come full circle. The right-wing leadership of Indian bourgeois nationalism was blossoming into Indian neo-imperialism seeking to act as the junior partner of Anglo-American imperialism.

Nevertheless, the basis for such a development, as events were soon to show, was lacking. India was preparing to enter on a new and different path in the next phase.

2. ANGLO-AMERICAN IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

The extent of the hold of British imperialism—and to a lesser, but increasing extent, of United States imperialism—on India is still very great.

Despite the political change, British finance-capital remains predominant in Indian economy. British capitalists still hold the main ownership or control of Indian coal

mines, tea and rubber plantations, oil deposits and refineries, and of many engineering concerns. British capital plays the decisive role in the control of Indian foreign trade and banking. British managing agencies draw into their sphere a large proportion of nominally Indian-owned enterprises. Through the system of joint combines and corporations, formally Indian, but with decisive control in the hands of foreign capital, the British and American monopolies subordinate the Indian monopolies as junior partners.

The Federal Reserve Bank of India has estimated the total of private foreign investments in India on June 30, 1948 at Rs. 5,960 million or £ 441 million, of which long term private capital represented Rs. 5,190 million (market value—par value, Rs. 3,204 million) or £ 384 million ("Census of India's Foreign Liabilities and Assets, 1950"). This total is in fact an understatement, since it covers only recorded long-term business investment, and leaves out of account, not only private investment in Government and municipal debt, but all foreign banking capital, which is very powerful in India, financing most of the country's foreign trade.

According to a statement of the Indian Finance Minister, C. D. Deshmukh, in the Indian Parliament on June 16, 1952, the total repatriation of foreign capital in India between July 1947 and December 1951, amounted to Rs. 526 million, as against new investment of foreign capital amounting to Rs. 110 million. This would represent a net decrease of Rs. 426 million, equivalent to £ 32 million. In the same statement the Minister quoted the Federal Reserve Bank figure for June 1948, of Rs. 6,131 million for the total of the book value of all long-term foreign capital in India, both in government securities (Rs. 2,926 million, of which Rs. 2,505 million were held by the United Kingdom) and business investment (Rs. 3,204 million book value, of which the United Kingdom held Rs. 2,301 million, with a market value of Rs. 3,756 million).

Thus the total net repatriation of foreign capital during the four and a half years following the Mountbatten Settle-

ment would represent, on the basis even of these figures which under-estimate the real new investment, only one-fifteenth of the original holdings. Britain continued to hold 85 per cent of the foreign holdings of Indian Government securities, or £ 188 million, and 70 per cent of private foreign investment of long-term capital in India, with a market value of £ 282 million, or a combined total of £ 470 million, even on this conservative basis of estimation of British long-term capital invested in India. This represented one-quarter of the total of British overseas capital in 1948 (£ 1,960 million), and more than two-fifths of all British capital invested in the Empire (£ 1,111 million). Decidedly the importance of India to British capitalism had not diminished with the change of regime.

The total of all capital invested in Indian joint stock companies registered in India in 1947-48 was Rs. 5,695 million (*Statistical Abstract, India, 1949*), to which must be added Rs. 1,458 million for foreign investments in branches of companies incorporated abroad but operating in India, thus giving a total of Rs. 7,153 million or £ 530 million (par value) for all company private capital investment in India. Thus foreign capital in India represented 44.7 per cent of the total.

But the decisive controlling power of this 44 per cent is even more striking. Of the total £ 384 million of private foreign (predominantly British) long-term capital business investment in India, no less than 84 per cent represented investment with ownership and control of the enterprises concerned. The Federal Reserve Bank Report presented an analysis of the proportion of foreign and Indian capital in 1,062 companies with a paid-up capital of half a million rupees or over, of which ninety-three were foreign companies incorporated abroad, 306 foreign-controlled Indian companies, and 663 Indian-controlled companies:

PROPORTION OF FOREIGN CAPITAL TO TOTAL CAPITAL IN INDIAN
LARGER COMPANIES IN 1948. (*per cent.*)

1. Petroleum	97	10. Financing	46
2. Rubber manufactures	93	11. Electric	43
3. Light railways	90	12. Coffee	37
4. Matches	90	13. Engineering	33
5. Jute	89	14. Food	32
6. Tea	36	15. Paper	28
7. Mining other than coal	73	16. Sugar	24
8. Coal	62	17. Cotton textiles	21
9. Rubber plantations	54	18. Cement	5

It will be seen that foreign capital in 1948 still held the majority position (over 50 per cent) in the first nine, a sufficiently strong position to exercise the dominant rôle through greater concentration (over 25 per cent) in the next six, leaving only the traditional Indian stronghold of cotton textiles, together with sugar and cement, for an effectively major role of Indian capital.

What is the extent of tribute still drawn from India by foreign imperialist interests? The following estimate has been attempted by an Indian economist:

"The Census of Foreign Liabilities and Assets indicates that the interest, dividends and profits accruing to foreigners are about Rs. 400 million per year. Various explanations on 'Balance of Payments' given by the Reserve Bank show that since 'the bulk of our imports would be normally carried by or insured with foreign companies', our payments to them might well be on an average Rs. 500 to 600 million annually. Similarly with our exports, the figure runs into hundreds of millions.

"According to a statement laid before Parliament last week by the Finance Minister, we have to pay pensions to 16,905 persons in the United Kingdom, and the total of such payments made during the years 1948-49 to 1950-51 comes to about Rs. 286.2 million, that is, more than Rs. 95 million per year.

"Lastly, there are large payments on account of banking commissions to just a few foreign banks in India which continue to monopolise almost the entire foreign trade of the country. No authoritative facts are at the moment available on this, but in view of all earlier estimates and the present-day increase in the volume

and value of trade, the figure may safely be placed anywhere between Rs. 250 and 300 million."

(*Cross Roads*, Bombay, September 14, 1951)

This estimate, on the basis of the figures given alone (omitting the "hundreds of millions" on Indian exports), would make a total of Rs. 1,245 to Rs. 1,395 million, roughly equivalent to £ 90 to £ 105 million annual tribute from India to imperialism after the end of colonial rule.

United States capital has begun to take increasingly active steps for the penetration of India in the recent period, although the amount of United States capital so far invested, while coming second to the British total, has been still relatively limited. The Federal Reserve Bank survey for 1948 already quoted found that out of the total of Rs. 5,190 million of private long-term foreign investments in India, Rs. 3,660 million, or 70 per cent, were British, and Rs. 300 million, or less than 6 per cent, United States capital. It should be borne in mind, however, that United States capital investment is often concealed behind nominal French, Belgian or also Indian ownership, so that the official return falls short of revealing the true position.

At the same time the United States has been very actively engaged in displacing Britain in the conquest of the Indian market, as the following figures indicate:

INDIAN IMPORTS (million rupees)		
	1948-9	1950-1
From the United Kingdom	1,530	1,227
From the United States	1,087	1,558
Total imports	5,429	5,655
U.K. per cent of total	28.2	21.7
U.S. per cent of total	20.0	27.6

Thus the United Kingdom, which still held first place in the Indian market in 1948-49 (and in 1949-50), lost it to the United States in 1950-51.

Further, the United States finance-capital and government policy, while concentrating in the first place on the capture of the Indian market, and showing considerable

caution initially in the export of capital, has been engaged during this period in extensive measures to prepare the ground for a future large-scale financial penetration of India. This has been demonstrated in the very active rôle of United States diplomacy and publicity in India, the buying up of Indian newspapers, and despatch of numerous technical missions. In expounding the Point Four Programme, it was noticeable that both Mr. Acheson and President Truman emphasised India as the first field they instanced for its operation.

A new stage in the penetration of Anglo-American finance-capital in India was reached at the end of 1951 with the agreements drawn up between the Indian Government and the leading American and British oil trusts for the establishment of giant oil refineries in India.

The agreement reached with the Vacuum Oil Company of New York was signed in November 1951, and provided that the company would float an Indian subsidiary with a rupee capital equivalent to \$35 million (over £12 million) for the construction of an oil refinery with an annual capacity of 1 million tons. Twenty-five per cent of the capital would be offered to Indian investors in the form of cumulative preference shares with no voting rights, while all ordinary shares would be held by the parent company in New York.

"Participation in the ordinary capital, and therefore in profits distributed as ordinary dividends, is to be completely withheld from the nationals of this country."

(*Hindustan Times*, December 4, 1951)

"Indians will have no voice in its control and management."

(*Commerce*, December 8, 1951)

The Government of India gave an undertaking not to nationalise the company for twenty-five years, and to provide full facilities for repatriation of annual profits; guaranteed tariff protection for ten years; and exempted the company from certain of the provisions of the Industries Development and Regulation Act.

The agreement signed with the British-owned Burma-

Shell oil combine in December, 1951, covered similar terms for the flotation of a company with a capital of Rs. 220 million (over £ 16 million), of which Rs. 20 million, or one-eleventh, would be available to Indian investors as cumulative preference shares without voting rights, for the construction of an oil refinery with an annual capacity of 1½ million tons.

A third agreement with another American oil company under negotiation at the end of 1951 brought the total capital involved to over £ 40 million for the establishment of companies under complete control of the Anglo-American monopolies and for their profit.

A further step in this programme of large-scale penetration of American finance-capital into India was reached in the beginning of 1952 with the announcement of an agreement signed between the Indian and United States Governments for the establishment of an Indo-American Technical Co-operation Fund. Already in December, 1950, India had signed a Point Four Agreement with the United States on the same lines as those signed between the United States and the Philippines and Thailand. In 1951 India had received a \$ 190 million food loan from the United States E.C.A. Agency.

The new agreement signed in the beginning of 1952 provided for an immediate advance of \$ 50 million up to June, 1952, for the formation of an Indo-American Technical Co-operation Fund, and further advances over a period of five years, totalling \$ 250 million. The money was to be used, not for advancing the industrialisation of the country, but for projects "which are aimed primarily at raising the efficiency of agriculture". (*Hindustan Times*, January 6, 1952). The Fund was to be administered jointly by an American Director of Technical Co-operation and an official of the Finance Ministry of the Indian Government. The Director, it was stipulated, would be an American official appointed by the United States Government, and working under the general supervision of the American Ambassador in India. This American Director and his staff, it was further stipulated, would enjoy "all the privileges and im-

munities, including immunity from suit in the courts of India, which are enjoyed by the Government of the U.S.A." in India.

Nevertheless, in the subsequent period, with the shift in foreign policy examined later, increasing trends of resistance to this one-sided dependence on Anglo-American capital made themselves manifest. Closer economic relations were established with China and the Soviet Union. An important indication of the new phase was reached with the Indian-Soviet agreement, signed in February, 1955, for the establishment, with Soviet aid and technical equipment, of a steel works, representing a capital of £ 33 millions, to produce one million tons of steel. The terms and the times of completion were extremely favourable, and won acceptance by the Government of India in the face of competitive moves for a project from British sources.

The economic and financial penetration of British and American finance-capital into India and Pakistan was accompanied by active measures for corresponding political and strategic penetration. Partition had entailed consequences, not only of economic and administrative disorganisation for India and Pakistan, but also of extreme exacerbation of communal divisions and conflict, with resulting blood-stained episodes in the first phase of the new regime, mass expulsions and flights, and a refugee problem, and a situation of chronic tension between the Governments of India and Pakistan.

Such a situation provided a happy hunting ground for imperialist intervention. The prolonged dispute of the Governments of India and Pakistan over the future of Kashmir, involving even military operations for a period (alongside the parallel British military command of the armed forces of both states during this earlier period) provided fertile opportunities for both British and United States imperialists to take a hand in the dispute, the latter especially utilising the machinery of the United Nations for the despatch of a series of conciliators, negotiators, boundary commissions and military experts. The special interest in Kashmir reflected, not only its intrinsic importance and considerable economic

potentialities, but also its special strategic significance on the borders of the Soviet Union.

In the case of Pakistan this American military penetration reached a high point with the U.S.-Pakistan military alliance and despatch of arms in 1954.

The chronic military tension between the two states, as well as the requirements of internal repression, led to the maintenance of armed forces and military expenditure on a scale which placed a crippling burden on both states, representing half the budget, in addition to heavy police expenditure. This burden added to the effects of the reactionary social and economic structure, heavily hampered constructive economic development.

Nevertheless, here also the shift in foreign policy brought the beginning of important changes. In 1953 the attempt of United States diplomacy to involve the Kashmir Premier in an intrigue to separate Kashmir from India was met by active opposition from India and from the majority of the Kashmir National Conference Committee, the replacement of the Kashmir Premier and the full incorporation of Kashmir in the Indian Union. The Indian Government enforced the withdrawal of the American Admiral Nimitz, who had operated since 1949 as "United Nations Plebiscite Administrator", and in 1954 enforced the withdrawal of the large team of American military and civilian "observers" from Kashmir.

3. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The profound economic contradictions within India and Pakistan, inherited from the period of direct imperialist rule, could not be solved by the change of administrative regime, so long as the essential features of colonial economy were maintained. On the contrary, the economic situation of India and Pakistan continued to show a serious further deterioration during the initial years after 1947, and only limited beginnings of economic advance in India under the Five Year Plan.

The continuity of the colonial character of the economy was demonstrated, not only by the continued, and even extending stranglehold of foreign finance-capital on the economic resources, as already examined, but also, as the necessary accompaniment to this by the slow development of heavy industry and the concentration on the overcrowded agricultural and light processing industries. The steel industry reached an output of only just over 1 million tons by the end of 1951, and was planned to reach 1.6 million by 1956. The Five Year Development Plan for 1951-56 allocated only 8.4 per cent of its funds for industry.

The deepening of the agrarian crisis, and the relative failure of the land reform legislation, has been already examined (see Chapter VIII). The food grains yield per acre fell from 607 lbs. in 1943-44 to 520 lbs. in 1948-49, and 480 lbs. by 1950-51.

Real incomes of the masses of the people fell, as prices rose. The index of wholesale prices (1937 as 100) rose from 303.3 at the time of the change of regime in 1947 to 456.8 in May 1951. The cost of living index for Bombay (1934 as 100) rose from 279 in 1947 to 363 in 1953. The index of profits of all industries (1939 as 100) rose from 191 in 1947 to 310 in 1951. (*Eastern Economist*, Budget Number, 1954). The burden of rising prices brought down the level of real wages and inflicted heavy hardships on the lower middle-class strata. On the basis of an exhaustive study of wages and prices in different parts of India, Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee, in his "The Indian Working Class" (Third Edition, Bombay, 1951), reached the conclusion:

"A larger proportion of the Indian working class is now in the poverty line than before the war. The bulk of the workers in India are below the poverty line."

The national income per head, at constant prices of 1938-39 fell from Rs. 83 in 1931-32, to Rs. 77 in 1945-46, Rs. 75 in 1946-47 and Rs. 70 in 1948-49 ("Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East", United Nations 1950. The estimate refers to the Indian Provinces as before partition). As already indicated in Chapter II (page 9), the real national income

per head for 1948-49, according to the Report of the Official National Income Committee published in 1951, had fallen below that estimated by the Simon Commission in 1930.

The first Five Year Development Plan, adopted in 1951, marked the beginning of a limited economic advance. Between 1951 and 1954 industrial output in India increased by 37 per cent and agricultural output by 15 per cent. Food grains output rose from 54 million tons in 1950-51 to 65.4 million in 1953-54, or an increase of 11.4 million tons. Food consumption per head was reported by the Government to have risen from 1398 calories in 1950-51 to 1623 calories in 1953-54. Over half this increase of agricultural output, however, was officially admitted to be due to favourable weather conditions, and a part to fuller statistical coverage. Further, the comparison with 1950-51 was a comparison with a lean year; if the peak year 1943-44 were taken as a basis, (the general index of agricultural production fell from 106 in 1943-44 to 94 in 1950-51), the increase would be very much smaller, under 2 per cent, or less than the increase in population.

It is significant that the Plan set the aim only to restore the pre-war levels of income by 1955. In fact, its target fell below even this aim. The Plan set the target to raise the national income from Rs. 90 billion in 1950-51 to Rs. 100 billion in 1955-56, or an increase of 11 per cent, equivalent, allowing for increase of population by $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent, to an increase of national income per head of 5 per cent. Since however the national income per head, according to the United Nations figures quoted above, had fallen by 16 per cent between 1931-32 and 1948-49, the planned increase of 5 per cent would not even bring the national income per head to the already starvation level of 1931-32.

In the event the first three years of the Five Year Plan showed an improvement on the original targets. By 1953-54 national income had risen to Rs. 106 billion, or an increase of 18 per cent in 1950-51. Income per head by 1953-54 rose to Rs. 283.9 or an increase of 8 per cent at current prices,

on 1948-49. This, however, did not yet make good the fall of 16 per cent between 1931-32 and 1948-49.

Meanwhile the profits of the big monopolists soared. Black-marketeering and corruption were rampant and strongly entrenched in the machinery of the ruling Congress regime in India and Moslem League regime in Pakistan.

Under these conditions mass discontent rose, and many signs in the internal political situation indicated the beginnings of disillusionment with the new Governments and with the dominant leaderships of the Congress and Moslem League.

4. NEW TRENDS IN FOREIGN POLICY

The outstanding feature of India's development during the most recent period has been the increasingly important world role which India under Premier Nehru has been fulfilling in the cause of peace. India has played a foremost part, alongside China, in voicing and uniting the opposition of the nations of Asia to the aggressive war plans of American imperialism, and in striving for the aims of peace, inseparably bound up with the cause of national freedom. Through the Afro-Asian Conference in 1955 this endeavour has extended to draw in the peoples of Asia, the Middle East and Africa for those aims.

This historic advance of India's world role is itself an expression of the mighty transformation taking place in Asia and in the balance of forces in Asia. The decisive turning point in opening this new era was the victory of the Chinese People's Revolution. The proclamation of the Chinese People's Republic, following the final expulsion of the American-armed and subsidised counter-revolutionary forces from the mainland, took place in the autumn of 1949. China was already the largest nation in Asia and in the world. The new People's China now stood out as the leading representative of victorious liberation among the colonial or dependent countries of Asia, as a people rapidly advancing from the previous bonds of feudalism and imperialist exploitation along the path of social and economic

progress, and as a foremost world power with whose unbreakable strength and unity the imperialist world had to reckon.

The Indian Government was quickly responsive to take into account this new situation in Asia. Whereas previously its policy had been mainly oriented to the imperialist camp, the Indian Government now sought also to promote close relations with the Chinese People's Republic, with early recognition and an exchange of ambassadors. These new tendencies were powerfully reinforced by the pressure of popular feeling within India, which was universally inspired by ardent enthusiasm for the victory of the Chinese People's Revolution and hatred for the blood-thirsty and marauding rôle of Western imperialism in Asia.

The American invasion of Korea brought the new situation to a head. The Indian official delegate's vote at Lake Success had been originally cast for the ill-omened and illegal "United Nations" resolution which authorised the invasion of Korea by the American war bloc, without waiting to hear the evidence and with refusal to hear the representatives of the Korean People's Republic. This initial acceptance of the American and Syngman Rhee version, before examination of the evidence, was indicated by Premier Nehru when he stated to a press conference on July 7, 1950, that "when North Korea launched invasion on South Korea, it was clear, without even a great enquiry, that this was a well-planned and large-scale invasion". The Indian Government had given its partial assistance to this Western imperialist invasion of an Asian country by despatching an ambulance corps to assist the invaders.

But this complicity in a crime evoked intense indignation among all circles of Indian opinion, which was aroused to enthusiasm by the heroic struggle of the Korean people against the barbarous onslaught of the massed armies, navies and air force of Western imperialism.

Already on July 13, 1950, within a fortnight of the American offensive on Korea, Premier Nehru addressed a message to Premier Stalin to explain the Indian Govern-

ment's desire for a peaceful settlement of the Korean conflict:

"The aim of India is to localise the conflict and assist the speedy peaceful settlement through elimination of the present impasse in the Security Council, so that the representative of the People's Government of China could take his place in the Council, the U.S.S.R. could return to it, and, within the framework of the Council or outside the Council, through unofficial contact, the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and China, with the assistance and with the co-operation of other peaceful states, could find a basis for the cessation of the conflict and for a final solution of the Korean problem."

Premier Stalin replied:

"I welcome your peaceable initiative. I fully share your point of view regarding the expediency of the peaceful settlement of the Korean question through the Security Council with the obligatory participation of the representatives of the five great powers, including the People's Government of China."

When the Chinese Government gave warning that China could not stand idly by in the event of the Western invading forces advancing beyond the Thirty-eighth Parallel to subjugate all Korea, the Indian Government correctly understood the seriousness of this warning — which was sneered at by the MacArthurs and dismissed as a fantasy by the American authorities — and abstained in the vote on the critical United Nations resolution of October 1950, which was pushed through by the United States in order to cover the further aggression.

From this point the system of Indian abstentions—and in some cases, even of opposition votes—in the United Nations in relation to critical resolutions pushed through by the United States in pursuit of its war policy became frequent and marked. There developed what became known as the "Arab-Asian bloc", which expressed a measure of disassociation from the aggressive policies of the imperialist war camp, and which was accused of "neutralism" by the spokesmen of the imperialist powers.

This shift in foreign policy did not mean that the Indian Government broke with its existing links with the camp of

imperialism or passed over at once to a full and consistent policy of opposition to the war plans and aggression of imperialism. Practical co-operation continued, as in the supply of arms and finance, jointly with the British, to the Nu Government for war on the Burmese people; the transport facilities to the French Government for war on Vietnam, until 1954; and the provision of facilities on Indian soil for recruitment of Gurkhas for war on the Malayan people, (though here the exposure by the Communist Party compelled the Indian Government in 1952 to take up this question with the British Government and reach a new agreement in 1954 by which the recruiting depots were to be established in Nepal, with transit of the recruits through India).

Practical economic and financial co-operation with imperialism was drawn even closer, as in the agreement reached in 1951 for the establishment of Anglo-American monopoly combines in India with virtual extra-territorial rights, and the constitution of Indo-American Technical Aid Fund in 1952. The significance of the series of abstentions or occasional opposition votes in the United Nations was played down by Indian diplomatic representatives abroad. As the Indian Ambassador to the United States (subsequently chairman of the United Nations) Mrs. Pandit declared in New York on September 19, 1951:

"We deplore the word 'neutralism' as applied to us in our situation. In recent sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, we have voted as you did thirty-eight times out of fifty-one, abstaining eleven times, and differed from you only twice."

Nevertheless, the signs of change were unmistakable, and began to develop more and more in the direction of a positive, alternative policy for peace, especially with the South East Asia crisis of 1954. If the official foreign policy was still only a partial reflection of the full anti-imperialist feeling of the people, even the initial cautious gestures of abstention in the United Nations votes created a growing embarrassment for the imperialist war plans by revealing that the majority of the world's population was opposed to

the United States and its Atlantic war bloc. The indications were sufficient to show to the imperialists that India could no longer be counted upon as a partner for the purpose of the war strategy, and that this political development might rapidly lead to a decisive change of alignment from association with the camp of imperialism.

With the South East Asia crisis of 1954, the development was carried a further stage forward. The United States-Pakistan military alliance in the beginning of 1954 deeply angered Indian opinion at this open attempt to draw the Indian sub-continent into the American war plans. Over the question of the war in Vietnam in the spring of 1954, the issue became sharp. While the United States was pressing for combined military action in Vietnam and an immediate military South East Asia Pact, and met with resistance from the British Government in April 1954, India took the lead in organising the Conference of the five Colombo powers (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia), in order to reach a common stand in favour of non-intervention, and peace on the basis of national independence of the people of Vietnam. Although the Governments of Pakistan and Ceylon revealed at this conference their closeness in orientation to the United States, an agreed declaration was reached along these lines. Indian diplomacy was able to play an active rôle at Geneva in promoting the cause of peace; and the meeting of the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai and Premier Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi in June 1954, following on the Indo-Chinese agreement on Tibet, constituted a development in the international political situation, which was widely recognised as paralleling in its significance the simultaneous meeting of President Eisenhower and Premier Churchill in Washington. The joint Chou-Nehru declaration published on June 28, 1954, proclaimed:

(1) Talks between the Prime Ministers aimed at furthering the efforts being made at Geneva and elsewhere for peaceful settlement.

(2) Their main purpose was to arrive at a clearer understanding of each other's point of view, to help in the maintenance of peace both in co-operation with each other and with other countries.

(3) The existence of different social and political systems in Asia and the world were recognized, but if the five principles were accepted there could be peaceful co-existence and friendly relations.

(4) Confidence was expressed that friendship between India and China would help the cause of peace in Asia.

(5) It was agreed that the two countries should maintain close contacts to further full understanding between them.

The five principles, inserted in the preamble to the Tibet Agreement, laid down:

(a) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;

(b) non-aggression;

(c) non-interference in each other's internal affairs;

(d) equality and mutual benefit;

(e) peaceful co-existence.

This joint peace declaration of the Indian and Chinese Governments constituted an historic new stage in the development of Asia.

The new moves for peace were carried further forward by the visit of Premier Nehru to China in the autumn of 1954, to be followed by a visit to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1955. Emphatic opposition was expressed to the aggressive South East Asia Military Pact, in which Britain was aligned with the United States. The London Conference of Commonwealth Premiers in the beginning of 1955 revealed that this division remained unsolved.

A significant new step to extend the area of co-operation for peace was undertaken by the decision of the five Colombo Powers in their meeting at Bogor at the end of 1954 to invite twenty-five other governments of Asia, including the Chinese People's Republic, and of Africa for an Afro-Asian Conference to be held at Bandoeng in April 1955. The Bandoeng Conference assembled leaders of the governments of twenty-nine states of Asia and Africa (Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, the Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Persia, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, South Vietnam and

Yemen). The population represented was in the neighbourhood of 1,500 millions. This wide extent of representation at this unique Conference could thus challenge comparison with the extent of representation of the still restricted United Nations. It was the more significant since here for the first time were assembled on so wide a scale representatives of nations which had all previously been, and in some cases still were, under imperialist domination. No less significant was the success of the Conference, despite many attempts inspired from imperialist quarters to promote disruption. The Bandoeng Conference reached unanimous decisions in support of the Five Principles of peace, extended in the Conference Declaration to Ten Points; for national freedom and against colonialism and racial discrimination; for the prohibition of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons; for economic and cultural co-operation of the nations of Asia and Africa; and on specific questions affecting West Irian, Palestine, Aden and the North African nations.

The Afro-Asian Conference in 1955, with the leading role of India and China, and meeting on behalf of the majority of the population of the world, in order to promote the aims of peace and national freedom, was a very powerful demonstration of the new balance of forces in the world, and of the pivotal rôle of India in speeding forward this new development of such consequence for the future of humanity.

5. THE INDIAN PEOPLE ON THE MARCH

The new alignment of India in the international political situation was the counterpart of profound new developments taking place in the internal political situation after the victory of the Chinese People's Revolution.

The experience of the recent period has shown with increasing clearness that the older forces are declining, and that the new forces of the people are coming to the forefront, even though there are still unsolved contradictions between

the progressive external orientation and the internal political situation.

The Congress, which in the past had been the traditional forum and mass organisation of the national movement, even though dominated by vacillating upper-class interests, became, following the change of regime in 1947, the Government party dominated by the great vested interests, monopolists, big landlords, profiteers and speculators. This did not mean that the Congress had lost its mass basis. The Congress was still able to maintain a wide measure of mass support, though on a diminishing scale, by invoking the memory of its past record and repute, and by capitalising the glamour of such leaders as Nehru, with his record of anti-imperialist struggle and imprisonment. In the further development the progressive international policy conducted by Premier Nehru, and the measure of partial achievement in economic advance in 1951, together with the presentation of a very vaguely formulated future aim of "socialism", contributed to stemming the process of decline and disintegration and holding a considerable part of the former mass support for the Congress, despite wide dissatisfaction among the workers, the peasantry and the lower middle class with their conditions of life. Nevertheless, discontent became increasingly manifest with the right-wing leadership of the Congress, and against the big business interests dominating the Congress machine.

Extreme reaction sought to take advantage of this situation in order to build up communal organisations with a mass following; but despite lavish expenditure and powerful backing, the results were limited. The rising wave of mass awakening moved to the left. This was shown in the high level and militancy of working-class and peasant struggles during this period, despite intense repression (notably the peasant revolt in Telengana in Southern India, with the seizure and redistribution of the landlords' land over an area of more than 2,000 villages, election of People's Administrative Committees, and armed defence against the invading armies, first of the Nizam, and then of the Indian

Union). The left feeling was further shown in the growth of the peace movement.

The publication in 1951 of the new Programme of the Communist Party of India constituted an important political landmark for the whole left advance, showing the path forward for the development of working-class and peasant unity and a broad people's democratic front to realise the aims of national independence and separation from the British Empire, the abolition of landlordism, democratic reform and social and economic advance, and the establishment of people's democracy in India.

The general election in India at the end of 1951 and beginning of 1952, revealed, on the basis of universal suffrage, the shift in political alignment which was developing. The results showed that the Congress, in place of its previous 80 to 90 per cent majority of the vote in the 1946 election, had fallen to a minority of the total vote, or 42 per cent, although still able to enjoy a majority of the seats on a minority vote thanks to the adoption of the notorious undemocratic "British" electoral system. The Communist Party and its allies of the united democratic front won 6 million votes, and, with 37 seats in the Central Parliament and 236 seats in the State Assemblies, emerged as the principal opposition group and challenging alternative to the Congress. A defeat of the Congress would have been possible but for the disruptive role of the leadership of the "Socialist Party", which refused unity with the left and thereby (through scattering nearly 10 million votes to win twelve seats) saved the Congress. Especially significant were the successes won by the Communists and their allies in Madras, Hyderabad, Travancore-Cochin, Bengal and Tripura. In Andhra, which had been the decisive base of peasant struggle in the preceding period, and which the Congress leadership had declared in the election to be a crucial test of the measure of popular support, the Communists won in the sixty-three seats contested 1,452,516 votes against 998,530 for the Congress.

These results indicated that the broad democratic people's front, built up through the initiative and leadership of

the Communist Party, had already won wide mass support in a number of regions and was capable of developing on an all-India scale as the decisive challenging force to the domination of the Congress Government and the leader of the Indian people's struggle for liberation.

This development was carried further forward in the period following the general election of 1952. Every effort was made by reaction to stem the Communist advance. The old Congress leader, C. Rajagopalachariar, who became Governor-General of India in succession to Lord Mountbatten from 1948-50, after the general election of 1952 took office as Chief Minister in Madras and proclaimed the Communist Party "Enemy Number One—this is my Programme". The Socialist Party, whose right-wing leadership more and more openly reflected American influence, entered into a merger with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, which had broken away from the Congress, and established the Praja Socialist Party, in the hope of displacing the Communist Party and its allies of the united democratic front as the main opposition. But the record of by-elections and state and local elections since the general election revealed the continued advance of the Communist Party and the Democratic Front. An official Congress analysis of 114 state by-elections during 18 months since the general election of 1952, published in September 1953, revealed that the vote of the Communist Party and its allies had risen from 7.4 per cent at the general election to 13.2 per cent. In the key state of Uttar Pradesh, the old stronghold of the Congress, the municipal elections in the autumn of 1953 revealed that the Congress had won 39 presidencies and 430,000 votes, the Democratic Front of the Communist Party and its allies 26 presidencies and 223,000 votes, and the Praja Socialist Party 12 presidencies and 97,000 votes.

In the key elections in the newly constituted State of Andhra in the spring of 1955 the entire strength of Congress on an all-India scale was concentrated, including the formation of a bloc with other parties, to prevent a victory of the Communist Party and its allies. Even so, the Communist

vote reached 2,696,000, or 31 per cent, against 4,266,000 for the Congress front.

The Third Congress of the Communist Party of India in December 1953 carried forward the strategic and tactical line already initiated by the Programme published in 1951, and showed the path of advance for the further development of the struggle of the working class and peasantry, the strengthening of the organisation of the working class and trade-union unity, the carrying forward of the fight for peace and national independence, and the building of the Democratic Front with the perspective to reach to the establishment of Governments of Democratic Unity in particular states and on an all-India basis, as a stage in the advance to the victory of people's democracy in India.

Heavy problems still remain in the path of democratic development and of the final victory of the popular forces in India. The contradiction between the progressive tendencies in international orientation, and the continued dominance of reactionary big business interests in the internal situation, cannot continue without giving rise to grave complications. Reaction is still powerfully entrenched in India; and the efforts of imperialist intrigue and penetration can lead to dangers which will require the strongest unity and co-operation of supporters of democracy and peace to combat.

But on a long-term view the path of political development in India is inescapably clear. The path of political development in India is moving forward to the same basic aims of complete liberation from imperialism and its associates within the country as has been achieved by the Chinese People's Revolution. The relatively slower development in India has corresponded to the differences in the concrete conditions. Alongside the close similarities in the basic problems and the conditions of their solution, the differences which have governed the variations in the line and tempo of development in India, may be noted:

(i) China was a semi-colony. Imperialism never penetrated China, but was only established on the coasts with its tentacles extending through trade into the interior.

India was a full colony for two centuries. In India imperialism established and consolidated a complete administrative structure, controlling every detail of the life of the country throughout its territory, and indeed the machine thus established continues to be administered by the present rulers.

(ii) Imperialism in relation to India was the single British imperialism.

Imperialism in China was divided; various imperialist powers sought to partition China between them but were hampered by their own differences; this gave greater opportunity for the early advance of the Chinese national struggle and a direct challenge to imperialism.

(iii) The Chinese revolution developed from the outset along the forms of armed struggle. This arose from the preceding conditions already noted. Hence Stalin's definition of the peculiar character of the Chinese revolution, where armed revolution confronted armed counter-revolution. It was not a question of the Chinese Communists opening a phase of armed struggle after a previous bourgeois-led passive political struggle, but on the contrary carrying forward the national armed struggle after it had been betrayed by the Kuomintang leadership.

(iv) Under the conditions of the long-continued imperialist rule in India, a considerable bourgeoisie and even big bourgeoisie developed with strong roots within the country and mass influence entirely different from the compradores in China, and able to exercise leadership of the national movement, while at the same time, especially in the monopolist stage developing close economic links with imperialist economic interests.

Nevertheless, despite these differences, the interests of these two most numerous nations of Asia and the world are not only closely linked, and their friendship and co-operation of vital importance for the peace of Asia and the world, but the basic problems in the battle of liberation from imperialism and the advance towards the solution of the tasks of economic, social and political reconstruction are closely parallel. In his message to the Communist Party of India in November 1949 immediately following the final victory of the Chinese People's Revolution and the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic, Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Communist Party of China, declared:

"The Indian people are one of the great Asian nationalities with a long history and a vast population; the country's fate in the past

and her path in the future are similar to those of China in many respects.

“Like free China, a free India will one day emerge in the world as a member of the Socialist and people’s democratic family; that day will end the imperialist reactionary era in the history of mankind.”

The events of the present period in India are proving, and will further prove, whatever the trials and ordeals through which the struggle of the Indian people has to pass, the truth of this prediction.

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