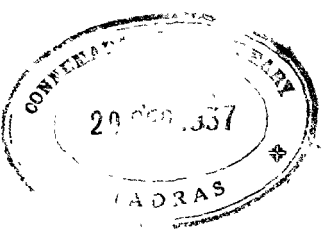
THE EMPIRE OF THE NABOBS a short history of British India

by LESTER HUTCHINSON

"Nabob, na'bob, *n.* a deputy or governor under the Mogul Empire: a European who has enriched himself in the East: any man of great wealth. (Corr. of Hind. *naiwwâb*, a deputy)." Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary



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CONTENT

No historical work can be impartial, as history is a questio of the interpretation of facts. I have not therefore tried t conceal my Socialist bias, believing that an avowedly socialis interpretation of the history of the British in India will be use to the reader as an antidote to the orthodox histori which appear from time to time.

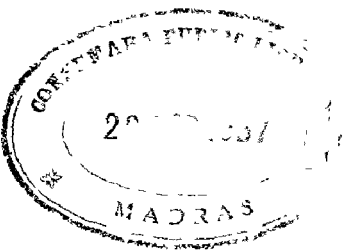
Some of the material in the last three chapters has alread been used in articles which I contributed to *Current History Plebs*, and the *Millgate*, to which acknowledgements are made

I have to thank Christine Millar, of the National Counc of Labour Colleges, for preparing the index, and also m wife for the help she has given me throughout.

L. H

PART ONE

THE CONQUEST



CHAPTER ONE

The Fall of the House of Timur

> "But take for example the Times of Aurung-Zebe; or the epoch when the Mogul appeared in the North and the Portuguese in the South; or the age of Mohammedan invasion, and of the Heptarchy in Southern India; or, if you will, go still more back into antiquity: take the mythological chronology of the Brahman himself, who places the commencement of Indian misery in an epoch even more remote than the Christian creation of the world."
>
> KARL MARX, "The British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, June 25, 1853

I

It is India's misfortune to be naturally wealthy; and therefore the political history of India is the history of a succession of invasions. In the past the rich fertile plains of the north were a standing temptation to the ragged tribes of Central Asia, and the country's fabulous wealth of gold and silver, of diamonds and precious stones, of silks and muslins, invited the attention of professional plunderers from all over the world, to whom Alexander of Macedon had given a lead. The successful invader usually stayed and established his dynasty at Delhi; but as time moved on his empire crumbled and his dynasty was swept aside by the next invader. Delhi became the graveyard of empires.

Each empire, maintained by the sword and based on plunder at home and abroad, nevertheless lasted for as long as it was able to exercise a useful social function. The essential social function of government in the East, where there is no regular rainfall, is and always has been the artificial supply of water to the land. Where all agriculture depended upon irrigation, a common necessity precluded the monopoly of the water

upply by private persons, and irrigation became an essential ask of government. For the same reason, since the fertility f all land depended upon irrigation, the only landed proprietor as the State. There were no private landlords in India before he British conquest; for as agriculture depended upon a ommon water supply, so all land was held in common, a ommon ownership guaranteed by the State through the village ommunes, the local princes, and the Central Government. "... in Asiatic empires," wrote Marx, "we are quite accustomed o see agriculture deteriorating under one Government and eviving again under some other Government. There the harvests correspond to good or bad government, as they change in Europe with good or bad seasons."[1]

As all agriculture in the East depends upon irrigation, and as rrigation depends upon the State, a weakening of the State leads to the neglect of agriculture and to the rise of economic discontent among the people, an economic discontent which, if unsatisfied, rapidly develops into a dangerous political discontent. The misgovernment of a degenerate Indian despotism thus speedily brought about its own ruin; a hungry peasantry would not only support rebellion, but would also welcome the invader as a necessary step towards the restoration of agricultural prosperity. At the same time, prolonged wars or civil upheavals, by undermining the system of irrigation, often depopulated vast areas which were previously prosperous. This explains why large territories in Egypt, Arabia, Persia, and India which were formerly cultivated by a thriving peasantry, are now barren and desolate: it explains also the rise of Mohammedanism, the greatest driving force in Asiatic history.

In Roman times, and during the first five centuries of the modern era, the main trade route from India to Europe was through the Red Sea. Alexandria was the great market where the traders of the two continents met and bargained for spices,

[1] Karl Marx, "British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, June 25, 1853.

silks, and jewels. Being on the direct line of traffic, the Arabian towns on the Red Sea flourished and accumulated great wealth. The prosperity of the coastal towns attracted the nomadic Arab tribes which settled in the hinterland, cultivating the sandy soil rendered fertile by efficient irrigation. For many centuries Yemen was the most prosperous of the Arabian States. Its prosperity depended not only on trade and the cultivation of the soil, but also on its ability to repel the invasions of predatory neighbours whom that prosperity attracted.

From the beginning of the third to the end of the sixth century, Arabia was almost continuously invaded either by the Ethiopians or the Persians. For a time Yemen was successful in withstanding these invasions: but the merchants and chieftains in the towns grew flabby on prosperity: they went awhoring after strange gods, and lost themselves in luxury and vice; and as a result, in the latter half of the sixth century, the Axumite King of Ethiopia crossed the Red Sea and conquered the country, after a fierce and prolonged war. The Government of Yemen appealed for help to the Persians, who invaded the country on the pretext of expelling the Ethiopians, and complete anarchy ensued. While the conflicting forces were destroying each other on land, pirates swarmed along the coast, preying upon the heavily laden merchant ships bound for Egypt, so that the Indian and Chinese merchants began to abandon the Red Sea route and to send their goods by caravan through the comparatively well-ordered Empire of Persia.

The wars and consequent loss of trade almost completely destroyed the machinery of government in Yemen. The system of irrigation fell into decay, famine broke out among the peasants, and the villages and towns were raided by nomads from the interior. The peasants directed their anger in the first instance against the towns, which had become sinks of iniquity and corruption, retaining all the vices of a long prosperity although the prosperity had gone for ever. This

revolt against the towns took the form of a religious reaction, a return to the simple tenets of primitive Judaism, exactly as at a later period in Europe the struggle of the merchant class against the feudal aristocracy took the form of Puritanism, an alleged return to the simplicity of the Old Testament as opposed to the subtleties and corruption of the Roman Church, the bulwark of feudalism. The rebellious peasants of Yemen soon found a leader in an able camel-driver, named Mohammed, who led his followers in search of fresh pastures, rallying to his side all the hungry peasants and discontented tribes in Arabia. After a series of wars, he finally overthrew the Himyarite dynasty and established the Caliphate at Mecca, dying when on the point of reducing Syria. Thus the era of Islam began.

Although the doctrine of Islam has the formal appearance of a religious reaction, the movement itself was revolutionary in character. The doctrine is embodied in the Koran, which, according to Mohammed, was personally dictated to him in chapters (*suras*) by God: but the Koran contains no original thought; it is a mixture of primitive Judaism and Christianity written in a style which contains many Ethiopian idioms. In fact, Mohammed had considerable difficulty in defending his new religion from the charge of being a Christian heresy; and it is possibly for that reason that he forbade wine-drinking by his followers, lest he should be charged with imitating the Christian Eucharist. But the doctrine is the least important aspect of Islam, which, springing from the economic discontent of the peasants, gave for the first time a national consciousness to the Arab tribes. It forbade private property in land even in Paradise and was thus able to weld together the peasants and nomadic tribes into one of the greatest revolutionary forces in history. The deserts in the interior of Arabia affording little opportunity for prosperous settlement, the movement burst the confines of Arabia and carried fire and sword throughout the greater part of Asia against all who would not believe. Long-

established thrones crashed before the advance of the fanatical hordes of Islam, Mohammedan kingships replaced the old, men suffered agonies from the crude knife of the circumcision, women took to the veil and withdrew from the sunlight, and the whole political face of Asia changed.

The first Arab invasion of India took place at the beginning of the eighth century, when Mohammed ibn Kasim conquered, with the permission of the Caliph, the kingdom of Sind, where he established a Mohammedan State which a century later split up into two. But the conquest of Sind had little effect on the rest of India, which was without any form of central government, being parcelled out among a large number of independent Hindu kings and princes. The Hindu dynasties continued to squabble happily among themselves until the beginning of the eleventh century, when the Turk, Mahmud, King of Ghazni, having sworn to wage every year a holy war against the Hindu infidel, invaded the Punjab. He scattered the Hindu armies, plundered the Punjab, massacred the unbelievers, and then returned to Afghanistan, conscious of having well performed his religious duty. True to his vow, Mahmud made no less than fifteen plundering and slaughtering expeditions into India, penetrating as far as Kathiawar: and when he died in 1030 he had increased his already extensive kingdom by the annexation of the Punjab.

By the time of Mahmud, the Arab national unity on which Islam was based had broken up. The wide extent of the Muslim empire, the huge number of converts, and the kingdoms carved out for themselves by the leaders, had made any racial unity impossible. The Caliph from being the temporal head of the Islamic world had become merely a spiritual chief; Mohammedan States no longer concentrated on the infidel, but fought among themselves for the greater glory of themselves rather than of God: and every chieftain now concerned himself with acquiring a kingdom, preferably at the expense of the infidel, but if necessary at the expense of a brother religionist.

India became one of the chief victims of the Mohammedan scramble for kingdoms, as in the nineteenth century Africa was the chief victim of the European scramble for colonies. The invasions of Mahmud were succeeded by those of Mohammed of Ghor, one of whose generals established the first Muslim dynasty at Delhi. After a stout resistance, Behar and Bengal were conquered, and five Muslim kingdoms were established: Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Bidar, and Berar, in Central India. Under succeeding dynasties the Sultanate of Delhi expanded until it governed nearly the whole of Northern India; but degeneration came with success, the central authority grew weaker as incompetents succeeded each other on the throne, public works were neglected and the peasantry became restive, ambitious nobles conspired against each other for the control of the person of the monarch, rival puppet kings were set up, and the empire rapidly dissolved. It was on this decaying empire that Timur the Earth-shaker descended like a hurricane, spreading death and desolation to mark his trail, but laying among the ruins the first foundation of the Moghul Empire.

2

The word Moghul is an Indian corruption of Mongol. The Mongols were nomads occupying Central and Eastern Asia, and were for the most part herdsmen ever moving on in search of new pastures. A certain racial unity had been given to them by Chenghis Khan, who in 1220 began his remarkable series of conquests by annihilating the empires of Khvarazm and Persia. India fortunately lay beyond the scope of his ambitions; but the subsequent conquests by his sons and grandsons, and the establishment of Mongol supremacy in Central Asia, inevitably led to friction between the Mongol outposts and the kingdom of Delhi. Frontier raids became a habit with the Mongols; and at the end of 1241 a Mongol force took advantage of a weakling, Bahram, who then occupied the throne of Delhi, to

invade the Punjab, penetrating as far as Lahore, which they sacked. The Mongols found sufficient encouragement in the success of these raids to organize invasions not only for plunder but for conquest; and in 1297 and again in 1308 large Mongol forces appeared before the walls of Delhi only to be beaten off by a combination of circumstances and force. But with the degeneration of the kingdom of Delhi, the Mongol danger increased, and when Timur left Samarkand in April 1398 at the head of a force of 90,000 Tartar cavalry, and swept through the Afghan passes on to the plains of India, he met with no effective resistance.

Since the time of Chenghis, the Mongols had adopted many of the customs of the more civilized peoples they had conquered; the formerly heathen tribes had been absorbed in Islam. Timur himself, a Barlas Turk, was a devout Muslim, as he took pains to demonstrate by his zeal in slaughtering unbelievers. On his march to Delhi he left behind him to mark his passage, nothing but burning homesteads and the mutilated corpses of Hindu peasants.

The throne at Delhi was as good as empty. The king, Mahmud, was a pawn in the hands of an unscrupulous minister named Mallu, and the nobles were all bickering among themselves; but as the refugees from the north poured into the city with their accounts of the advancing scourge, some attempt was made to put the city in a condition of defence. Meanwhile, Timur reached Delhi, and camped on the further bank of the Jumna; whereupon the enterprising Mallu made an ill-considered sortie which was easily beaten off; and 100,000 Hindu prisoners of war who had ill-advisedly shouted encouragement to Mallu were butchered on the spot. A few days later Timur crossed the river, met and scattered the defending army, and occupied the capital.

Once in Delhi, Timur had himself proclaimed Emperor of India: but he had no intention of remaining personally in India. The main object of the expedition was plunder, to

recoup himself for the expenses incurred in the conquest of Persia and Mesopotamia. In this he was completely successful. By ransacking the city for gold and silver and precious stones, he accumulated an enormous treasure. But while engaged in the business side of the expedition, he was not unmindful of his other obligations as a conqueror. Although at the request of the *Mullahs* he had proclaimed an amnesty on entering the city, he soon changed his mind, and his savage Tartar troopers, given a free rein, turned the capital into a shambles, while Timur himself watched the massacre from a convenient mosque. The slaughter continued for five days until the killers were weary and nothing was left to loot: then Timur, after offering in the marble mosque of Firuz on the Jumna his "sincere and humble tribute of grateful praise to the Divine Majesty," gave the order to retire from the stricken city. Riding north, he paused for a while at Meerut in order to massacre the population and to add to his loot, and then at last he crossed the Himalayas, his army loaded with the plunder of an empire, on his way back to Samarkand.

He left the whole of Northern India a barren waste, and the people a prey to anarchy, hunger, and disease. Delhi was a city of the dead, where thousands of corpses lay unburied or unburned in the streets, corrupting the air with the stench of decay; and "for two whole months not a bird moved wing in the city." Thus was the House of Timur founded.

Timur left nothing behind him except ruined cities and the terror of his name: but the kingdom of Delhi never recovered from the shock of his invasion. The first effect was a prolonged famine—the result of the ruin of irrigation and of the destruction of crops and granaries. King Mahmud and his minister Mallu crept out of their hiding-places to find scarcely anything left of their kingdom. Mallu was killed by Timur's viceroy in the Punjab, and the wretched Mahmud died shortly afterwards, thus ending his dynasty. There followed the Sayyid dynasty which led a precarious existence for thirty-seven years, being

forced even to collect its revenue by armed raids. It was succeeded by the Lodi kings, who improved matters a little, but they were swept aside in 1526 after the great battle of Panipat by Zahir ud din Mohammed, surnamed Babur (the Lion), fifth in direct descent from Timur the Conqueror.

Historians accord Babur the honour of being the real founder of the Moghul Empire. Timur, although proclaimed Emperor of India, had been nothing but a raider, and the task of establishing the dynasty fell to Babur, who formed his headquarters at Agra. But he was only successful because of the reputation left behind by Timur, whose name he utilized to the full, and because of the discontent of the people who required a strong Government which could ensure their livelihood and protect them from invasions. Although neither Timur nor Babur were Mongols, both being Barlas Turks, they were generally regarded as such by the people, among whom there was a growing conviction that Moghul supremacy meant security. For that reason Babur had little real difficulty in reducing Northern India to submission. At his death his empire extended from the Oxus to the Bengal frontier, and from the Himalayas down to Gwalior: but he had no time to consolidate his power as he died at the early age of forty-eight, a victim of strong drink and hardship, leaving to his son Humayun an empire only half digested.

The weakness of the empire was clearly demonstrated by Humayun, who spent his reign in losing almost all his father had won. Humayun began well by adding Jaunpur, Malwa, and Gujarat to his dominions, but he soon retired from activity to forget his cares in opium, while rebellion sprang up all around. He eventually succeeded in being driven out of his kingdom altogether by Shir Khan, the brilliant Afghan ruler of Bihar, and he passed sixteen out of the twenty-six years of his reign as an exile in Persia while Shir Khan ruled ably in his stead at Delhi. The early death of Shir Khan and the succession of weak kings, however, finally gave Humayun his opportunity,

and a few months before he died he marched into India at the head of Persian troops and managed to regain his capital. Fortunately for his house, he did not live long enough to suffer a fresh defeat. One evening as he sat at the top of a tower which he used as a library, nodding over his Persian manuscripts, he was disturbed by the Muezzin's call to prayer from a nearby mosque. In his anxiety not to be late in returning thanks to the one and only God, he began to hurry down the steep spiral staircase, tripped over the skirt of his robe, fell to the bottom and cracked his skull. And he died; and was succeeded by a child of thirteen, his son Akbar, destined to be the greatest of the Moghuls.

3

The economic, social, and political condition of India at the time of the accession of Akbar was feudal, roughly corresponding to the condition of Europe in the early days of the Holy Roman Empire. The political framework of the country was exceedingly loose. The whole of the South was under the dominion of hereditary Hindu chiefs who had practically no contact with Delhi; the Deccan was divided up among independent Muslim rulers: the Hindu Rajputs were still supreme over the greater part of Central India; and the provincial governors and Moghul nobles in Northern India were only too ready to seize the first opportunity to throw off the yoke of the Delhi Government and to establish themselves as independent rulers. As with the Holy Roman Emperor, the Central Government at Delhi could only continue to exercise its authority over the distant provinces by possessing an overwhelmingly strong military force at its command. Obedience depended upon the ability to exact a swift retribution, and a weakening of the central power led to instant rebellions. The Moghul army itself was a source of weakness, being composed of a large number of small private armies raised by the nobles in their fiefs (*jagirs*): and treachery and desertion were common.

The civil administration was in a state of corruption, each official feathering his own nest at the expense of State efficiency, and the mass of the people groaned under their oppression. The conflict of religions added to the confusion. The Hindu nobility was bitterly resentful of the arrogance of the Mohammedan conquerors; and the bitterness was intensified by the imposition of a poll-tax, the *jaziah*, as it was called, on non-Mohammedans. There was hardly any semblance of national unity, and there was no national consciousness. The law was administered according to the whims or the greed of the numerous rulers and their officers: public works were neglected; and plunder was the motive force of the time: little thieves preyed on big thieves and the big thieves preyed on one another.

The whole structure of the empire was based on village economy. There was a countless number of villages scattered all over the country, each one being an independent economic unit. In every village all land was held in common, worked on the principle of the division of labour; while the peasants worked in the fields their women folk were busy at the spindles and the looms and at other subsidiary industries. The produce of all was shared equally among the members of the community, each according to his needs, and the surplus was set aside for the payment of taxes to the State, in return for irrigation and protection. The taxes were for centuries paid in kind, but with the expansion of the Moghul Empire in the sixteenth century the use of coined money became more general, and many of the villages began to dispose of their surplus products as commodities in order to pay their taxes in cash. Each village had its own local government in the form of a council or *panchayat*, which appointed a number of officials. These officials have been well described by Marx:

> "Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the 'chief inhabitant,' who is a judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper who

keeps the accounts of the village 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 calendar-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."[1]

The strength of these village organizations lay in their simplicity, which was also the cause of their permanence. But although they remained for long the chief economic unity of society, the introduction of money-economy on a large scale by the Moghuls led to the development of a wealthy merchant class in the towns, which acted as brokers for the villages, and which in the coast towns carried on a prosperous export trade with Europe, first with the Portuguese and then with the Dutch. The same historical forces were at work in India as were active at the same time in Europe; but in the West the decay of feudal society was much more rapid, as India was later to know at her cost.

4

The kingdom left by the hapless Humayun consisted only of the Punjab, and of the districts surrounding Delhi and

[1] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. i, pp. 392–3, Kerr edition.

Agra: but at the end of the fifty years of Akbar's reign the Moghul Empire was firmly established over Afghanistan and the whole of Northern and Central India. The contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, he had begun as little more than a military adventurer and had ended the absolute ruler of one of the greatest and most orderly empires in the world. This he achieved not by military conquest alone, but also by wise administration.

He began by reforming his army. Hitherto, as it has been pointed out, the Moghul army, instead of being a source of strength, was a constant menace to the security of the monarch. It was recruited on the feudal system, the officers being given grants of land (*jagirs*) or assignments on the revenue in order to raise and support the musters which they brought to the imperial forces. Akbar was quick to realize that this system not only left him almost at the mercy of his officers, but also led to corruption and mismanagement which were destroying military efficiency. He therefore struck at the root of the disease by abolishing wherever it was possible the grant of *jagirs*, and by paying his troops in cash from the imperial treasury. Where *jagirs* already existed he had them strictly supervised, and he checked the muster-rolls very carefully, demanding the description of every man in the muster to be recorded, and every horse to be branded with the imperial mark, in order to prevent the holders of *jagirs* drawing money for supplies which existed only on paper. In this way Akbar made the army into an efficient instrument for the extension of the empire and for the punishment of rebellion.

Having conquered and subdued his empire, he divided it up into fifteen provinces, each one under a governor with a financial officer to assist him. He created a judicial administration responsible to the centre, and a regular police force which was expected to suppress banditry and to protect the communal property of the villages. He then ordered the provincial governors to pay particular attention to irrigation; for he

remembered the terrible famine of 1555, in which thousands perished, and in which mothers sold their children as slaves for little more than a rupee, and men and women ate one another. Towards the end of his reign, in 1596, another great famine took place, proving that the provincial governors were neglecting their jobs, and Akbar made the first serious attempt to organize famine relief measures. He tried to put a stop to the systematic plundering of the peasants by predatory officials, by enforcing a standardized revenue system, under which he claimed one-third of the average yield of produce over a period of ten years. By this system both parties benefited; the State collected an average of forty-five and a half millions of rupees in land revenue, and, as the contemporary writer Abul Fazl remarks with a certain degree of truth, "Men's minds were quieted, and cultivation increased, and the path of fraud and falsehood was closed."[1]

Akbar's greatest ambition, which he pursued consistently throughout his life, was to bring about the unification of the empire; he wished to weld together all the conflicting forces of race, religion, and caste into a nation bound by common ties and loyalty to his House. With this end in view he established at the beginning of his reign the most liberal religious toleration. He began by abolishing the humiliating poll-tax on non-Mohammedans, which had served to keep smouldering the fires of Hindu resentment: he then married a Rajput princess, the daughter of the Raja of Jaipur, whom he had previously defeated, and provided civil and military careers for the lesser Hindu nobility whom he had reduced. He appointed his Hindu brother-in-law as governor of the Punjab, and entrusted the affairs of State to a devoted and competent Hindu named Toda Mall. Hindu laws he respected in general, but he forbade child marriage, human and animal sacrifices, and trial by ordeal; and he legalized the remarriage of Hindu widows, but failed to suppress the rite of *suttee*, although

[1] *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 351.

he ensured that the act of self-immolation should be voluntary.

His policy of religious toleration enabled many Jesuit priests from the Portuguese settlement of Goa to move freely about his court, and in 1575 he began the interesting experiment of calling together every Friday the exponents of the different religions, for a long discussion on theology, at which Akbar himself presided. At these conferences he encouraged Muslim *mullahs*, Brahmans, Jesuits, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Jains to confound each other in argument, interfering only when the irate priests shouted at each other, according to the historian Budauni, such epithets as "fool and heretic." Orthodox Muslim opinion was outraged by these proceedings, but was powerless to prevent them. Akbar's policy of toleration survived the reigns of his successors, Jehanghir and Shah Jehan, and was noted with astonishment by William Fitch and other English travellers, accustomed as they were to the religious persecutions in Europe. The Reverend Edward Terry, chaplain to Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador of James I to the court of Jehanghir, gives a striking testimony to Moghul toleration when he describes one of the antics of Thomas Coryat who from the turret of a Muslim mosque intoned *Hazarat Isa Ibn Allah* (Christ is the Son of God).[1] Thomas Coryat himself, after observing that "in the Mongol dominions a Christian may speake much more freely than he can in any other Mahometan country in the world," proceeds to give an account of how he abused the privilege:

> "But I pray thee, tell me, thou Mahometan, dost thou in sadnes call me Giaur (infidel)? That I doe, quoth he. Then (quoth I) in very sober sadnes I retort that shamefull word in thy throate, and tell thee plainly that I am a Musulman and thou art a Giaur. For by that Arab word Musulman thou dost understand that which cannot be properly applied

[1] *Early Travels in India*, Foster, p. 315.

to a Mahometan, but onely to a Christian; so that I doe consequently inferre that there are two kindes of Musulmen, the one an orthomusulman, that is a true Musulman, which is a Christian, and the other a pseudo-musulman, that is, a false Musulman, which is a Mahometan."[1]

We do not know whether the unfortunate Muslim was paralysed by this display of learning, but Coryat lived to tell the tale, whereas, as he himself admits, if he had spoken thus in Turkey or in Persia "they would have rosted me upon a spitt."

Akbar found that the greatest obstacle in the way of the achievement of political unity was the arrogance and hostility of the orthodox Mohammedans; and in 1579 he made a bold attempt to eliminate it. He issued a decree assuming spiritual as well as temporal power, as Henry VIII had previously done in England, and claimed the sole right to interpret the divine commands. The ordinary salutation *Salaam Aleikum* (Peace be with you) and the reply *Valekum Salaam* (And peace be with you) were changed into *Allahu Akbar* (God is most great) and *Jalla jalaluhu* (May His Majesty be glorified). The ambiguity of these new salutations further outraged the orthodox: they were not sure whether *Allahu Akbar* meant "God is Great" or "Akbar is God," and they were equally uncertain about the real meaning of the reply, not knowing whether it was the majesty of God or that of Akbar which was to be glorified. They had hardly recovered from this shock before Akbar forbade the use of the name Mohammed in public prayers, and followed that by proclaiming in 1582 a new religion altogether, a kind of potpourri of all the others, which he termed the *Din Ilahi*, or Divine Faith.

Akbar was the only genuine enthusiast for the new religion. The nobles, both Mohammedan and Hindu, received it coldly, and the priests stirred up rebellion. Because of it, later historians

[1] *Early Travels in India*, Foster, p. 271.

have condemned him for a foolish vanity in pretending to be God. But it was not vanity; it was a desperate attempt of a brave statesman to end religious disruption and to bring unity to his empire. It failed, and with it went the last hope of a lasting Moghul dominion.

On October 22, 1605, Jalal-ud-din-Akbar, the wisest and the greatest of the Moghuls, died at Agra. At his death there were signs of the coming storm from the West. The Portuguese had already found a footing on Indian soil, and the new merchant powers of England and the Netherlands were looking greedily to the East.

5

The weakness of all Eastern despotism lay in the concentration of all State power in the hands of one man. The genius of Akbar had built a great empire, reasonably free from disorder and secure from foreign invasion; but the stability of the empire depended upon the life of Akbar or on the succession of an equally capable despot. In the history of the East there are many examples of empires flourishing under the rule of one man and rapidly crumbling in the reign of his successor. The Moghul Empire is one of the best of these examples.

Jehanghir, the son and successor of Akbar, was the contemporary of James I of England and Scotland; and the two monarchs had many characteristics in common. The Moghuls, with the exception of Aurangzeb, were all heavy drinkers in defiance of the Prophet, and even the princesses liked their spiced wine; but Jehanghir excelled them all as "he never went to bed sober, except perhaps on Friday nights, corresponding with our Thursdays."[1] According to the English sea captain, William Hawkins, who visited his court, it was Jehanghir's habit to retire after evening prayer with a few chosen companions to the bathroom, where after drinking "five cupfulls

[1] *Cambridge Short History of India*, p. 380.

. . . he eateth opium, and being in the height of his drinke he layeth him down to sleep, every man departing to his own home."[1]

It speaks well for the policy of Akbar that the drink-sodden Jehanghir managed to remain on the throne; and for the greater part of his reign, the actual administration was carried on by his favourite queen, Nur Jahan, the Light of the World. But with such a ruler, the administration was bound to suffer. The court was divided into factions: the provincial governors became unruly; rebellions were frequent; and the rival European agents intrigued against each other with the court officials, seeing opportunities in the decaying empire. The final humiliation came in 1626, when the emperor was made a prisoner by one of his own generals, and although he managed to escape, he died the following year, having done his best to break up his father's empire.

His son who ascended the throne in the name of Shah Jehan, began his reign vigorously enough by killing off his near relations, and then spent several years in an attempt to restore the prestige of the empire; but the task was greater than his ability, and he grew tired of it and concentrated on architecture. He left the conduct of the wars to his sons, and settled down to decorate Northern India with palaces and monuments of red sandstone and marble, in one of which he was subsequently imprisoned by his third son Aurangzeb, who proclaimed himself emperor in the same room in which his father lay in chains.

Aurangzeb was the last of the great Moghuls. In the year 1658, in which he was proclaimed emperor, terrible famines occurred; a sure sign of decay in the administration. To relieve the distress he was forced to remit taxes and to repair the machinery of provincial government. He then sent an expedition to punish the kings of Cooch Behar and Assam, who had taken advantage of the disorder of the previous reign to raid

[1] *Cambridge Short History of India*, p. 382.

the plains of Bengal. His next act was to attempt to suppress piracy in Bengal, which was causing a considerable loss to the provincial revenue. The pirates were mainly Portuguese and half-castes who had formed their base at Chittagong, and were protected by the King of Arakan, to whom they paid a percentage of their industry. The pirates had found a profitable side-line in the slave trade, selling their captives to English, French, and Dutch merchants at the Deccan ports. Aurangzeb, in burning the pirate fleet in 1665, was destroying a flourishing department of European commerce.

Aurangzeb was a good soldier and a crafty administrator. He was quick to recognize the corruption which was eating away his House, and the main object of his reign was to establish a firm foundation for his dynasty on an united people. Like Akbar, he desired to create a nation out of the conflicting feudal forces; but he lacked the wisdom and tolerance of Akbar, and the means he chose to reach his end ultimately brought about the destruction of his House. While Akbar had used the instrument of religious toleration, Aurangzeb chose that of religious persecution. He tried to revive the force of Islam to weld together the different races and creeds into a loyal whole. In the pursuit of this ideal he revived the insulting poll-tax on non-Mohammedans, and drove out of office all the Hindu captains and administrators. He then provoked a rebellion of the Rajputs, who had been loyal to the empire since their reconciliation with Akbar, and his oppression caused serious risings of the Hindu peasantry, one peasant sect even marching on Delhi. Within a short period he had succeeded in alienating all the Hindu States which had been a source of strength to his predecessors; and while his generals carried fire and sword through Rajputana, the Rajputs raided Malwa, where they pulled the beards of the priests of Islam, defiled the mosques, and burnt the Koran. In the space of a few years, Aurangzeb had awakened all the religious prejudices and hatreds which had lain dormant for a century; and these, allied with the

increased economic discontent caused by the poll-tax, created a force which struck at the structure of the empire.

By no means daunted, Aurangzeb proceeded with his plans for the reduction of the Hindu States of Southern India. He had begun the campaign against them in 1636, as the lieutenant of his father, and had waged it throughout the succeeding years either personally or through his generals, but with only moderate success. The general effect of his aggression, accompanied as it was by religious persecution, was to promote unity among his enemies, and in 1665 the Moghul armies found their way blocked by a military confederacy of the Marathas, under their leader Shivaji.

The Maratha confederacy which was created by Aurangzeb's aggression, was destined to overrun the whole empire, sweeping away the last remnants of Moghul prestige. They were mostly hardy peasants cultivating the land to the east of the Western Ghats; there were few social distinctions among them, and their spiritual leaders, Eknath and Tukaram, had both bitterly attacked the Brahman hierarchy and the caste system. The conditions for unity were therefore already present when the Moghul armies began to threaten their independence and beliefs. In the face of the common danger they rallied behind the leadership of Shivaji, who had established a small raiding State in the hills behind Poona. Shivaji opened hostilities by sending a long letter to Aurangzeb, in which after a graphic description of the poverty to which the people had been reduced, he rebukes Aurangzeb for imposing the *jaziah*, the poll-tax, on Hindus:

> "How can the royal spirit permit you to add the hardship of the *jaziya* to this grievous state of things? The infamy will quickly spread from west to east and become recorded in books of history that the Emperor of Hindustan, coveting the beggars' bowls, takes *jaziya* from Brahmans and Jain monks, paupers, mendicants, ruined wretches, and the

famine-stricken—that his valour is shown by attacks on the wallets of beggars—that he dashes down the name and honour of the Timurids."[1]

The Marathas were masters in the art of guerilla warfare. They were not professional soldiers, and supported themselves on the land when not fighting, thus saving their leaders the expense of maintaining a standing army. Avoiding open battles, they melted before superior forces, leaving the enemy nothing tangible to attack; and then when least expected they would swoop down from the hills to cut to pieces small parties and to plunder cities. Their mobility was their greatest strength; but the great armies of Aurangzeb with their elephants and swarms of camp followers were like moving towns, impossible to conceal and almost without mobility. The Moghul generals were puzzled and completely out-manœuvred by Shivaji, who continued to increase his dominions and even to levy tribute from districts within the empire until he died in 1680.

Two years later, Aurangzeb, having brought his affairs in Rajputana to a temporary conclusion, led personally a grand army into the Deccan, where he remained for the last twenty-five years of his life, capturing fortress after fortress, but failing either to subdue or to make open battle with his elusive enemy. The country was wasted, the imperial treasury exhausted, and soon the soldiers of the grand army began to complain and then to mutiny as their pay was in arrears. The flanks of the clumsy grand army were continuously harassed by Maratha horsemen, who began to plunder even the imperial camp. Their tactics wore Aurangzebe out:

"If an ordinary detachment was sent to check them, they repelled or destroyed it. If a great effort was made, they vanished; and perhaps did not again appear till they had plundered some distant town, and left time for their pursuers

[1] Quoted from *A History of India*, Sir George Dunbar, p. 286.

to weary themselves by forced marches in a wrong direction. They now treated the power of the emperor with derision."[1]

Aurangzebe, an aged man, was compelled to give up the struggle. Hotly pursued by Maratha cavalry he retreated to Ahmednagar in the bitterness of defeat. His policy had failed and had only served to create a force which was to bring the empire crashing down on the heads of his successors. He did not survive his ruin. In 1707, weary of life, he died at Ahmednagar in an odour of piety; and with him perished the House of Timur.

6

After the death of Aurangzeb, the empire rapidly disintegrated. His immediate successor made peace with the Marathas, who remained dominant over most of the Deccan, but he was faced with rebellions first of the Rajputs and then of the Sikhs. The Mogul governors, to whom the Nizam of Hyderabad gave the example, began to repudiate central authority and, while retaining a nominal allegiance, to establish themselves as independent rulers. A succession of puppet emperors on the throne hastened the disruption. The neglect of public work brought about famine, and the oppression of officials general misery; the seas and the river mouths were filled with pirates of every nationality; bands of desperate brigands roamed the land, raiding defenceless villages: and to add to the confusion, large numbers of European adventurers swarmed into the land to make their fortunes in the service of one or another of the rival princes. The Marathas encroached upon the Moghul dominions until all the provinces of the empire south of Delhi were in their possession or control: and as final evidence of decay, India, which had been free from invasion for two centuries, was again invaded. In 1739, the Persian king, Nadir Shah, having conquered Moghul Afghani-

[1] Elphinstone, *History of India*, book xi, p. 669.

stan without any resistance from Delhi, laid waste the Punjab and sacked Delhi, returning to Persia with the famous Peacock Throne of the Moghul emperors and sufficient treasure to enable him to remit the entire revenue of Persia for three years. After this, India fell into almost complete chaos and anarchy.

While the Marathas were awaiting their opportunity to overrun the country, the merchant companies of the West continued their steady penetration. Portuguese prestige had declined since Portugal had become a dependency of Spain, but Goa and other possessions had been retained. During the seventeenth century Holland had established in the teeth of Portuguese opposition her supremacy in the East Indies, the Spice Islands, as they were then called, and had formed several settlements on the mainland. The French East India Company was well entrenched at Pondicherry in the Carnatic, and at Chandernagore in Bengal; and the English Company was in possession of Surat and Bombay in the west, of Madras, Fort St. David, and Devi Kottai in the Carnatic, and of Calcutta in Bengal.

The stage was set for the coming struggle for power. For all practical purposes the Moghul Empire had ceased to exist: and the day was approaching when the thrones of Aurangzebe would be filled with pedlars from the West.

CHAPTER TWO

The Coming of the Conquerors

> "The economic forms in which men produce, consume and exchange *are transitory and historical.* When new productive forces are won men change their methods of production and with the method of production all the economic relations which are merely the necessary conditions of this particular method of production."
>
> KARL MARX, Correspondence

> " 'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-faced ronyon cries.
> Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master of the Tyger. . . ."
>
> *Macbeth*, I, iii, 6–7

> "Ile haue them flye to India for gold,
> Ransacke the Ocean for orient pearl,
> And search all corners of the new-found world
> For pleasant fruites and princely delicates . . ."
>
> MARLOWE, *Doctor Faustus*

I

THE future English rulers of India had very humble beginnings. They possessed none of the virtues usually associated with conquerors, being neither warriors nor gentlemen by tradition, but merely members of the Third Estate, despised by clergy and nobility. They were paunchy, melancholy creatures, with simple tastes and little culture, dividing their time between the shop and the counting-house, devoting their lives to the accumulation of money instead of to the spending of it as they would have done had they been gentlemen. Their moral code was puritanical, being designed to protect movable property in the shape of commodities, money, and women, and was very different from that of the degenerate feudal nobility, who had no need of ethics to protect property in land which nobody could put in his pocket. They had no country estates on which they could idle away their time in hunting and luxury, but

they lived as their fathers had lived before them in solid, comfortable houses in the towns, conveniently near their shops and warehouses; and for this reason they were known as burghers or bourgeois.

Conflict between the feudal landlords and the merchant bourgeois was made inevitable by their opposing economic interests. Feudal economy was based on peasant and handicraft production within the limits of a self-sufficient local community. Production was for use and not for the market: the peasant worked the land to maintain himself and his family as well as to maintain the feudal baron and his retainers: the craftsman fashioned the clothing, the tools, and the weapons necessary to the community, in return for which he was provided with food; and the baron with his army of retainers gave protection to the community from outside aggression and from internal disorder. The wealth and power of the baron depended upon the extent of landed property he possessed, the number of communities in his jurisdiction, and on the number of peasants and craftsmen whose services he could command. The head of the feudal State, the king, to whom the barons swore theoretical allegiance, was nothing more than the largest landlord controlling more wealth and a larger army of retainers than any one of his vassals, but his ability to exercise his authority depended upon the lack of unity among the barons. The real cohesive force of the feudal world was the Church, a vast international organization, which apart from its temporal power as the largest feudal landlord had the monopoly of interpreting the wishes of God, a valuable asset in an ignorant and superstitious age.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century the feudal system was showing signs of decay. Serfdom had almost died out, the custom having grown of commuting feudal dues for a money payment; for by this time money was in general use as a result of the growth of international trade, which had been stimulated by the Crusades. The nobles had begun to cultivate a taste for

luxury, spurning the rough homespun cloth of the village weaver in favour of fine Eastern silks sold only for cash by Italian and Greek merchants at the great trading centres of the Mediterranean; they had discovered that ale turned sour in their bellies and were content only with the choice wines of Guyenne; and they were demanding spices from the East to preserve their meats and to make their wine more palatable. These luxuries could be obtained only by money:

> "Money was the commodity which everyone took and everyone needed, for which one could receive everything, everything which the feudal mode of production offered—personal services, house and hearth, food and drink—as well as innumerable articles which could not be produced under the family roof, articles the possession of which became increasingly necessary and which were not to be obtained except with money. The classes engaged in acquiring money, producing or exchanging attained to increasing importance."[1]

With the growth of trade the bourgeois rose rapidly to power and influence. The towns, originally associations of free peasants and artisans "protected" by the feudal barons, became great warehouses for the storing of commodities, and as the times were unsafe it was found necessary to protect them even from their lordly protectors by erecting stout walls and fortifications. But the towns in shaking off the barons fell under the domination of powerful merchant guilds and corporations which exploited in shops and in factories the labour of the poorer townsmen. On the other hand, the nobles in their greed for money taxed the towns whenever they dared, overtaxed the peasants, and robbed merchant convoys on the roads. In the towns the nobles were heartily disliked, and their exactions caused widespread peasant discontent which from time to time flared up into active rebellion. The *jacqueries* in France were accompanied by similar outbreaks in England, and in 1381 a

[1] Karl Kautsky, *Thomas More and his Utopia*, p. 11.

great revolt broke out, when the peasants led by Wat Tyler and John Ball marched through the countryside attacking and burning manors and chanting:

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

—a sentiment with which the bourgeois, while deprecating the attack on property and anxiously wondering what the effect would be on the poor in the towns, entirely agreed.

The predatory conduct of the nobility, the insecurity of the roads, and the prevailing peasant unrest, led the merchants to attack the feudal political system by advocating the principle of central government. They wished to centralize all power in the king, to disband the private armies of the barons which had degenerated into banditti, and to police the trade routes. The ambitions of the monarchy coinciding with the desires of the bourgeois, the royal armies were financed by the cities and directed against the feudal strongholds. The frequent wars which the barons waged on one another made the task of centralization easier by weakening their collective strength: the feudal strife in France at the end of the fourteenth century led to the absolutism of Louis XI, and the Wars of the Roses gave supreme power to the Tudors in England. The absolute monarchy was the weapon with which the bourgeois attacked the economic and political structure of feudalism.

The bitter class struggle between feudalism and merchant capitalism, between the old and the new order, became concentrated in the fifteenth century into an attack on the Church. The growth of monopolies is a characteristic of social decay, and the disintegration of feudal society led to the centralization of economic power in the Church. The Church was not only by far the largest landowner, owning for example a third of the land of England, but it had also the largest share of international trade as well as the monopoly, through its Jews and Lombards, of finance. Furthermore, it had the supreme

advantage over all possible competitors of being able to protect its economic interests by its control over the superstitions of the mass of the people. Its tentacles spread through Western Europe stifling the development of the bourgeois and draining the wealth from every land. Before merchant capitalism could expand further it was necessary for it to shatter this giant monopoly.

The forces of history were behind the bourgeois. The Church for all its wealth and power was not a healthy body; it had all the diseases of decay. The conflicting forces in the Vatican hierarchy and the frequent divisions culminating in the Great Schism of 1378, steadily weakened the Church's influence; and this influence was still further weakened by the dissolute conduct of the clergy. The early Christian principles of austerity had long been abandoned, and priests and monks and nuns shamelessly flaunted their vices before the hungry peasantry whose toil provided the Church's wealth. The evil state of the Church is unconsciously revealed by the Franciscan, Dr. Thomas Murner, who in his *Narrenbeschwerung* assumed as a matter of course that

> "all parish priests kept concubines, and all priests and monks meddle with men's wives, while in the nunneries she who has the most children is reckoned the abbess."[1]

Such conduct outraged the moral sense of the people as much as the extortions of the Church excited their anger. The literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries reflects the popular hatred of the Church:

> "Right so out of holi chirche,
> Alle yveles springeth,
> There inparfit preesthode is,
> Prechours and techeris."[2]

[1] H. C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, vol. ii, p. 89.
[2] *Vision of Piers Ploughman.*

Great reform movements, such as that initiated by Wyclif in England, by attacking the property interests of the Church and by challenging the spiritual authority of the Pope, struck at the foundations not only of the Church but also of medieval society. Against the growing army of heretics and the flood of anti-clerical literature the Church battled in vain: its proscriptions, excommunications, and torments only intensified the popular hatred.

This hatred was of immense service to the bourgeois, who canalized it to serve their economic interests: the people became the willing troops of the bourgeois for the assault on the citadels of feudalism. But the bourgeois had an even greater ally in the development of the means of production which were breaking through the limits of feudal economy. The fourteenth century was an age of great inventions, great discoveries, and great personal ambitions. The invention of gunpowder had revolutionized the art of war; the invention of printing had broken the Church's monopoly of learning; the development of the metallurgical and textile industries, the progress in armaments, clock-making, astronomical research, and navigation, changed the old modes of production and stimulated men's minds to experiment with all possibilities. Great seamen with immortal names sailed boldly into unknown seas, discovering new trade routes and new lands, thus preparing the way for the slave trade and for imperialism. It was as if a blanket had been lifted from the world revealing to man for the first time a wonderful wealth of possibilities, so that he became restless and desperate in his attempts to slake his thirst for knowledge or his lust for gold. These discoveries still further discredited the dogmas of the Church, and while the merchants chafed under its restraint, the Vatican grimly settled down, in the phrase of Gibbon, "to defend nonsense with violence."

The storm which had been gathering force during the fifteenth century finally burst at the beginning of the sixteenth.

Revolutionary influence had grown so strong that in 1517 an obscure German friar named Luther was able to challenge with impunity the whole authority of the Pope and to give a lead to the great social revolution which is recorded in history as the Reformation. The Reformation assumed the form of a religious struggle, partly because a popular movement has to express itself in terms of its own common knowledge, but mainly because the Church was the most powerful force in feudalism. The bourgeois revolutionaries had to shatter the spiritual power of the Church before they could break its economic monopoly, and voicing the popular demands for religious reform they were able to mobilize the people for the overthrow of the old feudal order in the interests of merchant capitalism. They were successful in those countries in which the means of production had developed rapidly because of natural resources and geographical position, notably in Britain, Holland, and in parts of Germany, and even in Spain and Portugal, where the Church had a firmer hold it could only survive by making concessions to the new economy. Even in twentieth-century Europe, backward agricultural countries are in the main Catholic, and highly developed industrial countries Protestant.

In proportion to the triumph of the bourgeois over feudalism, the conditions of the peasantry became worse. Rebellions were frequent and the peasants began to desert the Reformation to join forces with the Anabaptists and Lollards and other primitive communist associations which were out to abolish private property entirely. Both bourgeois Protestant and feudal Catholic combined against the common danger, and during the great peasant wars of Germany, Luther denounced the peasant leaders far more violently than he had previously denounced the hierarchs of the Church. In England peasant unrest developed rapidly as a result of the confiscation of the Church lands, which were parcelled out among a new aristocracy, which was more interested in sheep-raising than in agriculture.

Peasants were turned off the former Church lands and ever common land was enclosed to make room for sheep; for it was very profitable to supply the expanding textile industry with wool. "The sheep," wrote Sir Thomas More, "have become so voracious and bold that they devour men, fields, houses, and devastate and depopulate towns."[1] In this way the peasants, deprived of their land and tools, and driven off the roads by the savage vagrancy laws, were compelled to sell their labour power to the merchant capitalist for a miserable wage. The Reformation not only shattered feudalism but satisfied the next condition for the development of capitalism by creating a landless, propertyless proletariat.

In the new conditions the English merchants greatly prospered. The Hansa merchants, who with the Church had the monopoly of medieval trade in Western Europe, were expelled from England, a policy of rigid protection for shipping and trade was adopted, and the English bourgeois turned their eyes greedily towards the fabulous wealth of the East.

2

The heavy pressure of the Turks on Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries made the old trade routes from West to East exceedingly dangerous to European traffic. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Turks possessed nearly the whole of Eastern Europe and threatened even Hungary and Vienna. The Mediterranean, the centre of medieval commerce, was infested by Moorish pirates, aided and protected by the Turkish Sultan; and although the two great commercial powers, Venice and Genoa, did their utmost to police the sea, the European merchants began to examine the possibilities of new and safer routes to India and the Spice Islands which

[1] ". . . tam edaces atque indomitae esse coeperant, ut homines devorent ipsos, agros, domos, oppida vastent ac depopulentur."—*Utopia*, lib. I.

would be free both from Turkish pillage and Venetian monopoly.

The initiative was taken by Portugal. Prince Henry the Navigator, the fourth son of King João of Portugal, turned to the neglected Atlantic. His ships explored the unknown coasts of Africa, rediscovered Porto Santo and Madeira and the Azores, and in 1460 sailed many leagues beyond Cape Verde on the west coast of Africa. Prince Henry's work was continued by other great Portuguese captains; in 1486 Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and twelve years later Vasco da Gama, profiting by the experience of Diaz, sailed round the Cape to Zanzibar, and from there across the Indian Ocean to Calicut, thus discovering the all-sea route to India. In the meantime other powers became interested and financed expeditions of their own. Sharing the common exaggerated view of the size of Asia and believing that it was to be found on the other side of the Atlantic, the Court of Spain fitted out an expedition under the command of a Genoese seaman, Columbus, who sailed across the Atlantic in the hope of reaching Japan, but instead discovered the island of Hispaniola off the American coast. Fired by this example, a few years later John and Sebastian Cabot, financed by Henry VII of England, discovered Newfoundland and the mainland of North America; and the opening of the sixteenth century saw the Florentine, Amerigo Vespucci, exploring the shores of Brazil and leaving his name to a great continent. Finally, in 1520, the Portuguese, Ferdinand Magellan, achieved the greatest adventure of them all by rounding Cape Horn and sailing for ninety-eight days across the deserted Pacific Ocean to the Philippines, thus circumnavigating the globe.

The importance of these discoveries was immense. In the first place they established a direct contact independent of the Turks and Levantine merchants with India and the Spice Islands; secondly they made the Spanish and Portuguese merchants free of the commercial monopoly of Venice in the

Mediterranean; and thirdly the mineral wealth of Sout America gave unprecedented opportunities for the accumula tion of gold and silver, which with the development of mone economy had become all important. In 1493 the Spanish Pope Alexander VI, punished the heretic nations and secured a shar of the pickings for the Church, by issuing a Bull in which h drew an imaginary line 370 leagues west and south of the Cape Verde Islands, arbitrarily assigning all new territory east o that line to Portugal, and all that west of the line to Spain Spain, given by the Vicar of Christ the monopoly of the Americas, rose rapidly to dazzling heights of power and wealth; her captains, Pizarro in Peru and Cortez in Mexico, lost no time in transforming as much of America as they could into a vast field for Spanish exploitation; her treasure-ships sailed regularly from the ports of Mexico and the Orinoco River heavily laden with gold and silver for the enrichment of the Spanish Court, the Church, the feudal grandees, and the merchants of Cadiz and Madrid. Benefiting by the same papal munificence, Portugal too prospered. For a century she held the monopoly of the Eastern trade, fortifying the strategic island of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, and establishing trading settlements at Goa, Diu, Daman, and Cochin, where, by reason of her superior sea power, she was able to exact many privileges and trading concessions from the Moghul Court. In 1580 Portugal became a Spanish dependency, although she continued to administer her Eastern settlements almost independently.

The enterprise of Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries left the English, Dutch, and Hansa merchants far behind. The Hansa merchants had become forced by the political domination of Germany by Spain to confine their trading to the Baltic, but in the last half of the sixteenth century the growing merchant powers of England and Holland struggled fiercely against the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly. Strangely enough, for a long time the

English and Dutch merchants were too timid to challenge the papal Bull of 1493 by sailing round the Cape of Good Hope to India, and as the Mediterranean route was unsafe and altogether unattractive, they wasted their money, ships, and the lives of their seamen in vain attempts to discover a north-west passage to India by sailing through the Arctic seas round the north of Asia. Spain, however, was not content to leave well alone, and the Spanish king entrusted to himself the task of exterminating the heretics and at the same time of extending his empire over the whole of Europe. Spanish aggression and Spanish military supremacy forced England and Holland to turn to the sea for protection, and they both emerged from the Spanish wars as first-class maritime powers, strong enough to challenge the Portuguese and Spanish monopolies. The defeat by the English of the Spanish Armada in 1588 enabled the English and Dutch merchants to use the Cape route to India. Spanish power began to decay as rapidly as it had risen. At the end of the sixteenth century Spain was no longer in a position adequately to defend the trade routes to the East, or even to protect her treasure-ships from the constant attacks by English pirates and adventurers; and Portugal, exhausted by the Spanish dominion, was unable to hold her own in the East against the Dutch and English onslaughts.

At first both the Dutch and the English were far more interested in the Spice Islands to the east of India than in India itself. Spices were to the Europeans more valuable than gold, for gold could not preserve meats nor make insipid food and drink more palatable. Of these spices, India furnished only pepper, and that produced in Malabar was a Portuguese monopoly. The Dutch therefore established settlements at Archin in Sumatra, at Bantam and Jakatra on the west coast of Java, and at points on the coast of Ceylon and Siam. The Dutch enterprise was exceedingly profitable, and the rival Dutch merchants flooded the European markets with pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and other spices until the Dutch States General

had to intervene in order to prevent a glut on the spice market. As a result of this intervention, the competing merchants were united into a single company which was given the monopoly of the East Indian trade.

The Dutch success in the Spice Islands displeased not only the Portuguese, but also the English, who thought that they had a prior claim to the Spice Islands, as Sir Francis Drake when circumnavigating the globe in 1579 had reached the islands and was supposed to have signed a treaty with the King of Ternate. The Dutch were not impressed with these claims, and the English, while not abandoning hope of eventually ousting the Dutch from Java and Sumatra, were forced to concentrate on the mainland.

The first Englishman to set foot on Indian soil was Father Thomas Stevens, a Jesuit, who in 1579 landed in Goa, where he resided for forty years, serving the interests of the Church and the Portuguese and writing religious works in the native languages. In a history of the English in India, Stevens is of little importance except for the letters which he wrote to his father which stimulated the cupidity of those London merchants who were privileged to read them. Shortly afterwards their cupidity was further excited by the report of a certain John Newberry who had successfully returned after making the long and difficult journey overland to India, and groups of London merchants began to discuss among themselves the possibilities of sending out fully-fledged expeditions. The initiative was taken by the English Turkey Company, a federation of merchants headed by Sir Edward Osborne and Mr. Richard Staper, which held the monopoly by royal charter of 1581 of English trade in the dominions of Turkey. This company organized an expedition, consisting of a number of merchants in charge of the adventurous Newberry, which sailed from London in the *Tiger* in February 1583, carrying a letter from Elizabeth "to the most invincible and most mighty Prince, Lord Zelabdim Echebar, King of Cambia," by

which designation she intended the Moghul Akbar, Emperor of India. And in case the expedition should lose its way, Elizabeth provided another letter addressed to the Emperor of China.

Carefully respecting the Portuguese monopoly of the Cape route, for the Spanish Armada had not yet been defeated, the *Tiger* sailed to the port of Tripoli in Syria, from where five members of the company—John Newberry, Ralph Fitch, William Leeds, John Eldred, and James Story—set out on the journey overland to India. Eldred and Fitch left records of their travels and adventures which are of the highest historical importance. At Tripoli they joined a caravan which after seven days brought them to Aleppo, where they hired a boat and, in spite of the Arabs "which were alwayes there abouts robbing," sailed safely down the River Euphrates to Babylon (Baghdad). On August 6th they reached Basra, the port town of Mesopotamia, where, failing to secure a guide to lead them to Bushire and thence overland to India, they were forced to risk Portuguese hostility by sailing down the Persian Gulf to the island of Ormuz

> "in a certaine shippe made of boordes and sowed together with cayro, which is threade made of the huske of cocoes, and certain canes or straweleaves sowed upon the seames of the bordes: which is the cause that they leake very much."[1]

At Ormuz the Portuguese threw them into prison as spies, but owing to the good offices of the English Jesuit, Stevens, they were released on bail after professing to be Catholics. Removed by the Portuguese to Goa, Story entered a Jesuit convent, where he was employed in painting the church, while the others opened a shop in Goa until, hearing that they were to be sent as prisoners to Portugal, they skipped their bail and crossed the border into the territory of the King of Bijapur, and began to wander about the country noting the wealth and the markets. After a visit to Golconda, where "bee the diamants

[1] Ralph Fitch, Narrative, *Early Travels in India*, Foster.

found of the olde water," they made their way up country to Fatehpur Sikri where Akbar held his court in the midst of

> "1,000 elephants, thirtie thousand horses, 1,400 tame deere, 800 concubines; such store of ounces (cheetahs), tigers, buffles, cocks, and haukes, that is very strange to see."[1]

Leeds remained at Fatehpur Sikri in the Emperor's service, and Newberry set out for home, dying on the way; but the indomitable Fitch continued his wanderings, carefully noting the state of the markets and the habits of the people, visiting the holy cities on the bank of the Ganges, the ports of Bengal, sailing from there to Kiang-mai in the Siamese Shan States, and returning in disguise via Malacca and Cochin to the dangerous Portuguese settlement of Goa. At the end of April 1591 he arrived safely back in London after an absence of over eight years, with a report which proved feasible the wildest schemes of the London merchants.

3

By the time Fitch returned to London the charter of the Turkey Company had expired, and in January 1592 a new body, the Levant Company, was formed which was given the monopoly of the trade by land through Turkish territory "into and from India." The Levant Company had very little success in its enterprises, and, urged by the high prices of spices charged by the Dutch monopolists, eighty City merchants, including Fitch and Eldred, met on September 24, 1599, for the purpose of establishing the East India Company. The new Company determined on an immediate expedition to the East:

> "The Merchants of London, in the year of our Lord 1600 joined together, and made a stock of seventy-two thousand

[1] Ralph Fitch, Narrative, *Early Travels in India*, Foster.

pounds, to be employed in Ships and Merchandises, for the discovery of a Trade in the East-India, to bring into this Realm Spices and other Commodities. They bought four great Ships to be employed in this Voyage. . . . These ships they furnished with men, victuals and munition for twenty months, and sent in them, in Merchandise and Spanish money, to the value of seven and twenty thousand pounds; all the rest of their stock was spent and consumed about the ships and other necessaries appertaining to them."[1]

As England was then at war with the united kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, the first expeditions sent out East by the English Company were not directed to India, but to the East Indian Spice Islands where the Dutch were already thriving. On January 24, 1601, the first fleet sailed under Captain Lancaster to Achin, in Sumatra, with a cargo of metals, specie, and woollen goods, which, except for the woollen goods which nobody wanted in a hot climate, was exchanged for 1,030,000 lb. of pepper. On the return to London, the final success of the expedition was imperilled by King James, who at first refused to allow the pepper to be sold until his own private supply, taken from a captured Portuguese carrack a year previously, had been exhausted. Recovering from this shock the Company passed a resolution against employing gentlemen, and dispatched further expeditions to the East Indies. In 1608, however, Captain William Hawkins, the leader of the third expedition, anchored his flagship in the harbour of Surat, on the west coast of India, where he was very unfavourably received by the Portuguese traders there, although Portugal and England were then officially at peace. Ignoring Portuguese displeasure, Hawkins set out to see the Emperor Jehanghir at Agra, but on the way several of his men were captured by the Portuguese, and when he demanded restitution was told that he was trespassing on the property of the King of Portugal, and he

[1] W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 18.

and King James's commission were treated, as he records, with scant ceremony:

> "At the receipt of my letter, the proud rascall braved so much, as the messenger told me, most vilely abusing His Majestie, tearming him King of Fishermen, and of an island of no import, and a f—— for his commission, scorning to send me any answer."[1]

Nevertheless, the Portuguese hastened to warn Jehanghir that "the suffering of the English in his land would be the cause of the losse of his own countries neere the sea-coasts," and that Hawkins was a "generall of ten thousand horsemen," preparing to attack the Portuguese settlement at Diu as soon as his ships arrived. Notwithstanding these warnings, Jehanghir received Hawkins cordially, and for a time the two got on famously together, the Emperor even appointing the Englishman captain of four hundred horse as well as promising to permit English trade with his ports on favourable terms. Thereupon, Hawkins appointed himself resident ambassador at the Moghul Court, married an Armenian wife, and settled down to enjoy himself. But unfortunately his boisterous diplomacy could not cope with the subtle intrigues of the Portuguese or of the Jesuits, or with the envy of the Moghul courtiers, and Jehanghir, tiring of the continuous trouble and disappointed in the presents which Hawkins had promised him, ordered the self-appointed ambassador to return to England and withdrew all his promises. On the voyage to England, Hawkins forestalled death by dying off the Irish coast.

The failure of Hawkins was revenged by Sir Henry Middleton, who roamed the Arabian Sea preying on Portuguese shipping. Finally, in 1612, Captain Best, having impressed the Moghul by defeating the Portuguese fleet off Swally, near Surat, was given permission to establish English trading

[1] Account of William Hawkins, *Early Travels in India*, ed. Foster.

factories in Gujarat. Hardly had this agreement been reached before the English position was further improved by a sudden outbreak of war between the Portuguese and the Moghuls; the English joined forces with the Moghul and inflicted two severe defeats on the Portuguese fleet off Swally; and after two years an inconclusive peace was signed, ending a war which had seriously injured Portuguese prestige without having in any way solved any of the Portuguese problems.

The pleasure of the English at the Portuguese decline was somewhat modified by the appearance of the Dutch at Surat in 1615, claiming that they had been formally invited there by Jehanghir during the Portuguese war; but the real reason of the Dutch arrival was to establish a factory which could supply their stations in Java and Sumatra with Gujarat goods to pay for the spices with which they were flooding the European market. Friction between the Dutch and the English was becoming acute. Allies during the Spanish wars, the decline of the power of Spain left them commercial and imperialist rivals, and although still nominal allies they sank each other's ships with as much determination as if they had been enemies. The Dutch, more effectively supported from home and far more firmly established in the East than the English, made no secret of their intention of driving the English not only from the Spice Islands but from India; and in 1618 the far-sighted English ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, warned the East India Company of the danger, informing them that the Dutch

> "wrong you in all parts and grow to insufferable insolencies. . . . You must speedily look to this maggot; else we talk of the Portugal, but these will eat a worm in your sides."

The corrupt administration of James I, indifferent to bourgeois interests (an indifference for which his son had to pay dearly), showed no sign of resenting any of these "insufferable insolencies"; and while Sir Thomas Roe laboured heroically at

the Moghul Court winning concessions for the English Company in spite of Dutch and Portuguese intrigues and Moghul prejudice, the English position became steadily weaker under Dutch aggression.

The situation was not improved by Roe's attempt to capture the Red Sea traffic and to corner Gujarat calicoes. The Company's export of Indian goods was far greater than India's import of European goods, chiefly because there was no demand in India for European goods, which on the whole were considerably inferior to those manufactured in the country; the English, Dutch, and Portuguese traders, therefore, had to pay in gold and silver specie for the Indian goods which they required. Captain Hawkins had already observed:

> "India is rich in silver, for all nations bring coin, and carry away commodities for the same; and this coin is buried in India, and goeth not out."

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Sir Thomas Roe, sharing the general European distress at this way of doing business, hit upon the expedient of making the Egyptian and Arabian merchants provide the gold and the silver necessary for British purchases in India, by monopolizing the Gujarat trade, a step which would enable the English Company to sell Indian goods for cash to Egypt and Arabia. This attempt at monopoly intensified Dutch and Portuguese irritation.

The contest between the English and the Dutch came to a head shortly after an agreement, negotiated in Europe, had been signed in 1619 allowing both parties an equal share in the Asiatic trade; but this agreement remained on paper only, for while the English wanted a share in the spice trade, the Dutch were determined to monopolize it. The Dutch intentions were made clear in 1623, when ten English merchants and nine Japanese, living under the protection of the Dutch fort at Amboyna, were arrested by the Dutch authorities on a charge

of conspiring to seize the fort and to assassinate the governor. As there were only twenty Englishmen in the island as opposed to four or five hundred Dutch, it would seem as though the Dutch had exaggerated English valour; but the prisoners were all put to the torture and executed. The massacre, as it was called, excited great anger in England, and later under pressure from Cromwell even the Dutch admitted that the proceedings were in some respects irregular; but the slaughter served its purpose as the English Company abandoned all claim to the Spice Islands and concentrated on strengthening its position in India.

A year previous to the affair at Amboyna the English attempt to break into the Portuguese monopoly of the trade in the Persian Gulf had led to an outbreak of hostilities. The English joined with Persia and succeeded in capturing the Portuguese island fortress of Ormuz; but they had little profit out of their success as they were cheated out of their share of the loot by the Persians, and soon had the mortification of realizing that in destroying the Portuguese they had opened the Gulf trade to their more formidable Dutch rivals.

In the East the Portuguese star had definitely set. They had lost their monopoly of the Gulf, the Dutch were pushing them out of the Spice Islands, the ambitions of Spain had exhausted them at home, and the Moghul, now that they were weak and had lost their prestige at sea, had become openly hostile. In 1631 the Emperor Shah Jahan, who had succeeded the easy-going Jehangir, attacked the Portuguese settlement at Hugli and put to death more than 4,000 prisoners. The Portuguese realized that if they were to maintain a foothold in India at all they would have to reduce the number of their enemies. Common hostility to the Dutch induced them to approach the English, and the representative of the English Company in Surat, William Methwold, negotiated an agreement with the Portuguese viceroy of Goa, which, when Portugal became independent of Spain in 1640, became a lasting peace.

In 1623 the English possessed six trading stations in India: Surat, Broach, Ahmedabad, Berhampur, Masulipatam, and Agra. Concessions had been difficult to acquire from the Moghul Court, and Dutch aggression had made the foothold they had obtained extremely precarious. Yet the Company, safe in London, prospered by the toil and enterprise of its servants in the East, who were badly paid, as they were expected to pick up here and there a little for themselves. Moghul munificence was not to be counted on: Sir Thomas Roe complained bitterly that all he received from Jehangir were "hoggs flesh, deare, a theefe, and a whore." It was therefore not surprising that corruption should grow among the Company officials, who sold the Company's privileges to native merchants, and took their commissions on passes granted by the Company to Indian ships. This form of insurance, by which Indian and foreign merchants could buy English naval protection for their shipping, kept the Company's war vessels active against the pirates who were then swarming into the Indian Ocean. Piracy became so profitable that many members of the English nobility fitted out their ships to prey upon the rich East Indiamen, irrespective of flag; in 1618 Sir Thomas Roe was forced to seize the ships of Sir Robert Rich, afterwards Earl of Warwick, observing that "to take pirates" had "grown a common pretence of being pirates"; and later, when the tension between the absolute monarchy and the bourgeois was growing to a climax, Charles I actually commissioned two privateers, the *Roebuck* and the *Samaritan*, to prey on Indian shipping, by which act he hoped both to annoy the London bourgeois and to add to his private fortune.

But in spite of these difficulties, circumstances were in favour of English expansion in India. They had benefited greatly from the decay of the Portuguese power; they were soon to benefit even more greatly from the decay of the Moghul power. The first sign of the decay in the Moghul administration was the Great Famine of 1630, brought about partly by the neglect of irrigation by corrupt officials and partly by the failure of the

rains. The famine was very extensive and very terrible. A sober Dutch merchant named Van Twist, who was then in India, has left a description of it:

> "Men deserted their wives and children. Women sold themselves as slaves. Mothers sold their children. Children deserted by their parents sold themselves. Some families took poison and so died together; others threw themselves into the rivers. Mothers and their children went to the river bank, and drowned themselves hand in hand, so that the rivers flowed full of corpses. Some ate carrion flesh. Others cut up the corpses of men, and drew out the entrails to fill their own bellies: yes, men lying in the street, not yet dead, were cut up by others, and men fed on living men, so that even in the streets, and still more on road journeys, men ran great danger of being murdered and eaten. . . ."[1]

The first effect of the famine was to put an end to the slave trade, by which the Dutch bought Indian peasants as commodities to work on the spice plantations of the East Indies: there were hardly any men left to be made into slaves. But the Dutch and English merchants soon found profit in importing foodstuffs from abroad and selling them at famine prices. The English, however, soon found their Red Sea trade at a standstill owing to the destruction of the Gujarat textile industry; for most of the Gujarat weavers had died of famine. But an all-wise providence turns even the misfortunes of the English to their advantage. Unable for the time being to exploit Gujarat industry, they were forced to look for opportunities elsewhere; and they found Bengal.

Bengal had suffered less than other provinces from the famine, and the textile industry there offered an alternative source of supply to the English merchants, the high prices of rice, ghee, and sugar, and other necessities being an additional

[1] W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Auranzeb*, p. 212.

attraction. Unfortunately the Dutch had the same idea, and the two rival companies attempted to establish their factories side by side in Bengal and Orissa, causing to each other the usual irritation. The famine had so unsettled the country that the English found it expedient to transport their goods by sea from Bengal to Surat, and thus entered into the Indian coastal trade, in which they suffered considerably from Arab, Maratha, and European pirates. But the English in expanding were gaining a firm hold on India and its trade, which was proving very profitable to merchant capitalism in England.

In 1635 Charles I had struck a great blow at the East India Company by granting a charter to a rival group of aristocrats and merchants, headed by Sir William Courteen. This competition seriously injured the original Company, which was also made answerable to the Moghul, the Portuguese, and the Dutch for the reckless and often piratical activities of the Courteen Association. But the difficulties placed in the way of merchant capitalism by an absolute monarchy which had long since ceased to serve any bourgeois purpose were soon to be removed. In 1642 the Civil War broke out in England, and in 1649 Charles I was beheaded by a bourgeois Government which did not hesitate to commit high treason in the name of patriotism. The Civil War seriously injured for a time the Company interests in India and encouraged Dutch aggression; but in 1651 Cromwell threatened the Dutch carrying trade by the Navigation Act, which prohibited the carrying of goods into English ports by foreign ships. War followed in which, while the English were on the whole successful in the Channel, the Dutch swept English shipping from the Eastern seas. A common danger of extinction forced the Company and Courteen's Association to amalgamate, and the Restoration of 1660, beside adding Bombay to the numerous English settlements in India, brought a measure of national unity necessary for an attack on the Dutch. But another enemy had entered the Eastern field, which was to prove more formidable than either

the Portuguese or the Dutch. In 1668, the same year in which Charles II handed over Bombay, brought to him by his Portuguese wife, to the English Company, Colbert, the astute minister of Louis XIV, promoted the French East India Company.

By that time the Moghul Empire was in an advanced state of decay.

CHAPTER THREE

The Struggle for Power

"When the rich realms, where Alexander toiled,
Shall by a Pettifogger's son be spoiled;
While London cits oppress the Eastern glebe,
And pedlars fill the thrones of Aurangzebe."
Public Advertiser, May 14, 1773

1

THE restoration of King Charles II to the English throne was in the nature of a compromise between the warring classes, and was intended to put out the smouldering fires of the Civil War and to promote a measure of national unity necessary to the merchant capitalist policy of expansion. The reign began auspiciously enough with the cession by the Portuguese of the island of Bombay as part of the dowry of Charles's wife, Catherine of Braganza: but the English had to haggle and threaten for three years before the Portuguese in India could be induced to obey their home Government and hand over to their rivals one of the most secure and splendid harbours on the west coast of India.

As Bombay was royal property administered by a royal governor, the East India Company still retained Surat as its headquarters, although that city was still ruled by a Moghul governor. The ravages of the Marathas under Shivaji and the general unsettled condition of the empire, however, caused the Surat merchants to look for a more secure refuge; and when in 1664 the unruly Shivaji sacked Surat and tried to storm the English factories, they turned their eyes more enviously than ever to Bombay where the King's governor, Henry Gary, contemptuous of the Company, was issuing English passes to Indian ships and administering impartial justice by hanging both the innocent and the guilty according to his pleasure.

The anomalous position came to an end in 1668, when, in return for a large "loan," the King handed over Bombay to the Company "in free and common soccage," and the Company found itself in possession with Madras of two strips of Indian territory under its own rule.

The first act of the English in Bombay was to begin to fortify the island. The lead in fortifying settlements had been given by the Dutch, who, as the chaplain of Sir Thomas Roe reported,

> "by fortifying themselves in the place wherever they settle, and then standing upon their guard, put a kind of force upon the natives to sell them their commodities."[1]

But there were also other reasons for fortification: to protect the settlements from European rivals, from the rapacity of local rulers, from pirates, and from the roaming armies engendered by Aurangzeb's wars. The decline of Moghul power made fortification a necessity; yet that fortification was the beginning of European territorial dominion in India. Both the English and the Dutch had already fortified their settlements on the east coast, and in 1641 the English began work on St. George's Fort which was to protect the settlement at Madras; but before the acquisition of Bombay there had been no large-scale fortification of the settlements on the west coast.

The strength and natural advantages of Bombay attracted many settlers from the ravaged mainland, and it grew rapidly into a prosperous city. Unfortunately for the same reasons it also attracted the predatory notice of Shivaji and of the Sidi, as the Moghul admiral was called. The latter, who led a piratical life for the best part of the year, formed the habit of spending the stormy monsoon period at Bombay, which he found a convenient base for his bloodthirsty raids on the Maratha villages on the mainland; and Shivaji long contemplated seizing the island as an effective means of putting

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India.*

an end to the Sidi's monsoon amusements. The strength of Bombay's fortifications, however, was sufficient to deter both of the protagonists; Shivaji adopted towards the Company a friendly attitude which lasted more or less until his death, and the Sidi continued his annual visits until 1684, when he was told more firmly than politely to go and amuse himself elsewhere.

In the meantime the Second Dutch War had broken out, and this lasting from 1665 to 1667 finally removed the Dutch menace to English progress on the Indian mainland. By the Treaty of Breda the English gave up all claim to the East Indies, and the Dutch agreed to respect the English possessions in India. Rivalry, however, between them continued to exist until a common hostility to Louis XIV's European policy brought them together. But the English Company's troubles were by no means over. A year after the Treaty of Breda the French East India Company was formed, and during the succeeding years the French established fortified settlements on the east coast. At the same time pirates of every nationality prowled the Indian Ocean; and rival merchant groups in England began to threaten again the Company's monopoly.

The East India Company's monopoly of the Indian trade had not only excited the greed of rival groups which spent their energies in scheming and in Court intrigues to break the monopoly, but it had caused serious discontent among the manufacturers and the artisans. A long-standing cause of general merchant discontent had been the export of bullion and specie from England to pay for Indian goods, but this had been partly allayed by the simple expedient of monopolizing Indian manufacture as well as trade, thus forcing the Eastern markets to provide the cash for the purchase of Indian goods to be sold by Europeans in Europe, and by the reasonable argument that the sale of these goods in Europe brought into England a far greater amount of specie and bullion than was originally exported to buy the goods. But the flooding of the

English market with Indian cotton goods and silks was almost destroying English manufacture, impoverishing the manufacturers, and causing serious unemployment among the artisans. Protests became general, and in 1697 the Spitalfields silk-weavers staged a giant demonstration outside Parliament, which was finally forced to intervene and, in the succeeding century, to take drastic measures to safeguard English manufacture. These measures have been summarized by Marx:

> "Parliamentary intervention, with regard to the East India Company, was again claimed, not by the commercial, but by the industrial class, at the latter end of the seventeenth century, and during the great part of the eighteenth, when the importation of East Indian cotton and silk stuffs was declared to ruin the poor British manufacturers, an opinion put forward in *John Pollexfen: England and India inconsistent in their Manufactures; London, 1697*, a title strangely verified a century and a half later, but in a very different sense. Parliament did then interfere. By the Act 11 and 12 William III, cap. 10, it was enacted that the wearing of wrought silks and of printed or dyed calicoes from India, Persia, and China should be prohibited, and a penalty of £200 imposed on all persons having or selling the same. Similar laws were enacted under George I, II, III, in consequence of the repeated lamentations of the afterward so 'enlightened' British manufacturers. *And thus, during the greater part of the eighteenth century, Indian manufactures were generally imported into England in order to be sold on the Continent, and to remain excluded from the English market itself.*"[1]

At the beginning of this trouble the Company's affairs fell under a dictatorship of a certain Sir Josiah Child, who ruled supreme in the Company for the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. By dint of heavy bribes to the King, to

[1] Karl Marx, "The East India Company—Its History and Results," *New York Tribune*, July 11, 1853.

the Court, and to Parliament, he kept at bay the interlopers and preserved for a time both the Company's monopoly and his monopoly over the Company. He had a supreme contempt for the laws of England, which he declared to be "a heap of nonsense, compiled by a few ignorant country gentlemen," but he had no hesitation in making use of those laws and of the venal judges (Jeffreys in particular) to overcome his rivals. But he was a shrewd rascal and did not fail to notice the rapid disintegration of the Indian political system and the opportunities which that disintegration afforded. In 1687 he pointed out that the developments in India were "forming us into the condition of a sovereign State in India," and recommended the Company to establish "the foundations of a large, well-grounded, sure English Dominion in India for all time to come." But he misjudged the extent of Moghul decay, and his error was soon brought home to him when, in 1686, he encouraged the Company to anticipate its sovereign rights by declaring war on the great Aurangzeb.

In spite of his clear-sighted imperialism, Sir Josiah Child did not do the Company any immediate good while he was in charge. His continuous and lavish bribery exhausted its profits, and led to drastic and dangerous retrenchment in India. As a result of his policy the Company's servants were more inclined than ever to indulge in private trade and to accept bribes, and the soldiers in the fortified settlements were kept on the point of open mutiny while their pay and supplies were docked to line the pockets of insatiable officials in England. The garrison of Bombay actually did rebel, took control of the island, and refused to obey the Company's orders; and the foolish war with Aurangzeb destroyed the settlements in Bengal. And these troubles were all in vain. Ultimately Child was defeated with his own weapons. Although by bribery he secured in 1693 a renewal of the Company's charter, his rivals five years later by *offering* Parliament a greater bribe were granted another charter and a new East India Company was

formed. The new Company sent an ambassador on a futile mission to Aurangzeb and tried to profit by the mistakes of the old Company; but eventually in 1702 after three years of ruinous competition the two Companies were amalgamated, and the East India Company that emerged was on a much firmer basis than any of its predecessors.

In the meantime the English were making steady inroads into Bengal, having been attracted there since the Great Famine of 1630 by the textile industry and by the saltpetre deposits of Patna. They soon established settlements at Pipli and Balasore on the Ganges delta, and in 1651 they formed a larger factory at Hugli. There they competed with the Dutch, the Portuguese, and the Danes, and fought against the pirates from Chittagong. All the European traders had trouble with the Moghul governors, who regarded their advent with a suspicious hostility; and the Danes were forced to wage war with the Nawab of Bengal for more than thirty years before they were allowed to settle at Serampur in comparative security.

In 1682 the Company's affairs in Bengal were administered by a certain Job Charnock, a bold and eccentric man who took pleasure in defying the conventions of European and Indian alike. To the scandal of the higher officials he lived in open concubinage with a Hindu woman, whom he was reported to have abducted from the funeral pyre of her husband. Furthermore, he had as a servant "a person of a most unquiett turbulent spirrit," who added to the scandal by his immoral habits and atheistical views. Nevertheless, Charnock was a useful servant of the Company; for when Sir Josiah Child started his war against Aurangzeb, Charnock was able to cut his way to Chutanuti (now Calcutta), and, when driven from there, to the island of Hijli, where his band kept at bay the Moghul forces as well as the tigers which infested the island. The war continued until 1690: Aurangzeb destroyed the English settlements in Bengal, and the English sank the Moghul ships; but in that year peace was signed, leaving Aurangzeb

bitterly resentful and Charnock free to establish a settlement at Calcutta, where he reigned supreme until his death in 1693. Three years later the Nawab of Bengal in his ignorance gave the English permission to fortify Calcutta, and in 1699 the fortified settlement was given the name of Fort William in honour of William of Orange, who with the help of the London merchants had recently chased from his kingdom the anti-bourgeois James II.

Until 1707, when Bengal was made a presidency, Calcutta remained subordinate to Fort St. George at Madras, the oldest of the English possessions as distinct from trading settlements. Conditions had been favourable for the development of an independent sovereign State at Madras, which was too remote to be easily reached by Moghul armies and too strong to be reduced by the small rajahs or seriously interfered with by the corrupt and unsupported Nawab of the Carnatic. By 1658 Madras was completely fortified, and in 1687 it received a charter from England and became a municipality with the privilege of hanging European and Indian malefactors in its own right, a privilege which it exercised to the full. In these conditions Madras continued to flourish in peace until the French wars, except for a few painful disputes with a new Nawab of the Carnatic, which were fortunately settled without bloodshed owing to the Nawab's partiality to strong drink and ready cash, both of which the English governor supplied liberally.

But the wheel of events was now turning rapidly. Aurangzeb, aged and unable to check the ravages of the Mahrattas, was dying amid the ruins of his empire; the English were firmly entrenched at Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay; the Portuguese no longer counted in the struggle for power, the Dutch were steadily abandoning India for the East Indies; the French were fortifying themselves strongly round Pondicherry; and pirates filled the seas and bandits roamed the land. The old India was dying and a new country of slaves was in the process of birth.

2

In 1707 Aurangzeb died; and the empire plunged into civil war. The Moghul governors and viceroys took every opportunity to make themselves independent of the Central Government; and the European Companies profited by the disorders to assume privileges to which they were not entitled and to extend their territories.

The pirate menace had by this time become so acute that the English Company was forced to take drastic measures against it. Madras had already in the last quarter of the seventeenth century administered a severe justice on all pirates or persons judged to be pirates who fell into its hands: a strange justice, since many of the officials of the Company at Madras were little better than pirates themselves. But unconcerned with points of conscience the Madras officials continued their campaign, which under Governor Elihu Yale became an obsession:

> "In government, so far as government consists in machinery for repressing the wicked, Madras was far ahead of any other presidency or agency. We find the records peppered with proof: an Indian is hanged for robbery and his head stuck up in a prominent place; and English sailors who deserted, especially if they used ship's property (a boat or pinnace) to make their getaway, plainly were 'pirates,' which Yale seems to have interpreted to mean anyone who, while accompanied by a stitch or splinter of property not strictly his, crossed any tract of water."[1]

But while the Company officials vented their hatred of piracy by hanging all the poor devils whose petty indiscretions gave pretexts, the real pirates were entrenching themselves on the island of Madagascar, whence they sailed to plunder

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 50.

Moghul and Company shipping. Here the pirates lived in royal state, many of them assuming the title of king, waging war with one another in the manner of civilized nations. Their names still thrill schoolboys: England, Taylor, Avery, Teach (Blackbeard), and the most successful of them all, John Plantain, who, having made himself king of Ranter-Bay, pursued a policy of progressive imperialism and lived in a house

> "built in as commodious a manner as the Nature of the Place would admit; and for his further State and Recreation, he took a great many Wives and Servants, whom he kept in great subjection; and after the *English* manner, called them *Moll, Kate, Sue* or *Peg*."[1]

Commanders of vessels sent out by the English Government to reduce the pirates usually ended by becoming pirates themselves; thus Captain Kidd, in command of a Government privateer, sank not only Moghul, French, and Portuguese vessels, but in 1698 chased one of the Company's East Indiamen. Finally the Government, under constant pressure from the Company, dispatched a naval squadron under a corrupt and blundering officer named Mathews. Mathews, after making himself intolerable to the Company at Bombay, sailed to the pirate stronghold at St. Mary's Island off Madagascar, which the pirates hearing of his coming had hurriedly evacuated:

> "There we found the Ruins of several Ships and their Cargoes piled up in great Heaps, consisting of the richest Spices and Drugs; all of which they valued not; but Money; Rich Silks, Diamonds, and other Jewels, they took care of; and all Eatables and Drinkables which they fancied. They made the Island of Madagascar their Rendezvous, where they committed all manner of enormities, and everyone did as his own vicious Heart directed him."[2]

[1] William Foster, *A History of the Indian Wars*, by Clement Downing, p. 105.

[2] Ibid., pp. 45–6.

Commodore Mathews, however, soon made contact with the pirates, with whom he proceeded to trade on his own account, for which he was lightly reprimanded and fined on his return to England, having had a profitable and altogether enjoyable cruise.

Many of the Madagascar pirates, including Plantain, then joined forces with the famous Maratha corsair, Kanhoji Angria, the founder of a great pirate dynasty, who dominated the coast from Goa to Bombay, preying on Portuguese, Moghul, and English shipping. Against this danger at the very gate of Bombay the Company created its own naval force; but all expeditions against the Angria strongholds at Gheria and Suvarndrug failed dismally until in 1757 Clive and Admiral Watson captured Gheria and broke the Angria power.

But a greater danger than the pirates was the growth of French influence in the Carnatic. French enterprise had been encouraged by the preoccupation of the Dutch and English Companies with the attempt by Spain and Austria to secure a share in the prosperous Indian trade. In 1722 the Emperor Charles VI gave a charter to an East India Company formed at Ostend: thereupon the Dutch and the English proceeded to sink Ostend ships with as much enthusiasm as they had previously sunk those of each other, and to destroy Ostend settlements in India: and finally the Ostend Company was forced out of existence. The English were later to regret the part they had played in exterminating the Ostend Company: for, as Pitt pointed out, had the Ostend enterprise survived it would have done far more harm to the Dutch and the French than to the English.

For a long time the French had shown clearly their determination to be in at the death of the Moghul Empire. In 1670, two years after the formation of the French Company, a French naval squadron under Admiral de la Haye seized San Thomé near Madras. Here, blockaded by a Dutch fleet and attacked by the troops of the King of Golconda, the French held out for

two years before retiring to Pondicherry. There the French received permission to stay, and under François Martin they organized themselves and built Fort Louis. Although captured by the Dutch in 1693, Pondicherry was restored by the Treaty of Ryswick and thenceforward became the stronghold of the French in India. But they were not content with Pondicherry alone, and in 1696 they settled at Chandranagore in Bengal, in 1725 at Mahe on the Malabar coast, and in 1739 at Karikal on the Coromandel coast. In addition they had seized the deserted but strategically important islands of Mauritius and Bourbon.

In the coming struggle for power the French Company was handicapped by the historically backward condition of France. By this time both England and Holland were essentially bourgeois countries, lusting for trade expansion and profit: but France was still in the last stages of feudalism. The French monarchy was absolute, the land was parcelled out among great landlords, the merchant class was small and despised, there was little industrial progress, and while Louis XIV squandered the nation's finances in futile and extravagant wars and ominous signs of anger were to be seen among the hungry and oppressed peasantry, there was little money or attention to be spared for overseas experiments. In the struggle for an empire the French were predoomed to defeat.

For some time the English at Madras and the French at Pondicherry remained on terms of mutual toleration, until the rapidity of Moghul decay precipitated the clash. In 1739 Nadir Shah of Persia had invaded Northern India, and the complete incapacity of the imperial Government at Delhi to defend its frontiers, its capital, or its treasures, had given the final encouragement to the Maratha chiefs, the Moghul viceroys, and the Hindu and Muslim princes to rule their territories independently of Delhi and to loot and war with each other to their hearts' content. In 1740 the Marathas overran the Carnatic, advancing to the gates of Madras and Pondicherry, before they withdrew heavy with plunder to rest awhile before

vading Bengal. The Maratha invasion of the Carnatic shattered the power of the Nawab, who was promptly murdered and succeeded by a puppet of the Nizam. The general state of disorder and confusion led both the French and the English to form hopes of establishing their own sovereignty over as much of the unhappy country that each one was able to grasp.

Hostilities between the French and English in India opened with the War of the Austrian Succession which, precipitated by Louis XIV's European ambitions, broke out in Europe in 1744. The interests of the French Company had previously been entrusted to two men of remarkable competency, La Bourdonnais, the Governor of Mauritius, and Dupleix, the Governor of Pondicherry, who by their vigour and skill did much to counteract the feeble support given to the Company in India by the French Government. At the beginning of the war, Dupleix, anxious for peace, proposed a neutrality agreement to the English at Madras; but the authorities at Madras, thinking that they had a heaven-sent opportunity to rid themselves once and for all of French competition, rejected the proposal, and an English naval squadron sent out by the home Government at the request of the Company, captured a rich French trading fleet homeward bound from China. Thereupon La Bourdonnais appeared off the Madras coast with eight men-of-war, and the English fleet after an indecisive skirmish sailed for Bengal, leaving Madras to its fate. After a fortnight's siege Madras fell to the French. The two French commanders then began to quarrel seriously about the terms to be imposed on the vanquished city, and Bourdonnais sailed back to France, where a grateful Government rewarded his services by putting him into prison. Dupleix, left in full charge, determined to hold Madras against all comers.

The poor Nawab of the Carnatic attempted in vain to restore order. Protests were showered on him by both sides, and finally, harassed beyond endurance, he determined to expel the French from Madras. Accordingly he dispatched an army

which, because of the vastly superior equipment of the French troops, was defeated by them with ease. The defeat of a large Indian army by a handful of Frenchmen demonstrated for the first time in India that up-to-date cannon, muskets, and bayonets, skilfully directed by competent military engineers, more than compensated for lack of courage and numbers. In courage and numerical strength the European armies were greatly inferior to levies of the Indian feudal lords; but in technical knowledge and in weapons they were vastly superior. The Nawab of the Carnatic was quick to realize this and hastened to make peace with the French.

In 1748 a large English expedition laid siege to Pondicherry in the hope of avenging the capture of Madras; but the siege was called off by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle which ended the war in Europe and restored Madras to the English. The Treaty brought not peace, but a temporary lull to the hostilities in India; the stakes, no less than an empire, were too high to allow either side to compose its differences with the other: either one or the other had to be exterminated. War was therefore carried on by proxy.

The condition of India now permitted both the French and the English to make full use of the Indian princes in the conflict between the Companies. The death of the Nizam had deprived the Carnatic Nawab of his protector; and as the latter was himself old and unwell the claimants for his job were many. Dupleix supported the claims of one Chandra Sahib, who, in 1749, with French and Indian troops defeated and slew the Nawab and then proceeded to reward liberally his French friends, giving to them all the concessions they demanded, making private gifts of land and money to Dupleix and his officers, and even appointing a disreputable relative of Madame Dupleix governor of San Thomé, on the outskirts of Madras. The English had reason to be alarmed; with a French puppet as Nawab, the encircling policy of Dupleix threatened to drive them into the sea. They therefore looked for puppets of their

own and found them easily enough in Muhammed Ali, one of Chandra Sahib's many rivals, and in Nasir Jang, a claimant to the viceregal throne of the Deccan. In 1750 Nasir Jang was murdered, and his rival assuming the title of Nizam paid Dupleix the reward of the assassin (in this case £200,000) and made him the Nawab of the Carnatic with Chandra Sahib as his subordinate. With Dupleix as ruler of the Carnatic, the position of Madras became desperate; accordingly the English concentrated all their efforts in the support of Muhammed Ali. A young officer of the Company named Robert Clive was sent with a force to besiege Chandra Sahib at Arcot, which fell with hardly any resistance. Besieged in his turn, Clive with the help of a Maratha freelance routed Chandra Sahib and his French allies, deflected a French attack on Madras, and marched to the relief of Trichinopoly, then besieged by Chandra Sahib. The latter, hard pressed by the English and by the forces of the Rajahs of Tanjore and Mysore, finally surrendered on being promised his life, and was promptly beheaded.

With the death of Chandra Sahib it became clear to the French Government that Dupleix had failed, and that his failure might lead to the loss of the French Indian possessions. With great presence of mind it therefore recalled Dupleix, and sent out in his stead to Pondicherry a less fiery agent named Godeheu, with instructions to make a truce with the English in India. Negotiations began immediately on Godeheu's arrival, and as a result a temporary peace was patched up by which both sides maintained the positions they had won.

Godeheu's peace was not destined to last long: each side was suspicious of the other. The French were still strong in the Carnatic, and their most brilliant general, Bussy, was in control of the viceregal court at Hyderabad. Jealous of each other's strength both sides prepared for war, supported by their home Governments. Progressive England and backward France were in the throes of an open struggle for a colonial empire in India

and in America. In India the scene of war soon shifted to Bengal.

3

Allahvardi Khan, the old and crafty Nawab of Bengal, had watched the struggle for power in the Carnatic with growing uneasiness: the behaviour of both the French and the English struck him as being in direct violation of all the principles of international law. There were many at his Court who advised him to expel forthwith the foreigners from his territory; but the old man had no desire to share the fate of his colleagues in the Carnatic, and contented himself with denouncing only the French, who were still weak in Bengal. Towards the English he preserved an attitude of wary ambiguity, although their new arrogance caused him some irritation. But this cautious if inglorious policy came to an end with his death in 1756. His grandson who succeeded him had different views, which he immediately began to put into practice. The new ruler, Siraj-ud-Daula, who is described in English school histories as a monster of iniquity, was by no means an amiable character; but there can be no doubt that he had reason on his side. Since their successes in the Carnatic, the English had assumed the airs of conquerors: they plundered the country, levied heavy customs on Indian goods entering Calcutta, and refused to pay customs themselves to the Nawab, treated the Nawab's officials with derision, and gave protection to his enemies. Furthermore, they were busily fortifying their factories at Calcutta without permission and in a manner which boded no good to the Nawab. The Nawab in just indignation ordered them to raze their fortifications, and on receiving an insolent refusal, announced his intention of marching on Calcutta to force obedience:

"I swear by the Great God and the prophets that unless the English consent to fill up their ditch, raze their fortifica-

tions, and trade upon the same terms they did in the time of Nawab Jaffeer Cawn, I will not hear anything on their behalf, and will expel them totally out of my country."[1]

Had the English been concerned only with trade they could hardly have objected to these demands, which were from the point of view of the sovereign authority of the country in which they were foreigners extremely reasonable; but the events in the Carnatic had stimulated their ambitions and their greed, and they were confident of being able to impose their will on the Nawab of Bengal as effectively as they had done on the Nawab of the Carnatic. There could be no doubt that the conditions in Bengal had changed since the time of Nawab Jaffeer Cawn.

On June 16th Siraj-ud-Daula appeared before Calcutta, driving the English to take refuge in Fort William. The governor and his officers set an example to the troops by scuttling away to the boats in the harbour; a few days later Fort William surrendered and Siraj-ud-Daula rather unexpectedly found himself master of Calcutta. The Nawab, thinking with some justification that the arrogant English were merely "men of wind," retired to celebrate his easy victory; and it is alleged by English historians that his troops confined one hundred and forty-six prisoners in a room twenty feet square, in the heat of a June night, so that all but twenty died of thirst and of the heat. Indian historians of repute denounce the "Black Hole of Calcutta" as a myth which the English later invented to discredit Siraj-ud-Daula and to justify their subsequent actions. It is not, however, impossible that the atrocity did occur: atrocities are part of the routine of war, and the English and the Indian chiefs in India in the eighteenth century were hardly less scrupulous than the respected generals and politicians of the twentieth century who contemplate with composure the

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 83.

destruction of whole populations with poison gas, bacteria, and poisoned bullets.

When the news of Siraj-ud-Daula's success reached Madras, there was general consternation, not at the fate of their countrymen (the bravest of these were safely aboard ship), but at the thought of losing one of the most important of their strongholds. The Madras authorities therefore lost no time in dispatching a fleet under Admiral Watson and a force under Colonel Clive to bring the Nawab of Bengal to reason. On arrival in Bengal, Clive sent a letter of reconciliation to the Nawab, who ignored it, and a few skirmishes took place. Calcutta was recaptured easily enough, and there Clive and Watson and Governor Drake settled down to quarrel among themselves on questions of precedence, Admiral Watson even threatening to use his naval guns to blow Clive out of Calcutta. These disputes were fortunately settled in time for the English to repel an attack on Calcutta by the Nawab who, tired of the struggle, offered peace. On February 9, 1757, peace was signed, and the Nawab as a token of his esteem presented Clive with an elephant, many jewels, and a robe of honour. But complications were to follow.

Towards the end of 1756, news had arrived that the Seven Years War between England and France had broken out in Europe. Siraj-ud-Daula saw in this war an opportunity to rid himself of the English who had so thoroughly undermined his rightful authority. He therefore wrote to the French general, Bussy, in Hyderabad, appealing to him for help to clear the English out of Calcutta; but the correspondence fell into the hands of the English. Then came the news that the Afghan king, Ahmad Shah Durani, having sacked Delhi, was preparing to invade Bengal; and Siraj-ud-Daula, thinking the French were very far away, was forced to ask the English for assistance to repel the invader. This help was promised on condition that the Nawab gave his consent to an English attack on the French settlement of Chandernagore. The permission was given, and

then, the invasion of the Afghans not materializing, withdrawn; but the English army was already in motion and the harassed Nawab ordered his army to protect Chandernagore, an order which he then countermanded on being told that the French were certain to be beaten. Chandernagore fell, and the English were then free to turn their attention to the vacillating and pro-French Nawab.

It was decided to stage a palace revolution. In concert with Omichand, a wealthy Hindu merchant and money-lender who was promised £200,000 for his share in the conspiracy, and several malcontents, Clive resolved to replace Siraj-ud-Daula on the throne of Bengal by an ambitious nobleman named Mir Ja'far. As soon as the plot was ripe, Clive sent the Nawab a letter in which he enumerated the injuries that he alleged the Company had suffered at the Nawab's hands, and in which with ominous politeness he announced his intention of calling for an answer in person:

> "The rains being daily increasing, and it taking a great deal of time to receive your answer, I therefore find it necessary to wait on you immediately."[1]

Thus warned the Nawab organized his forces, and the two armies met at Plassey on June 23, 1757. The battle was won even before it had started. Mir Ja'far, who commanded a division of the Nawab's army, in accordance with the arrangements previously arrived at with Clive, thoughtfully withdrew at the critical moment and took no part in the conflict other than that of an interested spectator; and an unexpected downpour of rain damped the Nawab's ammunition and his enthusiasm, so that, accompanied by a favourite concubine, he turned and fled, followed by his army in disorder. For a glorious victory the casualties were astonishingly small: the English lost only twenty-two killed and fifty wounded, and the

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 90.

Nawab's losses, killed and wounded, amounted to less than five hundred.

The results of the victory were many. Mir Ja'far was made Nawab on the spot; his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, captured Siraj-ud-Daula and sliced him into pieces with a sabre; and Clive and his fellow-conspirators began to divide the swag. Mir Ja'far threw open his new treasuries to satisfy the greed of his friends. The first division of the loot among the members of the Company's Council at Calcutta was as follows:

Governor Drake	£31,500
Lord Clive	211,500
Mr. Watts	117,000
Major Kilpatrick	60,750
Mr. Manningham	27,000
Mr. Becher	27,000
Mr. Boddam	11,367
Mr. Frankland	11,367
Mr. Mackett	11,367
Mr. Collet	11,367
Mr. Amyatt	11,366
Mr. Pearkes	11,366
Mr. Walsh	56,250
Mr. Scrafton	22,500
Mr. Lushington	5,625
Major Grant	11,250[1]

The Company received the Twenty-four Parganas, a large district bringing in a rent of £150,000, which was afterwards transferred to Clive, who thus became the Company's landlord, pocketing an annual rent of £30,000. Apart from the great political consequence the conspiracy against Siraj-ud-Daula had proved to be very profitable:

"To engineer a revolution had been revealed as the most paying game in the world. A gold-lust unequalled since the

[1] James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England*, New York, 1926.

hysteria that took over the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until it had been bled white."[1]

Only the merchant Omichand had reason to be discontented; for he was cheated by Clive out of his share of the plunder. He was coolly informed that the agreement he had signed was a trick and that he was to have nothing; whereupon he collapsed and had to be carried to his home. But the chief conspirator, who came to India as plain Robert Clive with a salary of five pounds a year, returned to England as Lord Clive, "the wealthiest of his Majesty's subjects."

Mir Ja'far soon repented of his bargain. He had become nothing more than a tool of the men he had enriched. Their rapacity had drained his treasury, and they had even appropriated the money consigned for his troops, who were in consequence on the point of mutiny. A further cause for alarm was provided by the Shahzada, the wandering heir-apparent of the captive Moghul emperor, who threatened to invade Bengal for want of something better to do; but he was sent about his business by Clive and the Governor of Bihar, and Mir Ja'far had once more to dip into his almost empty treasury.

The Company at Calcutta was greatly in need of money, because the Directors in London had cut off supplies, considering that the recent successes in Bengal ought to have made their Indian possessions self-supporting. The whole burden fell on the inadequate shoulders of Mir Ja'far, who driven to despair invited the Dutch to come to his assistance. The Dutch, who had for some time jealously regarded the growth of British power in India, were not backward in accepting the invitation, filled their fortress at Chinsura with troops from Batavia, and attempted to force their way up the Hugli. In the resulting battle the Dutch, attacked from land and sea, met with disaster,

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, pp. 91–2.

and had to agree to ignominious terms. Mir Ja'far was deposed and replaced by his son-in-law, Mir Kasim.

The second palace revolution proved almost as profitable as the first. Mir Kasim paid lump sums to the Company officials, and the districts of Burdwan, Midnapore, and Chittagong were made over to the Company. But the English by this time were insatiable. They insisted that the new Nawab should finance their army, and the Company officials claimed the right to carry on free of duties a private inland trade in country produce such as salt and tobacco, although their Indian competitors would have to pay these duties. The latter claim was not only manifestly unjust, but if admitted would have deprived Mir Kasim of the revenue necessary to maintain his payments to the Company. The Nawab, a better man than his predecessors, determined not to tolerate such humiliating vassalage; he retired up the Ganges to the tiger-infested ruin of Monghyr, where he began to recruit European adventurers and to put his army into fighting condition. When ready he stormed the English factories at Patna and Kasimbazar, and put to death two hundred English prisoners; then he joined with the Nawab of Oudh and the nominal Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam, who had recently claimed the title after the assassination of his father, and prepared to meet the advancing English army. On October 23, 1764, the armies met at Buxar, and after a fierce battle the Indian army was routed, and the Company became supreme in Bengal.

In the meantime the war against the French in the Carnatic had been proceeding. The French under Lally put up the best resistance that they could; but the lack of support from France, the lack of money, and the discord among the leaders, led to their eventual defeat. At the beginning of 1760 Lieutenant-Colonel Eyre Coote defeated Lally at Wandiwash, and the following year Pondicherry, the French headquarters in India, was compelled to surrender. Dupleix's dream of French dominion in India had been irretrievably shattered.

The Marathas, the only power which at this time could have checked further English progress in India, had been utterly defeated in 1761 by the Afghan chief, Ahmad Shah Durani, at the third battle of Panipat, and had retreated to the Deccan to lick their wounds and to prepare for revenge. This defeat left the English as the greatest single power in India. The wretched, wandering Emperor realized the strength of the new power, and after issuing a *firman* constituting the English as perpetual *dewan* (financial administrator) of the rich and fertile provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, settled down at Allahabad under the Company's protection.

Thus after a century of wars and exploitation, a confederation of wealthy merchants in London found itself in the position of a sovereign power, with a vast empire within its grasp.

CHAPTER FOUR

England and the Nabobs

> "Consider the situation in which the victory at Plassey had placed me! A great prince was dependent on my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation!"
>
> LORD CLIVE

I

THE end of the Seven Years War saw the East India Company firmly established as a political and territorial power in India. It was completely master of Bengal, although it maintained for a time a nominal Nawab, and it was the largest single power in the Carnatic. The titular Emperor of Hindustan, the unfortunate Shah Alam, was vegetating in comfort under the Company's protection at Allahabad, while the remains of his empire were being torn to shreds by the warring factions. In the west, the Marathas, showing a remarkable resilience, were recovering from the terrible defeat at Panipat, and were disposed to resume their pillaging of the country; in the north, the Afghans and the Pathans were on the prowl; and in the south, Haidar Ali, the ruler of Mysore, and his son Tipu, supported by the French, were at war against the English puppets, the Nawab Mohammed Ali of the Carnatic and the Nizam of Hyderabad. The country was in a state of almost complete anarchy. Although, after five years' residence at Allahabad, Shah Alam was induced by the Marathas to desert the English and to return to Delhi under their protection, he was unable to establish any form of independent administration and con-

tinued to be tossed from hand to hand while the civil wars continued. Such conditions made eighteenth-century India an adventurers' paradise.

The success of the well-equipped and disciplined armies of the French and English Companies had greatly impressed the Indian rulers, and the Europeans were given a military prestige far beyond their deserts. The princes rivalled one another in recruiting European troops, officers, and engineers; and the supply was even greater than the demand. Ruffians from the stews of London and Paris, unemployed pirates from Madagascar and the Red Sea, deserters from British and French men-of-war, and all those who had made Europe too hot for them, became the heirs of Europe's technical progress and found profitable employment in the service of the warring princes. Some of them rose to great heights of wealth and power: thus a runaway sailor named Perron rose to command the armies of the great Maratha chieftain, Mahadaji Sindhia, and a wild Irishman, a deserter from a British warship, achieved considerable fame under the name of General George Thomas, carving out for himself in the course of an incredible career a temporary kingdom in the north. Others less gifted spent their lives as common soldiers of fortune, changing masters frequently according to the state of their purse, or joining the small private bands of marauders which terrorized the countryside. Their names, de Boigne, Raymond, Pedron, Bourguin, Rene Madac, and Walter Rheinhardt, nicknamed Sombre, spell a page of Indian history; and their careers testify to the frenzy of Indian conditions which made the British conquest a possibility.

The English officials of the Company had surer if less romantic ways of obtaining fortune. The salaries paid by the Company to its servants in India were amazingly low, and no official could have existed on his salary had he not either accepted "presents" from Indian merchants or indulged in private trade to the detriment of that of the Company. A

contemporary account[1] gives a valuable description of the conditions of service in Madras, which can be regarded as typical of all the Company's settlements in India. The ruling hierarchy of Madras was composed of a governor, a council, two senior merchants and two junior merchants, five factors, and ten writers (clerks). The political status of the governor was almost that of a sovereign prince:

> "The governor has not only the command of Fort St. George, but of all the settlements on the coast of Coromandel, and the west coast of the island of Sumatra; he is also captain of the first company of soldiers, as the second in council is of the next; yet his salary amounts to no more than three hundred pounds per annum. The great advantages made by the governor arise from his trading on his own account. On his going abroad he is paid as much respect as a sovereign prince."

There can be no doubt that the governor's political power made his private trade a great success. Next in importance to the governor were the members of the council:

> "The six persons who compose the council have salaries from a hundred to forty pounds a year, according to seniority; but these being great merchants, depend more on their trade than the company's allowance."

The more humble members of the staff had also to depend on private enterprise:

> "There are also two senior merchants, who have forty pounds a year each; two junior merchants, who have thirty pounds; five factors, each of whom is allowed fifteen pounds; and ten writers, who have five pounds a year each. These dine at the company's table, and have lodgings provided for

[1] *A New System of Geography; or, A General Description of the World*, published in 1764.

them; but it is said that no people in the world work so hard for such a trifling salary as the company's writers. Their friends indeed usually supply them with something to trade with, or no man would undertake so hazardous and tedious a voyage in the quality of a writer, who was sensible of the fatigue he must undergo."

The other officers of the settlement were also not backward in supplementing their meagre salaries:

"Besides these officers, who transact the business for the company, they allow the two clergymen of the fort a hundred pounds a year each; the surgeon of the fort has a salary of about forty pounds a year; the judge-advocate is allowed a hundred a year; and the attorney-general, as he is called, has only twenty-three pounds a year. The company have likewise two essay-masters of their mint, who have a hundred and twenty pounds a year each: but all these officers make very great fortunes."

The directors of the Company in London did not expect their servants in India to live on the salaries paid: private trade was not only recognized but accepted by them as a right of employment: a man entered the Indian service not for the nominal salary, but for the right to trade on his own behalf within the exclusive monopoly of the Company. The only servant of the Company who was given no facilities to increase his miserable wage was the Indian workman:

"The best of the Gentoo[1] workmen scarcely gains more than a penny a day, and yet this is sufficient to maintain not only the man, but his wife and children. Rice boiled in water, which is very cheap, is almost their only food. Unleavened cakes, baked in the ashes, are their only bread, and that they seldom eat."

[1] From the Portuguese *gentio*, a term then used for all non-Mohammedans.

The rise of the Company to political power in Bengal and in the Carnatic opened further profitable sidelines to the Company's officers. Great fortunes had been made out of private trade; but greater fortunes were now made out of bribery, tax-collecting, extortion through intimidation, rack-renting, and money-lending. Philip Francis, beginning his campaign against Hastings, found it necessary to propose that the collection of the revenue should be entrusted to Indians and not to the Company's officials:

> "If the native Officers were guilty of Embezzlements, it was more easy to punish them than Europeans. At all events the Produce of their Frauds and Extortions remained and was spent in the Country. From the extraordinary decline of the Revenue, since we took the direct Management of it into our own Hands, it seems probable that white Collectors are not much honester than black ones, and that the Natives alone know how to deal with one another."[1]

But even more profitable than tax-collecting was money-lending at high rates of interest. This form of enterprise was given the greatest scope at Madras, where the Company officials from the governor to the most junior writer lent money to the impoverished Indian nobility and accumulated great fortunes in interest. The principal victim was the titular Nawab, Mohammed Ali, who, having impoverished himself and his State in waging war against the French and the other enemies of the English, was hopelessly in debt not only to the Company but also to its officers. The Nawab's chief creditor was Paul Benfield, an engineer in the Company's service, who in addition held the whole of Madras in pawn. In order that the Nawab should obtain the money to pay them their interest, Benfield and his friends encouraged him on plundering expeditions into the territories of his neighbours, who were often, as was the

[1] Francis MSS. No. 36, Philip Francis to Lord Clive.

Raja of Tanjore, allies of the Company. Against this ruinous policy London finally complained, and the Governor of Madras, Lord Pigot, to whom the Nawab could no longer give valuable presents, attempted to restrict the activities of the Benfield gang. But the power of the money-lenders was too great: Lord Pigot was seized and placed in prison, where he died a year later. His successor, Sir Thomas Rumbold, began his term of office by inviting the reluctant Nawab to a christening party and extorting from him as the price of the invitation no less than fifteen lakhs of rupees.

In Bengal the Company's officers did things on a bigger scale. Clive had shown that a palace revolution was the most speedy way to fortune, and he and his successors staged five of them within a period of eight years. But between revolutions they did not disdain the less dramatic methods of acquiring wealth: the inland trade of Bengal became the private monopoly of the Company's servants, who traded free of duty while the Indian merchants had to pay heavy duties; jobbery and bribery were accepted customs; and the officials sold themselves valuable land for a fraction of its value and rented it out at high profit. The burden of all this high finance fell on the shoulders of the peasantry. Never had the people known such oppression and exploitation; the horrors of past invasions and civil wars had been limited and temporary; but the nabobs introduced a cold and steady form of exploitation which drained the life blood from the land, as relentlessly as a famine of long duration. Robbed of the produce of their labour, crushed under heavy taxes which they were for the most part unable to pay, evicted from their lands, wasted with hunger, the people sank deeper into misery.

Of the results of this misery, the directors in London were concerned only with the decline of the revenue, which they attributed to the dishonesty of their servants in India. In this they were partly right; but there were also deeper causes. Francis, although a member of the Calcutta Council, was moved

by his quarrel with Governor Hastings to point out some of these:

> "You will be alarmed at the Decline of the Revenue. But, my Lord, without puzzling ourselves with the hard Words of a Bengal Dictionary, let us consult the plain Dictates of Common Sense. Is it in the Nature of Things, that a Country, from which there is a constant Extraction of Specie and Manufactures without any proportionate Return can long pay a rack rent to Government? The nominal Rent-Roll may be kept up, but where will be the Specie to realize the Revenue? Security of Property and a Freedom of Trade are the obvious Remedies for this Evil."

It is not without significance that Francis should have written his letter to Lord North, and not to the Company. To have suggested free trade in India to the monopolists would not have been the best way of securing sympathetic attention. But Francis in his historic quarrel with Warren Hastings was the tool of great forces interested in smashing the Company's monopoly.

When Clive returned to England in 1767 he was greeted at first as a popular hero. He had, as he took care to inform the directors, won for them "an empire more extensive than any kingdom in Europe, France, and Russia excepted," and he had "provided them with a revenue of four millions sterling, and a trade in proportion." With an empire to plunder, the East India Company became an object of envy. Its stock rose to £263, and it paid dividends at the rate of 12½ per cent.[1] Merchants and politicians vied with each other in gambling in the stock; both Burke and Fox, reserving their hatred of oppression for a later date, bought shares in the hope of making fortunes; and the directors of the Company were besieged in their offices by sons of the nobility and of the merchant class

[1] Karl Marx, "The East India Company, *New York Tribune*, July 11, 1853.

clamouring for appointments as factors or writers. The position of writer, carrying with it a salary of five pounds a year, was especially coveted. Had not the great Lord Clive, the richest man in the kingdom, gone to India as a writer! Fabulous bribes were offered to anyone who could secure these appointments. Advertisements such as the following appeared in *The Public Advertiser* and other newspapers:

> "WRITER'S PLACE TO BENGAL. WANTED, A WRITER'S PLACE to Bengal, for which One Thousand Guineas will be given. There is not a third Person in this Business, and the Money is ready to be paid down, without any written negotiation."[1]

In its issue of June 2, 1773, *The Public Advertiser* observed that writerships "brought the other Year between Two and Three Thousand Pounds each, though the favourite Sultana of one Director sold a Writership for the pitiful Sum of 500£."[2]

When, however, it became clear that the Company and its servants were the only ones likely to benefit from the spoliation of India, popular enthusiasm turned to indignation. Serious attacks were made on the Company in Parliament. In 1766 Lord Chatham had prepared a scheme for Parliamentary supervision of the Company's affairs; and the Company only preserved its monopoly by coming to an agreement with the Government to pay annually to the Exchequer the sum of £400,000. But the political jobbers and the rival merchants, as well as the manufacturers, increased rather than abandoned the attack. The Company officials who returned to England with immense fortunes made a convenient target for attack. They were given the title of Nabobs, and pilloried in the Press and on the stage. The aristocracy and the squirearchy boycotted them as *parvenus*; and the people as a whole condemned them as "execrable Banditti" and as "Plunderers of the East." Dis-

[1] James M. Holzman, *The Nabobs in England*, New York.
[2] Ibid.

respectful stories were circulated on their origins and on the ways by which they obtained their wealth. Thus Sir Francis Sykes, a factor in Bengal who brought back to England a considerable fortune, was nicknamed Squire Matoot, in reference to an extortionate tax he had imposed on Bengal, and was denounced as the son of a barber:

> "Worthy offspring of a barber,
> Squeez'd twixt powder-puffs and lather!"[1]

And the haughty but dishonest Sir Thomas Rumbold, a former Governor of Madras, was popularly supposed to have begun life in a more honest fashion as a shoeblack:

> "When Mackreth served in Arthur's crew,
> He said to Rumbold, 'Black my shoe';
> He humbly answered, 'Yea Bob,'
> But when returned from India's land,
> And grown too proud to brook command,
> His stern reply was 'Na-bob.' "[2]

The ostentatious and extravagant conduct of the Nabobs turned popular indignation into fury. Their main ambitions were to become country gentlemen and members of Parliament. They used their ill-gotten wealth to buy up pocket and rotten boroughs and to bribe electors, so that many of them, including Clive, Rumbold, Sykes, and the notorious moneylender Benfield, not only entered Parliament themselves, but controlled in their own interests the votes of several other members. Burke once stated that Benfield had brought eight members into Parliament.

Their attempts to be country gentlemen were also not successful. One Nabob, Major Charles Marsac, an illegitimate son of George II, outraged county society by introducing strange innovations to the English countryside:

[1] Quoted by James Holzman in *The Nabobs in England.*
[2] Ibid.

"The homely rustic and blushing maid are now supplanted by old French women, Swiss Valets de Chambre, Black boys, Gentoo coachmen, Mulatto footmen, and Negro butlers. The dialect is of course improved much—though here and there the plain English is retained—but it is only to make mistakes—for they call Mr. Marsac—a very worthy East Indian—Major Masacre—and his improvements—his devastation."[1]

Clive, the main target of attack, returned to Bengal, where he served his rapacity for a few more years, before facing charges of extortion and oppression before a Parliamentary Select Committee, and retiring into private life, which he ended with his own hand in 1774.

But the politicians and capitalists who directed public opinion were after bigger game than Clive. Promising to use the revenue of India to reduce taxation in England and to liquidate the National Debt, they demanded that the Company's possessions in India should be taken over by the English Government, and that the Company should be liquidated. The Company fought hard to preserve its privileges and its monopoly; but it was fighting a losing battle and was forced to yield concession after concession to its adversaries in order to avoid extermination. The struggle was transferred to India, where it took the form of a faction fight between pro-Company and pro-Government groups among the Company's chief officers.

2

The depredations of the Nabobs together with the decline of the revenue in India involved the Company in serious financial difficulties. Its distress was accentuated by the Bengal famine of 1769–70, which, precipitated by misgovernment and reckless rapacity, had seriously dislocated trade. In consequence

[1] Quoted by J. M. Holzman in *The Nabobs in England*.

the Company was forced to default in its annual payments of £400,000 to the Treasury; this was considered bad enough by the ministers, but when the Company in 1772 asked Parliament for a loan of a million pounds they were outraged in their finest feelings, and they demanded to know where the spoils of Bengal were going. Supported by a genuinely indignant people and by rival merchants and greedy politicians, the Government appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the Company's political and financial conduct; and the inquiry revealed much discreditable evidence against the Nabobs. It revealed to the delight of Lord North and the Company's ill-wishers that between 1757 and 1766 the English officers in Bengal had received in bribes more than two million pounds, and had received as compensation for alleged losses nearly four million pounds.

The inquiry provided ample justification to cancel the Company's charter altogether; but Lord North and his merchant friends had to move cautiously: the Company was still powerful in influence, particularly with poor imbecile George III, and the Government's attention was mainly occupied with the serious dispute which had broken out with the American colonies. Parliament therefore contented itself with passing the Regulating Act, which had been carefully framed by Lord North with the object of placing the maximum amount of difficulties in the way of the administration in India. To govern Bengal it appointed a council of five, consisting of three members sent out from England and two of the Company's servants in India. One of the latter, Warren Hastings, was named governor-general of Bengal, but his superiority over the other members of the council consisted only of a casting vote in case of a tie. The three members of the council, Philip Francis, Colonel Monson, and General Clavering, sent from London, had been carefully chosen by Lord North for their hostility to the Company. By the same act a Supreme Court was established at Calcutta, with a Lord Chief Justice and three

judges, to administer the savage English law of the time in the place of the far more lenient institutes of Timur. The Company was relieved of its annual tribute of £400,000, which it was not in a position to pay anyway, and was instructed to pay generous salaries to the members of the council.

Warren Hastings, the new governor-general, had previously held the post of governor of Fort William (Calcutta). He began his administration there by creating a private scandal, by running away with the wife of an impoverished German portrait-painter, and scandals of a private and public character were the distinguishing feature of his subsequent career. He had neither honesty nor scruples; he combined an unusual intelligence with low cunning; he was naturally secretive and constitutionally unable to tell the truth; in short, he had all the assets of a successful politician; and he was a very great politician.

On assuming charge of Fort William in 1772 he found himself faced with several delicate problems. The Emperor Shah Alam, having left the protection of the English for that of the Marathas, was demanding at Maratha instigation the payment of his pension of twenty-six lahks, which had been promised him while he resided at Allahabad. Hastings had many good reasons for refusing the Emperor's demand: it was impossible at the same time to content the directors and the shareholders in London, make a private fortune for himself and his friends, and pay a monstrous tribute to an emperor who had become a tool in the hands of the Marathas, the most formidable enemy left to the English in India. While refusing to pay a penny to the Emperor, Hastings, on the instructions of the Company, made full use of the imperial *firman* and assumed the *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and took over the complete civil administration in the name of the Emperor. The Company was now not only the supreme political power in Bengal, but also the sole landlord; and it proceeded to exercise its rights to the full.

For reasons already explained, Indian economy had rejected private ownership in land: the sole landlord was the State. The land-tax was paid to the State collectively by the village through a tax-farmer called a *zemindar*. The *zemindar* was given charge over a certain number of villages, and on the day appointed collected from the peasants a third of their produce on behalf of the State, deducting a tenth as a reward for his own pains. When, however, the Company became the State in Bengal, it was too jealous of its revenue and too suspicious of the *zemindars* to allow the old system to work unchecked; it therefore appointed supervisors who roamed the country prying into the *zemindars'* rudimentary accounts, accepting bribes, and doing a little tax-collecting on their own behalf. Hastings changed the supervisors into collectors, putting each in charge of a district with instructions to supervise the *zemindars*, and led a commission into the country to revise the assessments. The commission wandered from village to village, ignoring the horrible results of famine and oppression, granting five-year settlements to the subservient *zemindars* and putting up to auction the districts of those found to be rebellious or unsatisfactory. The new system was found to be quite unworkable. As the commissioners had ignored the effects of the famine of 1770, and as they were chiefly concerned in obtaining the maximum amount of rent from each strip of land, the land was over-assessed; and instead of increasing, the revenue decreased to the dismay of Hastings and of the dividend-drawers of London. Instead of blaming the policy of over-assessment and the poverty to which the people had been reduced, Hastings blamed the dishonesty of the collectors and *zemindars*, and sought to remedy the evil by appointing revenue boards, finally centralized into one. The revenue boards were pitiless; they exacted the utmost farthing from the distressed country, and introduced the practice of selling the land of those who defaulted through over-assessment. For the first time in Indian history, land became a commodity to be bought and sold, and

the *zemindars* became less like tax-farmers and more like European landlords. In his desire to increase the revenue, Hastings had introduced a new economy which could only function on the basis of the private ownership of land, although the fiction of the State as the sole landlord was maintained until Hastings's successor finally transformed the *zemindars* into permanent landlords by his Permanent Settlement.

The Company's methods of tax-collecting soon provoked trouble. Peasants, driven by taxation from their over-assessed land, took to dacoity as the only means of living, and roamed the country in armed bands, robbing the *zemindars* and threatening the security of all men of property. But Hastings soon made it plain that unofficial robbery was not to be tolerated: in defiance of Indian law which prescribed the death penalty for murder only, he decreed that all captured dacoits should be hanged in the native villages, their families sold as slaves, and the villagers compelled to pay a collective fine. Dealing only with the effects and ignoring the causes, this severity failed to check the unrest which flamed up into the Sannyasi rebellion. The Sannyasis, religious mendicants, gave a religious inspiration to the economic rebellion of the peasants; their armed groups waged a desperate guerrilla war against the Company, attacking small bodies of troops and retreating into the jungle before the advance of superior forces; and Hastings had the greatest difficulty in suppressing the revolt. The Sannyasi rebellion was a forerunner in many respects to the terrorist campaign in Bengal of a hundred years later.

But Hastings had to face a greater menace than internal rebellion. The Marathas, having the Emperor in their clutches, had occupied Delhi and were planning to reconquer the whole of Northern India, beginning with Oudh and finishing with Bengal, where they looked forward to having a happy time plundering the Company of its ill-gotten wealth. Hastings thought it therefore necessary to strengthen the neighbouring province of Oudh, and troops and ammunition were sent to the

Viceroy of Oudh to be used to defend his frontiers from the Marathas. It was also necessary to re-establish the Viceroy's finances, and this was done by presenting him with the districts of Kora and Allahabad, which districts the Emperor had just presented to his friends the Marathas, who were on the way to claim them from the English.

In the meantime the Marathas were threatening the country of the Rohillas, an Afghan tribe, who found themselves unpleasantly sandwiched between the predatory Nawab of Oudh and the plundering Marathas. The Rohilla chiefs did not know which of the two evils to choose; but in 1772, pressed by the Company and threatened by an immediate Maratha invasion, they were forced to sign an agreement with the ruler of Oudh, by which they agreed to pay him forty lakhs to protect them from the Marathas. The following year the Marathas actually crossed the Rohilla frontier, but withdrew before the advance of the Nawab with his own and Company troops. The retreat of the Marathas encouraged the Nawab to do a little plundering on his own, and he resolved to annex the Rohilla country to the province of Oudh. To secure English support he complained that the Rohillas had not paid him the promised subsidy, which, if Hastings would help him to collect it by force, he would turn over with interest to the Company:

> "Should the Rohilla Sirdars be guilty of a breach of their agreement, and the English gentlemen will thoroughly exterminate them and settle me in their country, I will in that case pay them fifty lakhs of rupees in ready money, and besides exempt them from paying any tribute to the King out of the Bengal revenues."

It was not in the nature of English gentlemen to refuse such a noble offer, and Hastings sent Colonel Champion with a force to fight the Nawab's battles for him. The Rohillas were defeated and their leader was slain; the Nawab took possession of the

territory, which he proceeded to loot with the utmost barbarity; and Colonel Champion and his officers made such heavy demands on the Nawab for their services that the latter began to regret having ever invaded the country, and appealed to Hastings to prevent the Company officers from plundering the plunderer.

3

While the English troops were still engaged in the Rohilla country, Lord North's Regulating Act was passed, and Warren Hastings became the governor-general of the English settlements in India. Of his colleagues on the council, one, Barwell, was already in Calcutta, and the other three, Francis, Monson, and Clavering, together with the judges of the Supreme Court about to be established, were on their way. During the voyage to Calcutta, Francis, having been carefully primed by Lord North and by Lord Clive (who had a personal grudge against Hastings), established a complete control over Monson and Clavering, who being soldiers were not noted for their intelligence. On the other hand, Barwell was completely under the influence of Hastings. Hostilities broke out from the moment the ship reached Calcutta: the three councillors from England complained of a discourteous reception and settled down to hold an inquiry into all the misdeeds which they were sure Hastings had committed while governor of Fort William; while Hastings and Barwell put every obstacle they could think of in the way of their new colleagues. Thus began a feud which, lasting for many years, culminated in the impeachment of Hastings and in a further weakening of the Company in England.

Historians have represented the long quarrel between Francis and Hastings as the result of personal antagonisms between the two men: they suggest that Francis wished to drive Hastings out of office in order to succeed him. That there was a bitter personal hatred between the two men cannot be doubted; but

that hatred arose only because they were serving different masters who were at cross-purposes. Francis himself was under no illusions as to the part he was to play in India. This is made perfectly clear by a letter which he wrote to his friend D'Oyly from Calcutta on March 1, 1776:

> "There is another great point, on which General Clavering and I have totally disagreed from the first, and in which I think my Conduct entitles me to some Merit with the Minister. We three should undoubtedly consider ourselves as the Representatives of Government deputed to act generally for the Nation; in contradistinction to Mr. Hastings and Mr. Barwell, who may be supposed to act for the Company, tho' in fact they are the greatest Enemies of that Interest."

Viewed objectively the quarrel between Hastings and Francis was in reality one between the Company and the Government. It was the task of Francis to obstruct the administration in India and to provide ammunition to the Company's enemies in London to enable them to batter down its monopoly of the East Indian trade.

With this object in view, Francis lost no opportunity of attacking the administration in India, and, as a responsible officer of that administration, of demanding that the Company should be superseded by the English Government. His letters to England are filled with demands that the Company's possessions should be taken over by the Crown. In this strain he wrote to Lord North, who would know what to do with the information, on February 24, 1775:

> "The first Thing to be done is to declare the King's Sovereignty over the Provinces. This I mention as a fundamental Condition *sine qua non*. Without it, there can properly be no Government in this Country. The People at present have either two Sovereigns or None. We coin Money in the

name of Shah Allum. We collect and appropriate the revenue by Virtue of his Grant. . . . It has been the Policy of Mr. Hastings to abolish the Sovereignty of the Mogul in fact, and to deny it in Argument. . . . By this irregular way of acting, he has involved himself and us in a Labyrinth of Contradictions and Absurdities both of Fact and Argument, from which Nothing can extricate our Government but an immediate Declaration of his Majesty's Sovereignty over the Kingdoms of Bengal, Bahar and Orissa. This single Operation will clear the Way and relieve us from a multitude of Difficulties."

Later in the same year he was writing to Lord North on the same theme:

> "The English Power should stand Paramount, and hold the Sword over the rest;—watching the Administration of Men in Office;—contented with a gross Tribute, and guarding the Country from being ruined in Detail by Europeans. This simple System, so natural to the Genius of the People, seems best calculated to resist an external Force, and has no radical Defect within itself."

In other words, the fortune-hunting of individual Nabobs should be stopped so that India could be exploited by British capitalism as a whole. This proposal threatened not only the fortunes of the Nabobs, but also the monopoly of the Company.

Francis, Clavering, and Monson soon established a triumvirate in Calcutta, harassing the Governor-General and frustrating his policy. In January 1775, Hastings's old ally, the Nawab of Oudh, died and was succeeded by his son, a weakling. Notwithstanding the previous policy of maintaining the strength of Oudh as a buffer State against the Marathas, the triumvirate proceeded to loot the new Nawab, wrenching Benares from his control and extorting so many subsidies that

the young ruler was faced with a mutiny of his troops. Hastings and Barwell, outvoted on every issue, were reduced to the position of spectators of the ruin of their policy. The weakness of Hastings encouraged his victims and enemies to rise against him; all those who had previously paid him bribes hurried to inform the all-powerful triumvirate; and among the informers was a certain Nandakumar, in whom Francis thought that he had found the perfect tool to dislodge Hastings once and for all.

When the Company, availing themselves of Shah Alam's edict, had decided openly to take over the political administration of Bengal, it was found necessary to displace the Indian officials through whom they had previously exercised control. The titular Nawab, the son of the late Mir Ja'far, had his pension reduced by half, and one of his father's wives, Munni Begum, was placed in charge of his household; the Nawab's deputy, Mohammed Riza Khan, was arrested and charged with embezzlement. In the charge against Riza Khan, Hastings had made use of an ambitious Brahman named Nandakumar, who afterwards considered that he had been cheated by Hastings out of his reward. He waited for his revenge until the triumvirate had assumed real control, and then lodged a charge against Hastings of accepting among other bribes a large sum of money from Munni Begum. The charge was probably true: bribery was an accepted custom of the time; but the triumvirate without examining the evidence passed a resolution condemning Hastings for peculation and ordering him to return the bribes. This resolution was forwarded immediately to England, where, as a friend wrote Hastings, it had the worst effect on the Governor-General's reputation:

> "In the first five days (your private dispatches not then received) excepting the few who think you cannot do wrong, you were condemned in one voice as the most corrupt man that ever filled the Chair of Bengal. These daring aspersions that the Governor-General *had been guilty of every species of*

peculation, found almost universal credit, nor could anything but your packet of the 29th April have checked the torrent."

To forestall an inquiry, Hastings took the offensive. Realizing the importance of removing the chief witness for the prosecution, he brought a charge of conspiracy against Nandakumar and an Englishman named Fowke; and while this charge was still pending, an Indian arose from obscurity and charged Nandakumar with forging a will many years previously.

The triumivrate did their best to protect their witness against Hastings. They visited him in state at the prison in which Nandakumar had quickly been lodged; they threatened the judges of the newly formed Supreme Court; and they spoke of securing his release by force. But Hastings had a trump card in the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, an old school-friend of his and one of the most despicable and most cordially detested men that ever went out to India. Nandakumar was convicted, and, before his friends could do anything effective to help him, promptly hanged. Indians were quick to realize the blessing of British impartial justice: a few years previously Clive had cheated by a forgery a Hindu banker of £200,000 and was rewarded with a peerage; Nandakumar alleged to have forged a will was executed as a felon.

The execution of Nandakumar, and the weakness and vacillation of Francis and his associates, re-established Hastings's position in Bengal. The death of Colonel Monson in the following year put Francis in a minority by giving Hastings the use of his casting vote. But while Hastings was supreme in Bengal, his position was being steadily undermined in England owing to the reports furnished by Francis to Lord North and other enemies of the Company. In an attempt to counteract this damage, Hastings sent an emissary to London with an authorization to submit his resignation if the tide went against him. Monson's death, however, caused the Governor-General to change his mind, and he withdrew the authorization; but not

before his emissary had submitted the resignation entrusted to him. Hastings's resignation was accepted with alacrity, and Lord North secured the appointment as governor-general of his own nominee, General Clavering, on whom George III bestowed the Order of the Bath. Everything seemed to be going in favour of the Company's enemies; but the stupid and violent Clavering was no match for Hastings. While the general swaggered and gave pompous orders, Hastings quietly induced his friend the Chief Justice to invalidate the appointment of Clavering and to confirm him legally as governor-general. The Government in England was too preoccupied with the French war and with the failures in America to take any drastic action against Hastings; and Clavering fell a victim to his own violent temperament: as a result of the rage caused by his humiliation, his body became covered with large boils, and in this reduced condition he was attacked by dysentery, from which he died.

Francis alone was left to continue the struggle; for the successor to Monson sent out from England proved to be a nonentity. His bitter hostility was in no way abated, but his opportunities of obstructing Hastings were few and very restricted. In 1779 the ministerial party and the Company came to a temporary arrangement, and this was reflected in an agreement arrived at between Francis and Hastings. But the agreement was short-lived. Differences about the conduct of the Maratha war which was then being waged caused another outburst of anger between the two men, and this time it ended in a duel. Francis was wounded, and as soon as he had recovered he took a passage to England, convinced that he would no longer be of use to his employers in Bengal, while in England he would be invaluable. He took with him from India a large fortune chiefly acquired by gambling, since his opportunities for accepting bribes had for many years been few.

Hastings at this time found himself reduced to desperate straits to obtain money to finance the Maratha and Mysore wars and to satisfy the demands of the Company. In his need he

turned to the Raja of Benares, Chait Singh, from whom he demanded a tribute far in excess of his ability to pay. Hastings therefore went on a pillaging expedition to Benares, and meeting Chait Singh at Buxar demanded from him no less than fifty lakhs. At this demand the supporters of the Raja attacked the Governor-General's escort, and Hastings had to flee for his life. Receiving reinforcements he marched on Benares, and Chait Singh fled to the Marathas for protection, whereupon Hastings appointed a new Raja and carried off all the treasure on which he could lay his hands.

The second outrage committed by Hastings in order to obtain money was against the Begums of Oudh. On the death of Hastings's old ally, the Nawab Shuja-ud-Dowlah, his wives had decamped with the greater part of his treasure. In 1775 the new Nawab had reached an agreement with his father's wives, who had paid him the sum of £560,000 on condition that no further demands were made on them. Ignoring this agreement Hastings compelled the Nawab to imprison the Begums and to torture their servants until they had disgorged their treasure. By these means the Begums were induced to give up about a million pounds, and the Company was again in funds.

Meanwhile events had been moving rapidly in England. The truce between the ministry and the Company had ended, and both sides were busy in intrigue. At the beginning of 1783 peace was signed with France at Versailles, and England recognized the total loss of the American colonies. To replace the lost empire a new one was required, and all eyes turned to India. Stories of the maladministration of Hastings, of the fortunes of the Nabobs, and of the iniquity of the Company were revived and added to. Thinking the moment opportune, the Government of the Duke of Portland, in which Lord North was the real power, authorized its Foreign Secretary, Fox, to introduce a Bill transferring power in India from the Company to seven commissioners to be nominated for four years by

Parliament and thereafter by the Crown, while leaving the management of commerce in the hands of the Company. The Bill passed the House of Commons to the horror of the Company, which brought all its influence to bear on the House of Lords and on the King, who authorized Earl Temple to warn the Lords that

> "whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy."

The silly old King prevailed, and the Lords rejected the Bill.

But the Company was to have only a short respite. The following year, Pitt introduced another India Bill appointing a Board of Control consisting of six members of the Privy Council, including one Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was to have supreme control over the Company's administration, although all business and patronage was to be left in the hands of the Company, whose appointments to the chief offices could, however, be vetoed by the Crown.

In order to stress the difference between Fox's Bill and Pitt's, Marx quotes from James Mill's *History of India*:

> "In passing that law two objects were pursued. To avoid the imputation of what was represented as the heinous object of Mr. Fox's Bill, it was necessary that the principal part of the power should APPEAR to remain in the hand of the Directors. For ministerial advantage it was necessary that it should in *reality* be all taken away. Mr. Pitt's Bill professed to differ from that of his rival, chiefly in this very point: that while the one destroyed the power of the Directors the other left it almost entire. Under the Act of Mr. Fox the power of the ministers would have been avowedly held. Under the Act of Mr. Pitt it was held in secret and by fraud. The Bill of Mr. Fox transferred the power of the Company to Commissioners appointed by Parliament. The

Bill of Mr. Pitt transferred them to Commissioners appointed by the king."[1]

The Company was to have the shadow and the Government the substance of power. And it was not without significance that provision was made for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to sit on the Board of Control: the wealth of India was in future to be used not only to enrich the Nabobs, but also to balance the National Budget.

[1] Karl Marx, "The East India Company," *New York Tribune*, July 11, 1853.

CHAPTER FIVE

Building an Empire

> "Alike in the political and the military line, could be observed auctioneering ambassadors and trading generals; and thus we saw a revolution brought about by affidavits; an army employed in executing an arrest; a town besieged on a note of hand; a prince dethroned for the balance of an account. Thus it was they exhibited a Government, which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre, and the little traffic of a merchant's counting-house, wielding a truncheon with one hand, and picking a pocket with the other."
>
> R. B. SHERIDAN, Speech against Warren Hastings

I

PITT's India Act marked the end of one and the beginning of another phase of the British conquest of India. The Company had now become the instrument of national policy; and the policy of British capitalism was definitely aggressive. Stimulated by the loss of the American colonies and by the need for an empire to replace them, the British Government concentrated its attention on India, and made clear its resolve to conquer as much of it as circumstances permitted. India it was felt would be more than ample compensation for the loss of America.

The circumstances were extremely favourable to a British conquest: the disorder and lack of any political unity in the country were an open invitation to an aggressor; and Britain was already firmly established in Bengal and in the Carnatic. But apart from the political confusion of the country, there were also deep social causes behind its inability to resist effectively the invader. These have been tersely stated by Marx:

> "How came it that English supremacy was established in India? The paramount power of the Great Mogul was broken

by the Mogul Viceroys. The power of the Viceroys was broken by the Marathas. The power of the Marathas was broken by the Afghans, and while all were struggling against all, the Briton rushed in and was enabled to subdue them all. A country not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindoo, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste; a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between all its members. Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest?"[1]

Such social conditions prevented any national consciousness among the people; they regarded the invader as a fatality against which they could do nothing except hope for the best, and they were historically incapable of conceiving the idea of national resistance. In the days of Moghul power, the emperors had concerned themselves only with defending their treasures and their dynasties, and during the wars their feudal armies had ravaged and pillaged the country as thoroughly as the armies of an invader could have done. Contemporary writers observed that the presence of a Moghul army inevitably caused a famine in the district in which it camped; and the mere passage of such an army left the countryside as bare as if it had been devoured by locusts. Except for the exceptional ferocity of a Timur or a Mahmud, the peasants had difficulty in appreciating the difference between their own Government, which plundered them in peace and in war, and the invader, who plundered them in war in the hope of being able to plunder them in peace. They were tolerably accustomed to misery, revolting only when they had passed the limits of their endurance; and they put their trust in priests, who, if Mohammedan, promised them their reward in heaven, and, if Hindu, a happy reincarnation. The Indian

[1] Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

peasant of the eighteenth century had no more idea of patriotism than his English prototype of the fifteenth century. Nor had the princes and chieftains any nationalist sentiments; their interests lay in preserving their power to rob their own peoples and to plunder the territories of others; they were able to judge the merits or demerits of the Moghul, the Afghan, the Maratha, or the Englishman only in the light of their own interests; and more often than not they imagined that their personal interests could best be served by allying with the British against their rivals, thus preparing the way for their own downfall. In many respects the Indian princes of the eighteenth century were very similar to the European barons in the Holy Roman Empire. In such conditions, with their superior discipline and armaments, the British could not fail to conquer.

The only serious challenge to British ambitions in India came from the Maratha Confederacy. As a result of the onslaughts of Aurangzeb, the Marathas had at that time acquired a rudimentary national and religious consciousness, and this consciousness had enabled them to shatter the Moghul Empire and to dominate the country. But their unprecedented success had had the effect of breaking all the forms of national unity, and after the disaster at Panipat in 1761 the Confederacy had split into five independent kingdoms. The Peshwa, the nominal head of the Confederacy, had his capital at Poona; the Bhonsla dynasty at Nagpur; the Sindhia dynasty at Gwalior; the Holkars at Indore; and the Gaekwars at Baroda. The ablest of these Maratha chieftains were Mahadaji Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar, two able generals, who maintained the titular emperor, Shah Alam, on the throne at Delhi as an instrument of their policy. Their armies prowled about India extorting *chauth* or tribute, raiding Orissa, and threatening even the British in Bengal.

A clash between the British and the Marathas, the two great powers, was inevitable. It began in 1779 with a dynastic

quarrel in Poona for the office of the Peshwa, for which there were two claimaints, Raghuba Rao, who having poisoned the late Peshwa thought that he had earned the job, and Madhu Rao, the legitimate heir, who was supported and controlled by the minister Nana Farnavis. The Company at Bombay saw in this rivalry an opportunity of extending its territory and of establishing its control over the Peshwa at Poona; accordingly they supported the claims of Raghuba Rao. Thereupon Nana Farnavis called in the French from Hyderabad on behalf of his client. The Bombay Government, ignoring the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, who, fearing a dangerous conflict with the whole Maratha Confederacy, highly disapproved of its policy, then proceeded to extort from Raghuba as the price of its support the promise of the island of Salsette and the port of Bassein. Not losing any time, an English force occupied Salsette and prepared to march on Poona; but Bombay had underestimated the military strength of the Marathas, and the Poona expedition was utterly defeated and the Bombay Government forced to conclude the shameful Convention of Wargaon, by which it admitted its guilt and apologized for its insolence. Hastings, realizing the danger of this loss of prestige, sent two of his ablest soldiers across the peninsula to try to retrieve the disaster, and this was accomplished by storming the fortress of Gwalior and by occupying the province of Gujarat. These successes placed the Company in a better position to make peace, and in 1782 by the Treaty of Salbai, Gujarat was restored to the Marathas, the pretender Raghuba was discarded, and in return the English were permitted to retain Salsette and two small islands off Bombay. It was not a very successful war.

Meanwhile Madras had been getting into trouble with its old opponent, Haider Ali, the ruler of Mysore. Madras had been for long a sink of iniquity and corruption; it was in the grip of all-powerful money-lenders whose policy was determined by the immediate prospects of interest and profit. The root of the

trouble was the never-ending debt of Mohammed Ali, the puppet Nawab of Arcot. Burke, speaking on the subject of that debt in the House of Commons, accurately if floridly describes its effects:

> "That debt forms the foul, putrid mucus in which are engendered the whole brood of creeping ascarides, all the endless involutions, the eternal knot, added to a knot of those inexpugnable tape-worms, which devour the nutriment, and eat up the bowels of India."

The "inexpugnable tape-worms" were Paul Benfield and his fellow-moneylenders of Madras.

A wise creditor helps his debtor to a position to pay the sums demanded of him. Following this course, the Madras creditors of Mohammed Ali encouraged and supported him to seize the revenues and territories of his neighbours. In consequence the Nizam of Hyderabad and Haider Ali of Mysore, harassed to the last degree of irritation, consulted together and with the Marathas as to the best means of eliminating the nuisance, which they saw to be the English in Madras. The skilful diplomacy of Hastings managed, in spite of Madras, to detach the Nizam and the Nagpur Marathas from the alliance; but Haider Ali was made of firmer stuff. In the words of Burke, he resolved "to make the country possessed by these incorrigible and predestinated criminals a memorable example of mankind," and he launched his armies against Madras. His cavalry scourged the Carnatic, cut to pieces an English force under Colonel Baillie, and only stopped outside the walls of Madras, to which it laid siege. His vengeance was terrible and has been well described by Burke:

> "A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect

of rank, or sacredness of function, fathers torn from children; husbands from wives, enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the goading spears of drivers and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity, in an unknown and hostile land. Those who were unable to evade this tempest, fled to the walled cities. But escaping from fire, sword, and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine."

Thus the innocent peasants of the Carnatic suffered for the rascality of the Nabobs of Madras. But the Company was shaken to its foundations. France, which was then at war with Britain, saw an opportunity of recovering her power in the Carnatic and sent a naval squadron and a small army to the support of Haider Ali, who was soon complete master of the Carnatic, only Madras holding out.

Once more Hastings had to come to the rescue. With a total lack of scruple he approached the Dutch for military assistance, and on this being refused, sent a force of sepoys and English troops under Sir Eyre Coote, an experienced and able general, to defend Madras. Coote succeeded in defeating Haider Ali at the battles of Porto Novo, Pollilur, and Sholingar, but was unable to expel him from the Carnatic. The war continued hotly and indecisively for four years. At the end of 1782, Haidar Ali died, and his son Tipu concluded peace with the English two years later, on the basis of a mutual restitution of all conquests. Yet the peace was in reality only a truce: it was a breathing space during which both powers could recuperate their spent strength in preparation for the final struggle.

A year later Hastings retired, and returned to England to face impeachment. The Government chose as his successor Lord Cornwallis, whose surrender at Yorktown had precipitated the loss of the American colonies. He was to atone for the loss of one empire by winning another. Although a man of mediocre ability, Cornwallis had many more advantages than

Hastings: he enjoyed all the benefits of Pitt's India Act, which gave him an unchallenged civil and military supremacy.

According to his instructions he began by suppressing nabobery among the Company's servants and by reorganizing the administration. He tackled first of all the delicate problem of the Nawab of Arcot's debts. He deported Paul Benfield and some of the other official money-lenders to England; but no sooner had he settled one debt and arranged the instalments by which it was to be paid, than another debt secretly accumulated was discovered. It was a hopeless muddle for which no solution was arrived at until 1830. Baffled by the Nawab and his English creditors, Cornwallis turned to other problems. He established the Supreme Court of Justice at Calcutta on a better basis, founded a college, and reorganized the civil and military services. But his most outstanding achievement was the Permanent Settlement of the land revenue.

The attempts by Hastings to raise revenue from the over-assessed lands had failed. Cornwallis, therefore, set out to reassess Bengal and Bihar and Benares. In this new assessment no attempt was made to measure the fields or to calculate the productivity, and Bengal was arbitrarily assessed at Rs. 2,68,00,000 (£3,400,000). In short, the amount of land revenue to be paid in the future was determined by what had been paid in the past. This settlement was first declared to be for ten years, but in 1793 it was made permanent. Having fixed its own revenue, the Government then abdicated its right as sole landlord, and recognized the *zemindars*, Government rent-collectors, as the actual owners of the land. Thus, for the first time in Indian history, the principle of the private ownership of land was admitted. Henceforth land could be bought and sold as any other commodity; and the *zemindars* found themselves the sole owners of large districts with nothing to do except to live on the rents. But the Bengali peasant was crushed under a double burden: the rack-renting *zemindar* and the grasping Government.

While Cornwallis was busy bringing order to the administration of Bengal, Tipu, Sultan of Mysore, was harrying the territories of the Nizam of Hyderabad and of the Marathas. Cornwallis supplied troops to the Nizam to be used against Tipu, and the Nizam and the Marathas made clear their willingness to support the British against the common nuisance. A pretext for declaring war on Mysore was found when Tipu attacked the Rajah of Travancore, whom the British considered to be their ally; and Lord Cornwallis, anxious to redeem his defeat at Yorktown, insisted on leading in person with all the pomp and ceremony of a Moghul emperor a large army into the Carnatic. Largely because of the support of the Marathas, Tipu found himself besieged in his capital of Seringapatam, and was, in 1792, forced to surrender. By the terms of peace he had to cede half his territory, which was divided among Madras, the Nizam, and the Marathas, and to pay an indemnity of 330 lakhs of rupees.

For all points of view, except that of Tipu, the second Mysore war had been a huge success. Cornwallis had made a handsome profit for the Company, and had extended its territories; the Nizam and the Marathas were jubilant, hoping to get rid of the English in the same way as they had got rid of Tipu; but Tipu sat in his palace at Seringapatam, contemplating revenge, and plotted with the French.

2

The events in France were by this time a matter of grave concern to British capitalism. Forgetful of the means by which itself had come to power a century earlier, it was outraged when the French *sans-culottes* stormed the Bastille, horrified when they cut off the head of Louis XVI as neatly as it had previously cut off the head of Charles I, scandalized at the theory of the Rights of Man, and terrified at the slogans of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. It regarded French jaco-

binism with as much hostility as modern capitalism regards bolshevism; that is as an epidemic disease, spreading more rapidly than the plague and far more dangerous to the interests of those who lived by exploiting their fellow-men. Accordingly in 1793 the British bourgeois launched a war against France for the same reasons as, a century and a quarter later, Mr. Winston Churchill launched a war against Soviet Russia.

In the beginning the British bourgeois fought fiercely against the revolutionary French Republic in the hope of destroying at its source an ideology which threatened their economic and political interests at home. But soon the revolutionaries were guillotined and the French people fell under the rule of a militant and aggressive bourgeois, which canalized the revolutionary spirit of the people to serve the interests of merchant capitalism. The new France in its search for markets and colonies was as much a menace to British capitalism as the old revolutionary France, particularly when General Bonaparte, following the footsteps of Alexander, occupied Egypt as a preliminary to a march overland to India. Bonaparte's project failed partly because of the internal condition of France and partly because of British naval supremacy by which he was cut off from his supplies; but after the general had become the Emperor Napoleon he revived the project and discussed the possibilities of a joint French and Russian invasion of India with the Czar Paul and later with the Czar Alexander, who were both interested, as by that time Russia had begun to expand into Central Asia and was threatening Persia. The alarm of the British Government at these negotiations turned almost to panic when they heard that Napoleon, then thought to be invincible, had offered to lead in person a joint French and Russian expedition into India.

The British Government had reason for its alarm. If Napoleon had arrived in India he would have found there plenty of support. The French were strongly entrenched at Pondicherry and at Chandernagore, and French regiments

dominated the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Tipu, Sultan of Mysore, had for long been in communication with the French Government, and had during the Republic planted a tree of liberty in his dominions and had enrolled himself in a republican club in the name of "Citizen Tipu." Furthermore, French military adventurers and officers swarmed the country, officering the native armies and organizing them on Western lines. The armies of the great Maratha chieftain, Mahadaji Sindhia, developed under the command first of the Count de Boigne and later of the runaway sailor, Perron, were largely officered by French mercenaries and contained many brigades of European adventurers. The arrival of Napoleon would have been the signal for a general onslaught on the British positions by the Indian princes and their foreign mercenaries.

The new Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, and his brother Sir Arthur Wellesley, later to be known as the Duke of Wellington, realized the danger and took steps to strengthen the British position. The first of these steps was to come to an agreement with the Nizam of Hyderabad, by which the French regiments in his service were disbanded and by which the Nizam agreed not to employ any Europeans without British consent. The Governor-General then turned his attention to Tipu Sultan, who, as jaunty as ever, was awaiting the French invasion. Wellesley was determined on the complete extermination of Tipu, whose courage and anglophobia had long been a menace to the Company, and having made his alliances with the Nizam and with the somewhat reluctant Marathas, he demanded that Tipu should dismiss all the French officers in his service, accept a British Resident, and cede to the Nizam and to the Marathas his Malabar seacoast. Tipu knew that he was doomed, but declaring that it was "better to die like a soldier, than to live a miserable dependent on the infidels, in the list of their pensioned rajas and nabobs," he refused the terms and prepared to fight to the end. Thereupon two English armies invaded Mysore, separately defeated Tipu in two

battles, and converged on his capital, Seringapatam. On May 4, 1799, Seringapatam fell, and Tipu, badly wounded, was killed in ignorance by a British soldier who was anxious to possess the gold clasp of his belt. Thus perished one inflexible enemy of the British; there remained only the Maratha chieftains in the way of the establishment of British supremacy in India.

To his disgust, for he expected something better, Lord Wellesley was given an Irish marquisate as a reward for his services in crushing Tipu; but he consoled himself by appropriating Tipu's crown jewels, while the rest of the swag was divided among the army officers. The coast of Mysore was for the most part annexed by the Company, which, however, restored the Hindu dynasty, deposed by Haider Ali, to rule over that part of Mysore which bordered on the Maratha dominions; but the new kingdom was completely controlled and subsidiary to the British.

Encouraged by his success in Mysore, Wellesley proceeded to intimidate the other States in India to accept British paramountcy. Having pocketed the Nizam, he forced the Nawab of Oudh to sign a treaty extending British territory and control over all the North-Western Provinces; and then greatly daring he ventured to suggest to the Maratha kingdoms a subordinate relationship to the British power. It was fortunate for him that the two great Maratha leaders, Mahadaji Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar, were dead; and he was still further favoured in 1800 by the death of Nana Farnavis, who had skilfully guided the Peshwa's policy for twenty years. The death of these leaders finally broke up the Maratha Confederacy. In 1802 Jeswant Rao Holkar, the successor of Tukoji Holkar, in Indore, declared war on the Peshwa Baji Rao, who had murdered Holkar's brother. Baji Rao and his ally, Daulat Rao Sindhia, were defeated, and the Peshwa took refuge in British territory. Here was the opportunity for which Wellesley had been waiting. The Peshwa was forced to sign the treaty of Bassein by

which he acknowledged the Company as his overlord, agreed to hold communications with no other power, and to assign districts to maintain a British army of occupation. Arthur Wellesley thereupon escorted the Peshwa back to his ravaged capital, and the Governor-General thoughtfully informed the Maratha chieftains of the Peshwa's submission, hoping rather naïvely that the treaty of Bassein signed by the theoretical head of the Confederacy would be accepted as binding by the other Maratha chieftains. On the contrary, however, Sindhia and the Bhonsla Raja, their independence threatened, heartily denounced the Peshwa as a traitor, repudiated the treaty, and prepared for war. Holkar remained like Achilles sulking in his camp, and the Gaekwar, noting the strength of the Company, went over to its side.

In the war that followed, the only effective resistance to the British armies was offered by Sindhia and Bhonsla. Sindhia had been weakened by his wars with Holkar, and he made the initial mistake of trying to fight the English with their own weapons; at the instance of his French officers he abandoned the guerrilla tactics which had made the Marathas so formidable in the past, and sacrificed his cavalry, and therefore his mobility, to his infantry. On the other hand, the British forces were well organized and well led by General Lake and by the Governor-General's brother, General Wellesley. The former inflicted an almost decisive defeat on Sindhia at Laswari outside Delhi, and captured among other booty the Emperor Shah Alam, now a poor old man blinded by an Afghan bandit during the absence of his Maratha protectors; and the future Iron Duke operating in the Deccan won the victories of Assaye and Argaum. By the end of 1803 both Sindhia and the Bhonsla were forced to ask for peace, which was granted. The Bhonsla was deprived of Orissa, which the Company annexed, and of Berar, which was given for the time being to the Nizam, and Sindhia was compelled to cede all territory north of the Jumna to the Company, whose possessions now stretched

across the whole of Moghul Hindustan. Both Sindhia and the Bhonsla became vassals of the Company.

But while Lord Wellesley and his brother were congratulating each other on their comparatively easy victory, there was another Maratha chieftain still to account for: Jeswant Rao Holkar. Holkar, who had remained aloof while the British were engaged with his rivals, now began a series of manœuvres which while puzzling the British generals left them highly exasperated. General Lake, who had the task of watching these manœuvres, was almost in despair:

> "I never was so plagued as I am with this devil; he just, nay hardly, keeps within the letter of the law, by which means our army is remaining in the field at an enormous expense."[1]

But soon Holkar ceased to keep within the letter of the English law, and showed his intentions of fighting. He had not made the mistake of Sindhia, and he retained all the old tactics of guerrilla warfare for which the Marathas had a genius never excelled. He began by making raids on Malva and Rajputana, where he found the support of the inhabitants, and where he was followed by a British army under Colonel Monson. He lured Monson into the heart of Central India and then began to harass his flanks, raid his supplies, and cut off his outposts. Monson was forced to retreat, with Holkar dogging his footsteps; in the retreat the British general lost his rearguard and had to abandon his guns, reaching Agra with the tattered remnants of his army after a nightmare march through the jungles of Central India. The success of Holkar had serious political repercussions: Sindhia became restless and many of the lesser chieftains went over to Holkar, including the Raja of Bharatpur, against whom Lake marched in person; but all attempts to storm the Fort at Bharatpur failed, and the Fort remained impregnable until 1827. The war against Holkar was

[1] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India.*

decidedly not a success, and for several years to come the Maratha freebooter was left undisturbed.

But although baffled by Holkar, Wellesley continued to follow his policy of annexing the territory of the weaker princes and of subjugating the more powerful. Oudh had been for long dominated by the Company, and now the Nawab was informed that he was to disband his own army and maintain a large English force in his province as a barrier against an Afghan invasion. In 1799 the old headquarters of the East India Company, Surat, was annexed, and in 1801 the Nawab of Oudh, already bullied into accepting the most humiliating terms for his existence, was shorn of the Rohilla country. In Central India, the Rajput States were largely controlled from Calcutta; in the Deccan, the Nizam was the humble tool of British policy; and in the Maratha country, the Peshwa was in abject and the Bhonsla and Sindhia in reluctant submission. In 1801, with his usual duplicity and self-righteousness, Wellesley annexed the Carnatic, forcing the son of the late Nawab (who had at last escaped his creditors by dying) to abdicate. When Wellesley finally retired from his post in 1805, the British had become the paramount power over nearly the whole of India. There remained only the Marathas under Holkar and the military confederacy of the Sikhs in the Punjab to deal with. And their time was short.

Lord Wellesley was succeeded by the Earl of Minto, who continued the same policy of expansion as his predecessor. During a brief interregnum, in which Cornwallis was again in charge, the Company came to terms with Holkar, and allowed him and Sindhia to plunder the Rajput States in order to convince the Rajputs of the necessity of obtaining full British protection. But a new danger had to be faced which came from the Company's own troops. The avarice of the Company and the corruption among the English officers had caused serious discontent among the sepoys. This discontent came to a head at Vellore in the Madras Presidency, where the sepoys, goaded

to fury by some new insulting regulations, rose and slaughtered two European companies. The mutiny was suppressed with ruthless severity, several ringleaders being hanged or blown from cannons; but the suppression failed to put an end to the discontent which affected many of the European troops and a few of the officers. In 1809 the Company's troops, Indian and European, mutinied at Masulipatam, arrested their commanding officer, seized the Fort, and threatened to march on Madras. As several sepoy regiments remained loyal, the mutiny was crushed and the English officers who had led it were cashiered and sent back to England. Both these outbreaks showed that the conditions in the English armed forces were developing into those which caused the sepoys to join the people in the Great Rebellion of 1857.

Apart from these ominous signs which greeted his arrival, Lord Minto had a fairly easy task in India, quietly consolidating the conquests made by Wellesley. He thought it his duty, however, to take his part in the Napoleonic wars by capturing the French islands of Bourbon and Mauritius, and then, when Holland fell under Napoleon's control, by leading an expedition to Java, which he conquered, but which was returned to the Dutch at the end of the war. Having accomplished these glorious deeds, he resigned and was followed by the Earl of Moira, later to be the Marquess of Hastings.

Lord Hastings had hardly arrived before he found himself faced with the problem of the northern approaches to India. Minto had tried half-heartedly to deal with the problem by sending ambassadors to Afghanistan, to Persia, and to the Sikh Court of Ranjit Singh at Lahore; but these embassies had returned empty-handed except for reports which were to prove handy later on.

Nepal, to which no embassy had been sent, now proved a source of trouble. In 1767 Nepal had been conquered by the Gurkhas, a Hindu race of Rajput origin, who having organized themselves on a feudal and military basis found compensation

for the barren nature of the soil in raids on to the Gangetic plain of India. These raids caused considerable annoyance to the Company, which also thought that a subservient State in the north would be a satisfactory acquisition both from a strategical and commercial point of view. Lord Hastings therefore declared war on Nepal, and invaded that country. The Gurkhas put up a spirited defence, helped by the hilly and wild condition of the country; they proved more than a match for the invading armies, which were defeated time and again and their numbers decimated. But time and money were against the heroic defenders, whose resistance was gradually worn down until they were finally compelled to accept peace on British terms. The British arms reaped no glory from the Nepalese war. The Nawab of Oudh was forced to contribute heavily to the expenses of the war, and for this help he was rewarded with the title of king.

To Lord Hastings fell also the task of bringing order to the country and of finally crushing the Marathas.

The troubled condition of India during the eighteenth century, the constant wars, the lack of any form of central administration, and the British policy of annexations, had caused widespread economic distress and had led to organized dacoity and brigandage. In Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, and where the Company administration prevailed, the dacoits were ruthlessly hunted and executed; but in the less ordered parts of the country their depredations had become a serious menace. They thrived particularly in Central India, where they received some measure of protection from Sindhia, who had his own plans, and where they established themselves as almost independent powers, their chiefs assuming the status of princes. They were known as Pindaris.

Hastings, realizing that the Pindaris were not only a threat to the British administration, but also valuable allies of the Maratha chieftains, resolved on their extermination. He therefore assembled an army of 120,000 men, the largest English

force which had yet operated in India, issued a stern warning to Sindhia, and marched on the Pindari stronghold of Malva. One of the Pindari leaders was disposed of by being given a slice of Holkar's territory with the title of Nawab; an act of British generosity which did nothing to soothe Holkar's already outraged feelings; and the other Pindari leaders were killed, one of them being driven into the jungle, where he was eaten by a tiger. Their followers were cut to pieces in their homes so effectively that few survived.

While his troops were slaughtering the Pindaris, Hastings thought the moment opportune to strike at the Marathas. He accordingly forced the Peshwa, long smarting under the terms of the treaty of Bassein, to sign another treaty by which he acknowledged his complete subservience to the Company, abandoned his claim to be the titular head of the Maratha Confederacy, agreed to receive an army of occupation, and ceded territory ostensibly to support that army. This was too much even for the Peshwa. He gave the order to attack and besieged Kirkee, where the English resident and a European regiment had taken refuge. The attack on Kirkee failed, and the Peshwa retreating was met by an English relief force which routed him at Yeroda. Simultaneous with the attack on Kirkee, the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur attacked an English force at Sitabaldi; the attack failed and a month later he was decisively defeated by an English sepoy army outside his capital, which fell. Sindhia, surrounded by Company troops, was immobilized, and it was again left to Indore to defend the Maratha rights. The great freebooter, Jeswant Rao Holkar, was dead, and his son was still a minor; but his troops put up a steady resistance to the British until they were routed at Mahidpur. After this the British task was easy, and in February 1818 the last stand of the Marathas was broken by a cavalry charge at Ashti. During the following year the Maratha fortresses surrendered one by one, until there was no opposition left.

The Bhonsla Raja was deposed, and an infant was recognized

as the ruler, under British control, of Nagpur; Sindhia and Holkar were deprived of further territories, but allowed to continue to rule over the rest as British agents; the Peshwaship was abolished, the Peshwa pensioned off, and his dominions annexed by the Company; and a lineal descendant of Shivaji was brought forth from obscurity and made titular head of the Maratha Confederacy, on the condition that the burden of his new responsibilities should be borne by a Captain Grant on behalf of the Company.

Thus passed the Maratha power and glory, never to be revived. The English merchants who had come as supplicant merchants were now the undisputed masters of the whole of India except for the Punjab. They enjoyed more power than had been possessed by Aurangzeb at the height of his grandeur. The British Empire of India had become an established fact. But its foundations were not yet firm and were to be severely shaken by the great social changes then taking place in England and in India.

CHAPTER SIX

The Great Rebellion

> "But, on full reflection, I would not put them all to death. I do not think we should be justified in the eyes of the Almighty in doing so. A hundred and twenty men are a large number to put to death. Our object is to make an example to terrify others. I think this object would be effectively gained by destroying from a quarter to a third of them."
>
> SIR JOHN LAWRENCE at Peshawar

> "It is hard to understand why Victorian theologians, with this great mass of Mutiny literature contemporary with them and hall-marked with general approval, should have been troubled by the alleged bloodthirstiness of the Old Testament. The Book of Joshua, by comparison, is a gentle and chivalrous record."
>
> EDWARD THOMSON,
> *The Other Side of the Medal*

I

THE late Lord Brentford was a God-fearing and respectable Conservative; nevertheless he had his moments of indiscretion. In 1928, in one of these moments, he permitted himself to speak the truth about the British connection with India, and his words, often quoted, deserve to be remembered. He said:

> "We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said in missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. This is cant. We conquered India by the sword and by the sword we hold it. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general and Lancashire goods in particular."

But, although this statement is essentially true, it is necessary to draw a sharp distinction between the policy which led to

the conquest of India and the policy pursued after the conquest had been consummated.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the conquest of India was in process, English capitalism had as its main object imports from India to Europe and not exports from England to India. The Indian textile industry, based on the hand-loom and the spinning-wheel, produced textures far superior to those produced in Europe; therefore to export English textiles to India would have been as profitable to English capitalism as it would now be to take coals to Newcastle. The flood of Indian goods into the European market had several effects, among the first being the protection given to English manufacturers by the exclusion of Indian goods from the English market. Another effect was that the imports from India created the need for English exports to India to balance the exchange, and this stimulus to English manufacture was further advanced by the resources derived from the commercial prosperity of English capitalism. The ultimate outcome of this development of English commerce and manufacture was the Industrial Revolution which coincided with the final stage of the British conquest of India.

The Industrial Revolution not only brought the manufacturers to power in England, but it also altered the basis of British imperialism in India. There was now no longer a demand for Indian manufactured goods: with the new machines producing rapidly and cheaply by far a larger supply of textile goods than the home market in the existing conditions could possibly absorb, British industrial capitalism demanded large external markets. The desires of British capitalism became concentrated in the doctrine of Free Trade, which, in other words, meant free and equal competition on the world market at a time when there was no country in the world capable industrially of competing with Britain. Most of the European countries therefore replied to the British proposals for Free Trade by increasing their tariff barriers

against British goods. But India, over which the British were economically and politically predominant, had no such remedy, and was destined to be a victim.

2

The Indian peasant and his wife, tilling the fields and toiling to produce cloth on the hand-loom and the spinning-wheel, could not possibly compete with the new machines: however hard they worked, the English manufacturers were able to undersell them; nor could they compete in productivity. Indian cottage industry was doomed to extinction. The process has been described by Marx:

"The whole character of the trade was changed. Till 1813 India had been chiefly an exporting country, while it had now become an importing one; and in such a quick progression that already, in 1823, the rate of exchange, which had generally been 2s. 6d. per rupee, sunk down to 2s. per rupee. India, the great workshop of cotton manufacture for the world since immemorial times, became now inundated with English twists and cotton stuffs. After its own produce had been excluded from England, or only admitted on the most cruel terms, British manufactures were poured into it at a small and merely nominal duty, to the ruin of the native cotton fabrics once so celebrated. In 1780 the value of British produce and manufactures amounted only to £386,152, the bullion exported during the same year to £15,041, the total value of exports during 1780 being £12,648,616, so that the India trade amounted to only $\frac{1}{32}$ of the entire foreign trade. In 1850 the total exports to India from Great Britain and Ireland were £8,024,000, of which cotton goods alone amounted to £5,220,000, so that it reached more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whole export, and more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the foreign cotton trade. But the cotton manufacture

also employed now $\frac{1}{8}$ of the population of Britain, and contributed $\frac{1}{12}$ of the whole national revenue. After each commercial crisis the East Indian trade grew of more paramount importance for the British cotton manufacturers and the East India continent became actually their best market. At the same rate at which the cotton manufactures became of vital interest for the whole social frame of Great Britain, East India of vital interest for the British cotton manufacture."[1]

It will be readily understood that the effect of the new economic policy of English capitalism in India was revolutionary. Firstly by divorcing industry from agriculture, and secondly by destroying cottage industry altogether, feudal economy was uprooted. The English conquest of India had the effect of a social revolution, of the same type that had taken place in England two centuries previously. Moreover, it was the only fundamental social revolution known in Indian history: in breaking the framework of Indian society, the English had accomplished what all the previous invasions, rebellions, conquests, and social upheavals had failed to do. It hardly needs to be emphasized that the English Nabobs, traders, and manufacturers were not conscious revolutionaries: they were in India solely because of their lust for plunder and profit; but they were nevertheless the unconscious instruments of history in effecting a social and economic revolution which had been long overdue. In this connection Marx wrote:

> "Arabs, Turks, Tartars, Moguls, who had successively overrun India, soon became *Hindooized*, the barbarian conquerors being by an eternal law of history, conquered by the superior civilization of their subjects. The British were the first conquerors superior, therefore inaccessible to Hindoo

[1] Karl Marx, "The East India Company," *New York Tribune*, July 11, 1853.

civilization. They destroyed it by breaking up the native communities, by uprooting the native industry, and by levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society. The historic pages of their rule in India report hardly anything beyond that of destitution. The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it had begun."[1]

The revolutionary process did not stop at the conquest. The destruction of Indian manufacture drove the craftsmen back to the fields, where they were forced to produce the raw materials needed by British industry in order to possess the cash to buy British goods. The day had passed when the peasant could obtain the manufactured articles he needed by exchanging for them his agricultural produce: it was now necessary to sell that agricultural produce on the market for cash, and as the best market was for cotton and other raw materials required by British industry, India became rapidly converted from an independent manufacturing and agricultural country into one subservient to the machine industry of another. It is hardly necessary to add that the British took full precautions against the introduction of machinofacture into India.

In order to convert India into a country producing cheap raw materials, British capitalism was forced to introduce the railway. The railway completed the social and economic revolution which the introduction of machine-made goods had begun. Politically the railways accomplished what the policies of Akbar and Aurangzeb had failed to accomplish: they brought political unity to the country. By means of the railway the armies of the Central Government could reach the most remote district within a few days, and thus by its very existence it discouraged rebellion by one or other of the princes while facilitating the British policy of expansion and penetration.

[1] Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

Furthermore, by linking up the towns and States it finally broke down feudal isolation.

The economic effects of the introduction of the railways were, however, far-reaching. At first they shattered the economic isolation of the villages, facilitated the conveying and exchange of produce, and made it easy for the British to drain the country of its wealth; but in doing so they also drew India into the advanced economic and social orbit of the West. The first railway was introduced in 1853. In the same year Marx wrote:

> "Steam has brought India into regular and rapid communication with Europe, has connected its chief ports with those of the whole south-eastern ocean, and has revindicated it from the isolated position which was the prime law of its stagnation. The day is not far distant when, by a combination of railways and steam vessels, the distance between England and India, measured by time, will be shortened to eight days, and when that once fabulous country will thus be actually annexed to the Western world."[1]

But Marx foresaw also other consequences which British capitalism, blinded by greed, was unable to foresee. In the same article he wrote:

> "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 rail-

[1] Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

way locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry."[1]

The process of unification and modernization was further helped by great engineering works, by the introduction of the electric telegraph, by the building of great roads, by the creation of a disciplined army capable of resisting any invader, and by the political organization of the whole country under a stable Central Government. In short, as a result of the British conquest, India emerged from anarchy and feudal isolation as an important economic unit of the modern world: she became the heir to all the technical and social progress made in the West.

The apologists for British imperialism in India lay stress on these benefits conferred by the British conquest. According to them imperialism assumed in India an avuncular role, consciously and liberally bestowing on a poor benighted people the great blessings of civilization. The introduction of railways and telegraphs combined with abstract generalizations such as the *pax britannica* are to them a sufficient reply to all charges made against British rule in India: by concentrating on railway lines and telegraph posts they conveniently manage to ignore the indescribable poverty and misery of the mass of the Indian people. It is therefore essential for the student to realize that all the benefits brought to India by the British were brought not for the good of the Indians, but to facilitate the exploitation of the country and its people by British capitalism. Roads, railways, and telegraphs were made for military purposes and for purposes of profit; without railways British capitalism could neither flood the country with its manufactured goods

[1] Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, August 8, 1853.

nor obtain inexpensively the raw materials which its industry required. And as for irrigation, the great engineering works on the rivers were only undertaken after British capitalism had realized that if they wished the Indian peasants to buy their goods it was first necessary to keep them alive.

But whatever the motives, the British undoubtedly accomplished a social revolution in India; but it was a revolution which conferred no immediate advantage on the Indian people; on the contrary, it intensified their poverty and their misery, reducing them to a slave population who were to toil yet for many years for the profit of the foreigner. Yet this revolution created the material conditions without which there could be no freedom or prosperity for the Indian people, once the yoke of the British had been cast off. It is idle to argue that India would have accomplished her regeneration without British interference: social revolutions depend largely on external forces, and in the case of India, Britain was the external force chosen by history to shatter feudalism and to bring India into line with modern progress. It is a matter of history, which cannot be altered, explained away, or ignored. Marx has adequately summed up the position:

> "England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, 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 revolution 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."[1]

The first effects of the revolution were disastrous to the Indian peasantry. The old established order of village economy was completely smashed. Tax-collectors flourished as legal

[1] Karl Marx, "British Rule in India," *New York Tribune*, June 25, 1853.

landlords overland which was once common; the land was over-assessed and through the increasing poverty of the peasants not properly fertilized; irrigation as a result of a century of anarchy had fallen into decay; famines were frequent and recurrent; and peasants were evicted from the land their families had cultivated for centuries, to be replaced by those with money to buy or to bribe. Money had become the all-essential. Taxes could no longer be paid in kind: the peasant to obtain the necessary money was forced to sell his produce for cash on the open market. Brokers and moneylenders flourished at the expense of the peasants, who found themselves more and more entangled in the complicated economics of a system they did not understand. The village craftsman ruined by machine competition abandoned the hand-loom and the spinning-wheel and returned to agriculture as the only means by which he could obtain the money to pay his dues. Textile factories, such as those at Dacca, declined to a standstill, and the workmen, together with those formerly employed by the Company, were driven back to the fields, thus increasing the pressure on the land, which having now become private property offered no scope for peasant expansion. To this general distress were added the corruption and brutality of the Company officials, the ravages of armies moving through the country to extend the British power, the frequent raids of armed bandits, the incomprehensible justice administered by British law courts, and the general lack of security for life and property.

Sporadic rebellions were frequent, such as that which broke out among the peaceful Sonthals in Bengal. The entire peasantry of Northern India seethed with discontent and anger. But they were too accustomed to isolation to join together in a widespread popular rebellion against the British under their own leadership. The time for such a rebellion was yet to come. As it was, they were forced to rely on the leadership of others. And that leadership was provided by the British policy of annexations and dispossessions.

In the years that followed the final crushing of the Marathas, the British followed a steady policy of consolidation and expansion. It was an era of small wars by which the last flickers of independence were ruthlessly stamped out.

Friction first developed with the Ava Kingdom of Burma. The Burmese had conquered Arakan, the stronghold of Portuguese and half-caste pirates, and Assam, which brought them on to the frontier of Bengal, leading to the inevitable frontier clashes. In 1824 the British, coveting Assam for its tea plantations, made these clashes a pretext for declaring war on Burma. The Burmese put up a stout resistance against superior armaments, and after two years of fighting distinguished by savagery on both sides, the Burmese were forced to accept the peace signed at Yandabu, by which they paid an indemnity of one million pounds and ceded Assam and the Burmese provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim. The bad conditions among the sepoys of the British army during this war led at Barrackpur, near Calcutta, to a mutiny, which was only suppressed after the sepoys had been decimated by gunfire on the parade ground.

In the meantime the Company was in difficulties in England. In 1813 the pressure of the manufacturers had forced to break the Company's monopoly of the Indian trade, which was thrown open to all English merchants and manufacturers, the Company maintaining only the monopoly of the trade, chiefly in opium, with China. With these changes the Company's charter had been renewed for another twenty-five years. The interests of the English industrialists, however, demanded that India should be directly administered by the Crown and not by a clique of merchants and financiers, who, draining the wealth from India in the form of large private fortunes and by their corrupt administration, were not only reducing the buying capacity of the Indian market, but were also preventing the rapid development of India into a producing country of raw

materials. As the time, therefore, approached for the renewal of the charter, the Company felt themselves obliged to show something on the credit side of their administration, and in consequence, the Governor-General, Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck, was instructed by the directors to effect certain social and administrative reforms which would have the dual purpose of establishing sympathy for the Company in England and of suppressing dangerous sects and customs. For these reasons the Company suddenly showed concern for the welfare of Indian widows, and in 1829 issued a decree forbidding the practice of *suttee* (the practice of burning widows on their husbands' funeral pyres). With rather more enthusiasm it then turned to the suppression of the *thags*. The *thags* were members of a religious sect devoted to the Kali, the goddess of destruction. They considered that the best way of atoning for their sins and of doing honour to the goddess of their choice was to strangle those who had offended or who did not believe in her. With the growth of economic discontent their numbers had increased and their attentions began to be directed against the British, the *fons et origo* of all evil. Lord William Bentinck and Captain Sleeman, therefore, in suppressing them, had the double satisfaction of performing a useful service to civilization while eradicating a movement which was a potential source of danger to their power.

These and certain minor financial changes, which included additional duties on opium, secured the renewal of the Company's charter in 1833; but by the new charter the Company was shorn of its last remaining monopoly, the China trade.

Under cover of these reforms, the expansionist policy was steadily pursued. Following a peasants' revolt in Mysore, the Company occupied that State with troops and took over the administration. The Raja of Coorg was then deposed and his State annexed; and a civil war in Jaipur enabled the Company to appoint there a British Council of Regency.

It was about this time that the British began to have doubts

about the intentions of Russia as regards India. Russian imperialism was steadily encroaching on Central Asia and on Persia, and was sending emissaries to Afghanistan, where Dost Mohammed ruled at Kabul. British envoys had also been sent to the Court of Kabul, but the present unwillingness of the Company to declare war on the Sikhs, who had just wrenched Peshawar from the Afghans, and its refusal to pay large sums as subsidies to Dost Mohammed, caused the Amir to turn a friendly ear to the proposals of the Russian envoys. On their side, the British decided to champion legitimacy, and turned to a deposed Amir of Afghanistan, one Shah Suja, who was then living on a British pension at Ludhiana.

The British were determined to have a more subservient ruler than Dost Mohammed on the throne of Afghanistan. A British army, therefore, avoiding the Punjab, then ruled by the Sikhs, marched through the independent kingdom of Sind into Afghanistan, defeated Dost Mohammed, who was sent as a prisoner to Calcutta, and installed Shah Suja in his place on the throne of Kabul. Two years later, following a rising in Kabul, the British army of occupation was forced to retreat in the depth of winter through unknown passes, harassed by the Afghan tribes, so that out of sixteen thousand soldiers and camp-followers only one survivor reached the British outpost at Jalalabad. In its horrors the retreat from Kabul can be compared only to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. To retrieve the disaster a fresh expedition was dispatched, which blew up half Kabul with gunpowder and then marched back, leaving Dost Mohammed in full possession. The first Afghan war was altogether a grim and futile piece of aggression. It cost more than fifteen million pounds, which added a further burden to the shoulders of the peasantry.

The sequel to the Afghan campaign was the conquest of Sind, which had foolishly allowed the British forces to march through its territory to Afghanistan. Lord Ellenborough, the incredibly pompous Governor-General, celebrated the Afghan

war by annexing Karachi, the only port of Sind, and Shikarpur, its largest city. Having thus broken the treaties with Sind, he then sent Sir Charles Napier to propose humilitating terms for a fresh treaty. This was too much for the Amirs, who called on the people to rise to defend their independence. They were, however, defeated in desperate battles and Sind was annexed, its treasures being taken to Calcutta. The comment of the successful general, Sir Charles Napier, seems adequate:

> "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be."

It was not, however, humane.

There remained only one independent kingdom left in India: that of the Sikhs in the Punjab. Unlike the Marathas the Sikhs were not a nationality but originally a sect of reformed Hindus. They had been cruelly persecuted by Aurangzeb and his immediate successors, and as a result of that persecution had formed themselves into a military confederacy. Towards the end of the eighteenth century they found a leader in Ranjit Singh, who, having organized the Sikh armies under European officers, formed an extensive kingdom for himself in the Punjab, conquering parts of Kashmir and Multan, and seizing Peshawar from the Afghans. The Sikh peasants made excellent soldiers, before whom even the savage Afghan tribes fled in disorder; and for a long time the British in their dealings with Ranjit Singh were strangely subdued. But Ranjit Singh died, and his kingdom was torn between conflicting interests.

It had long been obvious to political observers that the British and the Sikh powers could not exist peaceably side by side: one or other had to go. The forward policy pursued by the Company in Sind and in the territories bordering on the Punjab frontier precipitated the war. In spite of the political anarchy in the Punjab and the treachery of many of the leaders, the Sikhs proved no mean opponents, and the British were

forced to wage two compaigns, the first in 1845 and the second in 1848, before the Sikhs were finally defeated and their country annexed. In the pacification of the Punjab the Company showed more wisdom than its previous exploits could have led us to expect. The usual brutality and extortion were restrained, and as a consequence when the Great Rebellion broke out many of the Sikhs were willing to act as the Cossacks of the British.

With the Sikhs out of the way, there was nothing to check British expansion. States were annexed in rapid succession. The new Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, found moral justification for these annexations in the "doctrine of lapse": when the ruler of a State died without a direct heir, he held that the State should "lapse" to the Company for "the good of the governed." According to this principle, within a few years the States of Satara, Jhansi, and the large territories of the Maratha Bhonslas of Nagpur were annexed; the Nizam in the Deccan was induced to part with the rich cotton-growing provinces of Berar; and the principle was held to apply to the ex-rulers whose pensions from the British ceased on their death, thus creating a large number of discontented relatives, among whom being the adopted son of the last Maratha Peshwa, who was shortly to become a supreme danger to the Company.

The "doctrine of lapse" could, however, be hardly made to apply to the Nawab of Oudh, who not only persisted in living, but who also had provided himself with several direct heirs. The Oudh territories had for long been administered by British officers, but the cost of maintaining the court of a degenerate Nawab, whose only virtue was loyalty to the Company, outraged the frugal soul of Dalhousie. The Company therefore affected a sudden solicitude for the oppressed subjects of the Nawab, and solely in their interests issued a proclamation in 1856 annexing Oudh. This act had a bad effect on the Company's sepoys, many of whom had been recruited from Oudh.

It was the final proof to Indian opinion that no part of India was to be free of the great revolutionary changes which were taking place in British India.

After the annexation of Oudh, no Indian ruler, however subservient, felt himself safe; it was now clear to the most stupid and the most loyal that one by one they were to be dispossessed. And those who had been already dispossessed and their heirs feared the loss of their pensions and rank. For these reasons nearly the whole feudal nobility of India was ready to rebel. Such a rebellion was favoured by the priestly castes, who feared the loss of their privileges and influence as a result of the economic and scientific innovations: they were the first to realize that none of their miracles could compete with that of the electric telegraph. Their religious exhortations further inflamed the peasantry, already highly rebellious at the shattering of their economy; and the unrest among the peasants spread through the Company's armies, recruited mainly from the peasants of Northern India, which were discontented at the low pay and bad conditions of service.

In 1856 Lord Dalhousie prudently resigned, and his successor, Lord Canning, at a farewell banquet in London said:

> "I wish for a peaceful term of office. But I cannot forget that in the sky of India, serene as it is, a small cloud may arise, no larger than a man's hand, but which, growing larger and larger, may at last threaten to burst and overwhelm us with ruin."

The political sky of India was, however, by no means serene; nor were the clouds the size only of a man's hand: the clouds were already black and threatening and the atmosphere heavy with disaster.

On May 10, 1857, the sepoys of the Bengal army, stationed at Meerut, broke into open mutiny. The Great Rebellion had begun.

The rebellion which broke out in 1857 was neither a military mutiny nor a national war for independence. It was not a mutiny because it was not confined to the troops, but was supported by the vast majority of the peasants and people of northern India; and it was not a national war because as yet there was no nation in India, although the unifying policy of the British was rapidly creating one. It was a revolt precipitated by the revolutionary changes introduced by British capitalism into India, and by the British attempts to break down the feudal isolation of the villages and the States in order to weld India into an economic and political unit under British rule. Historically considered, it was a revolt against nationalism and against modernity: it was an attempt to turn the clock of history back to feudal isolation and to feudal tyranny, to the hand-loom and the spinning-wheel, and to primitive methods of transport and communication.

The Great Rebellion was therefore bound to fail. Although the mass of the outraged people was behind the rebels, history was behind the British (undeserving as they undoubtedly were). The germs of failure were apparent in the rebellion from the outset. The leaders, the ruined nobility, could think of no better plan than to declare Bahadur Shah, an old and senile man, but nevertheless the titular Moghul emperor, as the head of the rebellion, of which the object was to restore the old Mohammedan Empire. This move at once antagonized many of the Hindu chiefs, and ensured that the Sikhs, who still remembered the persecutions of Aurangzeb, went over to the side of the British. During the course of the rebellion, Bahadur Shah pottered aimlessly about the palace in Delhi, oblivious to the scheming of his wives and sons and to the quarrelling of the chiefs. There was neither central leadership nor cohesion given to the revolt, which was carried on in a condition of almost complete anarchy, without tactics, discipline, or understanding.

That the rebellion lasted as long as it did is no tribute to the leadership, but is a sign of the great popular support given to it.

In the beginning the leadership of the British was almost as bad. When the sepoys mutinied at Meerut, the British officers were paralysed with astonishment and terror, and the garrison of British troops, which might have checked the mutineers, continued their routine drill while the comparatively ill-armed sepoys, having destroyed the gaol and released the convicts, were marching on the road to Delhi. At Delhi the population rose to receive them, and the English garrison, after exploding the magazine, were forced to flee. From Delhi the rebellion raged through the North-West Provinces and Oudh down to Bengal, and many of the princes in Central India threw in their lot with the rebels. In Oudh the feeling against the British was particularly intense, owing to the annexations and to the previous decades of British oppression and spoliation. In Cawnpore, there appeared Nana Sahib, the dispossessed heir of the last Peshwa, who put himself at the head of the rebels and directed the siege of the entrenchments which the British garrison had erected to protect the European population. After a siege of nineteen days, the garrison surrendered on the strength of a safe-conduct to Allahabad offered to them by Nana Sahib, who seems to have been a blackhearted scoundrel even if we make allowances for his grievances against the British. The safe-conduct proved a trick, and the soldiers and their women and children were foully massacred as they embarked in boats on the Ganges. At Lucknow, a relieving force probably saved the garrison from the same fate.

The struggle centred in Delhi, where the rebel chiefs had clustered round Bahadur Shah. The city was besieged by the British forces for nearly three months before the final assault was given. After six days' desperate street-fighting, the city was captured. Many of the rebel leaders were promptly executed; Bahadur Shah was discovered cowering in the tomb of his

ancestor Humayun, and was afterwards sent as a State prisoner to Rangoon; and his sons were shot in cold blood by a British officer named Hodson, who thus took the opportunity to wipe out the Moghul dynasty once and for all. With the fall of Delhi, the head of the rebellion had been cut off; and the loss of that head, poor as it undoubtedly was, killed the rebellion. It remained to the British only to clean up.

The process of cleaning up took eighteen months. The greatest resistance was made in Oudh, where the rebels were fully supported by the peasants, and in Central India, where Nana Sahib, Tantia Topi, the Rani of Jhansi, and other leaders fought hopelessly but bravely.

The savagery of the repression hardly bears calm comment. It can only be compared with the decimations of Cromwell in Ireland. An attempt was made and is still made to justify this savagery by stories of the frightful atrocities committed by the rebels on British women and children. The massacre of Cawnpore is made the most of in school history books, which incidentally make no mention of the British reprisals. The massacre at Cawnpore was certainly an atrocity which no argument can justify; but it was not committed by the rebel troops who refused to obey Nana Sahib and fire on the unarmed garrison; it was the work of a few personal followers of Nana Sahib. Many Europeans, men, women, and even children, were murdered, and there were doubtless atrocities during the course of the rebellion; but in this connection it is as well to consider Macaulay's explanation of the outrages committed by the people in England two centuries earlier during the Civil War:

> "The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live."[1]

[1] T. B. Macaulay, *Essay on Milton.*

The British could hardly expect tenderness from the Indian people whom they had crushed and exploited for more than a century; yet, except for isolated incidents, such tenderness they actually received, from the poor and from the peasants.

There can, however, be no justification for the horrors committed during the repression by the agents of British capitalism, the self-styled civilizers, who, mad with terror and rage, ravaged the country with fire and sword, hanging, impaling, or blowing from guns the innocent and guilty alike. One English lady gives a vivid description of one of the mass executions of the rebels:

> "Many prisoners were hanged after the battle, and as it was discovered they did not care for hanging, four were tried and sentenced to be blown from guns; accordingly one day we were startled by hearing a gun go off, with an indescribably muffled sound. . . . An officer told us it was a most sickening sight. . . . One gun was overcharged, and the poor wretch was literally blown to atoms, the lookers-on being covered with blood and fragments of flesh: the head of one poor wretch fell upon a bystander and hurt him."[1]

The old practice of blowing prisoners from guns became one of the chief methods of execution: it was spectacular, effective, and calculated to strike awe in the breasts of all rebels. It is interesting to note that some British officers in India have not yet lost their taste for this method of punishing "niggers" and condemn the humanitarianism of the Government which now prohibits it. Thus Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O., in a book entitled *Turmoil and Tragedy in India*, justifies the punishment of blowing from guns on the following grounds:

> "This mode of punishment is instantaneous and far more humane than that of impromptu tree hangings, which is a

[1] Edward Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal.*

process of slow strangulation. The former is not only instantaneous and therefore painless, but has the great advantage that should form the motive of all serious punishment, that it acts as a terrifying deterrent."

It is refreshing to note that the bulldog breed is not entirely extinct.

But the British executioners did not confine themselves to the humane method of blowing from guns. Kaye in his admirable *History of the Sepoy War* reveals that they did not disdain the ordinary method of hanging prisoners:

> "Volunteer hanging parties went out into the districts, and amateur executioners were not wanting to the occasion. One gentlemen boasted of the numbers he had finished off quite 'in an artistic manner,' with mango-trees for gibbets and elephants for drops, the victims of this wild justice being strung up as though for pastime, in 'the form of a figure of eight.' "

Kaye also records:

> "It is on the records of our British Parliament, in papers sent home by the Governor-General of India in Council, that 'the aged, women, and children, are sacrificed, as well as those guilty of rebellion.' They were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in their villages—perhaps now and then accidentally shot. Englishmen did not hesitate to boast, or to record their boastings in writing, that they had 'spared no one,' and that 'peppering away at niggers' was a very pleasant pastime, 'enjoyed amazingly.' "

It is important to note that many of these horrors were inflicted before the massacre at Cawnpore, which therefore cannot be held as justification.

Edward Thompson, in his work, *The Other Side of the Medal*, has made a collection of the contemporary evidence of

the British atrocities after the rebellion. It is necessary to quote one further instance, taken from this work:

> "An eye-witness tells how Sikhs and Europeans together, after repeatedly bayoneting a wounded prisoner in the face, burnt him alive over a slow fire:
>
> "'. . . the horrible smell of his burning flesh as it cracked and blackened in the flames, rising up and poisoning the air—so in this nineteenth century, with its boasted civilization and humanity, a human being should lie roasting and consuming to death, while Englishmen and Sikhs gathered in little knots around, looked calmly on. No one will deny, I think, that this man, at least, adequately expiated, by his frightful and cruel death, any crimes of which he may have been guilty.'"

Thus in a torrent of blood the Great Rebellion came to an end. Hopelessly misled by intriguing and inefficient princes, the people had once again felt the iron hand of a conqueror. All resistance to British rule was now crushed; and there was nothing left for the Indian people except to nurse their bitterness and hatred. The social revolution had been achieved, and a new nation had been created; but it was a nation of slaves, deprived of its historical inheritance.

The British won because great historical forces were behind them; but after their victory they attempted to stem these forces and to arrest all further progress. They ceased to fulfil any social function in India, and their power began to decay. The Great Rebellion marks the end of one epoch in which British imperialism was a progressive revolutionary force in India, and the beginning of another in which the forces of progress are behind the Indian people in their long struggle against a reactionary imperialism, already condemned by history.

PART TWO

THE DECLINE

CHAPTER ONE

The New Imperialism

> "What of all these glorious advances of 'civilization' in such lands as Turkey, Egypt, Tunis, Persia, and other barbarian countries? They are nothing else but a preparation for the advent of a future bourgeoisie. The word of the prophet is being fulfilled: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord . . . Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory?' The bourgeois!"
>
> ENGELS, *The Revolutionary Movements of 1847*

I

THE Great Rebellion sealed the doom of the East India Company, and thus put an end to one of the most curious anomalies in history. For more than a century a small group of commercial monopolists, subjects of one State, had held sovereign power over the territories of another: the Company had been a State within a State. During the century many assaults, partially successful, had been made on its monopoly by the people, by the English Government, by rival groups of merchants, and lastly by the industrial manufacturers; and while it was extending its power in India, it was fighting a losing battle in England. By Pitt's India Act of 1784, it lost much of its actual political power; in 1813 it lost the monopoly of the Indian trade; in 1833 it lost the monopoly of the China trade; in 1853 it lost the right of patronage as regards appointments to the civil service, which was made open to competition; and finally in 1858, by the Act for the Better Government of India, it lost the right to exist.

The Act of 1858 transferred all power and authority in India to the Crown: the Company's Court of Directors was abolished,

and the administration of India was vested in Queen Victoria, who was to govern the country through a Principal Secretary of State assisted by a Council of fifteen members, appointed "during good behaviour." The Governor-General, as representative of the Crown in India, was given the title of Viceroy. No one, except the directors and the stockholders, mourned the eclipse of the Company; least of all industrial capitalism, which had long regarded the Company as a hindrance to its plans for the exploitation of India as a market and as a source of raw materials.

In India, the machinery of government was tightened and adapted to the new conditions. The civil service was rigidly overhauled, and the lesser grades thrown open to Indians; the district officers had their powers curtailed and were made subject to centralized departments; and the police force and secret service were reorganized under European officers. The administration of justice was revised and Supreme Courts were established for each of the main provinces; the Penal Code drafted by Macaulay in 1837 was introduced as law after a few repressive measures had been added, and codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure framed. A financial expert was sent out to devise ways and means at the expense of the Indian people of defraying the cost of suppressing the rebellion, nearly forty millions sterling. This he did by imposing a duty of 10 per cent on all imports, increasing the duties on salt, and by imposing an income-tax. Further measures included the setting up of a Legislative Council, to which three members of the Indian feudal nobility were admitted, the establishment of an Education Department, a Public Works Department (in charge of irrigation, roads, and buildings), and a Public Health Department. The army was completely reorganized: the English troops were increased to 60,000, and the sepoys reduced to 140,000, the artillery remaining in the hands of the English. The old Roman principle of using soldiers of one community in the territory of another was adopted: Gurkha and Sikh troops

were used in Mohammedan districts, and Mohammedan troops in Hindu districts.

The new Indian Government abandoned the annexationist policy of Dalhousie and showed itself benevolently disposed towards the Indian princes. The "doctrine of lapse" was discarded, but the princes were informed that their successors, direct or indirect, would have to be approved by the Government of India, which was to be regarded as the paramount power. British Residents were appointed to their courts in order to supervise the administration of the States; but in general the prince was allowed to oppress and rob his subjects provided he remained subservient to the Indian Government. This policy of toleration of the princes was adopted in direct defiance of history. With the end of the rebellion, the social revolution in India had been acomplished. Feudal economy and society had been irreparably shattered, and India had been drawn into the orbit of Western progress. By all the laws of history the princes should have disappeared from the scene: after the rebellion they had no more historical justification for existing than would have a medieval baron in modern England. It was a case of the survival of the unfittest.

The Indian Government in accepting responsibility for this unauthorized survival was not actuated only by a spirit of benevolence. It was made clear at the outset that the princes were to pay heavily for the right to exist. They were to act in the future as the servile and despised agents of imperialism, without rights, dignity, or honour; they were not to think for themselves, they were merely to obey orders; and they were to have no relations with each other except those permitted by the Indian Government. Breach of these conditions or any sign of independent thinking would be punished by instant deposition. In these circumstances rapid degeneration was inevitable: condemned by history and maintained on their tottering thrones by imperialism in humilating circumstances, they soon showed all the vices of idleness and decay. These vices became

more pronounced in succeeding generations, with the result that to-day over eighty millions of the most unfortunate of India's unfortunate people are ruled by epigones whose depravity as a class is well known. To these vices the Government of India remains surprisingly indifferent as a rule. The princes have been reminded from time to time that their own despotism depends on their absolute submission to the autocratic powers of the Government of India, whose edicts must be obeyed implicitly, without equivocation or protest; but they have also been given to understand that the Government is prepared to tolerate the most outrageous administrative and personal conduct, provided that they carry out their princely functions as instruments of imperial policy and maintain their States as oases in the desert of Indian sedition. They exist only to neutralize political India.

Occasionally princes who have shown signs of independent thinking or who have sympathized with nationalist feeling in British India have been deposed by a virtuous British Government on the ground of immoral behaviour. In 1934, during the debate in the House of Commons on the India Bill, a Conservative opponent of the Bill thus quoted one prince, who had rather indiscreetly confided his troubles to a sympathetic ear:

> "You know, we are none of us infallible, and all of us may make mistakes in the administration of our States. If I agree with the Government's policy I am a good boy, and if I make a mistake not much notice will be taken of it, but if I now get up and say I disagree, and make myself uncomfortable to them, then if I made a mistake my life would be made a burden to me."[1]

To make mistakes is generally admitted to be a human failing; but the "mistakes" committed by the Indian princes are beyond the power of ordinary mortals to commit, and usually assume when revealed such a magnitude as to justify more than ade-

[1] Hansard (Parliamentary Debates), December 11, 1934, p. 290.

quately any punitive action, however drastic, taken by the paramount power. The habits of the average prince are such that the Government is seldom without a pretext to punish political unreliability.

The benevolent tolerance shown to the princes was *not* shown after the rebellion to any other class of the population. The severity of the repression had left the peasants of Northern India sullen and bitter at heart. Englishmen were promoted to a high rank in the hierarchy of Indian demons. The peasants still resented the new innovations, and they were puzzled by the new economy. The money they obtained by selling their goods in the market they had no idea how to use; nor did they fully understand its value; and instead of hoarding it according to the best principles of capitalist economy they would melt it down to be made into bracelets and other ornaments, some even going to the length of decorating their carts with it. In time of crisis it was not found easy to convert those ornaments back to money.

But for a short time the peasants enjoyed a boom of temporary and very comparative prosperity. The rapid development of transport, the building of roads and railways, and the development of ports was turning India into a reproductive country, producing raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods. The American Civil War by ruining the cultivation of raw cotton in the southern States of America, forced the English textile industry to turn to India for its raw materials. In those years, therefore, exports of raw cotton from India greatly increased, and in response to the demand the prices rose. The peasant, of course, did not get the full benefit of the high prices, being robbed by the middlemen, both Europeans and Indians; but there seems no doubt that during this brief period the conditions in many of the villages were better than they had been before or were to be after.

This temporary prosperity was, however, to lead to disaster. It first of all lulled the peasants into a sense of security in which

they made no provision for the future, and secondly by making the cultivation of raw materials more profitable than the cultivation of foodstuffs, it seriously endangered the villages' food reserves in case of crises. In 1867 the crisis came in the form of the terrible Orissa famine, the first of several similar disasters which greeted the new economy and administration.

Orissa had remained comparatively undeveloped. There was no railway, there were few roads, and irrigating works had been neglected. In 1865 the monsoon, on which the peasants relied for their water supply, failed. Such failure in normal conditions would have been serious, but not necessarily alarming; but the conditions in Orissa were then anything but normal. The high prices offered in the preceding years had encouraged the Orissan peasants to export their stocks of grain to those districts where the peasants were engaged in the production of raw materials. The same high prices and heavy demand made it almost impossible for the Orissans, now desperately in need, to buy grain in the quantity they required, with the result that after they had consumed their remaining stocks they had nothing to eat. The Provincial Government of Bengal refused to recognize the danger and failed to rush grain to the threatened province, until it was too late for assistance to be effective. Nearly a quarter of the population died of hunger. Further ravages were made by floods and disease, and Orissa was left desolate.

From the same causes, similar famines broke out in 1873 and 1877. The latter famine laid waste nearly 200,000 square miles, including Madras, Mysore, the Deccan, and Bombay.

These famines not only killed the peasants, but also the cattle. The bullock is indispensable to the peasant for carting his produce and for ploughing his holding. After a famine the first necessity was to replace the cattle which had been destroyed. The peasant had no resources with which to do this and was forced to seek the assistance of the moneylender. In the famine areas every village soon became under the domi-

nance of moneylenders, who, charging an impossible rate of interest, often as much as 300 per cent., burdened the peasant family with a perpetual debt. Many of the landlords were quick to see the new possibilities and turned moneylenders, and would even supply the ready cash to pay their own rents; and in these cases the peasant was forced to borrow from the moneylender-landlord in order to pay the landlord moneylender. From this burden of debt there was little prospect of release: the boom period initiated by the American Civil War had ended and prices had fallen; and in any case the returns on the sale of produce went not to the producers but to the moneylenders. The village moneylender was one of the first blessings bestowed by the new economy. The peasant now had to travel a long road of misery before he would reap any of the benefits conferred on him by history.

2

In the years following the Great Rebellion in India great and far-reaching changes took place in the nature of capitalism in Europe. The principle of free competition was supplanted by that of monopoly.

After the Industrial Revolution, British capitalism had proclaimed the doctrine of Free Trade in opposition to its previous policy of rigid protection. Britain was at this time far ahead of the rest of the world both industrially and economically. She was without industrial rivals, and had no reason to fear competition, and she therefore wished to have a free entry into all the markets in the world, for the purposes of importing raw material and agricultural produce, and of exporting manufactured goods. She would generously allow the same entry to others, because she was aware that there was no possibility of having to face any real competition. The doctrine of Free Trade expounded by Britain amounted to competition without restrictions where there was no possibility of real competition.

But British industrial supremacy was built on machine production, and Britain could not hope to keep the machines to herself. It was one of the contradictions of capitalism that Britain could not help furnishing other countries with the means to develop competitive industries. Thus, for instance, coal was the basic requirement of the Industrial Revolution. Before 1828 the total amount of coal exported from England to all foreign countries never exceeded 250,000 tons. In 1845, after the introduction of steam-power, Britain exported in one year 2,100,000 tons of coal; and in 1913 more than 73,000,000 tons. The export of coal by itself rapidly accelerated the rate of industrial development in other countries; but British capitalism was not content to confine its exports to coal: it exported machinery, iron and steel, and even its technicians, until by the middle of the nineteenth century it was already faced with industrial and commercial competition. The world-market was no longer an unchallenged British monopoly. France, Germany, and America were demanding their places in the sun. The doctrine of absolute Free Trade no longer became practicable.

The first radical change took place on the domestic market and in the domestic industry. Before 1860 industry in Britain was mainly the concern of individual manufacturers, who freely competed with each other on the market; but with the growth of the monopoly principle individual capitalists began to join together. A process developed towards the gathering together of industrial concerns; small-scale plants were replaced by large-scale plants; individual ownership gave place to companies; companies gave place to cartels, trusts, and combines. These large enterprises gradually began to drive out the small producer by depriving him of raw material, labour, transport, markets, credits, and by lowering prices. The process led to the concentration of wealth and the centralization of industrial production and distribution; it tended to limit free competition, to regulate the cost of production by controlling wages, and to

maintain prices. But by eliminating free competition they intensified competition between rival monopolist groups.

The same process was to be seen developing among the banks. In the old days of free competition the banks had been little more than intermediaries of payments; but in order that the banks should fulfil this function it was necessary for the capitalists to deposit with the banks funds not tied up in industry. With the aid of this money the banks gave short-term credits to industrial firms, but the connection between the banks and industry was not lengthy or stable. There existed a multitude of small banks between whom there was fierce competition. The growth of industrial monopolies, however, infected the banks as part of the same economic system. Small banks combined until they had grown from modest intermediaries into all-powerful financial monopolies, controlling all the money capital of the industrialists and merchants and the savings of the rest of the population.

The large-scale industry of the monopolies depended on large credits, and particularly on long-term credits. This established a lengthy and stable connection between the industrial monopolies and the banking monopolies, ultimately leading to their fusion, and to the merging of industrial capital with banking capital. In this way industrial and banking capital becomes common to both monopolies and is termed finance capital. The financiers and industrialists who control finance capital control all the productive forces of society, and by reason of their economic predominance also control Governments, which were converted into the political executive committees of the finance capitalists.

The principle of monopoly had no respect for frontiers. Fierce competition between national monopolies led to agreements for the exploitation of markets, and out of these agreements the international monopoly, usually dominated by one national monopoly, was born. But the more competition became limited the fiercer it became. Competition between individual

capitalists had led to competition between monopolies on the domestic market; competition between the monopolies of different nations on the world market led to competition between international monopolies.

The principle of monopoly was applied to the great colonial markets. The prevailing demand of the capitalist powers was now for colonies and spheres of influence; that is for markets from which competition could be excluded. In the resulting scramble for colonies, Britain with the colonies she already possessed had a great advantage; but she was not content merely to hold what she had, and entered the scramble with the rest of them. In the rush of the new imperialism, those who still clung to the older doctrines of capitalism were ruthlessly swept aside: the "little Englanders," the Cobdenites, and the Radicals fell into comparative insignificance and their place was taken by rabid imperialists of the type of Disraeli, Joseph Chamberlain, and Cecil Rhodes. The struggle among the imperialist rivals lasted the whole of the nineteenth century. In the beginning it was mainly between Britain and France in the East and later in Egypt and Arabia; but Germany, after her success in the Franco-Prussian War, Italy, Belgium, and later Japan soon joined in the race. The first and obvious victim was Africa, as yet undivided. J. R. Green describes the scramble for that continent as follows:

> "The nations flung themselves into Africa; explorers were turned into conquerors, and in twenty years Europe by hurried strokes had carved up an entire continent, pushing vague frontiers into the unknown, till at last there was nothing left to divide save at the cost of the weakest of the conquerors."[1]

The same could soon be said of the rest of the world.

China followed Africa as the victim-in-chief of European

[1] J. R. Green, *A Short History of the Indian People*, Epilogue, p. 975.

expansion, but here the position was even further complicated by the intrusion of Russia and a new imperialist power, Japan. The South American Republics became all more or less under the economic control of either Britain, or France, or America. By the end of the nineteenth century there was nothing left to divide. In the future colonial empires could only be acquired at the expense of the imperialist powers which already possessed empires. Of these the greatest was Britain. In 1860 Britain possessed colonies covering a total area of 2·5 million square miles with a population of 145 million inhabitants: in 1900 she possessed 9·3 million square miles with 309 million inhabitants.

With these large and steadily expanding markets Britain was in the latter half of the nineteenth century the most prosperous capitalist country in the world. It assumed the title with some justification of "the workshop of the world." As a result of this prosperity there was accumulated a large amount of surplus capital in the banks, and as capital cannot be allowed to remain idle it was exported to the various backward and colonial countries where there was a demand for it. A well-developed capitalist country offers small inducement for capitalist investment, but a backward country, where capital is scarce, the price of land comparatively low, wages low, raw materials cheap, offers extremely high profits on capital invested. The export of capital therefore became another characteristic of the monopoly form of capitalism.

With the growth of monopolies the capitalists as a class became divorced from active participation in industry. They became an idle class living on dividends from the shares bought in the big companies. This class of people, who, in the phrase of Lenin, "live by clipping coupons, who take no part whatever in production, whose profession is idleness," were concerned only in investing their capital where it could bring the biggest return. They turned to the colonial countries.

Imperialism reflects the economic changes in capitalism. The economy behind the new imperialism was therefore monopoly

capitalism; and as monopoly capitalism depended more and more on its colonial markets, imperialism instead of being a branch of monopoly capitalism became identical with it. The most satisfactory definition of modern imperialism is given by Lenin:

> "Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has established itself, in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance, in which the division of the world among the big international trusts has begun; in which the partition of all the territories of the globe amongst the great capitalist powers has been completed."[1]

For the moment we are concerned only with one of these characteristics of imperialism: the export of capital to India and its effects.

3

With the abolition of the East India Company, British industrial capitalism proceeded rapidly to convert India into a market for manufactured goods and a source of raw materials. The Lancashire textile manufacturers at once pressed for the total abolition of import duties on cotton goods, but met with opposition from the Government of India, which was then busy raising sufficient money to pay the cost of the suppression of the Great Rebellion. The pressure from Lancashire was, however, persistent, and in 1875 the import duties were reduced to 5 per cent., a concession which by no means satisfied the British manufacturers, who in 1877 succeeded in persuading the House of Commons to pass a resolution recommending the total abolition of the duties. Reacting to this pressure, the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, two years later, in spite of the opposition of his

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, p. 81, ed. Martin Lawrence.

Council, removed the duty on English manufactured goods. In 1882 all customs duties were removed.

The breaking of feudal economy and the British exploitation of the Indian market created a wealthy Indian "go-between" class which was closely allied to the British in economic interests. The native bourgeois thus created was not at first interested in industrial experiments; it was content to act as the middleman between the English manufacturers and the Indian market; but inevitably with the accumulation of wealth it began to press for the development of an industry of its own. This pressure became greater in proportion to the amount of capital exported from Britain by monopoly capitalism.

British capital was at first invested in railways. Since Dalhousie had introduced in 1854 the first main line from Calcutta to the Raniganj coalfield, railway construction had proceeded at a rapid pace. As the interests on British investments were guaranteed by the Government of India, British capital was poured liberally into the Indian railways. There was no check on the expenditure of this capital; much of it was squandered or misappropriated by the constructing companies; but as long as the British investor received his 5 per cent. he did not worry. As a result the cost of constructing a line was three times greater than it should have been according to the original estimates. Miss Joan Beauchamp in her work, *British Imperialism in India*, quotes as follows from the evidence given in 1872 before a Parliamentary Committee by an ex-Finance Minister of the Viceroy's Council:

> "All the money came from the English capitalist, and, so long as he was guaranteed 5 per cent. on the revenue of India, it was immaterial to him whether the funds that he lent were thrown into the Hooghly or converted into bricks and mortar. The result was these large sums were expended, and the East India Railway cost, I think (I speak without the book), about £30,000 a mile."

Thus the Indian revenue, wrung from famine-stricken peasants, was used to compensate British "coupon-clippers" for the corruption and incompetence of the railway constructors in India.

But nevertheless the effect of the railways on the industrial development of India was, as Marx pointed out in the passage quoted in the last chapter, considerable. Iron and coal and other essential raw materials for the Industrial Revolution, present in abundance, were also developed as necessary consequences of the railways. The construction of the railways did not end the export of British capital; it continued to be invested in canal construction, in irrigation, in tea and coffee plantations, in mining, in merchant firms and banking, and in the textile industry. Loans to the Indian Government vastly increased the National Debt.

The export of machinery from Britain, and particularly of textile machinery, further accelerated industrial development. The existence of raw jute and cotton and the abundance of cheap labour were an overwhelming temptation to British companies. As early as 1855 one enterprising Englishman had imported machinery from Dundee and had built up a jute industry round Calcutta, which in later years was to become one of the most prosperous industries in India, and which was finally to lead to the complete ruin of the jute industry in Dundee. Compelled by the laws of economic progress, Indian merchants themselves began to experiment in industry. Wealthy Indian merchant communities such as the Parsees and the Bhatias began to construct factories in Bombay and Ahmedabad for the manufacture of cotton goods; but nearly all these mills fell under the control of British capital through the system of British managing agencies. The managing agents were British merchants who "nourished the growth of new enterprises and carefully nursed the young and immature."[1] In more direct language, they were company promoters, who

[1] *Capital*, Trade Supplement, December 1932.

having raised the capital mainly from England to organize a company would then sell out and start another one. They became channels for the investment of British capital:

> "The English managing agents in Bengal, Assam, and other provinces constituted a sort of bottle-neck through which British capital flowed to India and got distributed among the varied enterprises promoted by the British managing agents. But for the managing agency system the pace of industrial development in India would have been slower, and the opportunities for British capital and British enterprise to function in India would have been limited. . . . The lack of indigenous capital and Indian industrial leadership gave the British merchants their opportunity. The available British capital seeking investment found among these British merchants just the right sort of men who could safely be entrusted with it. Once the system came into existence its very success led to its growth and development."[1]

A network of managing agencies spread from the jute and cotton industries to the coal and iron and steel industries, organizing and developing for the immediate profit of British investors what was to become serious industrial competition with British capitalism on the Indian market.

The profits of this capital investment were and are considerable; but they were made at the cost of the buying power of the Indian market. Miss Freda Utley, in her authoritative survey of industrial conditions in *Lancashire and the Far East*, writes:

> "The amount of capital invested by the British in India has been estimated at £1,000,000,000, which includes £341,000,000 in State debts and railway debentures. Some is in railways, some in plantations, some in jute-mills, some in cotton and some in mining and irrigation. In view of the

[1] P. S. Lokanathan, *Industrial Organization in India*, p. 21.

enormous profits made by the plantations and the jute-mills (the latter paying as much as 50 per cent.), 10 per cent. can be taken as a fair average rate. This means £100,000,000 a year paid by India into the pockets of British shareholders" (p. 339).

In addition to this constant drain of wealth, the Indian peasant has to pay a heavy tribute to support the British members of the civil and military services, which spend a large part of their salaries, pensions, and bonuses in Britain. More than half the central revenue of India is spent on the military services, grouped together under the heading "Defence," and less than a quarter is spent on public services in the shape of irrigation, public health, irrigation, and public works. Miss Utley concludes:

> "It is difficult to refute the Indian contention that India is for the British Empire a source of enormous profit, an area comprising one-fifth of the world's population, administered mainly with a view to extracting the utmost possible amount of profit for Britain. True, the necessity of not killing the goose that lays the golden egg is recognized as it was not recognized in the days of the East India Company; but, apart from necessary safeguards against the complete economic ruin of the country, every penny possible is wrung from the peasants. They are taxed beyond the possibility of paying, and they receive in return almost nothing in the form of education, sanitary services or the financial assistance necessary to enable them to improve their methods of cultivation" (p. 342).

But in draining India of her wealth British capitalism was accomplishing the Indian Industrial Revolution. It was to pay heavily in the future in industrial competition and loss of buying power for its greed of the moment.

British capitalism with its world industrial supremacy gave

at first little thought to the possibilities of industrial development in India. It had not only the monopoly of the Indian market, but it was rapidly, thanks to the Opium Wars, establishing a monopoly in cotton goods of the great Chinese market. Blithely it even supplied machinery to Japan, little dreaming of the consequences. But when Indian merchant capitalism began to demand the development of a large-scale industry in India, when the effects of the export of capital began to be felt, British capitalism awoke to the danger. Having created the conditions in which industrial development was inevitable, it adopted a consistent policy of retarding that industrial development, and of keeping, in defiance of historical laws, India as backward as circumstances permitted. With this end in view, the Government of India imposed a tariff of 5 per cent. on imported machinery, and although at the same time it imposed a general duty of 3½ per cent. on textile goods imported from Europe, it nullified this by placing an excise duty of 5 per cent. on all goods manufactured in India. In 1898 it linked the rupee to sterling and changed its exchange value from 1s. 2d. to a fictitious value of 1s. 4d.; a measure which neutralized the tariff against British goods and struck a blow at Indian industrial development. A further weapon against Indian industralization was the banks, which were mainly controlled by British capital, and which were for the most part connected with the big monopoly banks in England. It was made extremely difficult for Indian industrial enterprises to obtain adequate credits, unless through the British managing agencies, which showed a curious unwillingness "to follow up lines of development naturally proceeding from the expansion of operations in their own specified industries."[1] The managing agencies now showed more enthusiasm for commercial rather than industrial development.

The economic and political power of British capitalism enabled it to retard but not to prevent the growth of Indian

[1] Report of His Majesty's Trade Commission in India (1919).

industry. The British conquest had created a bourgeois, which was now no longer content to act as the middlemen of British imperialism, but was determined to build up a competitive industry. For the first time the interests of Indian capitalism and British capitalism began to conflict. The Indian bourgeois found itself compelled to wage a long and bitter struggle for every inch of industrial progress, and its former subservience turned to political hostility towards British imperialism. The resulting struggle unleashed forces hostile to them both.

British imperialism created an Indian bourgeois; the Indian bourgeois created an Indian industrial working class.

CHAPTER TWO

Defending an Empire

> "India is the pivot of our Empire. If this Empire loses any other part of its Dominions, we can survive. But if we lose India, the sun of our Empire will have set."
> LORD CURZON

I

THE conquest of India and the development of the Indian market determined the foreign policy pursued by Britain throughout the nineteenth century. Shrewd statesmen had realized in the latter half of the eighteenth century that Britain was essentially an Asiatic power, and that shorn of her Eastern possessions she would rapidly sink from her dominant position in the world to the level of Holland. This realization became more generally established in the nineteenth century as British finance capital became more and more dependent on the exploitation of the Indian market. Foreign policy was then directed towards maintaining British control of the communications to India, and towards checking the Eastern ambitions of France and Russia.

There were then two routes to India: the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope, and the land route through the Turkish Dominions and through Persia and Afghanistan. It was Britain's first task to secure the sea route. A convenient opportunity to effect this was provided by the wars against the French Republic and against Napoleon. Holland, having been overrun by France, was promptly regarded as an enemy, and lost to the British the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, and the Spice Islands (afterwards restored). By the first Treaty of Paris (1814) Britain also obtained the island fortress of Malta, which, together with Gibraltar, acquired in 1704, strengthened British power in the Mediterranean.

The land route presented more difficulties. It was necessary for Britain to control not only Turkey and the Near East, but also Persia and Afghanistan. But all attempts to penetrate into Turkey, Afghanistan, and Persia brought her into conflict with Russian imperialism, which had similar designs. For more than half a century Turkey was to become the centre of the Anglo-Russian conflict.

Under the Empress Catherine II, Russia had pursued a policy of steady aggression against Turkey and Persia. In 1795 she had wrested the province of Georgia from Persia, and in 1813 established her sovereignty over all Persian territory north of the Aras; proceedings which the Indian Government regarded with extreme disquiet. In 1783 Russia annexed the Crimea from Turkey, and subsequently annexed further territory at the latter's expense. Thus establishing her position in Central Asia, she began to press further into Turkestan, to influence the government of Afghanistan, and during the Napoleonic wars even to contemplate a direct invasion of India.

Thanks to Russian aggression and internal corruption, the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Napoleonic wars was in a very weak state. Russia was preparing to press home her advantage in the hope of overrunning Turkey completely and of seizing the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, thus realizing the old dream of Peter the Great. But Britain under Wellington and Castlereagh firmly resolved to maintain the integrity of Turkey as a necessary safeguard to British interests in the East. Russian ambitions were regarded with undisguised hostility:

> "... But no power was feared like Russia, as she advanced towards the passes of Afghanistan or, pressing southwards over the Caucasus, threatened to intercept the trade of the Persian Gulf, where for three hundred years English ships had policed, for a distance greater than that from Plymouth to Gibraltar, those distant waters lying between fiery

stretches of desert gaunt and sun-scorched, had put down pirates, set buoys and beacons, and guarded the lines of her old commerce with Persia and the direct way to the harbour of Karachi and Bombay."[1]

Therefore, when the Balkan States and Greece, instigated by France and Russia, broke out in revolt against Turkey, Castlereagh resolutely opposed any proposal of Russian, French, and British intervention. The following year, however, he committed suicide, and his successor, Canning, "in the cause of civil and religious liberty," reversed British policy and came to terms with France and Russia for joint intervention on behalf of Greece. The Turkish fleet was pursued by the fleets of the interventionists into Navarino Bay, and there was sunk. In the meantime Canning had died, and the new Government of the Duke of Wellington was horrified at the news of Navarino; the Duke considered that the sinking of the whole Turkish fleet by British, French, and Russian warships was "an untoward event," and ventured to hope that a little thing like that would not disturb the traditional Anglo-Turkish friendship. The policy of the "little Englanders," which had been interpreted by Canning, was discredited and the Tories had their way; the British naval squadrons were withdrawn from the Mediterranean; and Russia was left alone to deal with Turkish resentment, the French having also withdrawn as a result of disorders in France.

Thus encouraged Turkey declared war on Russia, but after two years of desperate fighting she was compelled to sign the treaty of Adrianople, acknowledging the independence of Greece, which was placed under the joint "protection" of Russia, France, and Britain. Wellington successfully resisted the cession of Thessaly to Greece and generally did his best to check the growth of Russian influence; but all his efforts at sabotage failed to prevent Russia becoming the dominant power

[1] J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People*, Epilogue, p. 909.

in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Russia was continuing her steady absorption of Central Asia; her troops had crossed the Caucasus, invaded Armenia, and had fortified the Caspian Sea; her intrigues in Persia and Afghanistan were causing serious concern to the Indian Government; and her opposition to the British proposal of a steamer service on the Euphrates to shorten the journey to India, and her exclusion of British shipping from the Circassian coast were clear signs of her hostility to Britain.

The conflict had, however, to be postponed owing to French ambitions in North Africa and particularly in Egypt. In 1830 France in defiance of Britain occupied Algeria, and declared that it was her intention to restore "Roman Africa"; her officers were busy training the forces of Mehemet Pasha, the Turkish viceroy of Egypt, who fell completely under French influence; and her conduct showed a desire to expand from Egypt into Syria. Spain, too, was falling under French domination.

At the end of 1831 France engineered a conflict between Mehemet Pasha of Egypt and the Turkish Sultan. Mehemet then sent his son Ibrahim with a large army officered by Frenchmen into Syria with instructions to advance across Asia Minor against Constantinople. His success would have established French influence throughout the whole of the Near East. The more far-sighted English imperialists, headed by Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, called upon Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, to intervene and stop Ibrahim before it was too late. But Palmerston was obsessed in a belief in his own smartness, and entered into mysterious negotiations with Russia and Austria, negotiations which mystified even his own colleagues. Pending these negotiations he adopted a policy of doing nothing. As Mehemet Pasha was a rebel against the Sultan, he argued, it would be a breach of international etiquette to interfere with his progress against the Sultan. England should have no relations either hostile or friendly

with a rebel. Later Marx gave the adequate comment on this attitude:

> "*Etiquette* prevented the noble lord from stopping Ibrahim's armies. *Etiquette* forbade his giving instructions to his consul at Alexandria to use his influence with Mehemet Ali. Like the Spanish grandee, the noble lord would rather let the Queen burn to ashes than infringe on *etiquette*, and interfere with her petticoats."[1]

The Sultan, also mystified at Palmerston's conduct, was forced to ask assistance from Russia to prevent Constantinople falling into the hands of the rebels. The Czar did not hesitate. On February 20, 1833, a Russian squadron sailed from Sebastopol, landed a large force of Russian troops on the shores of the Bosphorus, and, in spite of French protests, occupied Constantinople. The Sultan was saved; but the saviours demanded a heavy price. To recover his capital from the Russians he had to sign the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, by virtue of which Turkey entered into an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Russia, undertook not to enter into an alliance with any other power without Russian consent, and agreed to close the Dardanelles to the warships of every country except Russia. As a result of Palmerston's policy Turkey became a vassal State to Russia.

But Palmerston remained unperturbed amid the furious attacks of the Tories. As jauntily as ever he pursued his secret course of playing France and Russia off against each other, so that in the end Russian influence would be weakened in Turkey, and France would be driven out of Asia Minor and Arabia, where she was threatening British imperial communications. As the price of his complaisance in the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, he obtained from Turkey a commercial treaty of free trade throughout the Turkish Empire, and the fortress of Aden which guarded the Eastern entrance to the Red Sea.

France determined to resist these and any further conces-

[1] Karl Marx, *The Story of the Life of Lord Palmerston*, p. 41.

sions from Turkey to Russia and Britain. On French instructions, Mehemet Pasha proposed to set up an independent kingdom composed of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia; a proposal which if effected would have cut Britain completely off from India. The Sultan was therefore encouraged to send a great army under Prussian officers against Mehemet, who almost annilihated it in the battle of Nezib. Thereupon Palmerston summoned Russia, Austria, and Prussia to a conference at London, and there the four powers hostile to France pledged themselves to preserve the integrity of Turkey and to expel Mehemet Pasha from Crete, Syria, and Arabia. Palmerston was anxious to include Egypt in the countries which should be wrested from Mehemet Pasha, but the conference would only agree to threaten Mehemet with the loss of Egypt if he failed to evacuate Syria and Arabia. Declaring that "if Mehemet Ali would not yield he must be chucked into the Nile," Palmerston, suddenly active, sent a fleet to bombard Beirut and agents to Syria to foment rebellion. France threatened war, a British fleet bombarded Alexandria, and Mehemet Pasha was forced to evacuate Syria. Another conference was called at London, which France also attended. Palmerston's attempts to confiscate Egypt were frustrated, and France's efforts to detach the Suez and the Euphrates region from Turkey were unsuccessful. The Russians were also disappointed: the conference set aside the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi and placed Turkey once more under the joint "protection" of France, Britain, and Russia. Palmerston's diplomacy had, after all, foiled for a time the ambitions of both France and Russia.

The conference at London was so well contrived that each power left it under a grievance. The three protectors conspired with and against each other and plotted war. The French danger having been temporarily averted, Britain began to draw closer to France as opposed to Russia, whose intrigues with Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan had already provoked the first Afghan war.

In 1850 Austria began to move east as a result of the suppression of the Hungarian rebellion of 1848, after which many refugees had taken refuge in Turkey. It was soon made clear that Austria had serious designs on Turkish territory, and Britain became alarmed. Palmerston immediately assumed the role of the champion of liberty against Russian and Austrian tyranny. He solemnly admonished Austria on her tyranny in Italy, Sardinia, and Hungary, gave a public reception to the Hungarian rebel Kossuth, and became exceedingly indignant when the Austrian minister reminded him of "unhappy Ireland." Finally, he dispatched a British fleet to defend Turkey and to intimidate Greece which remained under the influence of Russia. These high-handed actions evoked protests from France and Russia, and for a time there seemed a danger of war. It was prevented; but only for a short time.

In 1853 the long tension between France and Russia broke out into an open quarrel over a trifling issue arising from their respective claims to champion Christianity in Constantinople. The Czar, considering this a favourable opportunity to re-establish the position he had gained in Turkey with the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, approached Britain and proposed the division of Turkey between Britain and Russia. But the steady penetration of Russia in Central Asia and distrust of Russian intentions caused the British Government to reject the offer, and to side with France. Russia then issued an ultimatum to Turkey, withdrew her ambassador, and occupied the Turkish provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia. British and French fleets were immediately sent to the Dardanelles, and in November passed through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. In return, the Russians sank a Turkish naval squadron at Sinope, and Britain and France declared war. British and French forces invaded the Crimea, captured Sebastopol, and after two years the war ended in the defeat of Russia. By the treaty of Paris all warships were forbidden in the Black Sea, and the Dardanelles were neutralized; Russia withdrew her protectorate over

Moldavia and Wallachia, which were restored to Turkey; and Turkey was delivered from the humiliation of being a "protected" State, but nevertheless fell largely under the control of Britain.

Foiled in her march to Constantinople, Russia concentrated her energies in the Persian Gulf and in Central Asia. Khiva was captured in 1864, Bokhara seized in 1866, and a new province of Russian Turkestan formed in 1867; and in the same year fell Tashkent, and Samarkand, the capital of Timur. Afghanistan itself was threatened; and the Indian Government became alarmed. The Viceroy, Lord Lawrence, appealed to London to come to

> "a clear understanding with the Court of St. Petersburg as to its projects and designs in Central Asia, and that it might be given to understand in firm but courteous language that it cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan or in those of any State which lies contiguous to our frontier."

Alarming rumours circulated in the bazaars of Northern India, and British officials had no doubt that Russia was contemplating an invasion of India as soon as her preparations were complete.

Relations between Britain and Russia steadily became worse. Russia found a new ally in Prussia. By reason of her natural resources, geographical situation, and the development of her industries, Prussia had become the most powerful State within the German Federation. Under the leadership of Bismarck, she pursued an aggressive policy, securing herself from attack by fomenting trouble among the other powers. Bismarck began by encouraging the Poles to revolt against Russia and then earning Russian gratitude by helping Russia to suppress the revolt. Having thus secured Russian friendship, he turned his attention to the problem of linking the German ports on the Baltic with those on the North Sea. This could only be accomplished

at the expense of Denmark; accordingly in 1864 Prussia, supported by Austria and Russia, declared war on Denmark and annexed on behalf of herself and Austria the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. In 1866 it was Austria's turn. Alleging Austrian intrigues in Holstein, Prussia declared the German Federation dissolved, and attacked Austria. The war lasted for seven weeks until Austria, decisively defeated at Sadowa, was forced to accept Prussian terms for peace. The defeat of Austria was followed by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which ended disastrously for France after only six weeks of fighting. Prussia emerged from the war the head of the German Federation, Austria having withdrawn after her defeat, and a mighty industrial power, desiring her place in the sun.

Following on the defeat of France, Bismarck pursued his policy of maintaining discord among the powers. He succeeded almost beyond expectations. He pressed the Czar to defy the London Convention and to press forward in the Black Sea, and at the same time he encouraged Austria to compensate herself for the loss of Germany by building a Balkan Empire. Prussian agents then engineered a revolt in Hèrzegovina and Bosnia, and soon set the whole Balkan peninsula in a blaze. The Turkish Government was forced to adopt desperate measures in order to cope with the rising: religious fanaticism was aroused, and thousands of bashi-bazouks were let loose to massacre the Christian populations of Bulgaria and later of Serbia and Montenegro. The imperialists made the most of these massacres, and popular opinion in Europe rose to fever-heat against "the unspeakable Turk." As England was isolated, Russia was now ready for action. Having promised Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria to ensure her neutrality, Russia ordered her armies across the Turkish frontiers, ignored Disraeli's protests, and dictated terms to the Sultan at the gates of Constantinople. The treaty of San Stefano was signed, establishing Russia as the overlord of Turkey.

British imperialism led by Disraeli refused to recognize

the treaty of San Stefano. An English fleet was hurried to the Bosphorus, where it anchored in front of the Russian army encamped at San Stefano; Disraeli warned British capitalism what they could expect if the communications to India fell into the hands of Russia; the army reserves were mobilized and 7,000 Indian troops were brought to Malta. War seemed inevitable; but at the last moment Bismarck offered himself as the "honest broker" to compose the differences which he himself had intensified. At the subsequent Congress of Berlin in 1878, Kars, Batoum, and Ardahan were ceded to Russia; Rumania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, were declared independent principalities; Austria received the protectorate of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the dismay of Italy; and by a secret treaty Britain secured the important strategical island of Cyprus from Turkey as a reward for Disraeli's pledge to prevent any further Russian inroads into the Turkish Empire.

In the same year as the powers were thus cynically dividing Turkey among themselves at Berlin, General Stolietoff, who had been sent previously by Russia as an envoy to Kabul, was busy fomenting trouble for the Indian Government. After the treaty of Berlin, Stolietoff was recalled; but the Government of India considered that the diplomatic defeat of Russia in Europe was an excellent opportunity to reduce the Amir of Afghanistan to complete subservience. War was therefore declared and Kabul was occupied by a British force. Afghanistan was then compelled to sign the treaty of Gandamak, by which she agreed to accept a British resident at Kabul, ceded the districts of Pishin and Sibi, and further agreed to allow the Indian Government to determine Afghan foreign policy. The Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, received the premature congratulations of the Home Government for having at last settled the Afghan problem; but while he was still enjoying the plaudits of the imperialists, the Afghans rose and slew Cavagnari, the British resident, together with his staff and escort. Lord Lytton imme-

diately sent an army "to restore order." General Roberts occupied Kandahar and Kabul, where he instituted a reign of terror, hanging villagers and burning cottages and issuing bloodthirsty proclamations; but these measures were all in vain, as the whole population had risen against the British. The war dragged on for nearly a year at a heavy cost in lives and money until the British forces were withdrawn, having gained nothing but the hatred of the Afghan people. General Roberts himself was forced to observe: "The less the Afghans see of us, the less they will dislike us."

The Afghan problem having been temporarily but unsatisfactorily settled, British imperialism was able to concentrate its attention on the far more important question of Egypt and the Red Sea coasts. The opening in 1869 of the Suez Canal, which shortened the distance to India by a half, had made the control of Egypt of vital importance to Britain.

The importance of a waterway linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea had been realized even in the ancient world. In about 600 B.C. the Egyptians had actually made a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, and similar canals had been opened by Darius and by Ptolemy. The project had been revived in the sixteenth century after the Turkish conquests had made the land route to India unsafe for Western traffic. The Venetians had drawn up plans for the construction of such a canal; and Christopher Marlowe reveals that Elizabethan England had the same idea:

> "Then martcht I into Egypt and Arabia,
> And here not far from Alexandria,
> Whereas the Terren and the red sea meet,
> Being distant lesse than ful a hundred leagues,
> I meant to cut a channell to them both,
> That men might quickly saile to India."[1]

[1] C. Marlowe, *The Bloody Conquests of Mighty Tamburlaine*, Part 2, Act 5, Scene 3.

At the opening of the nineteenth century, Napoleon contemplated a canal through the Isthmus of Suez, but the defeat of the French fleet at Aboukir Bay, which forced the evacuation of Egypt by the French, terminated his plans. In the succeeding years English, French, and Italian engineers toyed with the idea, but the conflict of interests prevented any work being undertaken. To avoid the long and arduous Cape route, English shipping companies ran a mail and passenger service from England to Alexandria, where the passengers disembarked, crossed the Isthmus of Suez, and took ship again on the Red Sea. But in 1858 a French diplomat, Ferdinand de Lesseps, won the concession to construct the long overdue canal. Work began the following year and was anxiously watched by the European powers until it was finally completed and opened in 1869. The year before the canal was opened, Britain attempted to strengthen further her position in the Red Sea by an invasion of Abyssinia; and both France and Britain showed a sudden anxiety to accommodate the Khedive of Egypt with loans.

The Suez Canal brought Britain and France into an open race for the possession of Egypt and particularly of the Canal Zone. In 1874 Disraeli heavily scored on behalf of British imperialism by buying for £4,000,000 the Khedive's shares in the Canal. The competition had by this time become so serious that both France and Britain realized that compromise was the only alternative to war: they chose compromise. In 1876, the Khedive having become hopelessly involved in his finances as a result of British and French loans, was unable to pay the heavy interest demanded, and France and Britain used this failure as a pretext to establish a dual control of the administration of Egypt. Two years later the Khedive in a sudden spurt of patriotism dismissed his finance minister, a nominee of Britain and France, and was promptly deposed by the subservient Sultan of Turkey. The new Khedive was given two comptrollers-general, one British and one French, to regulate his affairs and to superintend the administration. Egypt had lost to

Britain and France the independence gained from Turkey by Mehemet Pasha.

But if the Khedive and his courtiers could tolerate this loss of independence, the Egyptian people could not. In 1882 they rose under the leadership of Ahmed Arabi Bey, who had previously denounced the English and French stock-jobbers and officials who were steadily draining the country of its wealth. The intervention of English and French warships at Alexandria provoked a massacre of the European population, and the British fleet thereupon bombarded and occupied Alexandria. At this act of aggression Russia and Germany protested and France withdrew her co-operation; but undaunted British imperialism sent out an expeditionary force, which, operating from the Canal, defeated Arabi Bey and occupied Cairo. Arabi surrendered and was banished, the system of dual control was abolished, France being adjudged a "deserter," and Britain assumed full control of Egypt and of the Canal.

The success in Egypt only served to whet the appetite of the British, who soon found themselves involved in the Sudan in a savage and protracted war against the Mahdi; a war which finally, in spite of incredible military blunders, gave the British the rich cotton-growing Sudan.

The absorption of the British in Egypt had led them to underestimate the potential danger of the new German imperialism. While Britain and France were scheming against each other in Egypt, in Africa, and in Burma, Germany was steadily penetrating into Africa. In 1884 the scramble for Africa had become so frenzied that the powers held another conference at Berlin in order to divide the continent amicably among themselves.

Germany, which was able to boast before the conference that "the large pudding of Africa was dotted with German peppercorns," emerged from it the possessor of an extensive African Empire. But she was not satisfied with her African possessions; nor was she content with the meagre foothold she subsequently

obtained in China; and her eyes turned to the East and particularly to the derelict empire of Turkey. She began to dream of an empire which would include the rich valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Babylonia, and Syria. As a preliminary towards realizing the dream, German capital was poured into Turkey; German army officers entered the Turkish army; and German influence in Stamboul grew at the expense of that of the British.

The aggressive imperialism of Bismarck was continued by the Emperor Wilhelm II and his advisers. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the new German Empire under Prussia, Wilhelm disturbed the powers by making a bellicose speech:

> "Nothing must henceforth be settled in the world without the intervention of Germany and the German emperor. . . . My cause is the right one, and I shall follow it. . . . Those who oppose me I shall dash in pieces. . . ."

Such speeches became a habit with him.

But German imperialism did not confine its activities to sabre-rattling. The assimilation of Turkey was preparing the way to a great German Empire in the East. The Turkish Sultan, the infamous Abdul Hamid, initiated a great pan-Islamic drive directed against Britain, France, and Russia. These powers were afforded a pretext for intervention by the horror inspired in all countries by the Sultan's massacres of the Armenians; but the opposition of Germany and the absence of agreement among them prevented intervention, and Abdul Hamid proceeded happily to defeat the Greeks. While the pan-Islamic movement was at its height, and while statesmen were thundering denunciations of the "Red Assassin," as Abdul Hamid had come to be called, the German Emperor paid a friendly visit to the Sultan at Constantinople, and from there went on a tour of the Turkish province of Syria. While in Syria he proclaimed

himself the champion of Christianity at Jerusalem, and the protector of the Mohammedans at Damascus:

> "May the Sultan and the three hundred million Mussulmans scattered over the earth be assured that the German emperor will always be their friend."

The enthusiasm which the Dasmascus declaration aroused among the Muslim populations of Turkey, Asia Minor, Egypt, Arabia, Morocco, and India, was not shared by British and French imperialisms, which bitterly pointed out that the Kaiser had not a single Mohammedan subject, whereas they had many millions. But this was the least of their shocks. During his visit to Turkey the Kaiser had not only made vainglorious speeches: he had also made treaties. It was soon announced that Germany had been given a concession to build a railway from Berlin to Baghdad and thence to the Persian Gulf and to the Holy Cities of Islam. Russia was threatened in Persia and on her Caucasian border, France stood to lose her important investments and rights in Syria, Italy felt that her carrying trade was endangered; and Britain saw in the concession a direct German military highroad to India as well as a danger to the Canal. British fears were increased when Germany actually constructed a railway to Mecca for the alleged purpose of carrying pilgrims, but which could also serve to carry Prussian troops to Mesopotamia, thus driving an armed wedge between Egypt and India.

The British and French answer to the Turkish concessions to Germany was the Entente Cordiale of 1904. Europe was drawing into two armed groups: Britain, France, and Russia on the one side, and Germany, Austria, Turkey, and a doubtful Italy on the other. The Entente, realizing that the influence of German imperialism in Turkey had to be destroyed, formed the Balkan League. In 1912 Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria, armed and financed by the Entente, declared war on Turkey. The conduct of the war was satisfactory from the point

of view of the Entente: Turkey was defeated and humbled, the Triple Alliance was threatened by the discords between Italy and Austria over the latter's Balkan policy, and German influence in the Near East was greatly reduced. But in 1913 skilful diplomacy saved Germany from disaster and robbed the Entente of many of the fruits of victory. The treaty of Bucharest left the Balkan States hostile among themselves and thus unable to serve the British purpose of a block of buffer States preventing German penetration in Asia Minor and Arabia.

After the treaty of Bucharest, which satisfied nobody, it became clear that the conflict of imperialist interests would precipitate a great European war in the near future. Both sides prepared for it feverishly. Crisis succeeded crisis. German propaganda was active in Ireland, Persia, and India; the British and French general staffs drew up a plan of campaign for a war against Germany scheduled to begin in 1915.

It began in 1914. The stakes were India and the Eastern possessions of Britain and France.

2

At the outbreak of the war Egypt, although technically a Turkish possession, was a British protectorate. When Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany, the pretence of Turkish suzerainty was dropped and Egypt became a centre of British military and intelligence activities. Contact was at once established with the Arab chiefs in Syria, who were informed that Britain had entered the war mainly for the purpose of freeing the Arabs from the age-long oppression of Turkey. Although this strained Arab credulity, the chiefs were prepared to listen to British promises. Negotiations took place between the High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, and the Sherif Husain of Mecca, and on July 14, 1915, an agreement was reached by which, in return for Arab assistance against the Turks, Britain agreed to:

"acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, in every sense of the word independence, to be bounded on the north by Mersina-Adana up to the 37th degree of latitude, on which degree falls Biridjik, Ourta, Mardin, Madiat, Amadia Island, up to the borders of Persia. On the east by the frontiers of Persia up to the gulf of Basra. On the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the colony of Aden, which is excepted from the boundaries. On the west by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina. . . ."[1]

But this extensive Arab kingdom, in every sense of the word independent, was destined not to be created, although the Arab tribes, as T. E. Lawrence testifies, fought loyally and bravely with the British against the Turko-German armies. In 1917, largely owing to Arab support, General Allenby was able to surround the Turkish army and enter Jerusalem: in the same year the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration in which it declared its intention of establishing in Palestine "a National Home for the Jewish people."

After the war the Turkish province of Syria was split into Palestine and Syria, the former going to Britain and the latter to France as "mandates" of the League of Nations. Britain also received a mandate for Mesopotamia, which was renamed Iraq. Later Britain resigned the mandate for Iraq, having superseded it by a treaty, by which the new kingdom was placed under British "protection," as it was not only rich in oil, but also an important strategical centre guarding the approaches to India.

From a strategical viewpoint Palestine was even more important. Mr. Amery, in the House of Commons (June 19, 1936), described it as "the Clapham Junction of all the air routes between this country, Africa, and Asia," and Lord Melchett, the Zionist leader, in his book *Thy Neighbour*, writes:

"Further to this comes the question of the defence of the Suez Canal, which cannot only be as easily defended from the

[1] The Husain–McMahon Agreement.

Palestine side as from the Egyptian side, but Palestine itself constitutes a real bulwark against the invasion of the Suez Canal, which is far more probable from the north than from the deserts of the south and west. Further to this, road and rail connection from Akabar to Haifa would give an alternative method for the transport of troops and *material* in case of any attack on the Canal, and in addition there is always the possibility of a duplicate canal from Akabar direct to the Mediterranean. We therefore see, from the imperial, naval, military, and air point of view, that Palestine occupies an essential strategical position."

As a loyal imperialist Lord Melchett shares the British Government's view that this nodal point of the Near East, so vital to British imperial interests, should be protected at all costs; and he suggests that it can be best protected by having a large Jewish population in Palestine dependent on the British:

"The Mediterranean may once more become a vital theatre of world power; the refortification of the Dardanelles, the conquest of Abyssinia, the New Treaty with Egypt, all show the great changes that are taking place. If the Empire could rally an army of 500,000 Europeans at this vital point, whose very existence and that of their homes and families depended upon the preservation of the Empire, what a different outlook, what a change in the balance of power."

The identity of interests of British imperialism and Zionism has made of the persecuted Jews of Central Europe a useful instrument for furthering imperialist purposes in Palestine and for guarding the highway to India.

The Arabs have been bitterly disillusioned. Their dream of an independent kingdom to include the western seaboard of Arabia has not materialized. British promises have turned out to be lies. Arab peasants are turned off the land in Palestine to make way for Jewish settlers and are shot down by British

troops when they object. The truth of T. E. Lawrence's statement that "the promises on which the Arabs worked would be worth what their armed strength would be when the moment of fulfilment came," has been proved. In 1918 their armed strength was worth very little, having exhausted it in the struggle against the enemies of Britain; consequently the British promises made in 1915 were worthless. By using the Arabs, British imperialism gained nearly all that it required: a firm grip of the sea and land routes from Europe to India and the East. Such great imperialist acquisitions, to obtain which British imperialism had fought and intrigued for a century, were not to be jeopardized by any quixotic notion of fulfilling promises given at a time of necessity. Britain would be prepared to sacrifice more than the Arabs to ensure her control of the roads to India.

But these roads are not yet secure. Other imperialist rivals, Germany and Italy in particular, are looking hungrily to the East. And the British possession of India is threatened from other directions: by the revolutionary inspiration given by Soviet Russia to all subject peoples, and by the deep-rooted economic and political discontent of the great mass of the Indian people. Against these new threats fortifications and alliances are useless.

CHAPTER THREE

Growth of National Discontent

> "The strength of the British Government enables it to put down every rebellion, to repel every foreign invasion, and to give to its subjects a degree of protection which those of no Native power enjoy. Its laws and institutions also afford them a security from domestic oppression, unknown in those states; but these advantages are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable."
>
> SIR THOMAS MUNRO, Letter to Governor-General, November 12, 1818

> "It is also to be noticed that one of the phenomena of an India, where the robin has a red stern instead of a red breast, is for movements of all kinds to gang agley."
>
> LT.-GEN. SIR GEORGE MACMUNN, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O., *Turmoil and Tragedy in India*

I

THE revolutionary function of British imperialism in India ended with the savage repression of the Great Rebellion. The final defeat of Indian feudalism had removed the last obstacle to the birth of a modern nation; a birth at which the Company had played the part of an inefficient, corrupt, and violent midwife. Imperialism ceased to be progressive and became reactionary; but India could not be turned back: she had begun the long and bitter struggle against imperialism, which had forfeited every historical right to be in India.

In the years that followed the rebellion, while the people sullenly nursed their resentment and while British officers, planters, and civilians were striding the land with the arrogance and brutality of medieval conquerors, India was almost completely transformed. The feudal class and religious divisions became lost in the new classes created by the new economy. On

the land a bitter class struggle was developing between the peasants on the one side and the landlords and moneylenders on the other; in the towns an ambitious Indian capitalism sought to extort from imperialism economic and political concessions for the development of its industry, while the growth of an industrial working class linked the towns with the villages, and a large middle class, English-speaking and generally educated, seethed with economic discontent.

As an expression of middle-class discontent, newspapers began to appear in English and in the vernacular languages, and these became so critical of the Government's policy that in 1878 the Vernacular Press Act was passed, restricting the freedom of all papers not published in English. The Government continued, however, to be attacked by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Bengalee*, the *Hindoo Patriot*, in Bengal; by the *Hindu* in Madras; and by the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari* in Bombay.

This Press soon acquired a considerable influence among the middle class and began to shape nationalist development. In 1876 the editor of the *Bengalee* founded round his newspaper the Indian Association, which was "to represent the views of the educated middle-class community and inspire them with a living interest in public affairs." This Association began its existence with an All-India campaign to demand equal rights for Indians in the civil service. A representative, Lalmohan Ghose, was sent to England to wage the campaign there, and in the General Elections of 1879 he was presented to the English public as a radical candidate.

But the Association did not have its real political test until 1883, when the Government introduced the Ilbert Bill, which was intended to give Indian judges criminal jurisdiction in certain cases over Englishmen. The opening of the Indian civil service to Indians had led to the appointment of several Indian district judges, who found themselves in an impossible position when they had to hear a complaint of assault or manslaughter against an English planter or civilian. The Ilbert Bill, a mild

attempt to remove this anomaly, was greeted with fury by the English population. A European Defence Association was formed and a fund of Rs. 150,000 was subscribed to safeguard the privileges of the conquerors and to protect white criminals from being tried by coloured judges. The European agitators hesitated at nothing; the most incredible slanders were uttered against Lord Ripon, the Viceroy, Sir C. P. Ilbert, his Law Member, and against Indian judges in general, who, if given the chance, it was said, would abuse their judicial powers in order to fill their "harems" with white women. The Indian Association was too weak or too timid to carry on an effective counter-agitation, with the result that the Indian Government bowed to the European storm and withdrew the Bill. Political India was profoundly angered, and rallied to the nationalist cause.

The nationalist movement, groping for expression, became entangled in movements for religious and social reform. Of these there were several, mainly Hindu proselytizing organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, which by accomplishing certain minor religious and social reforms hoped to unify Hindu India. The mystical confusion of this Hindu revival was increased by the arrival in India of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, who, establishing themselves at Adyar, near Madras, made a potpourri of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, and presented it to the puzzled Indians under the name of theosophy. This strange pair, however, achieved little, being content to dabble in the occult within the limits of Madras; it was left to a more forceful personality, Mrs. Besant, who arrived in India in 1893, to ally the theosophical movement with Indian nationalism.

The success of European agitation in defeating the Ilbert Bill brought home to Indian reformers and politicians the necessity of forming a national organization to defend the interests of Indian capitalism and the middle class. The Indian Association therefore appealed for the creation of a national

fund and proposed to call a national conference to formulate a programme of action. At the same time, a retired civil servant, Allan Octavian Hume, finding it difficult to occupy his enforced leisure, issued an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University, suggesting that they should form an association "for the mental, moral, social, and political regeneration of the people of India." This appeal coinciding with that of the Indian Association, the two movements joined and formed the Indian National Congress.

The Indian National Congress held its first meeting in 1885; seventy delegates attended from Bengal, Bombay, Poona, Madras, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra, and Lahore; and Hume appointed himself general secretary. The delegates were mostly members of the Brahmo Samaj or of the Arya Samaj. Although critical of the Government's policy in matters affecting the Indian middle class, they were by no means anti-British or even anti-Government. The President, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, was at pains to remove any misconception which the Government might entertain of the new organization by defining its policy as one for "the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in our beloved Lord Ripon's memorable reign." The Government, therefore, having full confidence in the excellent Mr. Hume and in the respectability of the Indian leaders, was disposed to regard the new organization with paternal tolerance and benevolence. Indeed, the Government had little cause for alarm. The Indian leaders, Surendranath Banerjea and Bhupendranath Basu of Bengal, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta of Bombay, Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian Member of Parliament referred to by Lord Salisbury as "that black chap," and Subramania Aiyar of Madras, had political opinions corresponding to those held by Mr. Gladstone's Liberal Party, and represented only the Indian capitalist and professional class.

But the Indian Government's benevolence was to be of short

duration. The maturing antagonism between British and Indian capitalisms was soon reflected in the relations between the Government and the Indian National Congress. At the same time, the lower middle class, students, clerks, and briefless lawyers, suffering either from unemployment or low salaries, and deeply moved by the works of Mazzini, were becoming restless at the interminable exchange of compliments between the Government and the Congress leaders, and were pressing for more vigorous action against imperialism. The Government began to suspect that Allan Hume's initiative had borne the wrong fruit, and altered its attitude accordingly. Soon, in 1888, Lord Dufferin referred nastily to the Congress as a "microscopic minority"; and Government favour turned from the Indian bourgeois to the Mohammedan landlords.

After the rebellion the Mohammedans in India had been regarded with justifiable suspicion by the British. Since the beginning of the century the Islamic world had been troubled by a puritanical movement of fanatics directed against infidels and corrupt Mohammedans. The Wahabis, as the fanatics were called, crushed in Arabia by Ibrahim Pasha, found a fruitful soil for their agitation in India. After the defeat of the rebellion, the Indian Wahabis gathered strength from Mohammedan bitterness and peasant discontent, and became a political danger to the Indian Government, which was forced to adopt measures to repress them. The Wahabis were therefore persecuted, arrested, and transported to the Andamans or executed. In 1872 a Wahabi convict in the Andamans assassinated the Viceroy, Lord Mayo.

Owing to their resentment at the Wahabi repression, the Mohammedans regarded the efforts of the Indian National Congress with sympathy, many of them actually becoming members and attending the meetings as delegates. There were hopes of effecting through the Congress Hindu-Muslim unity; but the tactless speeches of the Hindu revivalists and the

arrogant assumption of racial superiority by many of the Moslem leaders created between them friction which proved a fundamental source of weakness. The Government, now openly disapproving of Congress activities, found a useful instrument in a moderate Wahabi leader named Sir Syad Ahmad Khan, who, basking in the sun of British approval, did his best to direct Wahabi agitation against the Congress. In 1887 he organized a Mohammedan Educational Conference to take place during the same week as the Congress held its annual meeting; and in the following year he founded a Patriotic Association to work against the Congress, a grateful Government rewarding him with a K.C.S.I.

Attacked at the same time by the Government, the Wahabis, and by the more conscious nationalists, the Congress leaders were forced to take the defensive. Pamphlets were issued denouncing Wahabi rowdyism and regretting the Government's reluctance "to be instructed"; a Congress Committee was formed in London to carry on agitation in England, and Charles Bradlaugh was persuaded in 1890 to introduce a Bill in the Commons providing representative legislatures for India. The Government countered by bringing in a Bill of their own which in 1892 received the royal assent as the Indian Councils Act.

The Indian Councils Act by no means satisfied even the very moderate Congress leaders. By the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1858 the Governor-General was to be advised by a Council, consisting of the heads of departments, a Law Member, and, when meeting separately for purely legislative purposes, by two judges of the Bengal Supreme Court and one official representative from each of the provincial governments. The legislative sessions of the Council were thrown open to the public. In 1861 a new Act was passed which added for its legislative sessions six more members to the Council, of whom three were to be Government officials and three nominated Indians. The Indians nominated by the

Government received the popular title of *jo-hukum wallahs* ("Yes-sir men").

The Councils Act of 1892 was designed to obviate Indian dissatisfaction at the previous system without conceding anything which might jeopardize the Government's all-embracing autocracy. The Legislative Councils, provincial and central, were to be appointed by the recommendation of municipalities and district boards, and, in the case of the Governor-General's Council, by the Provincial Councils, one additional member being appointed by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. The members of the Councils were given the right of asking questions of the Government spokesmen and of discussing Government measures; but they were not given the right to vote upon the annual budgets, and it was stressed that their vote on other measures carried no weight whatsoever.

The Congress was profoundly disappointed with the new Councils Act; but it was not prepared to undertake militant action, as the nationalists demanded, against it. Instead it contented itself by passing a resolution in which it accepted "in a loyal spirit the Indian Councils Act recently enacted," but regretted "that the Act does not in set terms concede the right of electing their own representatives."

The nationalist lower-middle class emphatically rejected this tame acceptance of defeat, and, repudiating the Congress leadership, prepared to continue the struggle against imperialism by more drastic measures and by direct action. They found a leader in an astute Poona Brahmin, Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

2

The economic discontent of the educated lower-middle class had grown in proportion to the modern development of the country. There was very little scope for the numerous students turned out of the schools and universities every year. The

profitable and influential posts in the Indian civil service were reserved for Englishmen recruited in England; and the other services remained closed to them. A large proportion of them therefore turned to Law as a profession; but soon the number of youthful lawyers was far in excess of the total number of cases so that the courts were haunted by briefless advocates and vakils, who, to occupy their leisure, turned to politics. The only other occupation open to the English-speaking educated Indian was employment as a clerk in the English and Indian warehouses and in the Government offices; but here again the supply of clerks far exceeded the demand, and the salaries offered were incredibly low. The Indian student, therefore, found himself after years of study faced either with unemployment or with ill-paid drudgery in an office.

This economic discontent found its political expression in extreme nationalism. The cause of their poverty and degradation was alien rule. Their hatred of alien rule and their disappointment at the meagre rewards offered for acquiring Western culture led them to support the Hindu revival and to join the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj, which traced everything worth knowing back to the poets of the Vedas. They felt that by glorifying Hinduism at the expense of Western culture they were retaliating for the humiliation inflicted on them by British rule. They sought to escape from the present to the Hindu glories of the past, and exalted every Hindu tradition, religious and political, as a means of inspiration in the struggle which they were determined to wage against the foreign oppressors.

The weak, conciliatory policy of the Congress leaders failed to appeal to this emotional, deeply religious, and poverty-stricken class. The surrender on the Indian Councils Act finally drove them into the arms of Tilak in the Deccan and of Lajpat Rai in the Punjab.

Already for several years Tilak had been the leader of the Left opposition within the Congress. To spread his views and

to gain the influence he needed he founded at Poona a newspaper entitled the *Kesari*, in which he attacked the British, the Mohammedans, and the Congress leaders, and expounded the doctrines of the *Vedas* and of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Kesari* became not only popular, but profitable, and Tilak soon found himself the recognized leader of the lower-middle class. He confined his activities mainly to the Bombay Presidency, where he proceeded to inaugurate annual processions in honour of the elephant-god, Ganapati, and of the Maratha hero, Shivaji. These annual processions developed into mass political demonstrations against the British, and to a less extent against the Mohammedans, and those who took part in them were exhorted to emulate Shivaji, who had fought against foreign domination, and to defend the Hindu religion, of which Ganapati was the protector, against the aggression of Islam and Christianity.

In 1896 India was struck by famine, which was followed by an epidemic new to India, the bubonic plague. The Government for once took prompt measures to stem the epidemic. An English regiment was employed at Poona in exterminating rats, which carried the plague, and in enforcing sanitary measures on the population. Tilak in the *Kesari* represented these sanitary measures of the authorities as a deliberate attack on Hinduism, pointing out to an ignorant and superstitious population that the rat was the chosen steed and ally of the god, Ganapati. The British soldiers were accused of desecrating Indian homes, of violating Indian women, and of insulting the Hindu gods. This propaganda further inflamed existing passion, and two young men, the brothers Chapekar, disciples of Tilak and members of a society "for removing obstacles to the Hindu religion," their emotions stimulated to fever-heat, assassinated the two British officers, Rand and Ayerst, who were in charge of the plague work in the Deccan.

At this murder Anglo-India became almost as hysterical as the Hindu students. Tilak was arrested and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment; the murderers were executed;

two landlords who had criticized the plague measures were deported from the Deccan; a Sedition Act was hurriedly passed; and the Criminal Procedure Code and the Penal Code were amended in order to give wider powers to the police and magistracy. These measures were, however, unavailing: political terrorism had come to stay. The Rand and Ayerst murders were followed by the assassination of two witnesses at the trial of the Chapekar brothers and an attempt on the life of a head constable. Tilak became a Hindu hero and martyr; and the cult spread from the Deccan to even the more fertile soil of Bengal.

In addition to unemployed or badly paid intellectuals, Bengal had a class of idle young men drawing a pittance from the land on which their families had been permanently settled by Lord Cornwallis. This class, called in Bengal the *bhadralog*, was excellent raw material for the terrorist. Two leaders arose in Bepin Chandra Pal and Arabindo Ghose. Their paper, the *Yugantar*, was similar in content to and as successful as the *Kesari* of Poona. The movement again found its inspiration in the Hindu religion; but instead of Ganapati the Bengali terrorists looked to Kali, the goddess of destruction, for their inspiration. They adopted as their war-cry the greeting *Bande Mataram* (Hail, Mother), which some thought referred to India and others to Kali. The Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, in his novel of the Sannyasi rebellion, *Anandamath*, had, however, already explained the different manifestations of the Mother:

> "(Kali) covered with the blackest gloom, despoiled of all wealth, and without a cloth to wear. The whole of the country is a land of death and so the mother has no better ornament than a garland of skulls. Her own good she cruelly tramples under her feet; Durga, ten-handed, the wielder of many arms and the chastiser of her foes, the enemy trampled under her feet and the lion at her feet engaged in killing her

foes; Lakshmi to her right and Vani, the spring of knowledge and science, to her left; with her stand Kartik, the emblem of strength, and Ganesa, the god of success."[1]

Kali, Durga, and Shakti are the names given to the different manifestations of the goddess of destruction. Fantastic oaths of devotion were sworn to her, and the assassination of English officials was regarded as a sacrifice to the goddess. Nationalism became completely identified with Hindu religion:

> "Nationalism is a religion that comes from God. Nationalism cannot die, because it is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed. God cannot be sent to gaol."[2]

Stimulated by economic necessity and intoxicated with religious devotion, the *bhadralog* and the students of Bengal were rapidly forming a dangerous terrorist movement in the province. All that was required was a pretext to rouse popular emotion into supporting their acts of terrorism. The plague had provided this pretext in the Deccan: George Nathaniel, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, who had been Viceroy of India since 1898, provided it in Bengal.

Lord Curzon, unlike many of his predecessors, had very definite views on the real needs of India. Unhappily these views did not coincide with those held by political India. Always a very superior person, he regarded himself as the legitimate heir to all the glory, pomp, and power of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and therefore expected his views to be accepted without question not only by the Indian civil service, the Indian people, but also by the British Government in London. Shortly after his arrival he decided that too much education was bad for Indians and called a conference at Simla to consider revising the educational system then in practice. Scorning the previous resolutions on the subject, which although "inculcating the

[1] Quoted from H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 148 George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).
[2] Ibid. Speech of Arabindo Ghose.

most specious and unimpeachable maxims in the most beautiful language," were ineffective to serve the purpose he had in mind, he proceeded to frame proposals of his own, raising university and college fees and suppressing private colleges, especially those which taught law. His Universities Act of 1904 irritated the whole of the middle class.

Curzon arrived in India with a fixed idea that the Indian liked pomp and pageantry above all other things. As these were also his tastes he seized the first opportunity, provided by the coronation of Edward VII, to hold a showy *darbar* at Delhi. He was at first surprised at and then refused to recognize Indian opposition to the *darbar*. This opposition was dictated not by any nationalist reluctance to celebrate the accession of King Edward, but by the suffering in the country as a result of the prolonged famine from 1899 to 1901. Curzon was attacked for offering a costly and pompous pageant to a starving people, and for lavishly spending the money wrung from the poor by heavy taxation on fireworks and military displays. Curzon, less wise than the Roman emperors, had remembered the circus but had forgotten the bread. The irritation mounted: to the imaginative youth of Bengal, Curzon became symbolical of the monster of imperialism.

But, oblivious to protests, Curzon pursued his lordly course, annoying everyone, officials and Indians, with whom he came into contact. He assumed control over the Calcutta municipality, an act which even the moderate Congress leaders regarded as a gratuitous insult, and then proceeded to draw up a scheme for the division of Bengal into two provinces.

The storm burst with the proposed partition of Bengal. It meant breaking the solidarity of the Bengalis by creating a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, which would be largely dominated by Mohammedans. Much of the trade and prestige of Calcutta would be transferred to Dacca, the capital of the new province, and the political influence of Calcutta would be considerably weakened. This was more than the Bengalis could

quietly tolerate. Indignation grew into anger as Curzon showed no signs of giving way. Great meetings of protest were held all over the province; a petition with over 60,000 signatures was sent to the British Parliament; and the nationalists successfully carried on their agitation among the lower middle class for a national crusade against the British.

Curzon's partition of Bengal was singularly ill-timed. The prestige of Asiatic nationalism was high as a result of the events which were then taking place; and the same events had destroyed the myth of European invincibility. In 1904 a minor Asiatic power had defeated the Russian land forces in Manchuria and had annihilated the entire Russian fleet in the battle of Tsushima. The ease with which Japan vanquished Russia was in marked contrast to the panic shown by British officials in India at the very mention of Russia. The extreme nationalists were disposed to think that if the Japanese could so easily defeat the power which had for so long terrified British imperialism, the Indians, with traditions and culture far greater than the Japanese, could if they chose drive the English out of their country. British military prestige had also suffered in the Boer Wars. In these circumstances, the emotional youth of Bengal was not slow to respond to the appeals of Arabindo Ghose, Bepin Chandra Pal, and other terrorists, who, holding up the example of the nationalist struggle in Italy and Ireland, proclaimed the Indian War of Liberation.

All this disturbance did not, however, deter Lord Curzon, "the prancing proconsul," who, scornful of the men of lesser breed, had his way and effected the partition in July 1905. The "accomplished fact" did not end the agitation, but only increased it. The students and *bhadralog* formed secret "armies" and societies, taking fearsome oaths to Kali, pledging themselves to forsake "loquacity and fickleness" and to devote themselves to the serious work of driving out the foreign oppressor. They collected funds by the simple expedients of dacoity and robbery, and trained themselves in revolver practice

and in the manufacture of bombs of the uncertain kind used by Russian nihilists. Their need for more intensive training was made clear by their subsequent attempts, in which they usually succeeded either in killing the wrong persons or themselves. An attempt to murder the sessions judge of Mirzapur by means of a bomb resulted in two harmless Englishwomen being killed by mistake; a misfortune which by revolting public opinion had the opposite effect to that which the terrorists had intended. They were a little more successful with a former magistrate who was shot on a railway station; but an attempt on the life of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Andrew Fraser, failed, as did also an attempt to punish the pro-British sympathies of the mayor of French Chandernagore, who had a home-made bomb exploded in his house. The result of these activities was the Alipore Conspiracy Case, during which an approver was shot dead in the gaol itself by two of the accused who had smuggled arms.

From Bengal the terrorist movement spread to the Punjab, where Lajpat Rai had already sown the seeds of aggressive nationalism. The removal of Lajpat Rai after an attempt to propagate nationalism in the army, left the leadership in the hands of a young Hindu named Har Dyal and of a schoolmaster named Amir Chand. The latter organized the attempt on the life of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who was seriously injured by a bomb filled with gramophone needles as he was riding through Delhi on an elephant.

By this time Har Dyal had gone to Europe where groups of Indian terrorists had existed for some time. These were led by Krishnavarma, who edited a paper called the *Indian Sociologist*, and by Savarkar, who had written and illegally published an Indian account of the Great Rebellion under the title of *The Indian War of Independence*. A member of Savarkar's group, an Indian student named Dhingra, actually brought terrorism from Bengal to London, by assassinating an Indian official, Sir W. Curzon Wyllie, at a crowded meeting at the Imperial

Institute. In the meantime, Har Dyal had established a group in America, organized round a paper entitled *Ghadr* (Revolution), which he edited. Groups were also formed in Japan.

Faced with the terrorist menace, the Indian Government adopted rigorous measures. Profiting by the popular horror caused by the murder of the two Englishwomen in Bihar, they deported Tilak to Mandalay, where he was interned, and arrested and imprisoned several others. The terrorists who fell into their hands were ruthlessly executed or transported for life to the Andamans. The police were encouraged to establish a terror of their own, and the oppressive laws against sedition and conspiracy were put into effect on the slightest provocation. But it was all of no avail. The Government was soon forced to realize that terrorism thrives on oppression: the greater the oppression the greater the glory: the greater the danger the greater the political merit of the act and the glamour of the martyrdom. In its attempts at repression, the Government was also frustrated by the general discontent at British rule of the people; for although terrorist activity was confined to the emotional and romantic lower-middle class, the general hostility to imperialism gave the movement a certain amount of popular support; and popular applause is life to the terrorist.

Terrorism is the inevitable consequence of autocracy. It is the only way a discontented and emotional lower-middle class can voice its economic and political discontent as it is denied the ballot-box. Henceforward terrorism became endemic in India, its decline depending not on Government repression, but on the growth of political consciousness among the mass of the people.

3

Indian capitalism and the moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress were rather eclipsed by the rapid rise of extreme nationalism. For a short time they remained inactive,

paralysed by events; but the commotion caused by Curzon's enterprise in Bengal forced them either to take action or to forfeit the leadership. They therefore organized protest meetings and prepared a petition to the British Parliament. Then the Chinese gave them a good idea, which, if put into practice, would at the same time embarrass the Government, profit Indian capitalism, and sidetrack revolutionary enthusiasm. The United States of America had excluded Chinese immigration, and the Chinese had retaliated by organizing a boycott of American goods. The boycott had been fairly successful, and the idea of organizing a boycott of British goods in India appealed in particular to Indian capitalism; for if the people could not buy English goods they would have to buy Indian, and that would surely stimulate the growth of Indian industry. Accordingly, the Indian National Congress held on August 7, 1905, a great demonstration at the Calcutta Town Hall, at which the boycott against British goods was launched. On the day on which the Partition of Bengal was announced, the Congress proclaimed a day of mourning and of prayer, and in this way recruited religion into the service of boycott. Henceforward, a Hindu was not to defile himself by wearing foreign cloth: the only cloth pure enough for Hindus was that manufactured by the hand-loom or by the machines, imported from Lancashire, of the Bombay and Ahmenabad mills. At the annual meeting of the Congress in 1905, the moderate leaders, Gokhale, M. M. Malaviya, Surendranath Banerjea, and others, themselves excited by the general enthusiasm, reaffirmed the boycott and abandoned the policy of "mendicancy" and declared their intention of fighting (not in the violent sense of the word) for India's rights.

The Indian Government replied to this defiance by turning their favour completely to the Mohammedan landlords. The Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam opened his administration by making a speech, of doubtful taste in a law-abiding Christian, in which he said that

he had two wives, one Hindu and one Mohammedan; the Mohammedan being the favourite. An All-India Muslim Deputation was encouraged to visit the Viceroy, Lord Minto, to ask for communal representation on the councils, municipalities, and district boards. This principle, the negation democratic government, the Viceroy accorded, and the Muslim Delegation returned to their homes entirely pleased with themselves and the British. Thus encouraged they formed an All-India Moslem League under the leadership of His Divine Highness the Aga Khan, the head of the Khoja Mohammedans. Enjoying its position as the "favourite wife," the Muslim League became openly hostile to the Indian National Congress, which it denounced as an organization of effete Hindus.

But no imperialist policy could stem the flood of nationalist feeling, which was affecting even the Muslim middle class in spite of the Aga Khan. But the same nationalist feeling was also becoming dangerous to Indian capitalism. At the 1906 Congress at Calcutta, the moderates had the utmost difficulty in preventing a boycott of the Indian Government as well as of British goods. They were forced to change their object from "colonial self-government within the Empire" to *Swaraj* (Home Rule). Still dissatisfied, the Left Wing, led by Tilak, Arabindo Ghose, and Bepin Chandra Pal, formed the New Party, and declared open war on Gokhale, Bannerjea, Pherozeshah Mehta, and on other moderate leaders. In 1907 the annual Congress, attended by sixteen hundred delegates, opened at Surat in an atmosphere surcharged with animosity. After a preliminary skirmish over the election of a president, the meeting soon broke up in pandemonium. Tilak, having risen twice to a point of order, and having been twice ruled out of order by the president, Rash Behari Ghose, the members of the New Party rushed the platform, and in the resulting disorder Surendranath Banerjea was struck on the head with a shoe. The imperialist police were called to restore order and to

clear the hall. On the following day the moderate majority met separately and appointed a committee to draw up a constitution for the Congress, and determined that only those who would accept this constitution would in future be admitted to membership. The methods and aims of the Congress were clearly set forth in the first article of the constitution:

> "The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration, and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit, and developing and organizing the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country."

The methods and objects thus defined reflected the limits of the hopes and ambitions of Indian capitalism. After the Surat split, the Congress became the political organ of Indian capitalism in its struggle to obtain economic and political concessions from imperialism for the development of its industry.

The Indian Government took advantage of this cleavage between Left and Right to win over the Indian bourgeois by making it a few minor concessions. As a result India was given the Morley–Minto Reforms. British imperialism had need of allies in India. The terrorist campaign was unchecked; the middle class was aggressively nationalist; and the peasantry was restive, breaking out into agragian riots in the Punjab and considering a no-tax campaign in the Deccan. The Secretary of State for India, Morley, and the Viceroy, Lord Minto, therefore devised a scheme by which they could placate the big Indian landlords and capitalists without in any way conceding

anything material. Accordingly in 1909 a new Councils Act was passed, conceding the elective principle *on a communal basis*: the representatives to the Legislative Councils were to be "democratically" elected, Hindus were to be elected by Hindus and Mohammedans by Mohammedans. The Viceroy's Executive Council was opened to a few very select Indians, nominated by the Viceroy; the first of these being Sir Satyendra Sinha, afterwards Lord Sinha, who was admitted as Law Member. As a further concession to Indian opinion in preparation for the Coronation Darbar of King George V, it was announced that Bengal would be unpartitioned and its former boundaries restored. The capital, however, was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, as a sop to Mohammedan tradition.

The development of nationalism had gone too far to be checked by such paltry concessions. But they served their object in reinforcing the position of the moderates as against the aggressive nationalists: the moderates were able to suggest that if constitutional agitation could win these minor concessions it could also win major concessions in the future. The middle class remained unconvinced, and although the terrorist movement continued, the political ferment in the country subsided a little. The Indian bourgeois was indisposed to attack imperialism, and the Mohammedan leaders, thinking that they had won a great victory at the expense of the Hindus, were pro-Government. But it was only a temporary lull.

In South Africa an obscure Indian lawyer named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had already attracted a certain amount of attention by his doctrine of *satyagraha*, or soul force, and by his campaigns of passive resistance against the South African Government's oppressive laws affecting Indian settlers.

CHAPTER FOUR

The War and its Reactions

> "There is ample evidence that enlightened Indian opinion has a very just appreciation of the benefits derived from the British connection, but the attachment of a people to its government is not always determined by a dispassionate calculation of material interests, still less by sentiments of mere gratitude. The subtle ferments of education, the impact of the War, and the beginnings of that sense of nationality to which we have referred, have combined to create a public opinion in India which it would be a profound error for Parliament to ignore."
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> Report of Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, Session 1933–34, Vol. I, Part I

I

THE tangle of imperialist intrigues and rivalries and the German threat to the British Empire led in 1914 to the Great War. The entry of Britain into the war found India in a dangerous state of political ferment: the Morley–Minto Reforms had satisfied nobody and the extreme nationalist and terrorist movements were rapidly gaining ground. The *Ghadr* group, organized by Har Dyal in America, was active in its propaganda, particularly in the Punjab, where the political discontent was serious as a result of the *Komagatu Maru* incident. This incident arose from an attempt by about four hundred Sikhs and sixty Mohammedans to defy the Canadian immigration regulations. Under the leadership of one Gurdit Singh they chartered a Japanese steamer, the *Komagatu Maru*, and sailed for Vancouver with the intention of forcing an entrance; but the Canadian Government declined to be intimidated and threatened to sink the *Komagatu Maru* unless it took its unwelcome passengers back to India. They arrived back at Calcutta at the beginning of the war; and the Govern-

ment decided to make use of an emergency ordinance it had just issued to prevent the foiled immigrants from settling or even resting in Bengal. They were therefore driven to the railway station, whence they were to be taken by a police escort in a special train to the Punjab. The Sikhs, many of whom were armed, refused to enter the train; the police opened fire and eighteen Sikhs were shot dead, the rest returning to the Punjab, where they became a nucleus of revolutionary activity.

The British Government did not underestimate the danger in wartime of nationalist discontent. It was aware of the not very successful attempts of Germany to harness the Indian revolutionary movement to the chariot of German imperialism. At the end of 1914 a Committee of Indian Revolutionaries was formed by the German Government in Berlin. Prominent in this Committee were Har Dyal, who linked the *Ghadr* group in America to it, Virendranath Chattopadhya, Champarkaraman Pillai, and M. G. Prabhakkar, who were all well-educated members of the Indian lower-middle class. The German Foreign Office supplied the Committee with funds and directed their anti-British activities among the Indian prisoners of war, among the Indian soldiers in Mesopotamia and elsewhere, and among the terrorists in India. Especially dangerous was the propaganda among the troops. At the beginning of 1915 a serious mutiny of the Indian regiments stationed at Singapore revealed the general restlessness in the Indian army. There was special dissatisfaction among the Mohammedan soldiers, who found it difficult to reconcile their loyalty to the British Government with their religious duty to serve the nominal head of Islam, the Sultan of Turkey. The situation became more acute with the arrival of a German mission at Kabul, where it preached a holy war against the British and where it organized a "provisional government" of Indian revolutionaries.

Foreseeing these dangers, the British Government took precautions. The first of these was to ensure the loyalty and support of the Indian bourgeois. The British Prime Minister,

Mr. Asquith, therefore, announced that in future Indian questions would be approached from "a different angle of vision," and vaguely promised self-government as a reward for loyal support in the war against Germany. Later, in 1916, realizing the inadequacy of words to stem the tide of nationalism, the British Government increased the import duty on cotton to 7½ per cent., without raising the excise duty on cotton manufactured in India. This concession delighted the Indian industrialists, who had now the opportunity they had long been awaiting to develop Indian industry on a firm foundation. For this they had exceptionally favourable conditions. The war had almost completely dislocated British industry, and there was therefore little competition to be feared from Lancashire; and the new tariffs considerably handicapped Japanese and American manufacturers. The Indian Government, in these circumstances, not only smiled favourably on Indian textile enterprise, but also facilitated the development of heavy industry which was to supply war material to the armies in Egypt, Palestine, and in Mesopotamia. Miss Freda Utley thus describes the effects of this reversal of British policy:

> "The Tata ironworks supplied materials for the defence of India and the conduct of the War in Egypt and Palestine and East Africa. Coal production was increased. The Indian mills worked on Government contracts for the Indian armies and supplied part of the goods required for the Indian home market, left almost bare of Lancashire goods. Moreover, in time of war, when demands for material and military assistance were being made on India, it was necessary to do something to conciliate Indian Nationalism and no longer to rely entirely on the political support of the landowners, princes and big merchants."[1]

With their industry expanding and flourishing, the Indian

[1] Freda Utley, *Lancashire and the Far East*, p. 344 (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

capitalists were too busy to attend to nationalist agitation; in any case they were disposed to believe that for the time being their interests were identical with those of British imperialism. The Indian National Congress, therefore, fully co-operated with the Government in the pursuit of the war. In 1915 the Government was able to pass a rigorous and repressive Defence of India Act, which in normal conditions would have created a storm of opposition, without a voice being raised in protest. The moderate Congress leaders toured the country in the same way as the Labour leaders did in England, exhorting the people to make every effort to win the war for British imperialism; and Mr. Gandhi hurried back from London to become a leading recruiting agent, forgetting his doctrine of *ahimsa* in the necessity of killing Germans and Turks for the glory and security of the British Empire. As a result of this co-operation a "free gift" of £100,000,000 was made to the British Government, and 1,200,000 Indians were recruited, of whom 200,000 were dispatched to France and the rest to Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Indian Government bearing the costs of maintenance.

But the popular enthusiasm faded despite the attempts of the moderate leaders to keep it alive. The big landlords resented the pressure brought to bear on them to make frequent subscriptions to the War Loan; the capitalists, intoxicated by success, were impatient at the wartime restrictions of commerce; and the profiteering in agricultural produce by the landlords, brokers, and moneylenders deprived the peasants of the benefits of the high prices and promoted agrarian unrest. The intellectuals, hotly disapproving of the nationalist support given to the war, were busy preaching the old Sinn Fein doctrine paraphrased into England's peril is India's advantage.

As the war dragged on the discontent mounted. The death of Gokhale had robbed the moderates of their most able leader, and in 1916 Tilak emerged from the obscurity into which he had sunk since his release from prison in 1914, and once more

raised the banner of revolt in the Congress. He found an able lieutenant in Mrs. Annie Besant. Mrs. Besant, who had become head of the Theosophical Society in 1907, had hitherto remained aloof from the political movement, strongly disapproving of the methods and policy of the Bengal nationalists. But the lack of progress of the theosophical movement led her to believe that it would only become popular if allied with the nationalist movement. But she had no intention of becoming an "extremist," and loathed the conception of an independent India. Mr. H. C. E. Zacharias thus summarizes her political objects:

> "Whatever the reason, on her return from her last visit to England in 1913, she threw herself openly and for the first time into Indian politics. Redmond's Home Rule League suggested to her a similar movement for India. Her plan was to disentangle the nationalist Extremists from their compromising alliance with the Revolutionaries, to reconcile them to a position within the British Empire, and to bring them with the Moderates into line in a reunited Congress."[1]

With these objects in view she started a daily paper, *New India*, published at Madras, and soon won a following for theosophy by her advocacy of Home Rule for India. Encouraged by Tilak, she issued an ultimatum to the Congress, and, on the moderate leaders refusing her terms, launched the Home Rule League, which was welcomed by the younger nationalist elements throughout the country as a considerable advance on the official policy of the Congress. At the Lucknow Congress in 1916 the pressure of the Home Rule Leaguers forced the moderate leaders to accept a comparatively mild resolution moved by Tilak demanding self-government within the Empire. To give this resolution more weight, Tilak and Mrs. Besant entered into negotiations with the Moslem League, with the result that the

[1] H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 165 (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

Moslem League agreed to support the Congress demand for self-government provided that the Congress would agree to support the system of separate electorates, promised in the Morley–Minto Reforms. Accord was reached and a solemn Pact was signed.

The Home Rule agitation continued in full force until the Government became alarmed, thinking that India was taking Mr. Asquith's vague promises too seriously. The Press Act and the Defence of the Realm Act were employed to curb the movement, and finally Mrs. Besant and two minor theosophists, Wadia and Arundale, were arrested and interned.

The Government in London, however, were disturbed by the reports of unrest in India at the most critical period of the war. It therefore decided on a grand gesture, and on August 20, 1917, it was announced that Mr. Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India, would take the unprecedented step of visiting that Dependency. As a token of good will Mrs. Besant was released, and Mr. Montagu arrived in India to consult with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, on what concessions British imperialism could afford to make to Indian opinion without endangering the British autocracy.

By this time the control of the Congress had fallen into the hands of Tilak and Mrs. Besant. The moderate leaders, suffering from the lack of any outstanding personality, were eclipsed by the oratory and flamboyance of the Left Wing, and felt a personal resentment against Tilak and Mrs. Besant as the authors of their humiliation. Mrs. Besant was chosen as the President of the Congress for its coming session, which was to be held at Calcutta in December 1917. It was arranged that Mrs. Besant should ride to the Congress meeting in an ornamental chariot, and it was proposed that the moderate leaders should grace this triumphal procession by walking in front of the chariot; but they declined to play this role, and realizing that they were in a powerless minority decided not to attend the session at all, thus leaving the field to the victorious Left.

Mr. Montagu was invited to address the Congress, and although he personally wished to do so, he was compelled by the Indian Government to refuse. Instead he toured India, and in the intervals wrangled with the Viceroy about the contents of their joint report to the British Parliament. In July 1918 the Report was finally issued. The Report shocked all classes of political India, from the Bombay capitalists to the Bengal terrorists. The vague promises of self-government made at the beginning of the war were revealed as meaning nothing at all. Briefly, the Report outlined a complicated scheme for placing municipalities and district boards under popular control, for introducing a certain amount of responsibility in the Provincial Councils by transferring certain subjects to elected ministers. The Central Legislature to which the majority of the members were to be elected, but which was to have an official nominated *bloc*, was to be given the right to legislate with the provision that any Government measure they refused to pass could be certified by the Viceroy as law. Similarly, the Viceroy was to be given the power of vetoing any Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly which did not meet with official approval. The Report not only confirmed the principle of communal representation for the Hindus and Mohammedans, but also hinted at extending it to other communities.

Some eighteen months later the British Government secured the consent of Parliament to a new Government of India Bill which incorporated most of the disappointing proposals of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. Under this new Act, all political power remained in the hands of the Governor-General and Governors, who transferred politically unimportant subjects to the care of Indian ministers. Thus the provincial Governors were given complete control of land revenue, police, justice, press, labour, irrigation, prisons, loans, and forests, and the elected Indian ministers were to be little more than charity officers, their administrative powers being confined to such subjects as local self-government (i.e. municipalities and

district boards), hospitals, asylums, sanitation, education (excepting certain universities), co-operative societies, technical education, etc. The powers of the central Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Councils were limited according to the suggestions of the Montagu–Chelmsford Report. This curious scheme of government was called a dyarchy, as it was alleged to give dual responsibility.

The Government of India Act of 1919 did nothing to allay Indian discontent; on the contrary it made it more bitter.

2

While the storm of national revolt was brewing Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was chiefly occupied with schemes for the spiritual regeneration of his countrymen, explaining to his puzzled and doubting followers that Home Rule began with self-rule. He had founded an *ashram*, or as he preferred to call it, a *Satyagrahashram*, at Sabarmati, in close vicinity to the Central Jail, which had for him a special attraction, "as jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of *Satyagrahis*." From here he sent out his message of Soul-Force, which he claimed to have been successful in remedying Indian grievances in South Africa, and with which he had made a few minor experiments to secure redress for those afflicted in India. In March 1918, however, he attracted a certain amount of attention by supporting a strike of the Ahmedabad mill workers for a rise in wages. He regarded the strikers as *satyagrahis*, and so deplored a few deviations from the straight line of soul-force that he declared his intention of fasting until the strike was settled. The millowners thereupon at once came to terms and the strike ended. Mr. Gandhi's life was thus saved, but the victory, he thought, considered from the standpoint of a *satyagrahi*, "was not quite pure." Soon events were to provide him with an opportunity for an experiment in soul-force beyond his wildest dreams.

The publication of the disappointing Montagu–Chelmsford Report almost coincided with that of the Rowlatt Committee Report. In 1917 a committee had been appointed under a judge of the King's Bench, Rowlatt, to inquire into the development of political terrorism in India and to suggest measures to overcome it. Very shortly after the publication of the Report the Indian Government incorporated its proposals into two Bills, which when passed would entitled judges to try political cases without juries in notified districts, and the Provincial Governments would be given full powers to intern suspects for an indefinite period without trial. To Indians it seemed clear that the contrast between the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals and the Rowlatt Bills was the contrast between the shadow and the reality. Such repressive measures showed quite clearly the exact amount of self-government India was to obtain. In spite of the gathering clouds, the Government insisted on the Legislature passing the Rowlatt Bills, and the storm which had been gaining force throughout the last two years of the war finally burst.

The Rowlatt Acts only precipitated a revolt which was inevitable after the blow struck at nationalist hopes by the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. Indian capitalism was especially angry and alarmed. It had made enormous profits during the war years and had managed to establish its industry on a firm basis. But now the devil was well again, and seemed likely to take back what he had been forced to cede while he was sick. Denied the political and economic concessions necessary to protect their industry, Indian capitalism saw that the time had come when British imperialism would revert to its former policy of retarding the development of native industry. The Indian capitalists therefore looked around for a suitable weapon of defence and found it in the discontented peasantry, and in the extremely nationalist middle class. Once more, therefore, Indian capitalism rallied to the Indian National Congress, which was to harness the economic and political

discontent of the middle class, the peasantry, and the small but growing industrial working class.

For such a lead the country was more than ready. Peasant suffering had increased as a result of the rise in the prices of necessary commodities during the war and the slump in agricultural prices after the war. In 1918 an influenza epidemic swept the villages, killing more than twelve million people. At the same time the rapacity of the brokers, landlords, and moneylenders increased. Soldiers returning to their villages from the armies of Mesopotamia, East Africa, and Egypt, found little else to do except air their genuine grievances, which further inflamed the anger of their brother peasants. The peasants were quite ready for action. So were also the Indian middle class, and even the Mohammedans, the favourite wife of British imperialism, were restive at the treatment meted out by Britain to the defeated Caliph at Constantinople, and these were the economic grievances of the Mohammedan peasantry.

But Indian capitalism still hesitated. Realizing the need for a national demonstration of some kind, they were afraid that such a demonstration might get out of hand and that their leadership might be repudiated in action. They discovered that the organization of mass discontent for a purpose divorced from the economic interests of the masses was both difficult and dangerous; they, therefore, looked around for a political philosophy suited to the necessity of utilizing while emasculating a mass movement, which if left to itself might end in destroying their property interests as well as those of imperialism. It was at this crisis that they remembered Gandhi.

The curious philosophy of Gandhi (a mixture of theosophy, Tolstoy, the *Vedas*, and the Sermon on the Mount) and its complete incomprehensibility, were admirably adapted to this purpose. Moreover, he was a leader most likely to appeal to the popular imagination. The peasants, inheriting centuries of the ancient cult of the saint and the mystic, were more likely to

follow the lead of an ascetic than that of a modern, well-dressed and well-upholstered lawyer. Mr. Gandhi therefore became the chosen leader of the Indian capitalists and landlords. The more timid moderate leaders, distrusting the new policy and resenting the new leadership, withdrew from the Congress and formed the National Liberal Federation, thus fading out of the picture.

Mr. Gandhi accepted his new position with enthusiasm. Declaring that the Rowlatt Acts were "unjust, subversive of all the principles of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of the individual," he launched a Satyagraha League in Bombay for the purpose of disobeying them. A programme of action came to him "in a dream": he called on the country to observe a *hartal*, or day of mourning, as a protest against the Acts. Although his dream had not given him an original idea—the weapon of *hartal* was old and had been used during the agitation against the Bengal Partition—the response to his call was unprecedented. He appointed April 6th as the day of mourning, but as a result of a misunderstanding, the Congress leaders in Delhi held it in that city on March 30th instead. The Delhi police attempted to stop a procession, and in the resulting riot several people were shot down. It was an ominous beginning.

The Punjab now became the centre of activity. This province had long been in a ferment of economic discontent owing to the profiteering during the war, and the growing tension between the Indian Government and Afghanistan since the murder of the pro-British Amir Habibullah was inflaming the Punjab Mohammedans, who imagined that the new Amir Amanullah was coming to revenge on the British the wrongs suffered by the Punjab peasantry and by the Caliph in Constantinople. The more politically conscious section were also encouraged by the news from Russia: to them the day of deliverance had come. For these reasons serious rioting took place at Lahore, and a few days later at Amritsar, from where the Government had

deported Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, two prominent Congress leaders.

When the news of these violent outbreaks reached Mr. Gandhi at Bombay, he was deeply distressed. Rioting was not his idea of pure *satyagraha*, which was fundamentally fixed on *ahimsa*, or non-violence. He decided to go personally to the Punjab and investigate. He arrived as far as the border, where he was arrested and taken back to Bombay and released. His arrest became the cause of more violent outbreaks at Ahmedabad and Bombay. It became clear to the alarmed leaders of the Congress that the people were getting out of control even before the movement had properly started. Accordingly, Mr. Gandhi, stating that "the progress of the training in civil disobedience" was lamentably backward, confessed himself guilty of a "Himalayan blunder," and indefinitely suspended all *satyagraha*.

But it was too late for Mr. Gandhi and the Congress leaders to check the surge of the movement. A few days before the suspension of *satyagraha*, a terrible massacre of Indians by British troops had taken place at Amritsar. The rioting which had taken place there on April 10th had caused the death of a few Europeans. The Punjab Government, led by the diehard, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, resolved to make these murders the justification for instituting a reign of terror. With this purpose in view General Dyer occupied Amritsar with troops, and at once issued a proclamation forbidding public meetings. In defiance of this order, a large public meeting was held that same evening in a large enclosed space of sunken ground called the Jallianwalla Bagh. When the news was brought to him, General Dyer, considering his military dignity to have been outraged, decided on drastic action. He mobilized a force of sixty-five Gurkhas and twenty-five Baluchis and personally led them to the Jallianwalla Bagh, where he stationed them at one of the two exits. He then ordered fifty of his men to open fire without warning on the crowd, and not to cease fire until their

ammunition was exhausted. They obeyed and fired no less than 1,605 rounds into the panic-stricken crowd, with the result that, according to the official figures, 379 were killed and 1,200 wounded. After this display of military valour, Dyer marched his troops away, leaving the wounded to look after themselves. On receiving his general's report, the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, at once sent a telegram of approval and congratulation, and himself inspired by the action of his subordinate, ordered a number of aeroplanes to bomb and machine-gun the inhabitants of Gujranwala. Martial law was then proclaimed throughout the Punjab. At Amritsar and at Gujranwala all Indians were compelled to salaam British officers; public floggings and, what Sir Valentine Chirol called "fancy punishments," were inflicted for very minor offences; and in Amritsar Dyer issued his infamous crawling order, ordering Indians to crawl on all fours down the street in which an Englishwoman had been previously attacked.

The account of the massacre spread rapidly and caused a wave of horror throughout the civilized world. In India it had the same effect as the Czar's massacre of the Russian workers had in 1905. The outcry was so great that the Government was forced to appoint the Hunter Committee of Inquiry. The Committee published its Report in the following year, and severely criticized General Dyer and the Punjab administration. Disciplinary action was taken against the officers responsible, and Dyer was "retired" from the service. This butcher of unarmed men, women, and children became a hero to the diehards, the military caste, and to the rabid imperialists. A subscription was raised for him, and he was presented with a jewelled "sword of honour" as the saviour of the Empire. He was publicly congratulated by the House of Lords and by a judge of the King's Bench. But his evidence before the Hunter Committee leaves little doubt about his character and of the mentality of the officials and others who glorified his action. Before the Hunter Commission he said:

"I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action. If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab."

In short, General Dyer did not go to the Jallianwalla Bagh with the object of dispersing an illegal assembly; he went with the fixed intention of committing an atrocity in order to strike terror in the Punjab. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Autobiography*, describes a meeting with this "hero" in the train:

"I took the vacant upper berth. In the morning I discovered that all my fellow-passengers were military officers. They conversed with each other in loud voices which I could not help overhearing. One of them was holding forth in an aggressive and triumphant tone and soon I discovered that he was Dyer, the hero of Jallianwala Bagh, and he was describing his Amritsar experiences. He pointed out how he had the whole town at his mercy and he had felt like reducing the rebellious city to a heap of ashes, but he took pity on it and refrained. . . . He descended at Delhi station in pyjamas with bright pink stripes, and a dressing-gown."[1]

Such was the man whose bloodthirstiness and stupidity further widened the chasm between the British Government and the Indian people. To the Indian mind, the name Dyer is synonymous with imperialism.

A month after the Amritsar massacre the long threatened Afghan invasion actually took place. Amanullah, the foolhardy

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 43.

successor of the friendly Habibullah, aware of the exhaustion of Britain as a result of the war, and of the disordered state of India, thought that this was the time to establish Afghan rule again over Northern India. He hoped that on reaching the Indian frontier the Mohammedan population in India would simultaneously rise against the British. It was a foolish miscalculation. Much as the Caliphists disliked the British they had no desire to welcome the Afghan. It took the British Army and Air Force less than three weeks to defeat Amanullah and to make him sue for peace.

The speedy defeat of Amanullah, however, did little to lessen Mohammedan resentment in India. The suffering of the Mohammedan peasants in the Punjab, United Provinces, and elsewhere made them zealous supporters of the Caliphist propaganda. Thousands of peasants and students, declaring that they could no longer live under the infidel, joined the Hijrat movement and emigrated to Afghanistan. A few of these found their way to Tashkent and Samarkand in Soviet Turkestan, where they settled down to make a serious study of revolutionary politics. Many of the others, however, finding nothing to do in Afghanistan either fell by the wayside or drifted back to the Punjab. Those who later returned from Soviet Turkestan were usually arrested on a charge of "conspiring to deprive the King of his sovereignty of British India."

In October 1919 Mr. Gandhi, having received permission at last to visit the Punjab, decided to take up the cause of his Muslim brothers. A conference of Muslim and Hindu leaders was called at Delhi to decide ways and means of defending the Sultan of Turkey from the machinations of British imperialism. In return the Caliphist leaders, Mohammed and Shaukat Ali, attended the annual session of the Congress in December.

Previous to the Congress meeting, the British Government had made a shrewd move in granting an amnesty to political prisoners, and the Indian delegates were therefore more in-

clined to moderation in their attitude to imperialism; but in spite of this Gandhi had some difficulty in securing the Congress assent to a resolution agreeing to co-operate with the Government in working the reformed constitution. Encouraged by this rather unexpected attitude of the Congress, the Government hastened with its preparations for introducing the new constitution.

But the policy of co-operation was to have a very short life. It was not adapted to the conditions in the country. In 1920 the first signs of the world crisis became apparent: everywhere production exceeded buying power. In India the crisis accelerated the slump in agricultural prices: the peasants had to sell twice or three times the amount of their produce in order to receive the same amount of money they received during the war. Their troubles were increased by the failure of the monsoon, which while not affecting prices reduced their capacity to sell; by the increased rapacity of moneylenders, landlords, and brokers; by the rise in taxation owing to the Government's attempts to grapple with the War Debt and the results of its heavy expenditure on the Afghan War and in India; and by the higher prices of necessary commodities owing to the heavy customs duties imposed by the Government in an attempt to balance the Indian Budget. The desperate condition of the peasantry is well described by Jawaharlal Nehru, who visited about this time Oudh, the province of the *taluqadars* (big landlords):

> "In practice there was no guarantee in Oudh for even the short term of the contract. A landlord hardly ever gave a receipt for rent received, and he could always say that the rent had not been paid and eject the tenant, for who it was impossible to prove the contrary. Besides the rent there were an extraordinary number of illegal exactions. In one *taluqa* I was told that there had been as many as fifty different kinds of such exactions. Probably this number was exaggerated,

but it is notorious how *taluqadars* often make their tenants pay for every special expenditure—a marriage in the family, cost of the son's education in foreign countries, a party to the Governor or other high official, a purchase of a car or an elephant. Indeed these exactions have got special names—*motrauna* (tax for purchase of motor), *hathauna* (tax for purchase of elephant), etc."[1]

The wretchedness of the Hindu peasants found expression in the National Congress: that of the Moslem peasants in the otherwise absurd Caliphist movement. The common background of peasant misery soon drove these two organizations, Moslem and Hindu, into alliance.

It soon became clear to the Congress leaders that if they continued to follow the policy of co-operation with the Government, they would soon lose complete control of the mass movement, which, if not sidetracked, would develop into a class war against landlords, moneylenders, millowners, and all exploiters, white and brown. The lower-middle class, profoundly disappointed at the suspension of the national struggle, was pressing for action: and even the Indian capitalists were angry because of the shameless deflation of the rupee, which had been fixed at 1s. 6d. instead of at 1s. 4d., an act which not only nullified the tariff imposed on English goods during the war, but also created a special premium for British manufacturers exporting to India, raised the value of British investments in India, and caused a corresponding loss of profit to Indian capitalism.

Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues had therefore once more to undertake the dangerous task of sidetracking mass discontent into channels which, instead of injuring the property interests of Indian capitalist and landlords, would secure for Indian capitalism the economic concessions it needed. There was no time to wait until the annual session of the Congress due to be held in December 1920. A special Congress was therefore

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 54.

called at Calcutta in September. There Mr. Gandhi asked the enthusiastic delegates to adopt a policy of "progressive non-violent non-co-operation" for the attainment of *Swaraj*. Asked what he meant by *Swaraj*, he replied:

> "It means a state such that we can maintain our separate existence without the presence of the English. If it is to be a partnership, it must be a partnership at will."

He was to give several different definitions of *Swaraj* in the years which were to follow.

Thus began the first stage in the struggle of the Indian people for national freedom and independence.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Nation in Revolt

> "Mr. Khaparde, then, as a contrast, began praising Tilak. Here was a truly great man, he said, a wonderful person, a saint. 'A saint!' retorted Sir Rash Behary, 'I hate saints, I want to have nothing to do with them.' "
>
> *An Autobiography*, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

I

THE struggle of the Indian people towards independence falls into three well-defined stages.

The first stage began at the special Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920, when Mr. Gandhi, in spite of considerable opposition from the more moderate members, persuaded the delegates to launch a campaign of non-co-operation for the benefit of the Caliph and for the attainment of Home Rule (*Swaraj*). Four months later, at its annual session at Nagpur, the Congress as a whole confirmed the decision taken in September, and all true Indians were called upon to non-co-operate with the Government, which, as Mr. Gandhi declared, represented "the activity of Satan." Gandhi was once again placed in complete charge of the movement.

The subsequent career of Gandhi is contemporary Indian history, so closely has his personality been merged in the national struggle. But it is essential at this stage to remember that Mr. Gandhi is primarily a politician, and it is as a politician that he must be judged. Indian history since the war has been greatly obscured by the tendency to regard Mr. Gandhi more as a saint and less as a politician. His failures and frequent circumvolutions are excused as the vagaries of a holy-spirited man who is hardly at home in the sordid world of politics. It must be admitted that he has all the necessary qualifications to be a saint: a meagre appearance, an asceticism above worldly

temptation, a delight in metaphysical but often imcomprehensible utterances, and a personality which baffles description. But based on his saintliness alone, Gandhi's fame would have been localized and transient; he has achieved world fame because his saintliness has been superimposed on his political reputation as a national leader who directed the first great mass movement against imperialism in India. Mr. Gandhi is therefore first a politician; and it is as a politician that he must be judged, that is by his political actions. Discussions on whether he is or is not a saint are irrelevant except in so far as they explain his personal influence among a peasantry profoundly superstitious and devout.

The Indian National Congress had become the organized expression of the nationalist movement; but the nationalist movement was almost completely dominated by wealthy financiers and industrialists, who used the Congress as a means of canalizing mass discontent into the service of Indian capitalism in its economic struggle with imperialism. This class character of the Congress has not escaped the notice of Jawaharlal Nehru. In an article published early in 1936 he wrote:

> "It should be remembered that the nationalist movement in India, like all nationalist movements, was essentially a bourgeois movement. It represented the natural stage of development, and to consider it or to criticize it as a working-class movement is wrong. Gandhi represented that movement and the Indian masses in relation to that movement and he became the voice of the Indian people to that extent."[1]

This is undoubtedly a true estimate of the nationalist struggle under the leadership of Gandhi. Judged in relation to imperialism, Indian capitalism was then a progressive force, although actuated by the desire for greater profits and greater

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi*, an essay

rights of exploitation. It could obtain these advantages only at the expense of imperialism, and it was thus forced to reconcile its political and economic interests with abstract nationalism in order to disguise its real objective and to recruit the support of the people. Nationalism was the means by which the financiers, millowners, and landlords sought to suspend the class struggle in order to mobilize a united people capable of frightening imperialism into granting the concessions demanded by Indian capitalism. Mr. Gandhi was an ideal leader for such a movement in which it was necessary to harness the peasants and workers to the economic policy of their class enemies. To him and to the majority of the Congress leaders *Swaraj* was little more than an abstract slogan for rousing popular enthusiasm. Jawaharlal Nehru writes:

> "But 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. But he always spoke, vaguely but definitely, in terms of the underdog, and this brought great comfort to many of us, although, at the same time, he was full of assurances to the top-dog also."[1]

By praising equally the under-dog and the top-dog, Mr. Gandhi hoped to effect an alliance between them in the interests of the top-dog.

At first he succeeded. In the four months between the special Congress at Calcutta and the annual Congress at Nagpur he conducted a whirlwind campaign throughout the country, calling on the people to non-co-operate. All honours, awarded by Satan, were to be at once returned to the Government; he, himself, set the example by returning to the Viceroy, with a covering letter, the medals which had been awarded him for his services to the British forces in the wars against the Zulus and the Boers. That was an easy form of non-co-operation. It was

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 76.

much more difficult to persuade lawyers with lucrative practices to give them up. Here Mr. Gandhi could not give an example as he had no practice to give up; but he succeeded in converting to his theories a wealthy and influential Kashmiri Brahman named Motilal Nehru, who had a national reputation as a lawyer. Motilal Nehru, hitherto a Liberal and a friend of the great, had a personality quite the contrary to that of Gandhi. He has been well described by his son, Jawaharlal:

> "He was neither meek nor mild, and, again, unlike Gandhiji, he seldom spared those who differed from him. Consciously imperious, he evoked great loyalty as well as bitter opposition. It was difficult to feel neutral about him; one had to like him or dislike him. With a broad forehead, tight lips and a determined chin, he had a marked resemblance to the busts of the Roman Emperors in the museums in Italy. . . . In later years especially, when his head was covered with silver hair . . . there was a magnificence about him and a grand manner, which is sadly to seek in this world of to-day."

He made a cult of fastidiousness, pretending that shirts could only properly be washed in Paris, and therefore sending his soiled linen from Allahabad to France to be washed and returned. It is a tribute to the magnetic personality of Gandhi, and to the strength of the mass movement behind him, that this dainty aristocrat should have altered his mode of life to become a non-co-operator. He abandoned his practice, dressed in spotless white homespun, and gave his services to the Mahatma.

All students and schoolboys were instructed to leave the Government colleges and schools, and Gandhi devised on paper a system of "National Schools" to replace them; litigants were told that they should not go to the courts but should submit to Congress arbitration—a severe blow to a country which delights in litigation; and all the followers of the

Congress should wear *khaddar*, homespun, which was to become the national uniform. The restoration of village industries became Mr. Gandhi's obsession. He revived the ancient Indian spinning-wheel, the *charkha*, and formed an association for supplying yarn to the peasants and for distributing the finished products. He was under the impression that if the peasant was able to earn a penny or so extra a day it would relieve agricultural distress, and that the revival of cottage industry would regenerate the old feudal spirit of India. As he warmed to the scheme he began to rail against modern industry, pointing out that even the Hindu gods were made either in Germany or in Birmingham, and that India could not be free until the "ancient and sacred hand-looms" were established in every cottage. The Indian millowners, who were largely financing the campaign, did not take Mr. Gandhi's attempt to turn the clock back to feudalism too seriously; they were aware that it was not economically possible for *khaddar* to compete with machine-made cloth, and that the peasants could not afford to wear the homespun which they produced; they were also aware that the sentimental value of *khadi* propaganda was far greater than any temporary decline in their sales of mill-cloth. Jawaharlal Nehru and other progressive young men in the movement were disposed to regard *khaddar* as one of Mr. Gandhi's fads, which were not to be encouraged when Swaraj had been attained. Thus it came about that a strictly limited and artificial market was created for village homespun, a market which hardly affected the sales of British and Indian machine-cloth. The *charkha* became merely a symbol of nationalism.

Mr. Gandhi's campaign of non-co-operation did not, however, prevent the moderates from contesting the elections to the new Legislatures. About a third of the six million people entitled to vote went to the polls, returning a number of Liberals to constitute the opposition in the Councils and in the Assembly. Dyarchy was at once put into operation, and in each

province Indian ministers were appointed to take charge of such harmless subjects as Education, Sanitation, Agriculture, and Local Self-Government. The Congress completely boycotted the elections and denounced as traitors those who took part in them. They also boycotted the visit to India in January 1921 of the Duke of Connaught, who was sent out to open the new Councils. The visit of the Duke was a godsend to the Congress, which organized *hartals* and popular demonstrations of protest, of which the Duke was the object.

But not even the activities in connection with the visit of a royal duke could sidetrack the growing restlessness of the peasants, who were beginning to think that non-co-operation should also be applied to landlords and moneylenders. There was no sign of any recovery from the slump and bad harvests of 1920, and the heavy pressure of rents and dues was driving many to despair. Peasant riots became frequent, breaking out with increasing gravity, particularly in the Punjab, which had not yet recovered its calm after the events of 1919.

In March 1921 serious trouble occurred among the Sikhs. The Sikh peasants, indignant at the contrast afforded between their misery and the licence and luxury of the Sikh priests and landlords, found an expression of their economic discontent in puritanism. The Sikh puritans took the name of *Akalis* and attacked the corruption and immorality of the wealthier Sikhs, and particularly of the *Mahants*, the administrators of the shrines. The *Mahants*, thinking the movement dangerous, decided to nip it in the bud. They adopted the methods made famous in the Punjab by General Dyer. They recruited a Pathan guard, ambushed the *Akalis*, and killed 130 of them. The Government instead of bringing the instigators of this massacre to justice, instructed the police to uphold the sanctity of property and to crush the *Akali* movement; and the struggle therefore extended from its class basis to one against imperialism. The *Akali* rebellion spread from the Punjab to the Sikh States of Patiala and Nabha, where the

maharajahs used the utmost ferocity in attempting to suppress it. Eventually the Government was forced to compromise: it passed legislation effecting certain reforms in the management of the shrines and the movement subsided; but it was too deeply rooted in agrarian distress to be thus easily eradicated, and groups of *Babar Akalis* continue to be nuclei of sedition in the Punjab.

In the meantime the Congress was vainly attempting to control the forces which it had set in motion. The arrival as Viceroy of Lord Reading, an astute Jew, greatly reinforced the Government. One of the first acts of the new Viceroy was to have a private conversation with Gandhi, in which he skilfully tried to drive a wedge between the Congress and the Muslim Caliphist movement by suggesting that the Caliphist leaders, Mohammed and Shaukat Ali, were inciting the people to violence in spite of their pledge to Mr. Gandhi. Gandhi's objection to violence was not merely spiritual: he realized that any violent rebellion of the masses would transform the struggle from a passive demonstration into a class war, in which the property interests of imperialism and Indian capitalism and landlordism alike would be endangered. After the interview with Reading, he forced Mohammed Ali to publish a statement in which he pledged himself "neither directly nor indirectly to advocate violence at present or in the future." The Government promptly dropped an impending prosecution against Mohammed Ali, thereby creating the impression that the Muslim leader was retreating on the advice of Mr. Gandhi. In consequence the prestige of both suffered, and a certain antagonism was created between the followers of Gandhi and the Caliphists.

Mr. Gandhi, conscious of being out-manœuvred by the Viceroy, replied by declaring in July a boycott of foreign cloth. On August 1st, in commemoration of Tilak's death, a great bonfire was held of foreign cloth, and the enthusiastic nationalists watched the fires consuming their once prized European clothing with a religious joy. Mohammed Ali, also

conscious of the need of regaining prestige, held a Caliphist conference at Karachi, where a resolution was passed declaring all co-operation both civil and military with the Government *haram* (religiously forbidden). The Government took this latest manifestation of defiance seriously, and the Ali brothers were arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for sedition. The seditious resolution was, however, circulated and adopted throughout the country, causing unrest among the Mohammedan troops. The political condition of the country grew steadily worse.

Both Government and Congress dreaded a large-scale peasant rising. The shock of the *Akali* movement in the Punjab was followed in August by a rising of the Moplahs, the Mohammedan peasantry of Malabar. The fury of the Moplahs was directed mainly against the moneylenders and the landlords; and as these were mostly Hindu, the Press falsely represented the rebellion as a communal struggle between Hindus and Moslems, thus further widening the communal breach. The rebellion was cruelly suppressed: 2,266 Moplahs were killed in action, 1,615 were wounded, and 5,688 were taken prisoner. Several of the prisoners were sent under police escort in a closed train to Calcutta, a stage on the journey to the Andamans. Although the journey was made in the heat of the day, no precautions were taken for an adequate water supply and sufficient breathing space, and when the train arrived at its destination no less than seventy Moplahs were found dead, suffocated with the lack of air and by the heat.

The Moplah rising had the worst effect on Hindu-Muslim unity, and the growing friction between the Caliphists and the Congress acted against non-co-operation when the Prince of Wales arrived for a tour of India in November. The Prince's arrival was the signal for serious riots in Bombay and elsewhere, and his tour was everywhere marked by scenes of disorder.

The outbreak of communal rioting broke the non-co-operation movement by frightening its leaders. At the annual meeting

of the Congress in December at Ahmedabad, Mr. Gandhi vigorously rebuked those who had broken the pledge of non-violence, declaring, in connection with the Bombay riots, that "the *swaraj* he had then witnessed had stunk in his nostrils." Victory, he said, was to be won by suffering and not by inflicting suffering. Exhorting everybody to observe this fundamental principle of faith, he announced a new policy to meet the Government's repression. He called on all Indians, men, women, and children, to join a National Volunteer Corps for the purpose of defying the Government's laws. This new policy was given the name of Civil Disobedience, and was calculated to paralyse the machinery of government. It was enthusiastically acclaimed and Gandhi was appointed dictator.

The programme of civil disobedience began by Mr. Gandhi sending a letter to the Viceroy to inform him that the writer would personally inaugurate civil disobedience at Bardoli unless the Government showed a complete "change of heart" within seven days. Before the week of grace had expired an event occurred which, following on the outbreaks in the Punjab and in Malabar and on Mr. Gandhi's warning against violence at the Ahmenabad Congress, completely altered the situation. At Chauri Chaura, a little town in the United Provinces, a number of angry peasants led by Congress Volunteers attacked the police station and killed twenty-two policemen.

The mass movement had become too dangerous to continue it. As soon as he head the news of Chauri Chaura, Mr. Gandhi published his Bardoli resolutions, suspending the movements of non-co-operation and civil disobedience, and replacing them with a safe programme of limited agrarian reform. The country, he declared, must undergo a course of self-purification and penance before there could be any thought of resuming *satyagraha.*

The capitalists, financiers, and millowners rejoiced at the suspension of a movement which was threatening property; but the rank and file of the Congress were puzzled and angry. They

thought that Mr. Gandhi was carrying his saintliness too far. Jawaharlal Nehru writes:

> "We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts. But our disappointment and anger in prison could do little good to anyone, and civil resistance stopped and non-co-operation wilted away."[1]

Mr. Gandhi's prestige among the people was great; there was no leader capable of challenging his decision. About thirty thousand persons had been arrested and imprisoned as a result of non-co-operation, and among these were the most active and vigorous members of the Left Wing. The alternative leadership to Gandhi was safely enclosed within four walls. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, had his way; the movement was suspended at the height of its success; and the Government was once more able to take the offensive.

A few weeks later, Mr. Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

2

Non-co-operation and civil disobedience were discontinued by the leadership not because the movement was defeated, but because of its alarming success. Indian capitalism with the help of Mr. Gandhi had involuntarily created out of the misery of the people a monster which it was unable to control; it found itself in the role of Frankenstein.

The hungry peasant, the sweated worker, and the impoverished intellectual had discovered the power of organized mass action. This discovery transformed the whole conception of Indian politics as something esoteric and confined to the propertied and professional classes into a mass political movement based on the economic discontent of the illiterate and hitherto despised worker and peasant. It became apparent

that in future the pace of political progress would be set by the mass of the people and no longer by the Indian bourgeois, which, caught between economic conflict with imperialism and the fear of revolution, found itself obliged to direct its energies less against imperialism and more against the revolutionary feeling in the country.

In the years which followed the Bardoli surrender, the forces of revolt gathered their strength. They found themselves opposed not only by the repressive policy of the Government, which was taking advantage of the lull to strengthen its machinery of repression, but by the growing moderation and constitutionalism of the bourgeois. The policy of *satyagraha*, which had had such dangerous results, was rejected, and when Mr. Gandhi was released after a year's imprisonment, he was forced to retire into the background. Non-co-operation had ceased in practice: students returned to their colleges, litigants and lawyers to the courts; and on the initiative of C. R. Das a Swaraj Party was formed within the Congress to contest the elections to the Councils which were to take place in the autumn of 1923. The Delhi Congress held in September, in spite of Gandhist opposition, ratified the policy of the Swaraj Party, on condition that the Swarajists should enter the Assembly and the Councils for the sole purposes of causing "uniform, continuous, and constant obstruction." On this basis the Congress contested the elections and were returned with an overwhelming majority over the Liberals. But once returned many of the Swarajists forgot their pious resolves to obstruct, and began, on one pretext and another, to accept office and patronage. The imperialist art of corrupting their opponents was employed to the full, and the rot destroyed the moral of the Swaraj Party. Jawaharlal Nehru describes this rot and the effect it had on his father, Motilal:

"The general tone of the Swarajists went down. Individuals here and there began to slip away to the other side.

My father shouted and thundered and talked about cutting 'the diseased limb.' But this threat has no great effect when the limb is eager to walk away by itself. Some Swarajists became ministers, some became Executive Councillors in the provinces later. A number formed a separate group calling themselves 'Responsivists' or 'Responsive Co-operators,' a name originally used by Lokamanya Tilak in entirely different circumstances. As used now it seems to mean: take a job when you have the chance and make the best of it."[1]

Not only was corruption visible in the Swaraj Party, it was present throughout the whole upper strata of Indian politics. Hindu and Muslim communalism was rampant. Among the politicians, co-operation was interpreted as fraternization, and the advent of a Labour Government and the smooth promises of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Olivier did much even to make the Bengal Regulations, by which people could be imprisoned indefinitely without trial, palatable to the Indian bourgeois.

But while imperialism and the Indian bourgeois fraternized, the revolutionary fires among the people which Gandhi had not succeeded in extinguishing in 1922, and which were fed by the increasing misery in the villages and the towns, continued to smoulder. It became clear even to the imperialists that these fires if not smothered would soon burst into flame. Vague, tentative offers of constitutional changes were therefore made by the British Government to the Indian bourgeois, which were avidly received. Motilal Nehru expressed himself in favour of Dominion status as the goal of Indian ambitions, and C. R. Das publicly repudiated the goal of independence, saying: "Independence is a lower ideal than Dominion status in the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire." In June 1925 Motilal Nehru himself accepted a seat on the Skeen Commission on the Indianization of the army, and two other

[1] *An Autobiography*, p. 131–2.

prominent Congress leaders accepted high positions: Tambe became an Executive Councillor and Vithalbhai Patel the President of the Legislative Assembly.

The excessively friendly spirit with which the Indian bourgeois welcomed British overtures encouraged the Government to stabilize the rupee permanently at 1s. 6d., a rate which had been temporarily fixed in 1921. The effect of this on Indian economy has been well described by Mr. H. C. E. Zacharias:

> "This measure helped Sir B. Blackett to balance his budgets, certainly, but at the cost of the Indian producer. Since a rupee fetched 12½ per cent. more sterling than formerly, a premium was put on imports from England; and since the sterling world rates for agricultural produce henceforth represented 12½ per cent. less rupees than formerly, the Indian agriculturist producing raw material for the world market received so much less money for it. Hence the purchasing power of the Indian masses and the demand for Indian goods were simultaneously weakened, and there can be no doubt that the 1s. 6d. ratio has done much to accentuate in India the economic world crisis of the past two years."[1]

Not even the Indian capitalist could stomach this measure which not only attacked his profits but his industry. It rallied again behind the Congress and organized a bitter opposition to the passage of the Currency Bill in the Assembly. The opposition to the rupee ratio was so bitter that it completely destroyed the friendly spirit and revitalized the Congress. The younger and more militant members of the Congress, mainly intellectuals, organized themselves into Youth Leagues in the towns, and these Leagues became organs of Congress activity and propaganda, developing into a powerful political force. In spite of the efforts of Indian capitalism, however, the rupee ratio

[1] H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 245–6 (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

was far too technical and involved to provide a first-class war-cry for the people as a whole. A more easily understood and popular issue was required to call the movement into action. This issue was provided by the British Government which at the close of 1927 announced the appointment of a Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon "for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education, and the development of representative institutions, in British India and matters connected therewith."

The Simon Commission consisted of seven members: two Conservatives and two Labour members of the House of Commons; two Conservative members of the Lords and a Liberal as Chairman. The Secretary of State, in announcing the Commission, explained why there were no Indian members on it. It was essential, he said, that the findings of the Commission should be unanimous. Since the Indian members might prevent this desirable unanimity by pressing their country's demands, they were to be excluded. In these circumstances it was quite obvious to every Indian politician that the British Government was preparing the way not for constitutional concessions, but for a policy of reaction; and the appointment of the Commission was greeted with a storm of protest. Even the Indian Liberals, who looked forward to collaboration with the British, were angry. Protest meetings were held all over the country, and when the Simon Commission actually arrived on its first visit to India in February 1928, it was greeted everywhere with black flags borne by processions of people calling out the slogan, "Simon, Go Back"; *hartals* were proclaimed in every town in which the Commission appeared, and the magnitude of the public anger was such that it seemed to Sir John Simon and his colleagues that even the jackals which cried round their hotel at night were howling "Simon, Go Back."

The echoes of the protest reached the ears of Birkenhead in Whitehall, and rather petulantly he asked the Congress leaders

"to put forward their own suggestions for a Constitution, to indicate to us the form which in their judgment any reform of the Constitution should take." To his surprise the nationalists took him at his word. An All-India All Parties Conference was called in February by the Congress, which appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution which would satisfy Indian aspirations. In a short time this Committee published its Report advocating rather vaguely the same status for India as that enjoyed by the Dominions and particularly by the Irish Free State.

The Nehru Report satisfied nobody except the Liberals and the Indian capitalists. A new wave of nationalist revolt swept the country. In opposition to the official Congress policy now identified with the demand for Dominion status, Independence Leagues were formed, round which the militant rank and file rallied. Motilal Nehru and the other Congress leaders found themselves fighting a losing battle for Dominion status against their own followers. Even Jawaharalal Nehru deserted his father's camp and went over to the opposition. Capitalism became alarmed, looked round for salvation, and found it again in the person of Gandhi.

The next annual session of the Congress met in Calcutta in an atmosphere of tension. The leaders of the opposition, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, moved a resolution in favour of entering a struggle for the attainment of complete independence. The vast majority of the delegates supported them, and the official leadership would have been defeated had not Mr. Gandhi emerged from his saintly obscurity to urge on the Congress the acceptance of a characteristic resolution, giving the British Government exactly one year to accord Dominion status, failing which the Congress would organize "non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon." The personal prestige of Gandhi was still extremely high, and the delegates out of deference to him

reluctantly rejected the independence motion and accepted that of Gandhi. By this means not only was imperialism given a year's grace, but also the Indian leadership. It was fervently hoped that the events of 1929 would pacify public opinion and reduce the tempo of the revolutionary advance.

Their hopes were not realized. The temper of the people grew more uncompromising with the passing months. There was no sign of any improvement in the economic conditions of the peasantry, and these were already so bad that a large-scale peasant rising was an imminent possibility. Furthermore, a new force had entered the political arena: the organized working class.

The Indian working class was very young and was still closely related to the peasants. During the war it grew in proportion to the expansion of industry. Its conditions and particularly its wages are extremely bad. In the cotton industry, of which the main centres are Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Cawnpore, the average daily earnings of all operatives are as follows:

	Men	*Women*	*Children*	*All Adults*
Bombay ..	Rs. 1.8.0	0.11.1	—	1. 5.3
Ahmedabad ..	.. 1.6.8	0.12.6	0.5.6	1. 4.8
Sholapur ..	.. 1.0.5	0. 6.8	0.4.0	0.14.8

These are of course nominal wages, and do not take into account fines, bribes to the "jobber" (labour contractor), and dues to the moneylender. Furthermore, the wages are paid a month or six weeks in arrears, "because if full settlement were made immediately after wages fell due, the workers would have a tendency to change mills frequently."[1]

In other industries the conditions of the workers are as bad if not worse. In the jute mills of Bengal, which have paid

[1] Evidence given before the Royal Commission on Labour in India by a representative of the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association.

enormous profits to British shareholders, the average wage earned by men is about twenty-two shillings a month. Women and children are paid much less. A working day is ten hours. In more backward parts of the country, the wages paid are incredibly low. The India League Delegation which visited India in 1932 reports:

> "In Orissa, another plague spot of labour, the ordinary labourer receives four annas a day, while the Government extracts forced labour at about half that wage rate. In one of the jute mills near Calcutta, women were paid Rs. 2.4.0 per month, and men Rs. 3.4.0 per month. In one of the collieries owned by Messrs. Bird & Co., a husband and wife together earned about Rs. 1.2.0 per day; the wages are nine annas per ton of coal raised. In Cawnpore, skilled mill workers are paid about Rs. 30 a month; others from Rs. 9 to Rs. 13 a month."[1]

Since all that a worker earns after deducting the fines, bribes, and interest to the moneylender has to be spent on food for his family, his housing conditions are appalling. Miss Freda Utley writes:

> "The housing conditions for the factory workers of Bombay especially are terrible beyond description. Seventy per cent. of the tenements in the City are one-roomed. According to the investigations of the Bombay Labour Office, 97 per cent. of the working classes, with their families, live in one-roomed tenements, the average area per room being 103·6 sq. feet. Sanitary arrangements are of the most primitive kind, and foreign visitors bear witness to the terrible stench and the prevalence of disease due to overcrowding, bad sanitation and underfeeding. The infant mortality rate in Bombay is the highest in the world, viz.

[1] Report of India League Delegation, p. 447.

300 to 400 per thousand—but this is the lowest estimate, and the rate in the tenements has been estimated as high as 600 per thousand."[1]

Owing to the general backwardness and poverty of the workers, trade union organization was slow in developing. The early trade unions were organized mainly by unemployed lawyers, by humanitarians, and by various careerists who used the misery of the workers as a stepping-board to personal advancement. As can be expected, such "unions" did not encourage strikes; but in spite of the alien leadership, strikes were frequent throughout 1921 and 1922. The textile industry in Bombay had been comparatively free of these small strikes, owing to the policy adopted by the prosperous millowners during the post-war boom period of paying an annual bonus to the workers equivalent to a month's wages. But in 1924 the industrial depression began to be felt in India, and the Bombay millowners, fearing a reduction of the enormous profits, refused to pay the bonus. In consequence, the workers, disregarding their reactionary trade unions, struck work and maintained the strike in spite of hunger and police terrorism for three months. The next year another strike took place against a proposed wage reduction; after a prolonged struggle the workers maintained their existing wage rates and the Government removed their Excise duties on Indian cotton goods.

Alarmed by this growth of militancy among the working class, the Government introduced a Trade Union Act, finally put into practice in 1927, compelling unions to confine their expenditure to trade-unionist and non-political activity, and establishing control over their accounts and membership. Working-class militancy grew, however, in proportion to the depression. In 1928 a great wave of industrial unrest rolled over the country. There were strikes of the railwaymen on the East Indian and Southern Indian railways, of the steel workers

[1] Freda Utley, *Lancashire and the Far East*, p. 389 (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

in the Tata works at Jamshedpur, and of the jute workers in Bengal, and of the cotton workers of Bombay. The last strike, caused by the attempt of the Bombay millowners to safeguard profits at the expense of the workers by speeding up, wage reduction, and increase of hours, was the greatest that had ever taken place in India. Out of this struggle, which lasted for six months and which ended in the appointment by the Government of the Fawcett Committee to inquire into the owners' rationalization schemes, the great Girni Kamgar Union was formed by the workers themselves, which during the course of the struggle recruited more than 65,000 members. The Girni Kamgar Union, which adopted the Red Flag as its symbol, was the first of the great fighting unions.

Indian capitalism and the Government of India became alarmed at this awakening of the workers, particularly so as they began to rally to the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which was calling to them to organize and fight their own political as well as economic battles. For the first time, revolutionary political slogans began to appear on the workers' banners. "Long Live Revolution!" became the most popular cry, which spread from the workers to the middle-class intellectuals. The strike wave had resulted in a revolutionary wave.

Supported by Indian capitalism, the Government took drastic measures to crush the growing working-class movement. Various repressive measures were introduced, including a new Trades Disputes Act, which penalized sympathetic strikes and those "designed to coerce Government," forbade the transference of money from one union to another, and made it illegal to withdraw labour from the public utility services, such as the railways, postal service, water and light supply, and public conservancy, unless each individual going on strike gave one month's notice in writing to the management. The introduction of a Public Safety Bill in the Legislative Assembly in September 1928, to empower the Government to confiscate funds arriving from abroad to working-class organizations and

to deport undesirable Englishmen from India, finally linked the economic struggle of the workers with the revolutionary political struggle for socialism. The Public Safety Bill became a political issue of first importance. The debate on it in the Assembly developed into a debate on communism as opposed to imperialism. It was twice rejected by the Assembly, which evidently feared that the Government was quite capable of using the anti-communist measures it asked for against the nationalist organizations, and had finally to be certified by the Viceroy. The day before the second introduction of the Bill into the Assembly, the Government rounded up nearly all the prominent Left Wing trade unionists and members of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, and charged thirty-one of them (including three Englishmen) under section 121A with "conspiracy to deprive the King of the sovereignty of India." The accused, arrested in Bengal, Bombay, Lahore, Lucknow, and Allahabad, were thrown into prison at Meerut in the United Provinces, where they were kept for four years on trial, eventually receiving heavy sentences.

The Meerut Conspiracy Case was the Government's first shot in a campaign of intimidation. It was intended not only to break up working-class organizations and check the growth of the revolutionary movement, but also to bring home to the moderate nationalists the danger of taking any action which might encourage communism.

Instead of intimidating, it further lashed the revolutionary fury of the Congress rank and file. New leaders sprang up among the workers who became more aggressive than ever; a new strike wave began with another long strike of the Bombay cotton workers; and over 100,000 workers turned up to shout revolutionary slogans on the Chowpatti beach at Bombay on May 1, 1929. In a short time nearly all the important trade unions in the country were in the hands of the Left.

The revolutionary enthusiasm of the workers stimulated

that of the middle class. Students and intellectuals began to study socialism, and heavy demands were made on the booksellers for literature proscribed by the Government. But in spite of the growing interest in socialist theories, the political expression of middle-class discontent still found itself in terrorism, which now became rampant. Two police officers were murdered at Lahore, and in March 1929 two young men, Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt, who were afterwards tried along with others and executed for the Lahore assassinations, threw a comparatively harmless bomb from the public gallery of the Assembly at the beginning of the discussion on the Public Safety Bill. The courageous bearing of Bhagat Singh and his comrades in the Lahore Conspiracy Trial, and the death of Jatindranath Das, one of the accused, after a prolonged hunger strike, roused the country to an emotional frenzy of patriotism and of hatred of the Government. In nearly every town young men flocked to join the terrorist organizations in the hope of achieving martyrdom. The largest of these organizations, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, became a serious menace in the Punjab and the United Provinces; and in Bengal, the home of the terrorist, the movement revived with all its former zeal.

Meanwhile the year of grace given to the British Government by Mr. Gandhi in the hope of sidetracking the struggle, was expiring. The revolutionary pressure on the Congress leadership instead of weakening had increased. The Government of India became seriously perturbed, and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, went to England to discuss matters with the Labour Government which had taken office after the elections in May. Remembering the record of the Labour Government of 1924, Indians as a whole expected very little from the Labour Government, which showed no desire to do anything except continue the Indian policy of its Tory predecessor. But as the months passed it became clear that some gesture from Mr. MacDonald's Government was vitally necessary. Consultation

took place among Lord Irwin, Ramsay MacDonald, Wedgwood Benn (the new Secretary of State for India), and Mr. Baldwin. In the end Lord Irwin returned to India in October, and on October 31st publicly announced that he was "authorized by H.M.'s Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status." It was further announced that it was Mr. MacDonald's intention to call a Round Table Conference to discuss a new constitution for India.

The nationalist leaders, as eager as the Government to avoid trouble, welcomed this vague declaration with relief. This was a proof, they said, of the Government's readiness to comply with the conditions stated in the Congress ultimatum of 1928. They issued a manifesto from Delhi expressing their readiness to co-operate in such a Round Table Conference "to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India," but reminded the Government that it was "absolutely essential that the public should be made to feel that a new era has commenced," and that therefore an amnesty should be granted as a token of good will.

Nothing, however, that the Congress leaders could say would convince the people that the British Government meant business. Protests against the Delhi Manifesto were made from every centre in the country, and it finally had to be repudiated. The eleventh-hour attempt to avert the crisis had failed, and the year of grace drew to a close.

The next annual session of the Congress met at Lahore in December 1929 in an electric atmosphere of challenge and defiance. In spite of the opposition of the leadership, the delegates insisted on declaring war on the Government. The goal of the Congress was declared to be complete independence for India, and the leaders were forced to accede to an immediate movement of non-co-operation and civil disobedience, to be

continued until this goal was attained. By agreeing to the movement, the leaders succeeded in maintaining control; Gandhi was appointed dictator with full powers.

The second stage in the people's fight for independence had begun.

CHAPTER SIX

A Charter of Slavery

> "Generally speaking, it must be said that of all the ruling classes, the ruling classes of England, both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, proved to be the cleverest, the most flexible from the point of view of their class interests, from the point of view of maintaining their power. . . . In order to maintain their rule, the ruling classes of Great Britain have never forsworn small concessions, reforms."
>
> STALIN, Talk with Wells, *New Statesman* Pamphlet

> "The idea that Indians must always be ruled for their own good by the lonely white man is a late Victorian sentiment."
>
> MAJOR ATTLEE, *Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 64

I

AFTER the Lahore Congress and the declaration of independence, events moved rapidly. The Indian bourgeois and the Congress leadership realized that sidetracking tactics were needed—a programme that would be attractive on the surface but harmless in reality. Mr. Gandhi, the new dictator, supplied such a programme. It consisted mainly of defiance of the Salt Law, boycott of foreign cloth, and peaceful picketing of shops dealing in foreign cloth and liquor. The boycott of foreign cloth was designed to serve two purposes: to direct revolutionary discontent into a safe channel, and to send up the sales of Indian millcloth (*Swadeshi*). As for the programme of civil disobedience, which is intended to paralyse the Government by refusing to obey its laws, it is significant that Gandhi, when searching for the most effective laws to break, ignored the really repressive laws, and carefully selected the Salt Law for his attack on the Government. The suggestion that the Salt

Law was chosen in preference to any other as being the least likely to lead to dangerous results is supported by the fact that, although the Government has the salt monopoly in India, the tax on that necessity can hardly be called a *gabelle*: the Simon Report estimates it at approximately 4d. per head per annum. It is, of course, considered disgraceful that there should be a tax on salt at all; but there can be no doubt that the price of salt would be higher if the Government monopoly were abolished. Mr. Gandhi, however, decided that the Salt Law and no other should be broken by his followers, because it was an easy and not a very dangerous law to break: it was easy because of the large salt deposits on the Gujerat coast which were ready to hand for his purpose; and it was not as dangerous as would be breaches of the sedition laws, the Arms Act, the Trades Disputes Act, the Rent Acts, or any of the other draconian laws of imperialism.

The campaign opened on January 26, 1930, which was named Independence Day. Mr. Gandhi ordered that on this day mass meetings should be held in every centre; but there were to be no inflammatory speeches at those meetings: the people were to gather peacefully, repeat a long oath carefully drafted by the dictator, and then go home. The oath was chiefly concerned with the necessity for observing the strictest non-violence:

> "We recognize, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. . . . We therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj."

Mr. Gandhi and the Indian landlords and capitalists soon showed their over-enthusiastic followers that they had no

intention of organizing a movement among the peasants for non-payment of taxes. Apart from causing serious trouble to the landlords and moneylenders, such action would result in shifting the basis of the movement from political abstractions to the class struggle. It was mentioned in the pledge only in order to humour the revolutionary rank and file.

But this revolutionary rank and file was soon disposed of. Imprisonment was made an end in itself, and as Gandhi forbade any legal defence the Government had no difficulty in confining the more dangerous elements safely within four walls. Young men and women went to prison for the "crimes" of possessing salt illegally manufactured, of picketing liquor shops and shops selling foreign cloth, of pulling the communication cord in trains, of shouting "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*" (Long live the great-souled Gandhi); and they went joyfully, thinking that by these actions they had struck a blow for the independence of their country, and without realizing that they were leaving little opposition within the Congress to the policy of the Right. In course of time the leaders also were arrested and placed in prison, where for the most part they enjoyed a degree of comfort undreamt of by their followers, Mr. Gandhi even being permitted to take his goat with him, and to spend his time spinning and in examining the stars through a specially constructed telescope. Other leaders were even paid allowances when confined under the Regulations, the Government even paying the insurance premiums of one prominent Calcutta champion of the down-trodden.

But such a programme could not long satisfy the wretched peasantry and workers and the exploited intellectuals. As the movement gained strength the leadership began to lose control. Terrorism became rampant, assassinations and attempts succeeding one another in the Punjab, United Provinces, Bengal, and even in Bombay. The disillusioned youth began to flock to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and other terrorist organizations. In April the terrorists successfully

carried out their boldest stroke by raiding the police armouries at Chittagong, capturing plenty of arms and ammunition. Even more serious were the unrest among the peasants, who, suffering the horrors of repression for no apparent purpose, began to demand a movement against the payment of rents and taxes, and the revolutionary development of the working class in the industrial centres. Strikes, such as the G.I.P. Railway Strike during which the Government employed convict labour, and peasant risings became more and more frequent. On April 23rd British troops at Peshawar fired twice on an unarmed demonstration of workers and peasants, killing, according to the Congress Report, between two to three hundred, and wounding many more. One Congress witness, a timber merchant named Illahi Bux, gives the following biased account:

> "The death roll is between 200 and 300. . . . Between 2 and 3 p.m. we removed 60 bodies from the streets, we could not remove any from the bazaar. When we went there the English troops started firing. I had fifteen volunteers with me, six of them were shot down. . . . While the troops were in the bazaar it was flooded with water and all the blood was washed away. . . . A Pathan Sepoy, not a resident of Peshawar, probably belonging to some village, was on horse back. In my presence he was ordered to shoot by an Englishman. I heard him replying 'Sir, whom shall I shoot?' Hearing this, the Englishman fired at him with his revolver. The bullet hit the horse which fell and died after running for a little distance. The rider too fell down with the horse and then immediately ran away. The rest of the police and mounted Sepoys also ran away as the armoured car was in action. They ran away lest they should be shot down."[1]

Following this shooting, during which a company of Garhwali riflemen refused to fire on their countrymen when ordered to

[1] Peshawar Committee Report, p. 110.

do so and were later given life sentences, martial law was instituted in Peshawar, the alleged reason being the unrest among the Afridi tribes across the frontier.

Public anger rose. Processions of *satyagrahis* were charged and dispersed by the police; new jails and concentration camps had to be swiftly constructed to house the prisoners; and in the villages the repression was so severe that large agricultural areas were depopulated. Further risings took place at Delhi and at Sholapur. At Sholapur, on May 8th, a demonstration of textile workers and Congress volunteers was fired on by the police: twenty-six workers were killed and many wounded. At this the people, forgetting their pledge of non-violence, rose, defeated the police, and set fire to the Government buildings. A military force occupied the city, and four of the leaders were subsequently hanged.

The bourgeois leadership was terrified at these events. Afraid of its lead being repudiated in action, it again called on Mr. Gandhi to abandon the role of Messiah for that of executioner. Towards the end of the year he came out of jail and negotiated a truce with the Government, negotiations which ended on March 4, 1931, in his complete capitulation to imperialism. This capitulation was dignified with the name of the Gandhi–Irwin Pact. In return for a few minor concessions in the form of a partial amnesty to political prisoners not guilty of violence, and a permission to collect salt free of charge in a certain part of the Gujarat coast, Mr. Gandhi on behalf of the Congress Working Committee agreed to suspend civil disobedience and to co-operate with the Government to the extent of going to London to take part in the discussions at Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Round Table Conference, which had opened in November, India being represented by a few Liberals and the Princes. The Government then withdrew the extraordinary ordinances it had passed to repress the Congress movement.

The Gandhi–Irwin Pact met with a hostile reception from

the majority of the Congress supporters. It was generally felt that Mr. Gandhi had again betrayed the national interests as he had done in 1922. He, who had promised to fight until independence had been attained, had now signed a pact agreeing to discuss a new constitutional scheme to be imposed on India by imperialism with safeguards for imperialist interests. To persuade the country to accept the pact, Gandhi had need of all his subtlety and personal prestige. To a group of journalists who asked him why he had abandoned the fight for independence, he replied "*Purna Swaraj* (Complete Independence) only means inner self-discipline." The journalists retired baffled; but he could not so easily baffle the workers. At a meeting addressed by him in the working-class quarter of Bombay, he was successfully challenged and the weakness of his position exposed by one of the leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union, B. T. Ranadive. Rebellious murmurs were also heard among the *satyagrahis*, who began to wonder what it was they had fought and suffered for, and peasant unrest showed no signs of subsiding. It was clear that Gandhi would have a difficult battle for his pact at the special session of the Congress called to meet at Karachi on March 29th.

Gandhi's position was rendered much more difficult by the execution a week before the Congress of Bhagat Singh and two other terrorists, who had become popular heroes during the course of their trial. A *hartal* was at once declared, and at Cawnpore fierce communal rioting broke out. For days the riots raged, the authorities taking no effective action to suppress them; the District Magistrate of Cawnpore was later removed from his position, after a Government inquiry into the riots. Statements were made that the Government had actually fomented the rioting at Cawnpore, as a warning against terrorism and as a means of intimidating the Left Wing opposition to the Gandhi–Irwin Pact.

The Karachi Congress met in an atmosphere of indecision, but also of considerable hostility to the agreement signed by

Gandhi. The oppositional leaders, Jawaharlal Nehrū and Subhas Chandra Bose, when faced with a clear issue, shrank, however, from launching an attack on Gandhi and thereby forfeiting the support of the Indian bourgeois. In these circumstances the opposition collapsed, Gandhi had his way, and the Karachi Congress ratified the truce, appointing Gandhi as its sole representative at the Round Table Conference in London.

In the months preceding Gandhi's departure for the Round Table Conference, he toured the rural areas in which peasant unrest was assuming dangerous proportions, in a vain attempt to persuade the peasants to pay their dues. In September he left for London.

By this time the condition of the peasants was desperate. The world crisis, which had begun in 1929, was now reaching its height, leading to a further slump in agricultural prices. They were forced to resort to all expedients to meet the heavy land tax and to satisfy the grasping demands of moneylenders and landlords. The first of these expedients was to dispose of their women's gold and silver ornaments, representing their savings for generations. These they sold to the moneylenders for a fraction of the cost, the moneylenders selling them to the Government and to the banks. It is estimated that of the 111½ crore rupees of gold exported from India from September 1931 to December 1932, the bulk came from this expropriation of the peasantry. Having thus lost their savings, and the slump still continuing, the peasants' position became hopeless. Many of them sold themselves into slavery to the moneylenders, agreeing to work for nothing but subsistence. These debt-slaves, recognized in India under the name of *kamias*, become the actual property of the moneylenders, who dispose of them and their children as commodities. The son of a *kamia* inherits his father's debt and servitude. Other peasants threw up their holdings and became vagrants, finding refuge in the jails. The Government of the United Provinces reported in January 1933:

"The tenants preferred to give away their land and renounce their rights rather than pay the rent, which under present conditions has become excessively high. Consequently the number of deserted holdings for the year (1931) grew from 20,860 to 71,430, while the number of forced collections of the land tax amounted to 256,284."

These figures are for one province only. Similar conditions prevailed in other provinces. In 1931 about two million peasants rebelled in the Tharrawady districts of Burma, and resisted the concentrated attacks of Government forces for two years.

The storm broke over India while Mr. Gandhi was in London negotiating concessions for Indian capitalism. The ruined peasantry of the United Provinces organized and refused to pay rents and taxes. The Congress leaders of the United Provinces, for the most part landlords, were completely ignored. The Government and the Indian bourgeois were seriously alarmed. The peasantry of the United Provinces had set an example for the whole of rural India, and if the movement spread it might well develop into a class war which could conceivably destroy not only imperialism, but also Indian capitalism and landlordism. It was necessary to check the movement without delay.

Gandhi broke away from his admirers in London, and hurried back to India. On his arrival the Congress leaders met in secret conclave and proclaimed the resumption of the civil disobedience movement. The leaders, this time, made no attempt to organize the people behind any programme, but, led by Gandhi, took refuge in the jails. While thus maintaining their prestige as political martyrs, they gave the Government a clear field for repression. By a combination of police terrorism and temporary reduction and remission of taxes in the badly affected areas, the Government finally succeeded in driving the movement, deserted by its leaders, underground.

No sooner had this been achieved than Gandhi again came

to life by declaring the first of the series of his dramatic and extraordinary "fasts unto death." This first fast was a protest against the proposal of the Government to provide separate electorates under the new constitution for the untouchables. Before the end of the fast, however, he had succeeded in changing its purpose into one of uplifting the untouchables, and of securing for them the right to pray to Hindu gods in Hindu temples. Here was a way out.

Under cover of the sentimental hysteria raised by his fast, he had cleverly sidetracked a dangerous mass movement into the harmless channel of religious reform; he had destroyed the whole for the fraction exactly in the same way as he had substituted the Bardoli programme of agrarian reform for the non-co-operation movement in 1922. This time, however, he did not attain his purpose at once; he found it necessary to declare another "fast unto death" on behalf of the perplexed untouchables before he was able at the Poona conference of the Congress leaders finally to secure the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement, which had become dangerous to property, Indian and British alike. A surrender, however, must not be made to appear a surrender. To cover up his tracks Gandhi announced that he and a few chosen followers would enhance nationalist prestige by publicly defying the law. But before he could actually do so he was arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Gandhi had not been in prison more than a fortnight before he declared his third "fast unto death," this time in order to secure his own release—a release that was essential to the successful launching of his anti-untouchability campaign. Once released he announced that he proposed to serve his sentence of one year outside the jail, and that while doing so he could not honourably offer any further disobedience to the laws. He would, therefore, confine his activities to popularizing his campaign for religious and social reform. Once more he retired from political life, lapsing into a holy obscurity until his

services should once more be required by Indian capitalism. But new forces were rapidly taking control of the situation. With Gandhi's second retirement, the national struggle entered into its third phase: the struggle of the workers and peasants and lower-middle class against a combination of British imperialism and the Indian bourgeois.

In the meantime, the Round Table Conference, attended by the Liberal representatives of Indian capitalism, was drawing to a close in London. In April 1933 a Joint Parliamentary Committee was appointed to draft the basis of the agreement between imperialism and the Indian bourgeois on a new constitution. The Report of the Simon Commission was ignored. After holding 159 meetings, during which it put 17,000 questions to 120 witnesses, the Joint Committee finally published on November 22, 1934, its Report, which was accepted by Parliament. On the basis of this Report, in January 1935 an India Bill was introduced in the House of Commons, which, in spite of Indian hostility and the stormy protests of the Diehard Conservatives led by Mr. Winston Churchill, was finally passed and received the Royal assent.

2

The India Bill was introduced into the House of Commons by the "National" Government, which had succeeded the Labour Government on August 26th, retaining the same Prime Minister. It retained not only Ramsay MacDonald, but practically the same Indian policy. Under the auspices of the "National" Government the Round Table Conference ended its rather futile deliberations, and the Report of the Joint Select Committee was published. This Report and the debate on it in Parliament clearly revealed the cynical frankness of the imperialist majority; a cynical frankness which the usual hypocritical phraseology could not disguise. Although the usual phrases were used, emphasis was no longer laid on the future

benevolence and philanthropy of British rule in India, but on the necessity of holding India by any means and at any cost. It was in the words of the Liberal member, Foot, "not a question so much of India needing us, but of us needing India." Instead it was made abundantly clear that constitutional reform was urgently necessary if imperialism was going to preserve its hold of India. The necessity was expressed frankly by Mr. Baldwin to the Conservative Party conference at the Queen's Hall on December 4, 1934. He then warned the Diehard opposition within the Conservative camp that unless the scheme of Indian constitutional reform was accepted "we should lose India in two generations."

Baldwin's statement was a proof that the dominant imperialist majority had a much firmer grasp of the realities of the Indian situation than the semi-fascist diehard group led by Churchill. The inflexible "No Surrender" policy of the Churchill group was the policy adopted by the Government of George III, which resulted in the loss of the American colonies; a lesson which imperialism has not forgotten. The MacDonald–Baldwin Government realized that imperialism could only hope to prolong its rule in India, in face of the growing forces and difficulties which history is piling up against it, by remaining flexible; in order to survive it had to adapt its machinery of government from time to time to changing political and economic circumstances. Constitutional reform is the means by which an astute imperialism carries out alterations and repairs to the machinery of government, in order to bring that machinery up to date, so that it can deal more effectively with the growing strength of opposing forces.

From the very beginning the British Government showed its determination to impose the new constitution of India in spite of all difficulties and in the teeth of bitter opposition both in England and in India. In Parliament the real opposition came, strangely enough, not from the official Labour opposition, but from the Conservative Right Wing led by Churchill, Sir Henry

Page-Croft and others, who carried their campaign against the proposals from Parliament to the Conservative Party and to the country. The Labour Party was extremely handicapped in its oppositional role by its previous participation in the Round Table Conferences and in the work of the Joint Select Committee, and by the fact that it was under the Labour Government that the new imperialist policy was initiated. This oppositional inadequacy became an object of comment during the discussions in Parliament on the Report of the Joint Committee. In replying to the first debate, Baldwin opened his remarks by saying that he proposed to ignore Labour opinion and reply to "the real opposition . . . from a number of his own supporters." Churchill also jeered at the Labour leaders, accusing them of giving birth to the proposals:

> "Their paternity is proved without a doubt, and they are not going to escape the consequences by merely abusing the wretched brat which has been foisted on the guileless Conservatives."[1]

The leaders of the Labour Party became rather conscious of their weak position; and Lansbury weakly attempted to defend himself in the face of Churchill's contempt:

> "We shall not obstruct, and because we take that attitude the right hon. Member for Epping has once or twice chivied us by saying, 'You are not an Opposition; you do not fight the Government. It is we who fight the Government.' "[2]

On the other hand, the diehard opposition was unrelenting in its attack on the proposed new constitution. They considered that any concession to Indian pressure and opinion, however slight it might be, necessarily weakened the imperialist hold of India. They contended that the existing machinery of government in India was quite strong enough as it was, if it only would ignore Indian opinion and use its strength. They

[1] *Hansard*, December 12, 1934, p. 447.

[2] Ibid., p. 507.

demanded "firm government," by which they intended an open dictatorship based even more completely than before on violence and terror, and carried on in the teeth of the opposition of every section of the population. They made no secret of the form of government they would like to see established in India. They treated with scorn Baldwin's plea that if the Government adopted the Churchill policy in India it would be faced almost immediately with a mass rebellion; and Sir Henry Page-Croft produced and read to a startled House of Commons the following extract from an important document signed by the "eight greatest generals" who had recently held command in India:

> "We, the undersigned, having had considerable and recent military experience in India, state unhesitatingly that, from a military point of view, we can, at any time, hold India against external and internal dangers, provided we retain command of the land and sea communications and control of the police."[1]

In India the uncompromising opposition of the mass of the Indian people to the new proposals was apparent immediately on the publication of the Joint Committee's Report. All the Indian politicians who had co-operated with the Government in drafting the scheme were ignominiously defeated in the Indian elections which followed the publication of the Report. The Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, officially mourned their fall:

> ". . . is there a substantial body of public men in India who are prepared to work the Constitution? I am painfully aware of the fact that few, if any, Indian public men can say that they are satisfied with this or any other scheme. . . . I know also that in the recent elections which took place for the Indian Assembly, Congress, upon a programme of

[1] *Hansard*, December 11, 1934, p. 256.

hostility to these proposals, won very many seats. I know also that many of my Indian friends with whom I have worked during the last three or four years, have been defeated. They fell, let me say in passing, in the honourable cause of co-operation and reconciliation."[1]

Even the Indian bourgeois, whose hopes had been fed for years with specious promises of substantial economic and political concessions, were grievously disappointed with the new constitution; but they showed their willingness to support it because, being the immediate oppressors of the people, they are forced to rely on the strength of imperialism to protect them from the mass revolt which is maturing in the villages and the factories. The Indian princes, remnants of feudalism depending entirely on the British for existence, afraid of interference with their misrule, are also suspicious of the scheme, and have had to be dragooned into acceptance by threats, promises, and bribes.

The cold reception given by all sections of opinion to the new constitution can be easily understood by a brief examination of the scheme. It has been well described as a "dictatorship masquerading as a democracy."

It is proposed in broad outline to establish an All-India Federal Government, to which all the British Indian Provinces and the native States will be linked. The Provincial Governments will be independent of the Federal Government in all matters exclusively provincial, and the internal regime of the Indian States will be exactly as at present—a feudal autocracy. Matters which concern India as a whole will be the responsibility of the Federal Government. The Federal Government will consist of the Governor-General, who will be assisted by elected ministers responsible to a bicameral legislature; and the provinces will be administered by the Governor, with the aid of responsible ministers, and legislatures which will be

[1] *Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 57.

bicameral or unicameral according to the importance of the province.

The composition of the provincial legislatures is the negation of democracy. Each community will vote as a separate electorate, and there will be special seats reserved for Hindu untouchables, representatives from backward areas, Mohammedans, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, representatives of commerce and industry, mining and planting, landlords and labour, and representatives of the universities. The principle of communal electorates has been thus extended to class electorates. In the Bengal Provincial Assembly there will be 119 seats reserved for Mohammedans and only 80 for those elected generally.

Suffrage will be strictly limited on property and educational qualifications. Out of a population of 350,000,000, the total electorate will only amount to 29,000,000 male and 6,000,000 female voters. Thus Bengal, with a population of 50,000,000, will only have an electorate of 7,500,000 men and women. By restricting the suffrage, imperialism, in the words of Major Attlee, is handing over "the workers and peasants of India to the princes, landlords, moneylenders, industrialists, and lawyers."

The Federal Legislature will consist of two Houses: the Assembly and the Council of State. The Assembly will consist of 375 members, 125 of whom will be nominated by the princes, and the Council of State of 260 members, of whom 104 will be nominated by the princes. The position of the princes becomes curious. They will be forced to nominate 229 of the 635 members of the Federal Legislature, although the laws made by that Legislature will not be valid in their States, nor will their subjects pay the Federal taxes. But they will be compelled to fulfil their function of acting as a reactionary block to neutralize political India.

There will be no direct election to the Federal Assembly. Apart from those nominated by the princes, its members will

be elected on a communal basis by the provincial assemblies, sitting as electoral colleges, care being taken to secure adequate representation of the landlords, merchants, and industrial capitalists. Certain matters, such as the armed forces and the relations with the crown will be placed outside the competence of the legislatures.

But even the packed legislatures cannot be trusted to function exclusively in the imperialist interests; and therefore imperialism has devised an all-embracing system of safeguards, reserved subjects, special responsibilities, which concentrates all real political power in the hands of a super-dictator, the Governor-General, who will himself direct and control the Departments of Defence, External Affairs and Ecclesiastical Affairs, responsible only to the Secretary of State in London. He will, moreover, be empowered to act independently of Legislature or ministers in matters described as "his special responsibilities." These responsibilities have been sharply defined as:

(*a*) The prevention of any grave menace to the peace or tranquillity of India, or any part thereof;

(*b*) The safeguarding of the financial stability and credit of the Federation;

(*c*) The safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the minorities;

(*d*) The securing to the members of Public Services any rights provided for them by the Constitution Act and the safeguarding of their legitimate interests;

(*e*) The prevention of commercial discrimination;

(*f*) The protection of the rights of any Indian State;

(*g*) Any matter which affects the administration of any department under the direction and control of the Governor-General.

Although these special responsibilities are practically all-comprehensive, the Governor-General's powers are not limited to

them. He will be able at his sole discretion to suspend the constitution, issue ordinances without reference to the legislature, and to refuse his assent to any measure passed by the legislature. He will also have the personal control and direction of the police. In the provinces the Governors will have powers and special responsibilities more or less analogous to those of the Governor-General.

To safeguard further its financial and commercial interests, imperialism has constructed additional machinery. In February 1934 the "Rump" Legislative Assembly, shorn of most of its nationalist members, was induced to pass the Indian Reserve Bank Act, giving the legislative sanction for the creation of a Central Bank which would control the credit mechanism of the country. It would have the sole right of note issue, and be entrusted with the management of the public debt. The Government of India would transfer to the issue department of the bank gold and short-dated sterling securities equal to 50 per cent. of the note issue, or 10 per cent. more than the minimum backing required in that form; and all the exchange and local banks would be forced to deposit with the Reserve Bank 5 per cent. of their short-dated and 2½ per cent. of their long-dated deposits free of interest. The main responsibility for the management of this all-powerful financial machinery would lie with a Governor and two Deputy-Governors, who would be appointed by the Governor-General, who would also appoint four directors. Other directors would be elected on a communal basis to represent the various chambers of commerce and the landlords. The Indian Reserve Bank Act has been incorporated into the new Government of India Act.

The effect of this complicated constitutional structure will be to strengthen greatly the imperialist hold of India. The Conservative diehard, Lord Salisbury, described it as placing "India into a straitjacket," but at the same time feared that the straitjacket would turn out to be made of paper. He was reassured by Sir Samuel Hoare:

"No, Sir, these safeguards are not paper safeguards. They are safeguards with sanction behind them and with effective executive action to be put into effect if need arises."[1]

Indian opinion, however, had no illusions as to the real purpose of the new constitution. Summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru, that opinion is frank and to the point:

"A charter of slavery is no law for the slave, and though we may perforce submit for a while to it and to the humiliation of ordinances and the like, inherent in that enforced submission is the right and the desire to rebel against it and to end it."[2]

3

While imperialism is hurrying the introduction of the new constitution, fearing that any delay might make it too late, the nationalist movement prepares to continue the struggle, not for a vague Dominion status, but for complete independence. But the movement is on a different basis to the old. No longer are the masses of the people the passive instrument of economic interests hostile to their own; no longer are they easily led astray by political abstractions divorced from their misery. The peasants and workers and middle-class intellectuals have felt the power of mass organization, and when next they organize for battle they are likely to do so in their own economic interests and not in those of the landlords, brokers, and capitalists, who are their immediate exploiters. The struggle for independence has become a class struggle of peasant against landlord and moneylender, of worker against millowners.

Before this new great force of history all the old traditional ways of revolutionary struggle become antiquated and are swept aside. Terrorism, the product of political immaturity, is

[1] *Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 56.

[2] Presidential Address to the National Congress, Lucknow, April 1936.

rapidly losing ground before the advance of scientific socialism, which, already strongly entrenched in the industrial working class, is beginning to reach the peasantry and to purge the Indian National Congress of its reactionary elements. The formation of a Congress Socialist Party within the Congress is significant of the forces at work. The theories of the Socialist Party, although still immature and idealist, are finding ready converts among the Congress rank and file. In spite of the intrigues and open hostility of the millowners and financiers of Ahmedabad and Bombay, Jawaharlal Nehru, an avowed socialist, has become the acknowledged leader of the Congress movement. In his presidential address to the National Congress at Lucknow in April 1936 he defined the programme which he would like to see the Congress adopt:

> "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in Socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. . . . (Socialism) involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of co-operative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order. Some glimpse we can have of this new civilization in the territories of the U.S.S.R."

In the same address Nehru asks for the co-operation of all the progressive forces of the world:

> "To the progressive forces of the world, to those who stand for human freedom and the breaking of political and

social bonds, we offer our full co-operation in their struggle against imperialism and Fascist reaction, for we realize that our struggle is a common one. Our grievance is not against any people or any country as such, and we know that even in imperialist England which throttles us, there are many who do not love imperialism and who stand for freedom."

Instead of turning the clock back to feudal economic and feudal isolation, the new nationalist movement shows signs of wishing to turn it forward to world socialism.

In this it has the same objective as the advanced section of the British Socialist movement, which is now realizing that the Indian fight against imperialism and the class struggle in Britain are one and indivisible. Marx's statement that "a people which enslaves another people forges its own chains," is now appreciated. The economic impossibility for the Indian peasant, after nearly two centuries of imperialist rule, to renew the inadequate rags which the standards of Western respectability compel him to wear, and the menace of cheap Eastern competition leading to rationalization and speeding up in Britain, have had disastrous effects on the standards of the British working class. And in addition to their increasing poverty, the British workers are faced with the threat of fascism as the only means by which imperialism in its decay can safeguard its profits at their expense, and with war to defend the imperialist right to exploit more than four hundred million people. In the present conditions of decay they have nothing to gain from the Empire except increasing poverty, war, and the loss of their few civil liberties: they have, on the other hand, much to gain from an alliance with the great movement of colonial workers and peasants against the common enemy.

The socialist ideal is to convert the existing Empire into a commonwealth of free, self-governing socialist States. This cannot be accomplished by a socialist Britain formally giving "equality" to the oppressed nations of the Empire; it can only

be accomplished by the British socialist movement giving all its moral and material support to the Indian people in their struggle for their independence from imperialism. In putting forward their demand for a Socialist Commonwealth, British socialists must admit the right of oppressed nations to secede if they wish from such a commonwealth; for without the right of secession there can be no *free* association of peoples. The correct socialist attitude to the colonial question is fully explained by Lenin:

> "Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed classes, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e. their freedom to secede."

There are forces growing in India and elsewhere in the Empire which would welcome such a free association with a socialist Britain. But first they must free themselves from the grip of imperialism.

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