

# PART I. THE PEOPLE OF INDIA AND THEIR COUNTRY

## II. The Awakening of India

*"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect of the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."*—American Declaration of Independence.

India is a country with a very old civilization; but the Indian nation is a young nation. For the Indian people are only in the modern period awakening to their full consciousness and role as a nation among the progressive nations of the world.

To understand this awakening of the Indian nation is the key to the understanding of India today. The task of political wisdom is to see what is young and growing, not to bury the gaze in what is old and decaying.

India and China stand closely linked in the modern world situation. China, also, is a vast country with a very ancient civilization; but the Chinese nation is a young nation, advancing to political consciousness and strength only in the modern period. The Indian and Chinese peoples, representing the two leading national liberation movements of the modern world, comprise between one third and one half of humanity.

The Chinese people have already through a long and heroic struggle, since their National Revolution of 1911, won their independence and thrown off the foreign yoke, even if large portions of their territory are still occupied by the Japanese invaders. They have established their National Government. Under its leadership they have mobilized their armed strength against the Japanese aggressors. They have won recognition as an equal ally of the United Nations in the battle for human freedom against fascism.

The Indian people are aspiring to win their corresponding position as a free and equal nation among the nations of the world,

and to play their part as an ally of the United Nations in the common battle for freedom.

The advance of the Indian people to freedom is more arduous and less developed than in the case of China; for their subjection to foreign rule has been more prolonged and more complete. But for that same reason the awakening of the Indian people is of profound world significance; for India has been for generations the main basis of imperialism in the modern era.

The area of India is 1,808,679 square miles, or fifteen times the area of the British Isles, and twenty times the area of Great Britain. The population of India was 389 millions in the last 1941 census, and is estimated to be now approaching 400 millions, or nearly one fifth of the human race.

The 400 millions of India constitute three-quarters of the total population of the British Empire, four-fifths of the overseas population of the British Empire, and nearly nine-tenths of the subject colonial population of the British Empire.

If we compare the extent of the eight leading colonial empires on the eve of the present war, the Indian population subject to British rule represented in 1938 more than half the total colonial population of the world, and more than one and a half times the combined colonial population of the French, Japanese, Dutch, American, Belgian, Italian and Portuguese empires—that is, of the remaining colonial empires.

India is not only far and away the largest of the direct colonial possessions of imperialism. It is also the oldest, the longest dominated and exploited over many generations, and therefore the most complete demonstration of the working and outcome of the colonial system.

The European colonizing Powers all directed their first efforts toward India and the wealth of India; they stumbled across America and the "West Indies" in the course of searching for the new sea route to India; it was only in the later period that they extended their expansion to Africa, Australia, China and the rest of Asia.

The conquest of India by Western civilization has constituted one of the main pillars of capitalist development in Europe, of British world supremacy, and of the whole structure of modern imperialism.

What has been the outcome of imperialist rule in India?

Whatever the divergent social and political viewpoint of observers, on one point all, whether of the right or of the left, are agreed. After two centuries of imperialist rule, India presents a spectacle of squalid poverty and misery of the mass of the people without equal in the world.

This is not a question of natural poverty of the country or deficiency of resources. The vast territories occupied by the Indian people enjoy great natural wealth and resources. This is not only true in respect to the fertility of the soil and potentialities of agricultural production, which, as further examination will show, could, if brought into full use, provide abundant supplies for a much greater population than the existing. It is also true in respect of the raw materials for highly developed industrial production, especially coal, iron, oil and water-power, alongside the intelligence and aptitude (not wholly lost from the time when India enjoyed technical primacy among nations, before imperialist rule) of the population.

Yet these resources and possibilities are mainly undeveloped, as the present testing time of war has brought sharply to awareness. If capitalism in general is characterized by waste and relative failure to utilize the full potentialities of production, then this failure reaches a most extreme degree in India.

The basic problem of India is thus a problem of 400 million human beings who are living in conditions of extreme poverty and semi-starvation for the overwhelming majority, and are at the same time living under a foreign rule which holds complete control over their lives and maintains by force the social system leading to these terrible conditions. These hundreds of millions are struggling for life, for the means of life, for elementary freedom. The problem of their struggle, and of how they can realize their aims, is the problem of India.

This is the problem which has now come to a head in a new world situation.

The domination of India has long been the prize of rival imperialist Powers. That domination has not yet ended; and today there is added the still more menacing threat of fascist conquest. But at the same time there is a new factor which has arisen in the modern period, and which is of decisive significance, alike in the present crisis and for the whole future.

India is awakening. India, for thousands of years the prey of

successive waves of conquerors, is awakening to independent existence as a united people with their own role to play in the world. This awakening has leaped forward in our lifetime. In the last twenty years a new India has emerged. Today, despite the darkness of the present hour, India's advance to freedom is universally recognized as approaching victory in the near future.

This new awakening India has no intention to be either the victim of the existing imperialist rulers or the prey of the new fascist aggressors. As the declarations of the national movement have made clear, the awakening Indian people is determined to take its equal place with the peoples of the world on the side of freedom and world peace. India's advance is heralding a great accession of strength to the forces of the peoples all over the world against the tide of reaction.

Already before the present war the question of the continuance of imperialist rule in India had become an immediate and urgent question, both because of the visible weakening and decline of that rule in the modern period, and of its conspicuous failure to solve the problems of the people of the country, and also because of the increasing awakening and determination of the Indian people to win their freedom.

Over the record of the past quarter of a century since the last war all the efforts of imperialism at adaptation to the new conditions, all the alternating waves of coercion and concession did not succeed in damming the advancing tide of the national movement, nor were they able to bring any solution to the problem of India.

The immediate aim of the Indian national movement is national independence and the democratic right of self-government. This is the indispensable first step, both for the effective defense of India and mobilization of the people in the present crisis, and in order to advance to tackle the further heavy problems which confront the Indian people.

Every stage of civilization and of culture within class-society, from the most primitive to the most advanced, exists in India. The widest range of social, economic, political and cultural problems thus find their sharpest expression in Indian conditions. The problems of the relations and co-existence of differing races and religions; the battle against old superstitions and decaying social forms and traditions; the fight for education; the fight for the

liberation of women; the question of the reorganization of agriculture and of the development of industry, and of the relationship of town and country; the issues of class conflict in the most manifold and acute forms; the problems of the relationship of nationalism and socialism: all these varied issues of the modern world press forward with especial sharpness and urgency in India.

The people of India have already played a great part in world history, not as conquerors, but in the sphere of culture, thought, art and industry. Today they need to play their part in war in order to defeat the fascist aggressor, and to advance as a free people to the solution of their own problems. The national and social liberation of the Indian people will bring great new wealth to humanity.

### III. The Wealth of India

*"The most interesting fact about India is that her soil is rich and her people poor."*—M. L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 1925, p. 73.

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

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

The Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-18 opened its report with the statement:

"At a time when the West of Europe, the birthplace of the modern industrial system, was inhabited by uncivilized tribes, India was famous for the wealth of her rulers and for the high artistic skill of her craftsmen. And even at a much later period, when merchant adventurers from the West made their first appearance in India, the industrial development of this country was at any rate not inferior to that of the more advanced European nations." (Indian Industrial Commission Report, p. 6.)