

# Economic Causes of War

## Article No. 14.

THE history of India begins with the sacred writings of the Aryans. A thousand years B.C., the guide to conduct was "Speak the Truth, Practice Virtue." About 1200 A.D., the invasions for plunder began from the Northwest by Afghan and Turkoman adventurers. Despite the geographical isolation of India there has always been a considerable trade between her and Europe in jewels, precious metals, embroidered stuffs and essences of all kinds. In early times these were transported by coasting vessels to the head of the Persian Gulf and carried overland to Constantinople. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks resulted in the discovery of a sea route to India. Trade with India became immensely lucrative. A single ship in 1606 made a profit of 236 per cent., and goods costing £356,000 in India sold in England for £1,914,000. This profitable trade began the French and English rivalry which practically did not end until the Morocco affair of 1904. King Louis, in 1672, was counselled that the best method of obtaining control of this Eastern trade was to seize Egypt.

By 1763 the British had succeeded in controlling large possessions, and when the French East India Company went bankrupt in 1770, Britain was left alone in India. The "Round Table" for September, 1912, speaking of India, says, page 622: "The two principles which have governed our policy in the past will still govern it in the years that lie ahead. On the one side are the interests of the Empire. The commerce of Great Britain with India today is worth more than £80,000,000 a year. On this trade depends not only the profit of the merchants but the employment of many thousands of work-people. On it also depends that national revenue and custom duties, income tax and so on."

India has had a movement for self-government for years, but it has also been ignored at Paris. Robert Williams, Robert Smillie and George Lansbury made an appeal in the "Daily Herald," London, to protest against the methods used to put down the nationalists of India. In that appeal it read: "Indians ask the same right as Poland, Siberia and other small European nations, yet the bureaucrats of India replied with a Coercion Act which robs them of freedom of speech, freedom of the press and public meeting. Indians are unarmed, yet they are bombed from aeroplanes and shot down with machine guns." The appeal asks for self-government for a country of 315 millions of human beings. In some districts the people were forced to dismount and salute British officers, if riding on horseback or in wheeled conveyances. Orders signed by C. G. Hodgson, Lt.-Col., say that persons carrying opened and raised umbrellas shall lower them. The Indian revenue is mostly spent on the army and railways, which are built in part for strategic purposes.

Keir Hardie in his book on India points out that British investments in public works and railways in India were \$500,000,000 at 5 per cent., which means £25,000,000 a year in profit. Civil and military pensions amount to £30,000,000 a year. The natives are shut out of the high salaried positions. Eight thousand Anglo-Indian officials draw £13,930,544 a year, while 130,000 natives draw £3,286,163 a year.

In 1858, Queen Victoria promised the Indian people partial admittance to offices of the service, yet after a lapse of fifty years King Edward, in 1908, issued a proclamation containing the same promise. The Indian peasant used to pay one-fifth in kind, land rent, whether the harvest was good or bad. The Government charge land rent on what is called a 12 anna crop average. 16 anna is looked on as a bumper crop, but for ten years three crops only struck the established average, while the remainder were under, although the peasant had to pay up just the same. The pasture land, which formerly was common, is now enclosed and sometimes the peasant has to go a long distance for pasturage for which he pays rent. If his pigs wander into the unfenced forest they are impounded and he is fined.

Wild animals may root up his crop but he is not allowed to carry a gun. He is generally up to the neck in debt to the money lender, who takes a lien on his crops, and also to the railway companies. This is a splendid example of capitalist methods of creating a proletariat.

Shapurji Saklatvala, of the Workers' Welfare League of India, no later than January 20th, 1920, stated in England that: "Thousands of children 10 to 11 years of age are employed in coal and ore mining districts at 2 annas a day of six hours." He states that fines and confiscations are deducted from these wages which before the war were the equivalent of 4 cents. S. Satyamurti, delegate of the Indian National Congress, says in "Foreign Affairs" for October, 1919: "Last year out of an income of 81 million pounds, 41 million was allotted to the army, 18 millions for railways, only 4 millions for education, and 26 million pounds of India's money was spent in England, thanks to the political relationship between India and England." He also states: "Within the last three months no fewer than 30 newspapers have been prohibited. . . . Deportation without trial are favorite weapons with the Indian bureaucracy. . . . In conclusion . . . so long as India remains in her present position as the happy hunting-ground of the foreign exploiters and adventurers, the earth hungry nations will find in her a potent cause of war."

The high prices in India have affected the laborer to such an extent that a professor of Indore College made the statement that the Indian laborer spending the whole of his wages on food could only purchase 81 per cent. of the diets officially prescribed in the gaols. This is one of the great economic factors that is creating discontent in India. V. H. Rutherford, M.P. for Brentford, 1906-1910, says in his book "Commonwealth or Empire," page 69: "I must utter a warning to the friends of Nationalism in Britain and India. In 1916 Mr. Asquith rejected the insidious invitation of certain interested parties at home and in India to insert the thin edge of the wedge of protectionism for the cotton industry of Bombay, which policy was reversed in 1917 by Lloyd George's government ostensibly as a war measure. Financial exigencies suggested a loan of £100,000,000 from India requiring £6,000,000 a year interest, to help to meet which the cotton duties were raised from 3½ to 7½ per cent. without any corresponding rise in the excise duty. The Secretary of State, Mr. Chamberlain, in defending this definite breach in our free trade policy, described the loan as a free and generous gift of the Indian people, a description altogether dishonest, for the people of India have no real part in the government of their country and were never consulted. Instead of a 'gift' it is a loan forced upon the poorest country in the world by the richest. Every penny and more is needed for education, irrigation and sanitation, so that this imperial imposition is another impediment to her sanitary and agricultural development, to make the agricultural laborer and the mill worker pay more for his cotton goods to benefit the cotton millowners who pay the workers thirty shillings a month, is not economic emancipation but economic damnation."

To endeavor to placate the Moslems of India, Egypt, Morocco and Tripoli, the French, Italian and British rulers are to allow the Turk to remain in Constantinople, but while they may be the outward appearance the suspicion is strong that British and French investors are holders of hundreds of millions of Turkish bonds, and are keenly interested financially.

What has been the result of the Great War? The liberal paper of Amsterdam answers this question in an article thus: "For whatever reason the British public may be dissatisfied with the Coalition Government, it is certainly not because they have neglected England's imperial position. The French who have always had a weakness for Hither Asia are openly dissatisfied. Could they ever have expected any-

thing else? In imperial policy the English are past masters, and against their world policy, carried on with such farsightedness and with so much energy and cunning, all the others who went to have a try at world policy are mere bunglers. With what a master hand has the British Empire been built up in the course of the century, with a master hand has its further expansion been worked out now." . . . "Persia is an illustration of this policy. Germany, Turkey and Russia have collapsed, so that England's partner in the protection of Persia has gone as have all other possible claimants or rivals to that position. Only France is left, as America disclaims any interest in West Asia, and what can France do against England? The result then is that England is the real victor in the world war. England will shape a new powerful colonial empire and has been able to find a solution to the various problems whereby her dominating position is assured. From the Cape to Egypt and from there over Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia, Baluchistan, perhaps also Afghanistan and India, stretches an unbroken territory where the British flag waves or where British influence rules. What the proudest British imperialist scarcely dared to dream of has now been realized, or is near realization. Must not such dazzling success awaken the jealousy of others? But what will the League of Nations say or do? The League in which a place has been left for Persia too; what can the League do against the power of facts? In imperialism, too, the rule holds of the survival of the fittest."

Measured by results Britain won the war, but the enjoyment of its fruits is a different question as far as the workers are concerned.

Since the above was written Lloyd George has shot some more holes in the League of Nations.

PETER T. LECKIE.

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