

Emergence of Independent Nations in Asia

Within a few years after the Second World War, a large number of Asian countries became independent. One of the first to win her independence was India about which you will read in detail in Chapter 16. India had, however, been partitioned and along with India, another independent state, Pakistan, also came into being (Pakistan broke up in 1971 when her eastern part -now Bangladesh -became independent.) The independence of India was of great importance in the history of freedom movements in Asia and Africa. The policies pursued by the government of independent India under the leadership of her first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, helped in strengthening the freedom movements in other countries and in hastening the achievement of independence by them.

Burma, renamed Myanmar recently, achieved her independence from Britain a few months after India became independent. In 1944, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) had been formed in Burma. Its aim was to resist the

Japanese invasion of Burma and to win independence for Burma. After the war, the British tried to restore their rule over Burma. This led to the intensification of the movement for freedom. In the course of the struggle, many leaders of the Burmese freedom movement were assassinated. However, Britain was forced to agree to the demand for freedom and Burma became independent on 4 January 1948.

The beginning of the nationalist movement in Indonesia has been referred to in the previous chapter. After the defeat of Japan, Sukarno, one of the pioneers of the freedom movement in Indonesia, proclaimed the independence of Indonesia. However, soon after the British troops landed there in order to help the Dutch to restore their rule. The government of independent Indonesia which had been formed by Sukarno resisted the attempt to reestablish colonial rule. There were demands in many countries of the world to put an end to the war which had been started in Indonesia to restore the Dutch rule. In Asian countries, the reaction was particularly intense. The leaders of the Indian freedom movement demanded that Indian soldiers who had been sent to Indonesia as a part of the British army should be withdrawn. After India became free, she convened a conference of Asian nations in support of Indonesia's independence. The conference met in New Delhi in January 1949 and called for the complete independence of Indonesia. The resistance of the Indonesian people and the mounting pressure of world opinion and Asian countries compelled Holland to set the leaders of Indonesian people free. On 2 November 1949, Holland recognized the independence of Indonesia.

Within a few months of India's independence, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) also became free in February 1948. Thailand had been occupied by Japan and after the defeat of Japan became independent. During the war, Japan had driven out the American forces from the Philippines. In 1946, the government of the United States agreed to independence of the Philippines. In Malaya British rule had been reestablished after the war. In 1957,

Malaya (now Malaysia) became an independent nation.

weakened in Asia as a result of the Chinese revolution.