

Dietmar Rothermund

The Industrialization of India



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Preface

My interest in industry began in my childhood, long before I became a student of history. My father was the chief engineer of a large foundry with 600 workers at Henschel, Kassel. The company produced locomotives, but during the Second World war it was involved in the production of the Tiger tank. I visited my father several times at his place of work and asked him many questions. In the early 1950s he had a young Indian trainee, Satish Rastogi, he was the first Indian I met and I learned much from him. I later on visited him at TELCO, Jamshedpur, where he then was the chief engineer of the TELCO foundry. After TELCO I also visited the steel mill at Rourkela in 1961. I was later on told that people there thought I was an East German spy, because I asked so many pointed questions. I was amused by this suspicion. It seems that by picking my father's brain, I had absorbed a good deal of technical knowledge. During my stay in India, I often visited factories and workshops and talked to industrialists as well as labour leaders.

In 1992 I joined the Indo-German Consultative Group, which consisted mostly of Indian and German industrialists, with a few professors added to the team. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had asked Chancellor Helmut Kohl to convene this group, which then met every year, alternating between India and Germany. We had the task to produce a letter to both heads of government, indicating prospects of Indo-German cooperation. After our discussions we also visited important places. I still remember the impressive tour of ISRO in 1999. I learnt a great deal by talking to the Indian members of the group to which I belonged from 1992 to 2002. Prof. Ragnunath Mashelkar, Director General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, was also a member of this group. I got to know him there and kept in touch with him in later years. My assessment of the work of the CSIR in this book owes much to my discussions with him.

My colleague and friend, Prof. B.B. Chaudhuri, asked me then to contribute a chapter on the industrialization of India to his edited volume on the economic history of India from the 18th to the 20th century, (see bibliography) He kindly permitted me to reproduce much of the text here. I up-dated it. I had written two books after this text: *India: The Rise of an Asian Giant* for Yale University Press, in 2008 and *Contemporary India. Political, Economic and Social Developments since 1947* for Pearson Publishers in

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New Delhi, in 2013. In both these books I also referred to industrialization, I added some of this information to the present text.

Dossenheim near Heidelberg, October 2019

Dietmar Rothermund

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