

## Post-War National Movement (1945–47)

The Second World War came to an end in Europe with the suicide of Hitler (30th April 1945) and subsequent surrender of Germany (8th May 1945). With this, the freedom struggle in India entered a new phase.

The period during 1945–47 was a brief but crucial period of Indian National Movement. Even though it represented a climax of all political activities of the past decades, it was the Second World War and its impact which significantly shaped the course of events during this period.

### IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

#### Impact on Indians

After the decline of the Quit India Movement, the Indian political scene was rather quiet. However, significant disquiet accumulated beneath the surface owing to the war time sufferings of the people-

- **Scarcity:** Indian agricultural and industrial products were channelised in a big way to meet the demands of the Allied forces. This led to a sharp rise in hoarding practices and black markets, further giving rise to artificial scarcities and inflation.
- **Inflation:** Scarcity of basic products led to sharp rise in prices.
- **Bengal famine:** A cumulative effect of scarcity and inflation was the devastating Bengal famine of 1943 during which more than 3 million people starved to death. The condition of the rest of the country was not very different, though not ravaged by famine as such.
- **Failure of the British to repay Indians for their contribution:** The Indian discontent was further accentuated by the British failure to pay back Indians for their contribution and support during the war years.

#### Impact on British Government

At the end of the war in 1945, Britain emerged victorious but also war weary, exhausted and internally wrecked:

- **War weary military:** The European soldiers and officers in the army were desperate to go home after the tiring war years rather than staying on in India indefinitely, suppressing Indian people's struggle for independence.
- **Shattered Economy:** Even though Britain was on the winning side of the war, its economic and military power was shattered. It would take Britain years to rejuvenate itself. Consequently, the British government was not in the mental and material position to run down another Quit India movement. In the face of wide spread opposition, it was becoming increasingly inconvenient to use Indian wealth for furthering British interests. Also, by now, India was no more a debtor to Britain. Instead it was Britain that owed India nearly 33,000 million pound.
- **Paucity of European recruits in the ICS:** British domination of the ICS had already ended since the days of the First World War. By 1939, British and Indian officers had achieved parity. Besides the European officers were no longer men from aristocratic families who believed in 'White Man's Burden'. They were increasingly men for whom serving in India was just another job. The Second World War aggravated this problem. In the face of Indian hostility, India no longer appeared as an attractive option even for civil careers of Europeans. Continuous crisis management duties such as tackling famines and enforcing black outs had become a harassment and for the first time, the **British entry into the ICS practically stopped at the height of the war in 1943**. By mid-1940, the number of European ICS officers was reduced to a minority (587 Europeans as opposed to 614 Indians), thus marking a virtual end to classic imperialism.
- **Change of government in Britain:** After the war, the wartime coalition government was replaced by the Labour Party government, many of whose members supported the Congress demands.
- **Changed Balance of Power:** The war had changed the balance of power in the world. USA and Russia had emerged as the new world powers and they both supported India's demand for independence.

Hence, the British power to control events was almost gone and the possibility of independence began taking shape.

#### BRITISH POLICY AFTER THE WAR

Owing to the above factors, the British Government was in no position to ignore Indian opinion and this led to a change in British attitude.

At the same time, contrary to heralding an end to colonialism and imperialism, the Second World War had opened up the possibility of **Neo-colonialism**



**A glimpse of British thinking after the war-** 'A land and its people could still be effectively colonised and economically subjugated, even after conceding to them political independence, if their integrity and solidarity were disrupted and their weakness perpetrated through the setting up of separate, ineffectual puppet regimes.'

Thus, the British policy after the war was guided by the aim of ensuring **some sort of future in India** by keeping the Indians divided in whichever way possible. Projecting themselves as pluralist people, they tried to magnify all the diverse distinctions among Indians along the lines of caste, religion, language and culture.

The most successful British effort in this aspect was the communal card played by the British. From the very beginning, they had adopted the policy of using the Muslim League to counter-balance the Congress. The League was recognised as the only representative body of Indian Muslims, its demand for Pakistan was used to thwart every constitutional negotiation with the Congress. During the Quit India Movement, when all prominent Congress leaders were put behind bars, the League was practically allowed back door entry to take over some of the provincial ministries.

Congress failed to counter this British policy due to the following reasons:

- The Congress adopted a self-righteous approach towards communalism, merely disregarding or denouncing the claims that it was predominantly a 'Hindu' organisation.
- The Congress made no serious attempts to win the support of the Muslim masses.
- The use of slogans such as 'Vande Matram' and 'Ramrajya' by Congress leaders not only alienated the Muslims but also strengthened the position of the Muslim League.

In the presence of active government patronage, and simultaneous failure of the Congress to contain it, the Pakistan Movement gained considerable momentum. The movement also acquired a substantial degree of popular support among the educated Muslim middle classes which began to see Pakistan as a panacea for all Muslim concerns—where the Muslim peasants will be free from Hindu bania and zamindari exploitation and Muslim businessmen will be free from the overbearing Hindu business houses.

Such a situation allowed Jinnah to adopt an obstinate stand that the Muslim League will support the Congress in any negotiation with the British regarding the constitutional question only when the demand for Pakistan was conceded to. Jinnah refused to budge from this stand, even at the cost of weakening the national movement.

This situation presented a win-win situation for the British not conceding the demand for Pakistan meant perpetuation of the British rule in India, whereas, conceding the demand meant an opportunity to place puppet regimes in divided India.

### DOMINANT THEMES DURING 1945-47

It is clear that communal tangle around the demand for Pakistan dominated the Indian political scene during 1945 and 1947.

Simultaneously there also emerged sporadic popular unrest directed against the British and their collaborators. Hence, the two dominant themes during this period have been described as under-

1. Attempts at a Negotiated Settlement
2. Post-War Popular Unrest

### Attempts at a Negotiated Settlement

Once the war ended (with the surrender of Germany in May 1945), the British started realising the need for starting a dialogue with the imprisoned Congress leaders in order to prevent them from taking advantage of the post-war hardships. According to Governor-General Wavell, the energies of the Congress were required to be directed away from agitation into "**some more profitable channel, i.e. into dealing with the administrative problems of India and into trying to solve the constitutional problems**".

**Flashback** – the war in Europe ended after the suicide of Hitler (30th April 1945) and subsequent surrender of Germany (8th May 1945). The General Elections in England were in the offing and the Viceroy in India began formulating an offer, known as **the Wavell Offer** or **the Wavell Plan** to strike an agreement with the Congress. A conference was proposed to be convened with a view to opening talks with the Indian leaders. Consequently, on 14th June 1945, the government released the nationalists to enable them to participate in the Simla Conference. This marked the **official end of the QIM**.

### The Wavell Plan (14th June 1945) and the Simla Conference (25th June 1945)

In an attempt to resolve the constitutional deadlock in India, Wavell went to England for consultations.

On 14th June 1945, he announced through a radio broadcast, the proposals of the British Government, also known as the Wavell Plan 'to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government'. Through the same broadcast, he also announced the release of the top Congress leaders from detentions as a preparatory measure for negotiations with him. Further, Wavell also expressed his intention to call an All-Party Conference at Simla on 25th June to which he intended to invite Indian leaders representing various political parties and minority groups. The main purpose of the conference was to deliberate on the formation of a new **Executive Council** at the Centre representing organised political opinion in the country.

On the same day, Amery (Secretary of State for India) announced that the offer of March 1942 (i.e. the Cripps proposals) still stood in its entirety without change or qualification.

**Main components of the Wavell Plan** were as follows:

- Wavell proposed the reconstruction of the Governor General's Executive Council, pending the preparation of a new constitution.



Lord Wavell



- With the exception of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, all other members of the Council would be nominated from among Indian leaders (hence, the new Council would be practically Indian in composition).
- The Muslims and the caste Hindus would be represented in the Council in equal proportion.
- If formed, the reconstructed Council was to function as an interim government within the framework of the Act of 1935 (i.e. without being responsible to the legislature).
- The Governor-General would retain his veto but he would not use it unnecessarily.
- The portfolio of External Affairs would be transferred from Governor-General to an Indian member of the Council (except Tribal and Frontier matters which were dealt with as part of defence of India).
- Representatives of various parties were to submit a joint list to the Viceroy for nominations to the Executive Council. If a joint list was not possible, then separate lists were to be submitted.

Consequently, the government lifted the ban on the Congress, released the Congress Working Committee members and invited them along with others, notably the Muslim League to join in the Simla Conference. The released leaders had expected to find demoralised people, depressed by the privations of war and government repression. To their surprise, they were welcomed by ecstatic crowds waiting for their release. Even at Simla, villagers had gathered in large numbers, sitting atop trees and waiting for hours to catch a glimpse of their leaders!

### Simla Conference

On 25 June 1945, the conference met as scheduled under the presidentship of the Viceroy. Though, for the next four days it made a sincere attempt to evolve a formula which could help the constitution of a new Executive Council, it could not succeed.

**Failure of Simla Conference:** The major issue on which the conference failed to arrive at a solution was the manner in which the Muslim members of the Executive Council were to be selected. The League insisted that it alone had the right to speak for every Indian Muslim, and thus it alone should have the jurisdiction for choosing all Muslim members of the Council. Not satisfied with this, the League further demanded a **communal veto** by asking for a two-third majority in the proposed Council, instead of a simple one, on any decision opposed by the Muslim members.

The Congress contested this claim. As a national body, it could not agree to be reduced to the status of a representative of 'caste Hindus' alone (meaning a body of upper caste Hindus). Instead, the Congress proposed to include two Congress Muslims out of its quota. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (the then Congress President) and Abdul Gaffar Khan were present in Simla as Congress delegates.

The demands of the League embarrassed many, including the Viceroy himself. Such a right to the League would have denied representation to the Muslims of the Unionist Party of Punjab, which had supported the British staunchly throughout the War. The Viceroy felt that one non-League representing the Punjab Muslims, a nominee of Malik Khizr Hyat Khan should be included in the Council. Yet the Viceroy abruptly abandoned British proposals and dissolved the Simla Conference, three days after it began.

In this way, like many previous attempts, the Simla Conference too ended in failure in bringing about a consensus between the Congress and the League. The responsibility for the failure of the Simla Conference lay partly on Wavell and partly on Jinnah. Wavell should not have allowed the League to practically veto the whole plan.

**Significance of Simla Conference:** This dissolution of the conference by the Viceroy implied, as revealed by subsequent developments, official recognition of the League's monopoly to speak for all Muslims and conference of the veto power onto the League for all future negotiations. The failure of the talks thus strengthened the position of Jinnah and the League, which was clearly manifested in the Election of 1945–56.

### Labour Party comes to power in Britain (July 1945)

In July 1945, the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee won massive victory in elections and replaced the War time coalition government in Britain led by the Conservative leader Winston Churchill. The election was a disaster for the Liberal Party as well under Archibald Sinclair.

The new Labour government headed by Clement Attlee as Prime Minister installed an old friend of India, **Lord Pethick Lawrence**, as the Secretary of State for India. The Labour leaders were known for their sympathies with the nationalist cause in India and had already committed themselves to giving India its independence. Way back in 1938, prominent Labour Party leaders including Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps and Harold Laski had met Jawaharlal Nehru near London and had agreed to accept the Constitution of India framed by a Constituent Assembly duly elected on the basis of 'universal suffrage'.

However, once in power, the Laborite approach was hardly pathbreaking-

- On 21st August 1945, the Viceroy announced the holding of fresh elections in the approaching winters for the Indian Legislatures which were long due, both at the centre (last elected in 1934) as well as in the provinces (last elected in 1937).
- On 19th September 1945, the Viceroy renewed the promise of 'early full self-government' for India, carefully avoiding the term 'independence'.
- Discussions were also held with the elected legislators and representatives of the Indian princes for formation of a Constituent Assembly (conveniently bypassing the previous Laborite assurance of an elected Constituent Assembly on universal suffrage!).

### General Elections (December 1945)

In the winter of 1945–46, the General Elections in British India were held to elect members of the Central as well as provincial legislatures.

**Election Campaign:** The two issues that became the main plank of election campaign were the **repression of 1942** and the **INA trials**. In fact, as soon as they were released from jail, the Congress leaders had taken up the issue of official excesses during 1942. In their speeches, they



Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of Britain, 1945–51 (Labour Party)



condemned the official action, recounted stories of repression in detail and promised enquiries. The rising crescendo of demand for enquiries gravely demoralised the services. The UP Governor, Wylie had himself confessed that such methods had been occasionally used which nobody could defend.

The INA question taken up by the Congress most caught the imagination of the people. In its first post-war session held in Bombay (21–23th September 1945), the AICC adopted a resolution declaring its support for the cause. The Congress party took up the defence of the INA prisoners and lawyer-leaders such as Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, KN Katju, Nehru and Asaf Ali appeared in court during the historic Red Fort Trials (Read more about INA trials later in this chapter).

The Muslim League fought the elections with the straightforward communal slogan-‘**A vote for the League and Pakistan was a vote for Islam**’. Election meetings were held in mosques and pirs (holy men) were asked to issue fatwas (directives) asking all Muslims to vote for the League. Choosing between the Congress and the League was portrayed as choosing between the Gita and the Koran. After such communal propaganda, the results were hardly surprising and the Leagues made a clean sweep of the Muslim seats.

**Election Results:** Muslim League was in a favourable position. It had been able to attract the bulk of the Muslim masses thanks to government patronage and its religious cry of ‘Islam in Danger’. The Congress was also at the height of its popularity, particularly so in anticipation of independence, yet it found itself helpless before the impregnable religious propaganda based on partly real and partly unreal communal differences.

Congress Performance:

- Indian National Congress emerged as the largest party: The Congress swept the polls in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing 91.3% votes.
- In Centre: It won 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly.
- In provinces: It obtained a majority and formed ministries in all provinces except in Sindh, Punjab and Bengal. Thus, the Congress ministries were formed in **Assam, NWFP, UP, CP, Bihar, Orissa, Bombay and Madras**.

League’s Performance:

- The All India Muslim League was equally successful in Muslim constituencies, polling 86.6% of the Muslim votes.
- In the Centre: It won all the 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly.
- In the provinces: It grabbed 443 out of 509 Muslim seats in the provinces.
- However, on the whole, the League suffered a heavy blow. Of the 11 provinces, it could form ministries only in **Sindh and Bengal**, that too with official and European support. The League lost NWFP and Assam to the Congress and also failed to dislodge the Unionists from Punjab.

**In the Punjab**, though the Muslim League was the largest single party, it could not form a government and instead a coalition ministry was formed there of the Congress, the Akali Sikhs and the Unionists under the leadership of **Malik Khizr Hyat**, leader of the Unionist Party.

**Result Analysis:** It must be remembered that the League’s support base had hardly been tested in India. Elections were held on the basis of separate electorates under which only Muslims could vote for candidates for Muslim seats. Congress, which was ideologically committed to finding a common cause across the diversity of India’s people, found it extremely difficult to outbid parties seeking the votes of a single religious community. Thus, the Congress party faced unequal competition in Muslim constituencies. Even the franchise was severely restricted—barely 10% of the total population. Hence, it is difficult to say what could have happened, had the elections been held on the basis of adult franchise, specially keeping in view future developments (Congress success in 1952 Elections, the League’s reverses in East Pakistan and its failure to control events even in West Pakistan).

**Significance of General Elections 1945:**

- The Indian National Congress emerged as the largest party.
- The League won all Muslim constituencies, and hence the elections proved to be a strategic victory for Jinnah (even though the party failed to win any other seats).
- Even though Congress won, the League had united the Muslim vote and as such it gained the negotiating power to seek a separate Muslim homeland.
- These were the last General Elections in British India; consequent elections were held in 1951 in India and 1970 in Pakistan.

**Cabinet Mission, 1946**

Once the elections were over, the Attlee Government lost no time in starting negotiations with the leading parties. It sent a high-powered mission of three British Cabinet members to India to **find ways and means of peaceful transfer of power in India**. It came to be known as the Cabinet Mission.

**Members:**

1. Pethick Lawrence (Secretary of State for India)
2. Stafford Cripps (President of the Board of Trade)
3. AV Alexander (First Lord of Admiralty)

**Objectives:**

- To find ways and means of peaceful transfer of power in India.
- To settle the constitutional issue.

**Context to Cabinet Mission:** By March 1946, India had reached a high point of ferment and the British had sensed that time was running out of their hands due to the following reasons:

- Impact of the Second World War on India as well as on Britain (Mentioned earlier).
- Impact of Sporadic popular unrest throughout the country (Mentioned at the end of the chapter).
- Congress rule in provinces had also proved to be a big morale booster.
- As per the British Policy of conciliation and repression, this was once again the time for conciliation. But after failure of Cripps Mission, there was little left to offer except independence.



- The British Indian government had realised that a settlement was necessary to avert another mass movement and to ensure good future Indo-British relations.

By now, the British policy makers had realised that the British rule of the previous style could no longer be sustained. Hence, the overreaching aim of the British leaders now was to ensure a graceful withdrawal from India, peaceful transfer of power and good future Indo-British relations. The stage was now left to the three actors—the British, the Congress and the Muslim League to decide the future of India. Let us see what each wanted—

**British:** the British wanted to leave behind a weak India, divided in whichever way possible to make way for the neo-colonialists.

#### Views of Bipan Chandra

Contrary to the above, historian Bipan Chandra is of the view that the British wanted to leave behind a united, friendly India that would be an active partner in the defence of the Commonwealth. A divided India would not be an effective defence partner and be a blot on Britain's diplomacy.

In support of his view, Chandra quotes Prime Minister Attlee's Statement in the House of Commons (15th March 1946), "We are very mindful of the rights of minorities and minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we **cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority**."

The statement indicated a change in the British policy towards the Muslim League. Contrast this with the Simla Conference, where Wavell had allowed Jinnah to veto and wreck the negotiations. Hence, if continuance of rule demanded one stance, its withdrawal demanded another.

**Congress:** Congress wanted a united India, one central government and minority safeguards to be worked out only after independence (which could range from autonomy to Muslim provinces to self-determination after secession from the Indian Union).

**Muslim League:** The League wanted a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims.

#### Cabinet Mission Arrives in India (24th March 1946)

On 24th March 1946, the three Cabinet Ministers arrived in New Delhi and held prolonged discussions with the Viceroy and various Indian leaders for settling the constitutional question. These negotiations lasted over seven weeks and often ran into stalemates on account of Jinnah's demand for Pakistan and right to self-determination of the Muslims. Once again, the Congress and the Muslim League could not come to any agreement on the fundamental issue of unity or partition of India. Finally, the Mission decided to put forward what they considered to be the best possible proposals. They were included in a statement which they issued on 16th May 1946, and became known as the Cabinet Mission Plan.

**The Cabinet Mission Plan, 16th May 1946:** The Mission came up with a rather complicated Plan which can be divided into three parts:

- Examination of the scheme of Pakistan and its rejection
- A long-term plan
- A short-term plan (Interim Government)

**Examination of the scheme of Pakistan and its rejection:** Although the sympathies of the Viceroy and AV Alexander were with Jinnah, the Plan rejected the demand for a full-fledged Pakistan (consisting of the 6 provinces, viz. Assam, Bengal, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan) on account of the following reasons:

- The creation of Pakistan would not solve the problem of communal minorities as the percentage of non-Muslims living in west Pakistan would be 37.93% and those living in east Pakistan would be 48.31% of the total population.
- The mission further examined an alternate proposal according to which Pakistan would consist of only the Muslim majority areas of these provinces. The creation of such a Pakistan would have necessitated a bifurcation of Bengal, Assam and Punjab going against all regional and linguistic ties and would have created immense economic and administrative problems, and yet would not have satisfied Jinnah (as he was opposed to the idea of a truncated and moth-ridden Pakistan).
- There was no justification for including the predominantly non-Muslim districts of Bengal, Assam and Punjab within Pakistan (According to the mission, every argument that could be used in favour of Pakistan could equally be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan).
- It would be injurious to disintegrate the transportation as well as the post and telegraph system of India.
- The Princely States would find it difficult to join one of the two nations.
- The two halves of proposed Pakistan would be separated by some 700 miles and communications between them in war and peace would depend on the goodwill of Hindustan (more importantly, the Mission believed that a united India could be an active partner in the defence of the Commonwealth).

**Long term plan:** The following plan was recommended for a long-term settlement—

- **Union of India:** There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which should deal with the following subjects—defence, foreign affairs and communications (The Union of India meant a **federation** of the provinces and the princely states. **One central government** was proposed, controlling at least some specified subjects).
- **Full Provincial Autonomy:** The provinces should have full autonomy. All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the provinces (Hence, it proposed a very loose union of all Indian territories under a centre). The States would also retain all subjects and power other than those ceded to the Union. Provinces would be free to form groups with executives and legislatures and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common.
- **Groupings:** The six Hindu majority provinces, viz. Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Orissa and Madras would form Group A. The Muslim majority provinces in the north west, viz. the Punjab, NWFP and Sindh would form Group B. The Muslim majority provinces in the north east, viz. Bengal and Assam would form Group C. Of the Chief Commissioner's Provinces, three (Delhi, Ajmer-Marwara and Coorg) would



join Group A and one (Baluchistan) would join Group B. (Hence, the provisions of 'full autonomy of the provinces' and 'groupings' were meant to give the Muslim League, if not the form, but the 'substance of Pakistan'. It was obvious that Group B and C would be under absolute control of the Muslims. The provinces were given the power to opt out of their respective groups by a decision of their legislatures after the general elections under the new constitution).

- **Constituent Assembly:** A constitution making body should be set up immediately through indirect election (since direct election based on adult franchise would take a long time). For this purpose, each province was to be allotted a number of seats proportional to its population, roughly to the ratio of one to a million. The total number of seats thus arrived at for each province was to be divided among the main communities in proportion to their population and that the representatives allotted to each community were to be elected by the members of the same community in the Legislative Assembly (the communities recognised for this purpose were General, Muslim and Sikh). The representatives so elected along with the representatives of the Indian States would meet together in New Delhi as one body and form the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly would then separate into three sections—Section A corresponding to Group A and so on.
- **Provincial or Group Constitutions:** All these sections would have the authority to draw up provincial constitutions and, if necessary, group constitutions and accordingly setup provincial legislatures and executives.
- **Union Constitution:** After the group constitutions are settled, the groups would assemble together to settle the Union Constitution.

**Short-Term Plan (Interim Government):** Since this would have taken considerable time, the Mission also proposed a short-term measure, the immediate formation of an Interim Government at the Centre, enjoying the support of all major political parties and with Indians holding all the portfolios, including that of the **War Member**.

#### Merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan:

- The chief merit was that the Constituent Assembly was to be constituted on the democratic principle of strength of population and not on the principle of 'weightage'.
- The idea of partition was discarded and an all-India Union envisaged.

#### Defects of the Cabinet Mission Plan:

- While the Muslim minority was amply provided for, no such protection was accorded to any other minority, like the Sikhs in Punjab.
- The provisions regarding provincial groupings could be differently interpreted.

**Analysis:** The Cabinet Mission Plan was an anxious attempt to put together a disarranged India under a nominal centre, with the communally segregated autonomous units almost as a prelude to 'balkanisation' (on the sole plea of overrated Indian disunity). In their hurry to leave the ground for the neo-colonialists, they failed to take note of several important details. Further, the Plan was supposed to be a compromise. It tried to placate the Congress with the rejection of the

demand for Pakistan and tried to placate the League through the creation of autonomous Muslim majority areas. In the beginning, therefore, both the Congress and the League were quite inclined to accept the plan, particularly the long-term plan.

**Objections:** Soon objections surfaced over the provisions for forming sections or groups of provinces. While the League interpreted them to be compulsory, the Congress wanted them to be optional since in case of compulsory grouping, Congress administered Muslim majority provinces of **NWFP** and **Assam** would be reduced to helpless minorities in their respective groupings. The Congress also opposed the absence of any elected members from princely states in the proposed Constituent Assembly. The Sikhs were also considerably disturbed by the grouping system as they felt that they would be left without sufficient safeguards against the Muslim majority in Group B provinces.

- On 6th June, the League announced its acceptance of the plan in so far as the basis of Pakistan was implied in the compulsory grouping system.
- On 7th July, Nehru declared, "We are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided to go into the Constituent Assembly" (since the Assembly was meant to be a sovereign body that could amend the rules laid down by the Cabinet Mission).

**Failure of the Cabinet Mission:** By end of July 1946, both the Congress as well as the League decided against trying out the Cabinet Mission Plan on two accounts—difference over the grouping system as well as Cabinet Mission's inability to clarify its stand and intentions over the grouping system. In fact, the mission deliberately refused to clarify itself, even when asked to do so, in the hope that the ambiguity may help reconcile the differences between the Congress and the League. On the contrary, it only deteriorated the matters.

**Positive Outcomes:** Despite the above, there were some positive achievements.

- The problem of the future of India which was until now a nebulous cloud had been brought down to the plane of hard realities.
- It demonstrated that the Labour government in Britain intended to keep its promise of withdrawing from India as soon as possible.

**Wavell's Breakdown Plan:** In May 1946, this Plan was presented by Wavell to the Cabinet Mission to deal with the fast-evolving political situation in India. It proposed a phased withdrawal from India, starting from the Hindu majority provinces. Thus, the Plan envisaged the withdrawal of British forces to the six Muslim Provinces while leaving the rest of the country in Congress hands. It also aimed at avoiding partition of India by itself proposing a partition of Punjab and Bengal and strike a blow to Muslim interests in both these provinces to deter the Muslim League from pursuing its agenda of a separate Muslim homeland. Although the overall plan was rejected, the partition part was incorporated in the Mountbatten Plan. According to some scholars, the Plan also reflected the desire of some British circles to make a 'Northern Ireland' out of Pakistan.

#### Communal Carnage (beginning 16th August 1946)

The failure of the Cabinet Mission so frustrated the Muslim League that it decided to act upon its post-election slogan, '**Lekar Rahenge Pakistan, Ladke Lenge Pakistan**' (We shall take Pakistan by force).



**Direct Action Day** by the League was observed on 16th August 1946, which was simply an invitation to violence. It may be noted that Direct Action was directed against the Hindus and not the British government. Communal carnage first began in Calcutta with the League's Bengal Ministry headed by Suhrawardy looking on passively if not actively abetting in it and resulted in widespread violent attacks on the non-Muslims. By the time the army restored order, 4,000 people had already lost their lives in what came to be known as the '**Great Calcutta Killings**'

Henceforth, the Indian scene was rapidly transformed. Communal riots erupted in other parts of the country as well.

In **Bombay**, more than 300 persons lost their lives in riots.

In **Noakhali and Tippera (eastern Bengal)** more than 400 persons lost their lives, several women were violated.

In **Bihar**, violence in Noakhali was promptly avenged, more than 7,000 were massacred.

In **Garhmukteshwar (UP)** nearly 1,000 people were slaughtered.

In **NWFP**, the butchery in Bihar and UP was further avenged leading to communal riots carried out by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore Amritsar, Multan, Attock and Rawalpindi, killing more than 5000 by mid-1947. The Hindu and the Muslim communalists blamed each other for starting the violence and competed with each other in brutality.

**Flashforward:** Communal carnage continued to blaze high throughout 1947 resulting in innumerable deaths, abduction and rape of countless women and desecration of religious as well as personal properties. The fratricide that continued in Indian subcontinent during 1946 and 1948 in the context of partition has few parallels in the annals of civilisation, in terms of the extent of human suffering and dehumanisation.

**Note:** In the meantime, elections to the proposed Constituent Assembly were completed by now in all the Provinces. The Congress won 199 out of 210 General seats, the League won 73 out of 78 Muslim seats. Jinnah maintained that since Congress had support of 211 out of 296 members of the Assembly, the Muslims would be placed at its mercy. He, therefore, demanded a separate Constituent Assembly for Pakistan.

### Interim Government (2nd September 1946)

In September 1946, in the midst of communal carnage, an Interim Government at the centre—the one proposed by the Cabinet Mission as a short-term plan, with Jawaharlal Nehru as its de-facto head, came into existence.

At the time of its formation, the Interim government faced similar challenges as faced by the Simla Conference—Jinnah insisted on a parity between five Hindu nominees of the Congress and five Muslim nominees of the League in such a government, apart from 1 Sikh and 1 Scheduled Caste members in it. The Congress had rejected such a demand claimed the right to include any number of Hindus, Muslims and others in its list of nominees.

Once again, Wavell would have called off the talks, as he had happily done in Simla, had it not been for the **widespread popular unrest** that had begun to rage the country. Moreover, His

Majesty's government also felt that the support of the Congress was a prerequisite for their long-term interests and good relations in the future with India. Thus, Wavell decided to go ahead with the Interim Government, even if formed solely by the Congress a party that enjoyed the greatest influence over the public mind. Thereafter, the Viceroy asked the Congress to form the Interim Government, to which it responded in the affirmative.

Accordingly, on **2nd September 1946**, for the first time in 200 years, a fully popular Governor General's Council consisting of all Indian leaders took over the reins of Indian administration. **Nehru was its first Vice President.**

**Functioning of Interim Government:** This Interim Government, however, was bound for a **series of misadventures**. It proved helpless, in face of the communal carnage, in moving the army led by a British Commander in Chief. Presided over by the Viceroy, it also sometimes could not withstand his vetoing power.

Muslim League joins the Interim Government (26th October 1946): Communal fire kept burning and the possibility of a civil war unleashed by the Muslim League loomed high. The British now realised that the League, which was their own creation, had now assumed the shape of a 'communal monster which could not be tamed'. Under these circumstances, the British decided to go back on their policy of placating the Muslims. Accordingly, Wavell supported by Pethick Lawrence (the Secretary of State), persuaded the Muslim League to join the Interim Government, which it did on 26th October 1946.

The League had been allowed to join the Interim Government without giving up the idea of Pakistan, or the plan of Direct Action and even without agreeing to the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Why did the League join the Interim Government?

- To wreck it from within as Jinnah publicly declared that the Interim Government was merely another front for the continuation of Civil War.
  - To get a foothold in the Government for furthering the goal of Pakistan.
  - To demonstrate that cooperation between the League and the Congress was impossible.
- Liaquat Ali Khan**, the Finance Minister, continually hamstrung the functioning of other ministries.

Once the League joined the Interim Government, it got sharply divided into two perpetually warring camps, which further reduced its position to a mere figurehead.

First Meeting of the Constituent Assembly: Founded on 6th December 1946, the Constituent Assembly first met at New Delhi on 9th December 1946 and appointed **Sachchidananda Sinha** as its Interim President.

On 11th December, the Assembly elected **Dr. Rajendra Prasad** as its permanent President. Jurist BN Rao was appointed constitutional adviser to the Assembly. He prepared the original draft of the Constitution (A detailed draft was later presented by BR Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee). Two days later, Jawaharlal Nehru moved



First day of Constituent Assembly of India. From Left BG Kher and Sardar Vallabhai Patel; KM Munshi is seated behind Patel



his famous 'Objectives Resolution' which declared the Assembly's firm resolve for an 'Independent Sovereign Republic' and later became the Preamble of the Constitution.

Even though the League had joined the Interim Government, it refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly even though His Majesty's statement of 6th December 1946 **upheld the League's version of grouping**. Instead, the League demanded dissolution of the Assembly calling it unrepresentative (as Muslim majority provinces had not joined it). Jinnah now wanted Pakistan directly, and not through any Mission Plan.

On 5th February 1947, fed up by the disruptionist practices of the League, the Congress members of the Interim government sent a letter to Wavell with a demand that the League members be asked to resign. A crisis was in the offing.

With the government thus torn asunder and major communities ready to slit each other's throat, clouds of gloom hovered over the entire country. In such a scenario, the only ray of hope was the popular unrest that demonstrated the capacity of the common Indian people to rise above their differences for the freedom of their nation.

## Post-War Popular Unrest

The period closely following the end of the Second World War was marked by a wide spectrum of popular initiative. The popular unrest during the period 1945–47 took the form of various urges and upsurges and can be broadly classified into two varieties.

1. Unrest which led to direct confrontations with the British administration.
2. Unrest which indirectly undermined British Raj through direct confrontations with its upholders—certain landlords, princes and capitalists.

The popular upsurges were numerous in number and only the major ones have been mentioned below.

### Direct Confrontations

#### INA Trials (or the Red Fort Trials, November 1945–May 1946)

The first major popular explosion took place over the INA trials: The court martials of surrendered INA soldiers and officers who had earlier served in the British Indian Army. They were accused of having broken the oath of loyalty to the British Crown, and thus of having become 'traitors'. The first, and most famous, of the approximately ten trials, was held in the Red Fort in Delhi, hence known as the "Red Fort trials".

#### Landmark Features of INA Trials:

- **INA Cause taken up by the Congress:** In November 1945, the trials began in the historic Red Fort of Delhi. The cause of the INA men had been taken up by the Congress and made a main plank of its election campaign. Many Congress leaders appeared in defence of the INA prisoners. Hundreds of meetings were held throughout the country, demanding clemency for INA prisoners. The largest meeting was held in Deshapriya Park, Calcutta which was addressed by Sarat Bose, Nehru and Patel.

- 5–11 November was observed as **INA Week** and 12th November was observed as **INA Day**. The Congress also organised **INA Relief and Enquiry Committee** which provided money and food to released men and attempted to secure for them some employment.
- **Issue turns Indian versus British:** In the beginning, appeals were made for clemency to 'misguided men', but soon the INA men were hailed as most heroic patriots and the government stand condemned. Henceforth, the issue became more and more **Indian versus British**. The question of the right or wrong of the INA men's action was not debated. What was debated was the right of the British to decide a matter concerning Indians.
- **Priority coverage in newspapers:** The trials were given priority coverage in newspapers, eclipsing international news. Pamphlets such as '**Patriots Not Traitors**', were widely circulated.
- **Wide geographical reach:** Another significant feature of the INA campaign was its wide geographical reach. Even though Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and the towns of UP and Punjab emerged as the storm centres, the agitation also spread to distant places such as Coorg, Baluchistan and Assam.
- **Participation of diverse social and political groups:** The Muslim League, the CPI, the Unionist Party, the Akalis, the Justice Party, the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh League supported the INA cause in varying degrees. The sympathies for INA men cut across caste, colour and creed!
- **Participation of the people took diverse forms:** Some donated funds, others attended meetings, some struck work, others raised the demand for the release of prisoners.
- **Effect on the traditional bulwarks of the Raj:** The most striking feature of the INA agitation was the effect on the traditional bulwarks of the Raj—the **armed forces** as well as **other government employees (the police and the bureaucracy)**. Thus, even the traditional loyalist sections of the British Raj got submerged in the tide of INA sympathy.
  - The armed forces were the chief instrument of British Raj in India. Several armed forces men attended INA meetings, often in uniform. There were widespread strikes in Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF). The Indian Signal Corps at Jabalpur also struck work. The Commander in Chief himself confessed that a growing feeling of sympathy for the INA pervaded in the Indian Army.
  - The Police and the bureaucracy were the other two major instruments of the British Raj. They also began showing signs of nationalist leanings. For e.g., the Police force in Bihar and Delhi also went on strike.
  - A considerable number of INA men themselves belonged to families which had traditions of loyalty, which further fuelled local interest (For e.g., PK Sahgal was the son of an ex-Judge of the Punjab High Court).
- **The Three Upsurges:** The rising nationalist sentiment over INA trials culminated into three upsurges.
  1. On 21st November 1945 in Calcutta over INA trials
  2. On 11th February 1946 in Calcutta to protest against 7-year sentence given to an INA officer
  3. On 18th February 1946 in Bombay when the ratings of the RIN went on strike



**Pattern of Upsurges:** The three upsurges followed a similar pattern—the upsurge initiated by a group (such as students or ratings), joined in by the city sympathisers, who were in turn joined in by sympathisers from other parts of the country.

**1. Upsurge on 21st November 1945:** The first of the INA trials, and the most celebrated one, was the joint court-martial of **Colonel Prem Sahgal**, **Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon** and **Major General Shah Nawaz Khan**. When the three heroes, belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities respectively and representing Indian unity were put on trial, a countrywide protest upsurged. There took place widespread meetings, processions and speeches demanding the release of the INA prisoners.

**Calcutta** however, emerged as a storm centre. On 21st November 1945, on the call of the Forward Block, students marched towards the administrative quarters in Dalhousie Square. On their way, they were joined by members from the League's as well as the Communist student organisations. These students had tied the National, the League and the Red flags together representing the need for a united anti-imperialist struggle.

The demonstrators were obstructed by the armed police and fired upon, killing a Hindu and a Muslim student. The killings immediately set the city on fire, and for the next two days the angry people repeatedly clashed with the police resulting in over 30 deaths and destruction of over 150 police and army vehicles.

Understanding the significance of the agitation which 'cut across communal barriers', the government decided to step down by first announcing to try only those INA members who could be accused of murder and brutalities (December 1945) and then remitting the sentences passed against the first batch of the accused (January 1946).

**2. Upsurge on 11th February 1946:** In February 1946, when **A. Rashid Ali of the INA** was sentenced to 7 years in jail, the agitation resurfaced and ended only after two days, leaving 84 dead and 300 injured.

**3. Upsurge on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1946:** Mentioned below.

#### **Royal Indian Navy Revolt (RIN Mutiny, 18th February 1946)**

The RIN Revolt, a revolt in the armed forces had a dramatic impact on popular consciousness and remains a legend to this day.

The RIN men had served abroad and were familiar with developments in other parts of the world. They thoroughly resented the racist behaviour of the British officers. They were also aware of the unrest in the country, specially over INA trials.

On 18th February 1946, their rising tempers suddenly frayed over the poor quality of food they were served and the ratings of HMIS Talwar in Bombay harbour struck work to protest against the following:

- The treatment meted out to them including racial discrimination.
- The arrest of BC Dutt (a rating) for writing 'Quit India' on HMIS Talwar.

The ratings were joined by others in 22 neighbouring ships and those in the barracks on the shore. Once again, the strikers raised the National, the League and the Red flags together. They

also elected a **Naval Central Committee** with **MS Khan** as its head and drew up a set of demands including the following:

- Release of INA prisoners
- Release of all other political prisoners
- Withdrawal of Indian troops from Indo-China and Java
- Better food, better treatment
- Equal pay to both Indian and European sailors alike

On 20th February, the ratings in the barracks as well as those in the ships got surrounded by British forces. Soon there was exchange of fire and a gun battle began.

By 22nd February the revolt had spread to all the naval bases in India involving 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20000 ratings, making it the most serious of all direct confrontations with the British administration of the time. The naval mutiny evoked unprecedented public sympathy, specially of students and workers and clashes got particularly bloody in Bombay. **Karachi** also emerged as a major storm centre.

On 23rd February, however, **Vallabhbhai Patel** and **Jinnah** persuaded the ratings into surrender, bringing the mutiny to an end.

**Evaluation of the three Upsurges:** Even though the upsurges were short-lived and their participation was confined to a few sections and a few urban centres, they forced the British government to grant some concessions, such as first announcing to try only those INA members who could be accused of murder and brutalities (December 1945) and then remitting the sentences passed against the first batch of the accused (January 1946), and withdrawal of Indian soldiers for Indo-China and Indonesia.

**Attitude of Congress towards the Upsurges:** Even though the Congress lauded the spirit of the people, it did **not officially support** these upsurges because of their tactics and timing. While the agitations were led by the Communists, the Socialists or the Forward Blockists, the Congress tried to diffuse the revolutionary situation.

Some scholars accuse the Congress of being immersed in negotiations or even power hankering during the upsurges. On the other hand, historian Bipan Chandra is of the view that the upsurges were in fact an expression of the strong anti-imperialist sentiment that the Congress had fostered through its defence of the INA prisoners. As for negotiations, they formed an integral part of Congress strategy and the guiding maxim of the Congress was: 'Negotiations when possible and non-cooperation and direct action when necessary'.

**Attitude of Gandhi:** As revealed by Gandhi's statements published in the Harijan in 1946, Gandhi was relieved that the ratings had listened to Sardar Patel's advice for surrender. Gandhi felt that the upsurges were badly advised. If the people had any grievances, they should have waited for the intervention by the political leaders of their choice. By not doing so, the people had been thoughtless and ignorant.



**Other Direct Confrontations**

Several other direct confrontations continued to take place simultaneously such as—

- In mid-February 1946, in Allahabad, over 80,000 demonstrated against the government decision to cut down the ration supplies of the civilian population.
- In April 1946, in Delhi, Bihar, Bengal, Andamans and Bengal, there was a widespread police strike aided by the leftists.
- In July 1946, the postal employees struck work for some time. In fact, the atmosphere remained much tensed throughout July in anticipation of an all India Railway workers' strike.

**Indirect Confrontations**

As stated earlier, such confrontations indirectly undermined British Raj through direct confrontations with its upholders—certain landlords, princes and capitalists.

Spearheaded by peasants and workers, these confrontations mainly arose out of economic grievances and took the form of strikes against their immediate exploiters such as the landlords and capitalists and thereby weakened the hands of their colonial masters as well. Collectively known as the strike wave of the 1940s, these strikes generated a mood of defiance and self-confidence all around.

**Peasant Agitation of the Warlis (Maharashtra, 1945–46):** The Warlis (or Varlis) were the indigenous tribal or adivasi peasants who were in majority in the villages of Umbergaon, Dananu, Palghar and Jawahar Taluks of Thana district, Bombay. The Warlis had lost most of their land holdings to the moneylenders and were themselves reduced to the status of tenants or even farm labourers or wage earners. In times of difficulty, many of them had to give veth bigar or labour without pay.

In 1945, the Warlis were first organised by the Maharashtra Kisan Sabha. Subsequently, lead by **Godavari Purulekar**, the Warlis began to strike opposing veth bigar and low wages. The landlords retaliated by terrorising them with the help of the police. Several violent clashes followed and the Warli agitation gradually petered out by the end of 1946 in the face of repression.

**Bakasht Peasants' Agitation (Bihar, 1946–47):** This peasant agitation had grown over the past decade over bakasht lands, which the tenants had lost to zamindars during depression years (1929–37) by virtue of non-payment of rent which they continued to cultivate as sharecroppers.

Apart from the rayati lands and the zirat lands, the zamindars also rented the bakasht lands.

**Rayati lands:** were those lands which were settled by zamindars with the occupant tenants.

**Zirat lands:** were those lands which the zamindars kept for themselves and got cultivated by agricultural labourers.

**Bakasht lands:** were those lands which were rented to the tenants-at-will at varying rates.

The bakasht peasants continued to face ejectments as it was profitable to the zamindars—the new incumbents had to pay fresh salami and higher rent to get possession. The zamindars also wished to circumvent the Tenancy Act of 1885 by evicting the peasants as the Act gave the bakasht tenants some occupancy rights if they had been in that position for 12 years.

During 1937–39, the peasants had first resisted their eviction under the banner of the Kisan Sabha. In 1946, the issue caught fire once again when the Congress contested the elections in Bihar and promised to abolish the zamindari system. The zamindars felt insecure and tried to convert all bakasht lands into zirat by evicting the bakasht peasants in the hope that they would at least be able to retain the zirat lands.

Such moves were naturally resisted by the peasants who once again protested under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha. The agitation led to violent clashes, arson, loot, injuries and even deaths.

**Flashforward:** In 1947, the **Bihar Bakasht Disputes Settlement Act** was passed which had little effect.

In 1948, the **Bihar Abolition of Zamindari Act** was passed by the Congress government after which the movement finally subsided.

**Travancore Agitation (1946):** In 1946 in Shertalai-Aleppy region of northwestern Travancore, a strong trade union-cum-agrarian movement developed under the leadership of the Communists against the Travancore Maharaja and his Diwan.

During this time, the Maharaja and his **Diwan, CP Ramaswamy Iyer**, were secretly planning to carve out an independent state of Travancore in anticipation of British departure from India. They wanted to impose an irresponsible government in Travancore, with all real powers vested with the Diwan to be appointed by the Maharaj. The Communists mobilised the peasants and workers and launched a massive campaign against this plan. Even the authorities unleashed forces of terror against their opponents, making indiscriminate arrests and inflicting torture.

**Punnapra-Vayalar Episode:** On 22nd October 1946, as a response to state violence, the workers called a general strike in Aleppy area and also attacked the police camp at Punnapra. In response, the army was ordered to attack the workers sheltered at Vayalar. This culminated in a ghastly massacre of 800, which instead of terrorising people into submission only reaffirmed their resolve to stand against the state's independence move.

**Tebhaga Movement (Bengal, 1946–47):** This was probably the most extensive of all post-war agrarian movements encompassing 19 districts of Bengal and 6 million peasants including a high percentage of Muslims.

The Tebhaga Movement was a peasant movement that first began in September 1946 under the leadership of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha. It was directed against the exploitative sharecropping system and the jotedars who took away a major part of the produce. The movement thus demanded three-fourths of the produce for the tillers against one-half (though some sources also mention that the demand of the peasants was to reduce the landlord share from one-half to one-third, and thus the name 'Tebhaga').



**Sharecropping:** Sharecropping is a form of agriculture in which a landowner allows a tenant to use the land in return for a share of the crops produced on their portion of land.

**Jotedars:** The Jotedars were the class of rich peasantry in the villages of Bengal that emerged as a new class of rural exploiters between the landlords (zamindars) and the tenants (rayats). The jotedars accumulated huge chunks of land (jotes) for which they paid rent in cash and which they in turn rented out to landless peasants on basis of sharing the crops in equal halves.

The agitators raised the slogan '**Tebhaga Chai**' or we want three parts out of four. The contest over crops soon led to angry outbursts and violent clashes. Despite communal carnage in Calcutta and Noakhali, Muslim peasants participated in large numbers. Women also played an active role. The movement, however, wilted away in the face of government repression, apathy of the Congress and the League, hostility of the rentier Bengali middle class and worsened communal situation and was finally suspended in March 1947.

**Telangana Movement (Hyderabad state, 1946–51):** The Telangana movement that arose in the Telugu speaking region of Hyderabad state grew out of an exploitative agrarian situation. The peasants were exploited and abused by jagirdars on one hand and the Deshmukhs (past revenue farmers) and Patel-Patwaris (tax-collectors) on the other hand.

The Deshmukhs and the Patel Patwaris had lost their job in 1860s when the Nizam's government started collecting the land revenue directly. Even though they were given substantial amount of land as compensation, their lust for land continued. Using their knowledge as revenue officials, they manipulated survey records and went on a land grabbing spree. They also began imposing a number of illegal taxes on the villagers and exacting **vetti** or free labour (also called vetti chakiri or begar).

It was against these malpractices that the Telangana peasantry arose in revolt. They were led by the **Andhra Maha Sabha**, a communist organisation.

On 4th July 1946, armed retainers of the Visunuri Deshmukh of Janagaon opened fire on a peaceful gathering of peasants and killed Doddi Komaryya. This incident forced the peasants to take to arms and start an armed peasant movement.

Soon the Andhra Sabha and the Communist Party were declared illegal by the Nizam's government. Despite attempts at severe repression, the authorities failed to disintegrate the movement which continued unabated till the end of 1951, thus proving to be the most enduring and the most militant of all similar agitations.

#### Impact and Significance of Post-War Popular Unrest:

- The post-war unrest was an expression of the militancy in the popular mind.
- It demonstrated that nationalist feelings had penetrated into hitherto untouched sections and regions of India.
  - The British Indian government could no longer rely on the Indian personnel of its civil administration as well as the armed forces to suppress a revolt in India.
  - The INA trials had well demonstrated that patriotic ideas had entered into the minds of the armed forces—the chief instrument of British Raj in India.

- The RIN Revolt, a revolt in the armed forces, had a liberating effect in the minds of the people.
- The large-scale peasant and worker unrest all over the country also expressed the determined and confident mood of the Indian people.
- When non-violent agitation was met with force, it exposed the brute force that stood behind the government, eroding its prestige as well as moral basis to rule India.
- The Popular Unrest provided immediate context for the announcement of Cabinet Mission, to find out ways and means of peaceful transfer of power.

The popular unrest during the period 1945–47 demonstrated the enormous capacity of the common Indian men and women to stand up unitedly in the face of exploitation. With the Congress and the Muslim League tangled in power struggle, the mass discontent emerged as the only ray of hope for the nationalists.



### Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. Which one of the following is not correct about the Cabinet Mission Plan? [UPSC 1996]
  - (a) Provincial grouping
  - (b) Interim Cabinet of Indians
  - (c) Acceptance of Pakistan
  - (d) Constitution framing right
2. What is the correct sequence of the following events? [UPSC 1998]
  1. The August offer
  2. The INA trial
  3. The Quit India Movement
  4. The Royal Indian Naval ratings revolt
 Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
 Codes:
 

(a) 1,3,2,4	(b) 3,1,2,4
(c) 1,3,4,2	(d) 3,1,4,2
3. Which one of the following leaders of the Congress was totally in favour of Cabinet Mission Plan? [UPSC 1999]
  - (a) Mahatma Gandhi
  - (b) Jawaharlal Nehru
  - (c) Sardar Patel
  - (d) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
4. Which Indian nationalist leader looked upon a war between Germany and Britain as a god sent opportunity which would enable Indians to exploit the situation to their advantage? [UPSC 1999]
  - (a) C Rajagopalachari
  - (b) M A Jinnah
  - (c) Subhash Chandra Bose
  - (d) Jawaharlal Nehru
5. 'It made its proposals in May. It still wanted a United India. There was to be a Federal Union composed of British provinces.' [UPSC 1999]
 

The above question is related to

  - (a) Simon Commission
  - (b) Gandhi Irwin pact
  - (c) Cripps mission
  - (d) Cabinet mission
6. The last opportunity to avoid the partition of India was lost with the rejection of which of the following? [UPSC 2002]
  - (a) Cripps Mission
  - (b) Rajagopalachari formula
  - (c) Cabinet Mission
  - (d) Wavell Plan



7. The members of the constituent assembly which drafted the Constitution of India were [UPSC 2002]

(a) Nominated by the British Parliament  
(b) Nominated by the Governor General  
(c) Elected by the legislative assemblies of various province  
(d) Elected by the Indian National Congress, Muslim League

8. Who headed the Interim Cabinet formed in the year 1946? [UPSC 2003]

(a) Rajendra Prasad  
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru  
(c) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel  
(d) C. Rajgopalachari

9. Which one of the following statements is correct? [UPSC 2004]

(a) The Constituent Assembly of India was elected by the Provincial Assemblies in the year 1946.  
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru, M A Jinnah and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were members of the Constituent Assembly of India  
(c) The first session of the Constituent Assembly of India was held in January 1947  
(d) The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 January 1950

10. Who among the following was the Chairman of the Union Constitution Committee of the Constituent Assembly? [UPSC 2005]

(a) B.R. Ambedkar  
(b) J.B. Kripalani  
(c) Jawaharlal Nehru  
(d) Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer

11. Consider the following statements:

[UPSC 2005]

1. Lord Mountbatten was the Viceroy when Simla conference took place.  
2. Indian Navy revolt, 1946 took place when the Indian sailors in the Royal Indian Navy at Bombay and Karachi rose against the government.

Which of the statements given above is / are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

12. Assertion (A): According to the Wavell Plan, the number of Hindu and Muslim members in the Executive Council were to be equal.

[UPSC 2007]

Reason (R): Wavell thought that this arrangement would have avoided the partition of India

13. With reference to the Cabinet Mission, which of the following statements is / are correct? [UPSC 2015]

1. It recommended a Federal Government.  
2. It enlarged the power of the Indian courts  
3. It provided for more Indians in the ICS.  
Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) Only 1  
(b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3  
(d) None of the above

14. With reference to Indian freedom struggle, consider the following events:

[UPSC 2017]

1. Mutiny in Royal Indian Navy  
2. Quit India Movement launched  
3. Second Round Table Conference

What is the correct chronological sequence of the above events? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1-2-3 (b) 2-1-3  
(c) 3-2-1 (d) 3-1-2

15. The demand for the Tebhaga Peasant Movement in Bengal was for

[UPSC 2013]

(a) the reduction of the share of the landlords from one-half of the crop to one-third  
(b) the grant of ownership of land to peasants as they were the actual cultivators of the land  
(c) the uprooting of zamindari system and the end of serfdom  
(d) Writing of all peasant debts



## Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. What was the Cabinet Mission Plan? How was the 'grouping clause' fundamental to it? What was its impact on the attitude of the Congress and the league?

[UPSC 1989]

2. 'The trial of the INA officers did more harm than good to the British rule in India.' Explain [UPSC 1989]

3. When and why did the revolt of the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy take place? Why did they suspend the movement? What were the attitudes of Gandhi and Patel towards the moment? [UPSC 1990]

4. Trace the origin of the R.I.N mutiny and evaluate its impact on the political situation in India. [UPSC 1998]

5. What were the proposals of the Cabinet Mission? Analyse the reactions of the Congress and the league to the proposals.

[UPSC 1999]

6. Trace the salient sequence of events in the popular Revolt that took place in February 1946 in the then Royal Indian Navy and bring out its significance in the freedom struggle. Do you agree with the view that the sailors who took part in the revolt were some of the unsung heroes of the freedom struggle? [UPSC 2011]

7. In what ways did the Naval Mutiny prove to be the last nail in the coffin of British colonial aspirations in India?

[UPSC 2014]

8. It would have been difficult for the Constituent Assembly to complete its historic task of drafting the constitution for Independent India in just three years but for the experience gained with the Government of India Act, 1935. Discuss.

[UPSC 2014]



## Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. Examine the following statements with reference to the Bakasht Agitation:

1. It was started by the Bengal peasants in 1946-47.  
2. The peasants protested under the leadership of the Congress.

Which of the above statements is/are untrue? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) both (d) neither

2. Which of the following is/are true with regard to the Wavell Plan of 1945?

1. The Governor General's Executive Council was to be reconstructed.

2. With the exception of the Governor General, all other members of the Council would be nominated from among Indian leaders, including the Commander in Chief.  
3. The Muslims and the caste Hindus would be represented in the Council in proportion to their population.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only  
(b) 1 and 2  
(c) 1, 2 and 3  
(d) none of the above



3. Which of the following was/were among the popular upsurges that took place in India after the Second World War?

1. The Warli agitation
2. Telangana movement
3. Punnapra-Vayalar episode

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2                      (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

4. Examine the statements with regard to the Cabinet Mission-

1. Stafford Cripps was a member.
2. It was sent with the aim of settling the constitutional question in India.

3. It proposed one Central Government.

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2                      (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Consider the following responses of the Muslim League with reference to the Cabinet Mission Plan

1. It interpreted the provision regarding groupings of provinces to be compulsory.
2. It rejected the Plan and did not join the Interim government of 1946.
3. After the failure of the Plan, it observed the 'Day of Deliverance'

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Which of the following is/are true with regard to the Tebhaga movement?

1. It first began in the Hyderabad state.
2. It was directed against the jotedars.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) both                      (d) neither

7. Which of the following was/were among the recommendations of the Cabinet Mission Plan?

1. The Mission accepted the demand of Pakistan.
2. It recommended full provincial autonomy.
3. It recommended the formation of an Interim Government with Indians holding all portfolios, excluding that of the War Member.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2                      (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 2 only                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

8. Which of the following is/are true regarding the INA upsurges?

1. The three upsurges shared a similar pattern.
2. Gandhi and Nehru persuaded the RIN ratings to surrender.
3. The upsurge over INA trials ended in communal riots.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3                      (d) 3 only

9. Which of the following was the most important reason for the launch of the Travancore agitation of 1946?

- (a) The peasants there were forced to give begar.
- (b) The workers were exploited with low wages.
- (c) The peasants were forced to pay high land revenue.
- (d) The ruler there was planning to carve out an independent state.

10. Examine the following statements with reference to the General Elections of 1945-

1. The two issues that became the main plank of election campaign of the Congress were the Tebhaga movement and the INA trials.

2. The Muslim league formed provincial ministries in Sindh, Bengal, NWFP and Assam.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) both                      (d) neither



## Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. Critically analyse the British Policy in India after the Second World War. In what ways was it different and why?
2. Throw light on the impact of the victory of Labour Party in Britain in July 1945, on Indian political scene.
3. Write short notes on the following:  
(a) Bakasht Peasants' Agitation  
(b) Tebhaga Movement
4. What do you understand by Cabinet Mission? What were its main recommendations?
5. 'The most striking feature of the INA agitation was the effect on the traditional bulwarks of the Raj.' Comment.

## Answers

### Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (c)  | 2. (a)  | 3. (c)  | 4. (c)  | 5. (d)  |
| 6. (c)  | 7. (c)  | 8. (b)  | 9. (a)  | 10. (c) |
| 11. (b) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | 15. (a) |

### Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- |        |        |        |        |         |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (a) | 3. (d) | 4. (d) | 5. (a)  |
| 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (a) | 9. (d) | 10. (d) |