

## 19. The Last Decade of British Rule in India

### Spread of Quit India Movement

| Major happenings during the Quit India Movement | Actual Activities   |
|---|---|
| <b>Public on Rampage</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general public attacked symbols of authority, and hoisted national flags forcibly on public buildings.</li> <li>Bridges were blown up; railway tracks were removed and telegraph lines were cut.</li> <li>Most intense activities in eastern United Provinces and Bihar.</li> <li>Students responded by going on strike in schools and colleges, participating in processions, writing and distributing illegal news sheets (patrikas) and acting as couriers for underground networks.</li> <li>Workers went on strike in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Jamshedpur, Ahmednagar and Poona.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Underground Activity</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants in these activities were the Socialists, Forward Bloc members, Gandhi ashramites, revolutionary nationalists and local organisations in Bombay, Poona, Satara, Baroda and other parts of Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, United Provinces, Bihar and Delhi.</li> <li>The main personalities taking up underground activity were Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, BijuPatnaik, Chhotubhai Puranik, Achyut Patwardhan, Sucheta Kripalani and R.P. Goenka.</li> <li>Usha Mehta started an underground radio in Bombay.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Parallel Governments</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ballia under Chittu Pandey, he got many Congress leaders released.</li> <li>Tamluk (Midnapore)—Jatiya Sarkar undertook cyclone relief work, sanctioned grants to schools, supplied paddy from the rich to the poor, organised Vidyut Vahinis, etc.</li> <li>Satara – named “Prati Sarkar”, was organised under leaders like Y.B. Chavan, Nana Patil, etc. Village libraries and Nyayadan Mandals were organized, prohibition campaigns were carried on and ‘Gandhi marriages’ were organised.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Extent of Mass Participation</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Youth:</b> - the students of schools and colleges, remained in the forefront.</li> <li><b>Women:</b> especially school and college girls, actively participated, and included Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani and Usha Mehta.</li> <li><b>Workers:</b> went on strikes and faced repression.</li> <li><b>Peasants:</b> of all strata were at the heart of the movement. Even some zamindars participated.</li> <li>There was complete absence of anti-zamindar violence.</li> <li><b>Government officials:</b> especially those belonging to lower levels in police and administration, participated resulting in erosion of government loyalty.</li> <li><b>Muslims:</b> helped by giving shelter to under-ground activists.</li> <li>There were no communal clashes during the movement.</li> <li><b>The Communists</b> did not join the movement; in the wake of Russia being attacked by Nazi Germany, the communists began to support the British war against Germany and the</li> </ul> |

‘Imperialist War’ became the ‘People’s War’.

- **The Muslim League** opposed the movement, fearing that if the British left India at that time, the minorities would be oppressed by the Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha boycotted the movement. The Princely states showed a low-key response.

### **Government Repression:**

- Although martial law was not applied, the repression was severe. Agitating crowds were lathi-charged, tear-gassed and fired upon.
- In February 1943, Gandhi started a fast as an answer to an exhortation by the government to condemn violence; the fast was directed against the violence of the State.
- Three members of the viceroy’s executive council resigned. The fast achieved the following.
  - Public morale was raised.
  - Anti-British feeling was heightened.
  - An opportunity was provided for political activity.
  - Government’s high-handedness was exposed.
- On March 23, 1943 Pakistan Day was observed.

### **▪ Rajagopalachari Formula (1944): (CR Plan):**

C. Rajagopalachari proposed a formula for congress- League cooperation. It was a tacit acceptance of League’s demands for Pakistan and Gandhi supported the formula.

### **The main points of CR plan:**

1. Muslim league to endorse congress demand for Independence.
2. League to cooperate with congress in forming a provisional government at Centre.
3. To decide by plebiscite for the Muslim majority areas, whether or not to form a separate sovereign state.
4. In case of partition, agreement to be made jointly for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications etc.

Jinnah wanted the congress to accept two nation theory demand. He wanted only Muslims to vote in Plebiscite in the Muslim majority areas.

### **▪ Desai –liaquat pact:**

Congress and league nominees to have equal representation in the central executive. 20% of seats reserved for minorities.

### **▪ Wavell Plan (Shimla conference-1945):**

- The elections in England necessitated for a sincere effort on reaching a solution.
- A conference was convened by the viceroy, Lord Wavell, at Shimla in June 1945. The main proposals of the Wavell plan were as follows,
  - a. With the exception of governor general and commander in chief all other members in the executive council are to be Indians.
  - b. Caste Hindus and Muslims were to have equal representation.
  - c. The reconstructed council was to function as an interim government.
  - d. Governor- General was to exercise his veto on the advice of ministers.
- Congress objected the plan as it reduced the congress as pure caste Hindu Party.
- Muslim league wanted all Muslim members to be league nominees.

### **▪ The Indian National Army (INA) and Subhash Chandra Bose:**

#### **Subhash Chandra Bose:**

- He passed the Indian Civil Services examination but resigned in 1921 to join the struggle for freedom by becoming a member of the INC.
- His political guru was Chittaranjan Das.
- He became mayor of Calcutta in 1923.
- He presided over the Hazipur session of INC in the year 1938.
- Bose choose his own path, because of the ideological and strategic differences with INC and party leaders.

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- He formed a Forward Bloc Party in the year 1939.

### Activities of Bose:

#### 1. **Anti-Compromise**

**Conference:** Convened by Bose at Ramgarh on March 1940. It was a joint effort of the Forward Bloc and the Kisan Sabha.

**Resolution:** A world-wide struggle should be launched on April 6. He called for resistance to be offered to all forms of exploitation of Indian resources for the imperial cause.

- #### 2. **House arrest and Escape:** He was arrested for protesting against proposed monument for Holwell (survivor of black hole incident) in Calcutta.

Reason for Escape: “to supplement from outside the struggle going on at home”.

### Origin and First Phase of the Indian National Army:

- Mohan Singh created army of retreating soldiers from Malaya and POWs from Japanese.
- By the end of 1942, 40,000 men were ready to join the INA.
- INA would go into action only on the invitation of the Indian National Congress and the people of India.
- The move to form this army has been seen by many as a check against the misconduct of the Japanese against Indians in South-East Asia and as a bulwark against a possible future Japanese occupation of India.
- After Quit India movement, Mohan Singh wanted to launch invasion on India with the help Japanese with larger Indian troops. However, differences emerged over role to be played by INA. Finally, Mohan Singh was imprisoned by Japanese.

### Second Phase under S. Bose

In June 1943, Subhash Chandra Bose reached Tokyo; met the Japanese prime minister, and secured permission for INA.

### Rashbehari Bose:

- Rashbehari Bose had fled to Japan in 1915 due failed revolutionary activities in India and became naturalized citizen of Japan.
  - He made a lot of effort in getting the Japanese interested in the Indian Independence movement.
  - He had created Indian Independence League (IIL) in 1942 in Tokyo.
  - After the formation of INA, he decided to fly to Singapore and place INA under IIL.
  - After Subhash reached Singapore, he met Rashbehari, who transferred the control and leadership of the Indian Independence League and the INA to Subhash in July 1943.
  - On October 21, **1943, Subhash Bose** formed the **Provisional Government for Free India at Singapore**.
  - The famous slogan— “Give me blood, I will give you freedom” was given in Malaya.
  - This provisional government declared war on Britain and the United States, and was recognized by the Axis powers.
  - A women’s regiment called the Rani Jhansi Regiment was also formed.
  - On November 6, 1943, Andaman and Nicobar Islands was given by the Japanese army to the INA; the islands were renamed as Shahid Dweep and Swaraj Dweep respectively.
  - The INA headquarters was shifted to Rangoon (in Burma) in January 1944, and war cry “Chalo Delhi!” became famous
  - July 6, 1944- Subhas Bose addressed Mahatma Gandhi as **‘Father of Nation’**-from the Azad Hind Radio.
  - The Azad Hind Fauz crossed the **Burma border**, and stood on Indian soil on March 18, 1944 then advanced up to Kohima and Imphal. **On April 14, Colonel Malik of the Bahadur Group hoisted the INA flag for the first time on the Indian mainland at Moirang, in Manipur.**
  - The INA met the same fate as the Japanese, and all brigades began their withdrawal on July 18, 1944.
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### **Two Strands of National Upsurge:**

Two basic strands of national upsurge can be identified during the last two years of British rule—

- a. Tortuous negotiations involving the government, Congress and Muslim League, increasingly accompanied by communal violence and culminating in freedom and the partition.
- b. Sporadic, localised and often extremely militant and united mass action by workers, peasants and states' peoples which took the form of a countrywide strike wave. This kind of activity was occasioned by the INA Release Movement, Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt.

### **Congress support to INA Prisoners:**

- At the first post-War Congress session in September 1945 at Bombay, a strong resolution was adopted declaring Congress support for the INA cause.
- Defence of INA prisoners in the court was organised by Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailash Nath Katju, Jawaharlal Nehru and Asaf Ali.
- INA Relief and Enquiry Committee distributed small sums of money and food, and helped arrange employment for the affected.
- Fund collection was organised

### **INA trials:**

- Trial of INA prisoners sometimes described as "Edge of volcano". British initially decided to hold trials of several hundreds of INA prisoners.
- 1st trial at red fort in November 1945 putting on dock together a Hindu, Premkumar sehgal, a Muslim, Shah Nawaz khan, and a Sikh, Gurbaksh singh dhillon. INA day was celebrated Nov 12, 1945 and INA week (Nov 5 – 11).

INA agitation spread all over the country and witnessed participation of diverse social groups.

### **▪ Congress Election Results:**

#### **• Performance of the Congress**

- It got 91 per cent of non-Muslim votes.
- It captured 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Assembly.
- In the provincial elections, it got a majority in most provinces except in Bengal, Sindh and Punjab. The Congress majority provinces included the NWFP and Assam which were being claimed for Pakistan

#### **• Muslim League's Performance**

- It got 86.6 per cent of the Muslim votes.
- It captured the 30 reserved seats in the Central Assembly.
- In the provincial elections, it got a majority in Bengal and Sindh.
- Unlike in 1937, now the League clearly established itself as the dominant party among Muslims.
- In Punjab A Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition under Khizr Hayat Khan assumed power.

### **▪ Cabinet Mission Plan:**

- Attlee government in 1946 Secretary of State Pethick-Lawrence personally led a three-man cabinet deputation to New Delhi with the hope of resolving the Congress-Muslim League deadlock and, thus, of transferring British power to a single Indian administration.

### **Why British withdrawal seemed imminent by 1946?**

1. Success of nationalist forces in struggle for hegemony.
  2. Demoralisation among bureaucracy and loyalists.
  3. Limitation of conciliation and repression strategy of British.
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4. RIN ratings revolt.
  5. Official rule seemed impossible.

**Major recommendations of the committee:**

- The subcontinent was to be divided into three major groups of provinces: sections A, B, C.
- Rejection of the demand for full-fledged Pakistan.
- Provinces to have full autonomy and residual powers.
- Common centre for defence, communications and external affairs.
- Three tier executive and legislature at province, section and union level.
- Princely states were no longer to be under paramountcy of the British government. They would be free to enter into an arrangement with successor governments or the British government.
- Local provincial governments were to have the choice of opting out of the group in which they found themselves should a majority of their populace vote to do so.

▪ **Communal Holocaust:**

The early summer of 1946, therefore, saw a dawn of hope for India's future prospects, but that soon proved false when Nehru announced at his first press conference as the re-elected president of the Congress that no constituent assembly could be "bound" by any prearranged constitutional formula.

Jinnah read Nehru's remarks as a "complete repudiation" of the plan, which had to be accepted in its entirety in order to work. Jinnah then convened the league's Working Committee, which withdrew its previous agreement to the federation scheme and instead called upon the "**Muslim Nation**" to launch "**direct action**" in mid-August 1946.

Thus, began India's bloodiest year of civil war since the mutiny nearly a century earlier. The Hindu-Muslim rioting and killing that started in Calcutta sent deadly sparks of fury, frenzy, and fear to every corner of the subcontinent, as all civilized restraint seemed to disappear.

▪ **Attlee's Statement of February 20, 1947:**

- **June 30, 1948:** A deadline for transfer of power irrespective of any situation in India.
- The British would relinquish power either to some form of central government or in some areas to the existing provincial governments if the constituent assembly was not fully representative, i.e., if the Muslim majority provinces did not join.
- British powers and obligations vis-a-vis the princely states would lapse with transfer of power, but these would not be transferred to any successor government in British India.
- Mountbatten would replace Wavell as the Viceroy.
- The statement contained clear hints of partition and even Balkanisation of the country into numerous states and was, in essence, a reversion of the Cripps Offer.
- The date was fixed by government to prevent any further escalation of constitutional crisis and to portray British's sincerity.
- INC was fine with the transfer of power to more than one Centre as it meant the current government could work for its constitution. However, emboldened by this provision, Muslim league launched civil dis-obedience movement in Punjab to overthrow coalition government in Punjab.
- By April 1947, INC was ready for partition provided Bengal and Punjab are divided in fair manner.

▪ **Mountbatten Plan, June 3, 1947:**

- The freedom-with-partition formula was coming to be widely accepted well before Mountbatten arrived in India.

**The important points of the plan were as follows.**

- Punjab and Bengal Legislative Assemblies would meet in two groups, Hindus and Muslims, to vote for partition. If a simple majority of either group voted for partition, then these provinces would be partitioned.
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- In case of partition, two dominions and two constituent assemblies would be created.
- Sindh would take its own decision.
- Referendums in NWFP and Sylhet district of Bengal would decide the fate of these areas.

**Since the Congress had conceded a unified India, all their other points would be met, namely:**

1. Independence for princely states ruled out—they would join either India or Pakistan.
2. Independence for Bengal ruled out.
3. Accession of Hyderabad to Pakistan ruled out.
4. Freedom to come on August 15, 1947.
5. A boundary commission to be set up if partition was to be effected.

Thus, the League's demand was conceded to the extent that Pakistan would be created and the Congress' position on unity was considered to make Pakistan as small as possible. Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity.

### **Why Congress Accepted Dominion Status?**

- (i) It would ensure a peaceful and quick transfer of power.
- (ii) It was important for the Congress to assume authority to check the explosive situation.
- (iii) It would allow for some much-needed continuity in the bureaucracy and the army.

For Britain, the dominion status offered a chance to keep India in the Commonwealth, even if temporarily, considering the economic strength, defense potential and greater value of trade and investment in India.

**Why August 15:** Britain wanted to secure Congress' agreement to the dominion status and escape the responsibility for the communal situation

### **Responses of States:**

1. Bengal and Punjab decided in favour for partition: East Bengal and West Punjab joined Pakistan and West Bengal and East Punjab stayed with India.

2. The referendum in Sylhet resulted in the incorporation of that district in East Bengal.
3. The referendum in NWFP decided in favour of Pakistan and similar was case with Baluchistan and Sindh.

### **Indian Independence Act, 1947:**

On July 5, 1947 the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act which was based on the Mountbatten Plan. The Act was implemented on August 15, 1947. Provisions of the act are:

- The creation of two independent dominions—India and Pakistan.
- A governor-general for each dominion for the effective operation of the Act.
- The constituent assembly of each new dominion was to exercise the powers of the legislature of that dominion, and the existing Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States were to be automatically dissolved.
- Till formation of new constitution both dominions to act in accordance with Government of India Act-1935.
- M.A. Jinnah became the first Governor-General of Pakistan and Mountbatten of India.

### **Integration of States:**

Nehru presided over the All India State People's Conference sessions in Udaipur (1945) and Gwalior (April 1947). He declared that the states refusing to join the Constituent Assembly would be treated as hostile.

July 1947, Vallabhai Patel took charge of the new States Department and skillfully incorporated all the states with baits and threats.

- **Phase-I:** By August 15, 1947, all states except Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh had signed an instrument of accession with the Indian government, acknowledging central authority over defence, external affairs and communication.

The princes agreed to this fairly easily because

- i. they were 'surrendering' only what they never had and

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- ii. there was no change in the internal political structure
  - **Phase-II:** Involved a much more difficult process of 'integration' of states with neighbouring provinces or into new units like the Kathiawar Union, Vindhya and Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan or Himachal Pradesh along with internal constitutional changes in states which for some years retained their old

boundaries (Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore-Cochin). This phase was accomplished within a year.

The principal bait offered was a generous privy purse while some princes were made governors and Rajpramukhs in free India. This rapid political unification of the country after independence was Patel's greatest achievement.