



**Second Level Support Service (SLSS)**  
**Cultural and Environmental Education**

# History

**British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947:  
helping students to think critically**

March 2010

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**Cultural and Environmental Education**

**History**

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We would like to thank his excellency, P.S. Raghavan, Ambassador of India to Ireland, and the Embassy of Pakistan, Dublin, for assistance in the compilation of this resource.

Thanks also to the members of the History Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science for their on-going encouragement and support.

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## ***British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947: helping students to think critically***

In exploring the case study, “British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947”, students are following a narrative of events. They are not concerned, however, merely with “what happened” (and, even here, there may be conflicts of interpretation) but also with why it happened, and what its historical significance is. In exploring issues of causation and significance with students, we have a great opportunity to develop their ability to think critically, which is one of the stated objectives of the syllabus, and an increasingly cherished aim of senior cycle education.

At previous history in-service sessions, it has been argued that some of the best ways in which students’ critical thinking can be generated include:

- the use of the enquiry-focused approach
- the use of a multi-perspective approach
- the use of ‘critical skills’ exercises that involve group discussion and judgement-forming

Each of these approaches is drawn on in the following exploration of the case study.

### **The enquiry-focused approach**

The enquiry-focused approach involves organising a set of lessons around an enquiry question on which the teaching and learning activities are focused. It aims to give a clear focus to a series of lessons, to clarify for all concerned what the learning purposes are and to ensure that the sequence of lessons is leading to improved understanding on the part of the students.

In her book, *The Twentieth Century World* (The Historical Association, 1997), Christine Counsell outlines the rationale behind the approach. The following is an edited extract:

Choosing a sequence of interesting historical enquiries gives a clear focus to any scheme of work. This approach has a number of advantages:

- (i) It prevents a superficial run through the content and leads pupils into deeper levels of historical understanding.
  - (ii) It allows students to engage in real historical debate. Historians usually begin with a question.
  - (iii) It motivates students by giving a clear focus to their work. Identifying key questions is a powerful way of ‘sharing clarity with learners’. Teachers are thus reinforcing that the whole point of a sequence of lessons or activities is to build towards some attempt at answering the question. Some teachers who use this approach will refer to such a question in every single lesson. Pupils are constantly reminded of what they are trying to do and why.
  - (iv) Key questions can shape and limit an otherwise sprawling content.
  - (v) It encourages pupils to produce more substantial and significant outcomes at the end of a section of work.
- (pp.30-31)

## A multi-perspective approach

The benefits of adopting a multi-perspective approach are set out in the *Guidelines for Teachers* as follows:

### Rationale

A multi-perspective approach can help students to grasp some of the key points that underlie the syllabus objectives, e.g.

- that there is not necessarily one correct version of a particular historical event
- that the same historical event can be described and explained in different ways depending on the standpoint of (for example) the eye-witness or historian
- that the same piece of evidence may be interpreted differently by different historians
- that few historical sources of evidence can be deemed to be totally impartial, and that the context in which they were produced must always be taken into consideration.

The *Guidelines* go on to identify the following ‘teaching implications’ of the approach:

### Teaching implications

Firstly, the teacher will need a range of texts or other sources that display different perspectives on the historical phenomena under investigation. Secondly, the teacher will need to direct students in identifying similarities and differences in the accounts. If students are to understand particular viewpoints on an historical episode, they will need to be provided with a context, i.e. where the holders of a particular viewpoint are ‘coming from’; what their political, economic, social or cultural circumstances are, and what are their specific objectives and priorities. Thirdly, the teacher will need to assist students in relating one perspective to another so that a more rounded and complete picture emerges. While the approach involves exposure to different perspectives, it also involves the development of analytical skills and a way of thinking historically that is always conscious of alternative viewpoints.

The topic used in the *Guidelines* to exemplify the approach is “European retreat from Empire and the aftermath, 1945-1990”. The following commentary is provided:

### Exemplar

Let us take as an example Topic 5 in the history of Europe and the wider world from the Later Modern field of study: **European retreat from Empire and the aftermath, 1945-1990**. Here, there are clearly two broad perspectives or viewpoints that permeate the whole topic, viz. that of the coloniser and the colonised. In the case of a number of elements, a broader range of perspectives applies e.g. in the element, ‘British withdrawal from Palestine and origins of Arab-Israeli conflict’, the British, Arab and Israeli perspectives are obviously of key importance; indeed, ‘Arab’ here is plural in that one is referring not only to the Palestinian Arabs but also to those surrounding Arab states who were drawn into the conflict. The perspectives of France and the U.S.A. are also relevant.

The main focus of the topic from the political and administrative perspective is the withdrawal of European powers from an imperial role in Asia (with a particular focus on India, Indochina and the East Indies), Palestine and Africa (with a particular focus on Algeria, Nigeria, the Congo, Tanzania and Angola) and their subsequent relations with their former colony or mandate. The two European powers that feature most prominently are Britain and France.

The first set of elements refers to European retreat from empire in Asia and subsequent relations between the formerly colonising and colonised powers. The related case study examines ‘British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947’. While students will need to be made aware of the parallels and dissimilarities between the situation in the Indian sub-continent and that in Indochina and the East Indies, the multi-perspective approach applied to India can be

applied to the other areas, albeit in a less detailed way. The following are examples of source extracts that could be used in dealing with British withdrawal from India and the consequent establishment, as independent states, of India and Pakistan:

### **British perspective**

*The Indian Independence Bill ... received the royal assent on the 18<sup>th</sup> [July]. The effect on India was magical; confronted for the first time with real responsibility, realizing that Parliament meant what it said and that the future of the country lay in their own hands, political India came to rapid conclusions. The inevitability of partition was accepted by the Indian National Congress; the ...regrettable consequence, the division of Bengal and the Punjab, was agreed to ... Regrets there must be at the passing of the miracle of British rule in India ....*

Sir Stanley Reed, (1952) *The India I Knew, 1897-1947*, Odhams Press.

### **Congress Party perspective**

*...We end today a period of ill-fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us... We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen ....*

Jawaharlal Nehru to Constituent Assembly, 14 August, 1947.

[Source: Brian MacArthur, ed. (1999 second revised edition) *The Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches*

### **Muslim League perspective**

*Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people ... If you will work in co-operation , forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed ... in course of time ... the Hindu community and the Muslim community ... will vanish ... You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan ... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State.*

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on his election as first President of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 11 August, 1947.

[As quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed, (1998) *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity* Oxford University Press.]

Questions such as the following could be used to draw attention to the different assumptions and perspectives of the three people quoted:

- *Based on the evidence of the extracts, is it likely that Nehru and Jinnah shared Sir Stanley Reed's regret at 'the passing of British rule in India'?*
- *Why, do you think, did Nehru place emphasis on 'the greater triumphs and achievements that await us'?*
- *Why did Jinnah talk about the need to 'work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet'?*

In many cases, the context in which particular comments were made will need to be explained to students. In the above extracts, it is helpful for students to know that Sir Stanley Reed was editor of 'The Times of India' from 1907 to 1923 and a Conservative M.P. at Westminster from 1938 to 1950; that Jawaharlal Nehru was at the forefront of the struggle for Indian independence from 1919 to 1947, spending nine years in gaol; and that Muhammad Ali Jinnah realised the importance of tolerance and co-operation, internally, if his geographically-divided state were to survive into the future.

In his book, *Teaching 20<sup>th</sup>-century European History* (Council of Europe, 2001), Robert Stradling writes that

Multiperspectivity, within the context of history and history teaching, aims to achieve three things:

- to gain a more comprehensive and broader understanding of historical events and developments by taking into account the similarities and differences in the accounts and the perspectives of all the parties involved;
- to gain a deeper understanding of the historical relationships between nations, or cross-border neighbours, or majorities and minorities within national borders;
- to gain a clearer picture of the dynamics of what happened through examining the interactions between the people and groups involved and their interdependence.

**Discussion point:** What is the relevance of each of the above bullet points to the case study, “British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947”?

## Contrasting historiographies

In the context of the multi-perspective approach, it is interesting to compare the manner in which school history approaches the issue of British withdrawal from India. The following extract is taken from a study which has been critically acclaimed by both Indian and Pakistani historians

In the Indian case, the end of the freedom struggle marks the end of the history syllabus and the textbook in most states. After more than five decades of independence, the Indian system of education has not been able to introduce the history of post-independence India in the school curriculum ... For the majority of school children, the history of India *starts* in ancient times and comes to an *end* in 1947.

The Pakistani case is quite remarkably different in its treatment of 1947 as the 'end' of the freedom struggle. This end also constitutes the formal beginning of the nation-state called Pakistan, and it is hardly surprising that in contrast to India, Pakistan has introduced post-independence history in a substantial manner at various stages of education. In the Pakistani structuring of knowledge about the past, the Partition of India as an 'end' of the freedom movement is embedded in a longer history which, in fact, *starts* from 1947. Most textbooks discuss the division of assets and other problems of national reconstruction faced during the years following independence ... All these topics, particularly the process of Islamization cover a substantial portion of senior-level textbooks.

*Prejudice and Pride: School histories of the freedom struggle in India and Pakistan*, Krishna Kumar (Penguin Books India, 2001, pp.74-75)

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### A glossary of Indian terms

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Jai Hind</b>   | Victory to India   |
| <b>Lathi</b>      | a heavy stick  |
| <b>Mussalmans</b> | Muslims  |
| <b>Pathan</b>     | A member of a Pashto-speaking people of SE Afghanistan and NW Pakistan                                 |
| <b>Pukka</b>      | Real, genuine  |
| <b>Raj</b>        | The period of British rule in India before independence (literally, 'rule')                            |
| <b>Sahib</b>      | An Englishman or other European as addressed or spoken of by Indians. Also, a gentleman.               |
| <b>Satyagraha</b> | Commitment to the truth force; the use of moral pressure for political purposes as pioneered by Gandhi |
| <b>Swaraj</b>     | Self-government, freedom   |

### **British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947: the broader context of colonialism**

In 1919, in the immediate aftermath of World War One, the British Empire covered more of the globe than at any time in its history. The defeat of the Ottoman and German Empires meant that Britain added territories in the Middle East and Africa to its empire in the form of mandates given to it by the League of Nations.

But it is strangely ironic that Britain's imperialist power also faced grave challenges at this time. For example, national identities had formed in many self-governing colonies which now pressed for greater clarity on their status as independent countries within the British Commonwealth. Furthermore, the United States and the Soviet Union became more vocally critical of the practice of colonialism in the post-war world. Thirdly, despite the economic rewards that colonies brought, many people in Britain and other colonial powers began to question the expense involved in maintaining colonies as post-war economic realities began to bite.

In the 1920s, European colonial powers began to face growing opposition from within their territories, often led by educated elites who sought a role in local administration or even national autonomy. The war led to a reawakening of nationalist impulses in such places as Egypt and Ireland, with the former gaining independence from Britain in 1922, after a massive revolt in 1919. In 1922, the newly formed Irish Free State was granted dominion status within the British Commonwealth. Significantly, the All-India Congress Party campaign for Indian independence gathered momentum under the leadership of Mohandas Gandhi. Faced with mass opposition, Britain greatly extended Indian participation in government during the 1930s.

In the 1930s, tensions in the British mandated territory of Palestine were exacerbated by the increasing levels of Jewish immigration from Germany which followed Hitler's accession to power. Britain, which had publicly committed itself to supporting the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, was faced with a widespread Arab uprising in 1936. Meanwhile, Iraq, over which Britain also exercised a mandate, gained its full independence in 1932. As the decade wore on, it was evident that the notion of international accountability and responsibility in colonial affairs was becoming increasingly acknowledged and accepted. Indeed, the League of Nations mandate\* system was significant in this regard, as was the British notion of dominion\*\* status which was clarified in the 1931 Statute of Westminster and which accorded significant levels of autonomy to dominion territories (not least in Ireland).

Other colonial powers now began to face mounting opposition. In North Africa, Italy experienced resistance in Abyssinia, while the French were faced with communist revolts in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, and also in Indo-China, where the creation of a nationalist guerrilla organisation, the Viet Minh, by Ho Chi Minh, would have significant implications for international relations in later decades. Furthermore, the impact of the Wall Street Crash and the subsequent Great Depression would be pronounced, with widespread unrest affecting many colonial economies. Changing patterns in world trade, rising unemployment and falling export prices led to strikes and riots in many colonial territories between 1935 and 1938.

By the end of the decade, then, the development of nationalism in Asia and North Africa and the emergence of new, radical nationalist leaders, such as Sukarno in Indonesia and Nehru in India, meant that European colonial empires were under great strain. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and its dramatic passage through the 1940s significantly undermined European colonialism. Changing social, economic and political circumstances led to a major realignment of the nature of Britain's relationships with its colonies. It was in India that this change was perhaps most significantly realised in the period between 1945 and 1947.

\*Mandate: A League of Nations mandate refers to the legal status and administrative structure of territories transferred from the control of one country to another following World War One.

\*\*Dominion: Former British colony accorded self-government. The Statute of Westminster of 1931, in simple terms, established the equality of dominions with the United Kingdom within the Commonwealth and enhanced the powers of dominions to make laws for themselves without having them imposed from London.

## **British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947: overview of the case study**

By 1945, India, for long regarded as the jewel in the empire's crown, had high expectations of independence. Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of various non-violent campaigns aimed at British withdrawal from India, including a campaign to boycott British cotton imports in 1920-22, and movements of non-cooperation and civil disobedience in the 1930s.

When Clement Attlee led the Labour Party to power in 1945, he quickly set about negotiations on British withdrawal. This was partly due to the anti-imperialist ethos of his party. It was also due to British gratitude for Indian assistance in the war effort, in which some two million Indians served in the British forces or on the Allied side. But a further factor was Attlee's fear that growing Indian impatience and discontent about the slow pace of the move to independence (caused in part by the war) and the dilution of plans for greater autonomy might lead to violent unrest. Attlee hoped to secure a united, independent India, where Muslims and Hindus would live together in one large state, linked to Britain with trade and military agreements. But it soon became evident that internal religious and ethnic tensions in India would make this difficult to achieve.

The Government of India Act of 1935 had conferred a measure of Home Rule on India, expanding on a similar act in 1919. Sir Stafford Cripps, a British cabinet minister, led a mission to India in 1942 which sought Indian cooperation in the British war effort in return for the concession by Britain of dominion status for India after the war. The rejection of Britain's terms was followed by the Congress Party's "Quit India" campaign. Cripps was also part of the 1946 British Cabinet Mission which proposed a federal union of India in the long-term, but with provision for autonomous provinces to evolve as well, thus allaying Muslim fears of Hindu domination. However, while tentatively accepting the federal proposal, the Muslim and Hindu sides remained deadlocked over the issue of Muslim autonomy. Lord Louis Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as Viceroy in early 1947. His background as both a royal and an experienced military administrator in South East Asia during the war suggested that he would be an effective representative in negotiations with the Muslim League and the Congress Party.

But despite Mountbatten's skills, it soon became evident that partition was unavoidable. British and nationalist politicians were unable to agree a balance of power between a united Indian government and provincial governments. Put simply, Muslims would not accept Hindu domination, despite that fact that Hindus and Sikhs constituted the majority across the sub-continent. Consequently, it was planned that India would be split into Muslim-controlled Pakistan, and Hindu-dominated India. The loss of India represented a damaging blow to British national esteem and morale, coming so soon after the end of the war, where initial euphoria in the wake of victory was being eroded by grim economic realities. But the consequences in India were, in the short-term, appalling. When Mountbatten announced that independence would happen ten months earlier than anticipated, on 15 August 1947, an estimated one million people were killed in sectarian violence as some 15 million Hindus and Muslims on the wrong side of the border fled their homes. Religious and ethnic tensions were released in widespread violence as law and order broke down during the transfer of sovereignty. While most of the 600 princely states that survived from the period of British rule formally joined either India or Pakistan in the days preceding British withdrawal, the inadequacy of the nation-state model of governance in accommodating many diverse regional identities quickly became apparent. The state of Hyderabad, which had a Muslim majority, was forcibly integrated into India while in the late 1940s, the two states went to war over Kashmir, a state with a majority Muslim population but ruled by a Hindu dynasty, before UN intervention secured an uneasy truce. Pakistan itself was partitioned in 1971 when Bangladesh was created.

The issues and events that surrounded British withdrawal from India, together with the key personalities involved, are the subject of investigation in this case study.

## **British Withdrawal from India: Glossary**

**Cabinet Mission (1946)** – This mission to India was launched by the British Government in March 1946 to discuss plans for the transfer of power from the British Raj to Indian leadership. The members of the mission were: Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India,

Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade,

A.V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty.

**Congress Party** – an Indian political party founded in 1885 as Indian National Congress. Founded by Allen Hume, a British colonist and, until World War I it was a moderate body. Later, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, it began a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation. It was declared illegal between 1932-34. It led the move to end British rule and was the government party after independence from 1947-77.

**The Cripps Mission (1942)** – The British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India in March of 1942 to get cooperation for the war effort. Cripps offered full dominion status after the war with general elections to be held and minorities to be protected. The plan came to nothing because it was rejected by both the Congress and the Muslim League. Jinnah opposed it because it did not make provision for a separate Pakistan. Gandhi demanded immediate self-government in return for support in the war and began the “Quit India” movement.

**Direct Action Day (1946)** – 16<sup>th</sup> August 1946. Following continued rejection by the Indian Congress of the proposal to divide India, the Muslim League planned a protest which began with a "Day of Direct Action" to assert the right of the Muslims to a separate homeland. The protests triggered riots in Calcutta in which 4,000 people lost their lives (known as the “great Calcutta Riots”).

**Lahore Resolution (1940)** - also known as the Pakistan Resolution. This resolution, which demanded a separate state for Muslims, was passed at Minto Park in Lahore where the Muslim League held their annual meeting in 1940.

**Muslim League** – founded in 1906 as the All- India Muslim League under the leadership of Ali Khan. In 1940 the league led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah demanded an independent Muslim state. They boycotted the Assembly in 1946; it was the activities of the Muslim League that led to the establishment of Pakistan.

**Princely States** – These were semi -autonomous states within the Indian sub-continent that were nominally ruled by their own princes according to treaties which had been drawn up by the East India Company. The British could count on the cooperation and support of the princes and a British resident was appointed to each principality to act as a channel of communication.

**Punjab Massacres (1947)** – the violence that occurred after the partition of India, when over 1 million people died in the Punjab. The eastern section of Punjab went to India and the western section went to Pakistan. The violence occurred as Muslims fled from east Punjab, and Hindus and Sikhs moved to India.

**Quit India (1942)** - resolution passed by Congress in August 1942 in reaction to the Cripps Mission. This was a civil disobedience movement launched in August 1942 in response to Gandhi’s call for immediate independence. “We shall either free India or die in the attempt.” He hoped to bring the British government to the negotiating table.

**The Red Fort Trials (1945/6)** - These were trials for treason of officers in the Indian National Army (INA), which had been formed in 1942 with the aim of overthrowing the British Raj in India. They were initially composed of Indian prisoners of war captured by the Japanese, but then fought with the Japanese against the British and Commonwealth forces in Burma and elsewhere. After the war the Red Fort Trials (held in the Red Fort in Delhi) of captured INA officers provoked massive public outcry, eventually triggering the Bombay mutiny in British Indian forces.

**Simla Conference (1945)** – Simla in the Himalayas, was the summer residence of the British Viceroy in India. In 1945 the Viceroy convened a conference there of the Congress party and the Muslim League to discuss plans for the future of India.

### **British Withdrawal from India 1945 – 1947: a chronological overview**

Before proposing a possible enquiry on the case study, and pursuing that enquiry with a focus on the views of different protagonists, it will be helpful to consider the following overview of relevant developments prior to and during the period of the case study.

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1858  | British Crown rule (the 'Raj') established in India (ending a century of control by the East India Company)<br>Two-fifths of the Indian sub-continent continued to be ruled by over 560 independent principalities who made treaties with the British   |
| 1885  | Foundation of Indian National Congress as an all-India, secular political party   |
| 1906  | Foundation of Muslim League   |
| 1920  | Mahatma Gandhi becomes leader of the Congress; begins Non-cooperation Movement; 1922, Civil Disobedience Movement (revived 1930-1934 and 1942)  |
| 1929  | Lord Irwin promises Dominion Status for India   |
| 1935  | Government of India Act receives the royal assent   |
| 1939  | Viceroy announces that India is at war with Germany; Congress ministers resign  |
| 1940  | Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League demands a separate state for the Muslims of India  |
| 1942  | Congress launches 'Quit India' movement and is declared an illegal organization   |
| <hr/> |   |
| 1945  | 26 July: Labour Party comes to power in Britain<br>Dec (- Jan) General Elections in India   |
| 1946  | 23 March-29 June: Cabinet mission visits India (16 May: constitutional scheme; 16 June: plan for formation of interim government)<br>16 August: 'Direct Action Day'<br>2 September: Congress forms interim government with Nehru as Vice-President<br>13 October: Muslim League decides to join interim government<br>3-6 December: London conference of major Indian leaders aborted |
| 1947  | 20 February: Atlee (p.m.) announces British intention to leave India by August 1948<br>24 March: Mountbatten sworn in as Viceroy and Governor-General<br>2 June: Mountbatten (following Cabinet talks in London) gives Partition Plan to Indian leaders<br>18 July: Indian Independence Bill receives royal assent<br>14-15 August (midnight): Power transferred.                     |

Main source: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/chronology/index.html>

## *British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947: profiles*

### *Congress Party Leaders*

#### **Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam (1888-1958)**

Leading Muslim member of Congress Party; Congress president, 1940-1946; Indian education minister after independence.

#### **Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) (1869-1948)**

Studied law in London; 1893-1914, worked in South Africa; on return to South Africa, rose to dominance in Congress Party, becoming its president in 1924. Led a number of civil disobedience campaigns, spending a number of spells in prison. Made numerous attempts between 1944-1947 to stop the partition of India but failed. Assassinated, 1948.

#### **Nehru, Jawaharlal (Pandit) (1889-1964)**

Barrister and politician in the United Provinces of India; supporter of Gandhi; President of Indian National Congress, 1929, 1936-37, 1946, 1951-54; first prime minister of India, 1947-1964.

### *Muslim League Leaders*

#### **Jinnah, Mahomed Ali (Quaid-i-Azam) (1876-1948)**

Studied law in London; as barrister in Bombay, active in Indian National Congress. Joined Muslim League, resigning from Congress Party in 1920. Prime mover behind 'Lahore Resolution' of 1940, which demanded a separate state for Indian Muslims; first Governor-General of Pakistan.

#### **Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawabzada (1895-1951)**

Trained as a lawyer in England, 1919-21; leader of the Muslim League Party, 1940; Finance Minister in the Interim Government, 1946; first prime minister of Pakistan, 1947-1951.

### *British Administrators/Politicians*

#### **Attlee, Clement (1883-1967)**

Labour prime minister, 1945-1951; granted independence to India, 1947.

#### **Cripps, Sir Stafford (1889-1952)**

Sent to India in 1942 to offer dominion status after war in return for full support for war effort; member of the Cabinet Mission to India, March 1946; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1947-1950.

#### **Ismay, Hastings, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Ismay (1887-1965)**

Mountbatten's Chief of Staff.

#### **Mountbatten, Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Mountbatten of Burma (1900-1979)**

Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, 1943-1946; Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1947-1948.

#### **Wavell, Archibald Percival, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl (1883-1950)**

Commander-in-Chief, India, 1941-43; Field-marshal, 1943; Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1943-1947.

### Key personality: Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)

Born in Porbandar, Kathiawar, Gandhi studied law in London and, in 1893, gave up a well-paid legal practice in Bombay to work in South Africa for £1 a week, where he spent 21 years opposing legal discrimination against the Indian population. On his return to India in 1914, he developed an interest in the *Swaraj* (freedom) movement and soon rose to prominence in the Congress Party, becoming its president in 1924. In 1930, he led a famous Salt March to the Dandi coast in defiance of the government's tax on salt. He chose civil disobedience, non-cooperation and fasting as means to oppose the injustices he linked to the British Raj.

During World War II, Gandhi described the Cripps' proposals of 1942 as "a post-dated cheque" on a crashing bank and he was instrumental in the launch of the Congress Party's 'Quit India' campaign which led to his arrest, on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1942, and imprisonment until 1944.

In the years that followed, Gandhi continued to campaign for Indian independence whilst doing whatever he could to prevent the adoption of any strategy involving partition as a means of satisfying conflicting political demands. However, talks with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, in 1944 were unsuccessful. In 1946, Gandhi held talks with the British Cabinet Mission but he opposed their proposals which he saw as advancing the prospects for partition. In May 1947, he greeted the British decision to grant independence as "the noblest act of the British nation". Both before and after the announcement on independence, many of his energies were absorbed in dialogue with Muslim and Hindu leaders in efforts to ease communal violence, the prayer meetings that were part of his daily routine, and fasts to shame the perpetrators of violence.

Gandhi marked 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 with a 24-hour fast in Calcutta. The independence he had sought for so long came at too high a price, partition, and the problems of hunger and communal violence continued to trouble him. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948, he was shot dead by a Hindu extremist in New Delhi.

Nehru's broadcast to the nation on the evening of 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1948 (edited).

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere ... Our beloved leader, Babu as we called him, Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow, not to me only but to millions and millions in this country ...

The light has gone out I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light ... For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

*Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Volume One* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), Third Impression, 1967, pp.42-43.

## **British withdrawal from India, 1945-1947: a possible enquiry**

### **What happened between 1945 and 1947 that led to the creation of two states as the British withdrew from India?**

Potential benefits of using this question to focus on the subject matter of the case study?

One way of approaching this enquiry is to focus on the circumstances that obtained and the developments that took place in each of the three years 1945, 1946 and 1947. The focus in each case might be as follows:

1945 What circumstances, already existing, made moves towards British withdrawal, Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan likely?

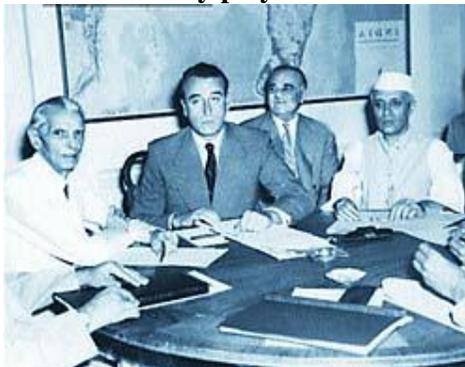
What developments during 1945 made these developments more likely?

1946 What (actions by and?) interactions between the British government, the Congress Party and the Muslim League had a significant impact on developments during 1946?

1947 Why did British plans for India undergo a number of changes during 1947?

In the pages that follow, a list of significant points for each stage of the enquiry is followed by a selection of linked primary source extracts and some secondary source extracts.

### **Key players**



Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/fline/fl1910/19100781.jpg>

The three crucial strands of the story of British withdrawal from India are represented here: Jinnah - the Muslim League; Mountbatten and Ismay - British administration; Nehru – the Congress Party)

### **A possible 'hook'**

One could begin with a newsreel film clip showing the establishment of the two states on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, and use this as a 'launching' point for the enquiry. A suitable clip, entitled 'A New India', may be downloaded from [www.harappa.com/wall/wall.html](http://www.harappa.com/wall/wall.html).

## **Transcript of film clip, 'A New India'**

The gate of freedom is open in India.

In Karachi, capital of the newly-created Moslem state of Pakistan, Lord Louis Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India, arrives to take part in the official end of British rule. With Lady Mountbatten he enters Government House for the ceremonies which make Pakistan a full-fledged dominion. Next to arrive is Mohammed Ali Jinnah, first Governor-General. As his final official act, Lord Louis delivers a message from the king. As Lady Mountbatten and Jinnah's sister, Fatima, listen, the Moslem leader replies with assurances of good will.

With these brief ceremonies is completed one of the most momentous political transitions in modern times. The new flag of Pakistan flies over a nation of more than 80 millions, the largest Moslem state in the world.

India's partition is completed the following day, as thousands of Hindus in New Delhi swarm the streets awaiting their hour of liberation. On this historic occasion, the First Constituent Assembly is addressed by Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, political leader in the fight for independence.

Three hundred million Hindus enter the British Commonwealth with Lord Louis Mountbatten as their Governor General. Carefully laid plans for celebration go by the boards as delirious crowds break through police lines in a near riot that results in minor casualties. Lord Mountbatten is overwhelmingly accepted by the masses.

So India, with over three hundred and eighty million people and a hundred creeds, now has two flags flying. One of the Earth's ancient civilisations, her future is beset with strife but her people are free.

### **Questions on the transcript**

1. What positions of power were held by each of the following on 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947: Lord Louis Mountbatten, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Pandit Nehru?
2. In 1947, what were the capital cities of the new dominions of Pakistan and India?
3. What meaning does the term 'dominion' have in the context of this film clip?
4. What details mentioned by the film clip narrator help to justify his description of the events described as "one of the most momentous political transitions in modern times"?

A map of India before independence and partition is available at the website of the British library [[www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/index.html](http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/index.html)]

## Step 1 of the enquiry

**In 1945, what circumstances, already existing, made moves towards British withdrawal, Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan likely?**

### Relevant circumstances

- The 'Government of India Act' of 1935 had conferred a measure of 'home rule' on British India, expanding on the degree of autonomy permitted under an earlier act of 1919. However, many were dissatisfied with the degree of democracy permitted and the extent of the powers reserved to the Governor General. This dissatisfaction was increased by the wartime decision to involve India in the British war effort without prior consultation with Indian leaders.
- The Muslim League (in existence since 1906) had adopted a resolution – the Lahore Resolution – in 1940 – demanding a separate state for the Muslims of India
- Japanese involvement in World War II led to expulsion of British forces from Malaya, Singapore and Burma, and threatened British control in India. Sir Stafford Cripps – a Labour member of the wartime cabinet – met with Indian leaders in 1942, promising dominion status with the right of secession as soon as the war ended in return for wholehearted cooperation with the war effort. Rejection of the terms offered was followed by the launch of the 'Quit India' movement.
- Opposition to the terms offered by Cripps was widespread but for a variety of reasons. The Congress Party (in existence since 1885) clung to the demand for immediate independence but was also disturbed by Cripps' reference to the *peoples* of India and the proposed 'opt out' clause for individual provinces and states. Jinnah rejected the proposals because there was no explicit acceptance of the creation of 'Pakistan'.
- The Congress Party launched the 'Quit India' campaign in August, 1942.

### Show your critical awareness

1. Which of the circumstances listed made some form of British withdrawal from India likely from 1945 on?
2. Which of the circumstances listed are likely to have given momentum to the push for Indian independence?
3. Which circumstance may be seen as the first of the moves that led in 1947 to the creation of the state of Pakistan?

## Relevant sources

### The Lahore resolution

#### Source 1A (i)

The so-called 'Pakistan' resolution (the word 'Pakistan' was not used in the resolution) was adopted by the Muslim League on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1940. Jinnah made the following speech in proposing the Lahore resolution:

Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religions, philosophies, social customs and literature. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations that are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their concepts on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other, and likewise, their victories and defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state.

Source: [www.thestoryofpakistan.com/articletext.asp?artid=A043](http://www.thestoryofpakistan.com/articletext.asp?artid=A043)

#### Source 1A (ii)

The Lahore resolution declared that no constitutional plan for India would be acceptable to Muslims unless,

geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

Text taken from *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947*, Anita Inder Singh (Oxford University Press, 1987)

### The Cripps Mission, 1942

#### Source 1B

Sir Stafford Cripps landed in Delhi on 22 March 1942 and made his offer eight days later. I distinctly remember hearing Sir Stafford's broadcast in the evening news of All-India Radio in my school that day (30 March). And I was struck by one word in his broadcast, i.e. the 'peoples' (of India). I had never before thought of, or heard, the people of India being described in the plural. And it was on the implication of this very thesis that India contained more than one nation, that Cripps' offer got stuck.

Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, (HarperCollins India, 2005 p.108)

## The 'Quit India' resolution

### Source 1C

A 'Quit India' resolution was endorsed by the All-India Congress Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1942.

... the ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom

... This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure ... These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and Colonial countries ... The possession of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern Imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

[[www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/index.html](http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/index.html) (extracts from the original source)]

### Questions on the sources (pages 18-19)

1. In Source 1A (i), what case does Jinnah make against Muslims being forced to accept a single state where Hindus would be dominant?
2. According to Source 1A (ii), which areas of India did the Muslim League consider "should be grouped to constitute Independent States"? What implications, if any, does this have for future developments relating to British withdrawal from India?
3. In Source 1B, why was Narendra Singh Sarila so struck by the phrase 'the *peoples*' (of India) in the broadcast by Sir Stafford Cripps?
4. In Source 1B, what does Narendra Singh Sarila mean when he writes, "And it was on the implication of this very thesis that India contained more than one nation, that Cripps' offer got stuck"? Can you suggest one other reason why the Congress Party rejected the offer?
5. According to Source 1C, for what reasons was "the ending of British rule in India ... an urgent necessity"?
6. According to Source 1C, why have the policies "so far pursued by the Allied nations ... led to repeated and disastrous failure"?
7. According to Source 1C, what impact would the granting of freedom to India have in the wider international context?

## Step 2 of the enquiry

### **What developments during 1945 made moves towards British withdrawal, Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan more likely?**

... the war had only postponed and not solved the issue of self-government ... The Cripps offer had been rejected by the Congress and withdrawn by the British, but the issue behind it, the way to and the nature of self-government remained. [p.230]

*A History of India: Volume 2*, Percival Spear (Penguin Books, 15<sup>th</sup> impression, 2001)

#### **Relevant developments**

- Following the ending of the war in Europe, imprisoned Congress leaders were released on 15<sup>th</sup> June.
- The Viceroy, Wavell, summoned Indian leaders to a conference in his summer residence at Simla, in the Himalayas. The conference was to discuss plans for the setting up of a representative executive council, once the war against Japan had been completed. Gandhi went to Simla but did not attend the conference. “It was Jinnah, in his London suits, who was the star.” (Narendra Singh Sarila, p.186)

The conference failed to reach agreement: the main stumbling blocks were the allocation of seats in the planned executive council and the Congress refusal to recognize the League as the sole representative of the Muslims.

After Simla, the Muslim League grew in strength; by attending alongside Muslim League leaders, Congress Party leaders made it look as if they had given up their claim to be the sole representatives of the Indian people in plans for British withdrawal.

- On 26<sup>th</sup> July, post-war elections in Britain resulted in the Labour Party coming to power.
- Following the ending of the war against Japan, it was agreed that provincial and central elections would be held in the winter to test the strength of the different parties. During the months that these elections were being organized, tensions mounted. One focus of tension was the trial of leaders of the ‘Indian National Army’ (INA) – a nationalist force which, under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, had declared war on Britain in 1943 with Japanese support. Before the trials began, Nehru demanded leniency, referring to the INA leaders as patriots, albeit misguided ones. [The ‘Red Fort’ trials, as they were called began on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.]
- The elections confirmed the position of the Congress Party as the predominant party in Hindu India, while the Muslim League commanded almost equal support from the Muslim electorate. “The two-nations theory of Mr. Jinnah had found political expression.” [Percival Spear, p.231]

## Show your critical awareness

1. What developments in 1945 made British withdrawal from India more likely?
2. What developments in 1945 are likely to have boosted support for the Congress Party in their campaign for Indian independence?
3. In what ways was the position of the Muslim League stronger at the end of 1945 than it had been at the beginning of the year?

## Related sources

### The Simla Conference, July 1945

#### Source 2A

At India's summer capital, statesmanship and wisdom were on trial. For in Simla's viceregal lodge the momentous conference of Viscount Lord Wavell and India's nationalist leaders was about to begin ...

For two days Simla seethed with secrecy ... Then the conference suddenly stalled ... At issue was the question: should the Moslem League have sole right to nominate the Moslem ministers in India's projected new government? Mohamed Ali Jinnah said yes. The delegates of the All-India Congress, which also includes Moslem members, claimed the right to nominate at least one Moslem minister ... But Mohamed Ali Jinnah was uncompromising.

*Time* magazine, Monday 9 July, 1945

#### Source 2B

The following excerpts are taken from the minutes of the final meeting of the Simla Conference on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1945.

*L/P&J/8/524:ff 50-2*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad did not agree with His Excellency's [Lord Wavell's] comments as regards the failure of the Conference ... The Muslim League wanted all members of the Executive Council to be nominated by them. To this the Congress could not agree. If the Congress had accepted this position, it would have reduced itself to a communal organization. As a Muslim, he could not tolerate reducing the Congress from a national organization to a communal one. The Congress should carry the Muslims in India with it. The Congress could not therefore accept the Muslim League claim to have the sole right to select the Muslim representatives. From the account His Excellency had just given, it was clear that he too had no alternative but to reject this claim. In the circumstances, there was no doubt where the responsibility for the failure of the Conference lay.

Nicholas Mansergh (ed.) *India. The Transfer of Power, 1942-7. Volume 5, The Simla Conference.* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1974, p.1243.)

### Source 2C

The following excerpts are taken from a press conference given by Jinnah in Simla, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1945.

Our stand has been, and we have repeatedly made it clear to the British government several times since 1940, that we cannot consider or enter into any provisional government unless a declaration is made by the British government guaranteeing the right of self-determination of Muslims and pledging that after the war, or so soon as it may be possible, the British government would establish Pakistan having regard to the basic principles laid down in the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League passed in March 1940 ...

But finally we broke as Lord Wavell insisted upon his having one non-League nominee of Malik Khizar Hayat Khan representing Punjab Muslims. As I have said, it is only the blind who cannot see that the all-India Muslim League is the only authoritative representative organization of the Musulmans. If we had accepted this position as presented to us by Lord Wavell, we would have emerged out of this conference minus everything and we would have entirely betrayed our people.

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Source 2D

H.V. Hodson, main adviser to the Viceroy, gave this assessment of the Simla Conference.

Mr. Jinnah's demonstration of imperious strength at the Simla Conference was a shot in the arm for the League and a serious blow for its Muslim opponents especially in the Punjab ... Lord Wavell's sudden abandonment of his plan was a decisive move that made the partition of India inevitable ... To twist Mr. Jinnah's arm, it is clear, was not part of the plan that he had so laboriously agreed with His Majesty's Government.

H.V. Hodson *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* (Oxford University Press edition, Delhi, 2000, p.127)

### The 'Red Fort' trials



Source: [http://www.s1942.org.sg/s1942/indian\\_national\\_army/\\_images/remember\\_redfort.jpg](http://www.s1942.org.sg/s1942/indian_national_army/_images/remember_redfort.jpg)

### Source 2E (i)

The Director of the Intelligence Bureau reported:

There has seldom been a matter which has attracted so much Indian public interest, and, it is safe to say, sympathy.

*The Transfer of Power, Volume 6, p.512.*

## Source 2E (ii)

Nehru:

Never before in Indian history had such unified sentiments and feelings been manifested by various divergent sections of the population as it had been done with regard to the question of the Azad Hind Fauj [Indian National Army].”

S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 14* (New Delhi, pp.279-80)

Sources 2E (i) and 2E (ii) are cited in Bipan Chandra et al., *India's struggle for independence, 1857-1947*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1988, p.477)

## The elections of 1945-1946

### SECONDARY SOURCE 1

An Indian historian's judgement on the election campaigns of the Congress Party and the Muslim League:

The world over, the rhetoric of modern democratic politics has been marked by two rather opposed rhetorical styles. The first appeals to hope, to popular aspirations for economic prosperity and social peace. The second appeals to fear, to sectional worries about being worsted or swamped by one's historic enemies. In the elections of 1946 the Congress relied on the rhetoric of hope. It had a strongly positive content to its programme, promising land reforms, workers' rights and the like. The Muslim League, on the other hand, relied on the rhetoric of fear. If they did not get a separate homeland, they told the voters, then they would be crushed by the more numerous Hindus in a united India. The League sought, in effect, a referendum on the question of Pakistan. As Jinnah put it in a campaign speech: 'Elections are the beginning of the end. If the Muslims decide to stand for Pakistan in the coming elections half the battle would have been won. If we fail in the first phase of our war, we shall be finished.'

Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*. (London: Macmillan, 2007, pp. 28-9)

## Source 2F

Interview given by Jinnah during the elections to Duncan Hooper, Reuter's Special Correspondent, Bombay, December 7, 1945 (excerpts)

The British Government ... are putting the cart before the horse in proposing an all India constitution making before a settlement of the Pakistan issue. First we must get agreement on Pakistan. Then, and only then, can we proceed to the next step. But there will have to be not one, but two, constitution-making bodies - one to frame and decide the constitution of Hindustan and the other to frame and decide the constitution of Pakistan.

..Patchwork methods will not work at this stage in India's destiny. What is needed is real statesmanship (sic) and a real effort to face facts. We could settle the Indian problem in ten minutes if Mr. Gandhi would say: "I agree that there should be Pakistan - I agree that one fourth of India comprised of six provinces, Sind, Baluchistan, Punjab, N.W.F.P, Bengal and Assam with their present boundaries should constitute Pakistan state."

After that it would be a simple matter to sit down as friends and work out the details of a friendly and neighbourly life between the two great nations of this sub-continent.

Canada and United States live together. Why can't Hindus and Muslims?

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Questions on the sources (pages 21 to 23)

1. In Source 2A, what evidence is there as to why the Viceroy's conference with Indian leaders was held in Simla?
2. According to Source 2A, what was the issue on which the Conference "suddenly stalled"?
3. With regard to the issue referred to in Question 2, what were the different positions taken on this issue by (a) the Congress and (b) the Muslim League?
4. In Source 2A, what does the *Time* magazine reporter mean when he says that Jinnah was "uncompromising"?
5. According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Source 2B, what was the main issue on which the Muslim League and the Congress disagreed?
6. In Source 2B, who does Azad blame for the failure of the Conference?
7. According to Jinnah in Source 2C, what had been repeatedly made clear to the British Government since 1940?
8. According to Jinnah in Source 2C, what was the issue on which the Muslim League finally 'broke'?
9. In Source 2D, who does Hodson see as the main winner to emerge from the Simla Conference?
10. According to Hodson in Source 2D, what was inevitable once Wavell abandoned his plan?  
**Show your critical awareness:** Does Hodson imply that he acted on his own initiative in doing so or that he had the approval of the British Government?
11. On the evidence of Sources 2E (i) and 2E (ii), how significant was the public reaction to the 'Red Fort' trials of INA leaders?
12. In Source 2F, what did Mr. Jinnah mean when he said that the British Government were "putting the cart before the horse in proposing an all India constitution making before a settlement of the Pakistan issue"?
13. In Source 2F, explain Mr. Jinnah's use of the term "Hindustan".
14. What 'facts' did Gandhi need to face, according to Mr. Jinnah in Source 2F?
15. How were Congress party leaders likely to respond to Mr. Jinnah's reference to "the two great nations of this sub-continent" in Source 2F?

### Step 3 of the enquiry

**What actions by, and interactions between, the British government, the Congress Party and the Muslim League had a significant impact on developments during 1946?**

#### Significant actions and interactions

- Between March and June, the ‘Cabinet Mission’ had discussions with Indian leaders to try to work out constitutional arrangements for India’s future.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> May, the Cabinet Mission produced a plan for British withdrawal from India. This would involve the establishment of an interim government and the holding of elections for a Constituent Assembly that would draw up a new constitution. (The elections were held in July.)
- In August, the Muslim League-inspired ‘Direct Action Day’ led to serious outbreaks of inter-communal violence in Calcutta and elsewhere.
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> September, the Congress Party formed an interim government with Nehru as vice-president (of the Viceroy’s Executive Council) [This council became popularly known as the ‘cabinet’ and its vice-president, ‘prime minister’.]
- On 13<sup>th</sup> October, the Muslim League joined the interim government (but did not give up its ‘direct action’ policy).
- To discuss difficulties in reaching agreement on the summoning of the Constituent Assembly, Attlee, the British p.m., invited Congress and League leaders (and the leader of the Sikhs) to London for a conference from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December. The conference failed to reach agreement.
- On 9<sup>th</sup> December, the Constituent Assembly finally met, but without the involvement of the Muslim League.

#### Show your critical awareness

1. What moves were made by the British government in 1946 towards withdrawal and the establishment of alternative arrangements for the government of India?
2. From the outline given above which party, the Congress party or the Muslim League, seems to have responded more favourably to the Cabinet Mission proposals? Explain your answer.
3. What questions do you need to ask to understand the actions and reactions of the Muslim League during 1946?

## Related sources

### The Cabinet Mission

Source 3A



Civil war and famine are heading towards India. *Daily Mail*, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1946.  
Acknowledgement: © Daily Mail. Used with permission.

Source 3B

Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, Viceroy of India, has invited Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, President of the Moslem League, to meet the three-man British Cabinet Mission on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively, says Reuter's New Delhi correspondent. The Cabinet Mission, which consists of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Sir Stafford Cripps, leader of the unsuccessful Mission in 1942, and Mr. A.V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, is leaving for India this week.

"I find in the latest pronouncement of Prime Minister Attlee a new spirit," Dr. Azad, President of the All-India Congress, declared yesterday in New Delhi. "If the Cabinet Mission is coming to India with determination to find a solution in that spirit, I see no reason why we should not be hopeful of the outcome," he stated, and added: "An independent India would guarantee the peace of the world."

... Nobody will envy the three British delegates their task. As things stand at present, they seem to be confronted with the same deadlock which has spelled the doom of every effort to further a settlement between Great Britain and India. The Congress party will have nothing but a united nation; Mr. Jinnah will not relax his demand for *Pakistan*, or a Moslem state, to all intents and purposes independent of the main fabric.

*The Irish Times*, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1946.

All material from *The Irish Times* used with kind permission.

## **What did the Cabinet Mission propose?**

### **The Cabinet Mission Plan, May 1946**

The plan had a long-term part and a short-term part (the interim plan).

The long-term plan envisaged a federal union that would have two tiers. The first tier would be an all-India Union Government and a legislature, consisting of the British Indian provinces which the princely states could join after negotiation. This Union Government would deal only with foreign affairs, defence and communications.

The second tier would consist of autonomous provinces which would be allowed to form subordinate unions of their own. Where 'regional' unions were formed, each province would be entitled to decide how much power they would vest in the regional union.

It was hoped that, by allowing subordinate unions with substantial powers, Muslim fear of Hindu domination could be allayed.

The details of the constitution would be worked out by a Constituent Assembly. In this assembly, provinces would be grouped to reflect communal differences i.e. those provinces with non-Muslim majorities, the Muslim-majority areas in the north-west, the Muslim-majority areas in the north-east. The plan rejected the division of India in its preamble but contained a provision that, after ten years, the Muslim-majority groups would have the option of opting out of the Union.

The second part of the plan provided for an interim government to be set up, with the leaders of the main political parties replacing the nominated members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Elections would be held for the Constituent Assembly.

While both the Congress Party and the Muslim League were prepared to accept the first part of the plan, they fell out over the interim plan. The Congress Party still claimed to represent all of India and, therefore, to be entitled to appoint a Muslim member to the cabinet, a position that the Muslim League would not accept.

### **Historians' views**

The preamble of the plan rejected the division of India but left a large loophole for the creation of Pakistan (p.211)

Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (Harper Collins Publishers India, 2005)

I think it can be said that the Cabinet Mission formed the point of no return after which partition was inevitable. (p.234)

Percival Spear, *A History of India, Volume Two*, Fifteenth Impression (Penguin Books India, 2001)

## The Cabinet Mission (continued)

### Source 3C

I regret that the Mission should have negated the Muslim demand for the establishment of a complete sovereign state of Pakistan, which we still hold is the only solution of the constitutional problem of India and which alone can secure stable Governments and lead to the happiness and welfare not only of the two major communities, but of all the peoples of this sub-continent.

Statement by Mr. M.A. Jinnah on the Cabinet Mission Plan, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1946 (excerpt)

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Source 3D

I advised you to reject the Cripps proposal, I advised you to reject the last Simla Conference formula. But I cannot advise you to reject the British Cabinet Mission's proposal. I advise you to accept it ... The Lahore resolution did not mean that when Muslims put forward their demand, it must be accepted at once. It is a big struggle and a continued struggle. The first struggle was to get the representative character of the League accepted ... Acceptance of the Mission's proposal was not the end of their struggle for Pakistan. They should continue their struggle till Pakistan was achieved.

Speech by Jinnah at the secret session of the All-India Muslim League Council, New Delhi, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1946

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Source 3E

The first thing is we have agreed to go into the Constituent Assembly and we have agreed to nothing else ... What we do there, we are entirely and absolutely free to determine. We have committed ourselves on no single matter to anybody.

... In regard to the minorities it is our problem and we shall no doubt succeed in solving it. We accept no outside interference in it – certainly not the British Government's interference in it ...

Statement by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at a press conference on the Cabinet Mission Plan, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1946 (excerpts)

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Source 3F

The attitude of the Congress clearly shows that these conditions precedent for the successful working of the constitution-making body do not exist. This fact, taken together with the policy of the British Government of sacrificing the interests of the Muslim nation ... to appease the Congress and the way in which they have been going back on their oral and written solemn pledges and assurances given from time to time to the Muslims, leaves no doubt that in these circumstances the participation of the Muslims in the proposed constitution-making machinery is fraught with danger and the Council, therefore, hereby withdraws its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposals.

Resolution of the Council of the All-India Muslim League, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1946.

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

## **'Direct Action Day', 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1946**

### Source 3G

At its Council meeting in Bombay, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1946, following withdrawal of its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan (Source 3F above), the Muslim League passed resolutions committing itself to 'direct action'.

The Council of the All-India Muslim League is convinced that now the time has come for the Muslim Nation to resort to Direct Action to achieve Pakistan, to assert their just rights, to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated Caste-Hindu domination.

The Council calls upon the Muslim Nation to stand a man behind their sole representative and authoritative organization, the All-India Muslim League and to be ready for every sacrifice.

The Council directs the Working Committee to prepare forthwith a programme of Direct Action to carry out the policy enunciated above and to organize the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when necessary.

Source: <http://sites.google.com/site/cabinetmissionplan/>

### Source 3H

Moslems throughout India were called upon by the Moslem League Working Committee, meeting in Bombay yesterday, to observe August 16<sup>th</sup> as "Direct Action Day", in a campaign for Pakistan (a separate Moslem State).

A "Committee of Action" has been authorized to prepare a detailed programme of "direct action".

Some idea of what this action is likely to be is given in yesterday's decision, which calls on Moslems to suspend all business and hold public meetings.

... The Moslem League newspaper, *Dawn*, said yesterday: "Machine guns and bayonets cannot quench the will of 100,000,000 people" (approximate number of Moslems in India). *The Irish Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1946.

### Source 3I

The following excerpts are taken from a letter from Sir Frederick Burrows, Governor of Bengal, to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, concerning the riots in Calcutta on 16<sup>th</sup> August.

Even before 10 o'clock Police Headquarters had reported that there was excitement throughout the city, that shops were being forced to close, and that there were many reports of stabbing and throwing of stones and brickbats [piece of brick used as missile]. The trouble had already assumed the communal character which it was to retain throughout ... Later reports indicate that the Muslims were in an aggressive mood from early in the day and that their processions were well armed with the lathis [long, heavy sticks used as weapons], iron rods and missiles. Their efforts to force Hindu shops to close as they passed through the streets were greeted with showers of brickbats from the roofs above – indicating that the Hindus were not unprepared for trouble – and from this sort of exchange of missiles, matters soon degenerated into arson, looting and murder.

Source:

[www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition4/index.html](http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition4/index.html)

## The Interim Government

Source 3J

Friends and comrades, Jai Hind [Victory to India]! Six days ago my colleagues and I sat on the chairs of high office in the Government of India. A new Government came into being in this ancient land, the Interim or Provisional Government we called it, the stepping stone to the full independence of India. Many thousands of messages of greetings and good wishes came to us from all parts of the world and from every nook and corner of India. And yet we asked for no celebration of this historic event and even restrained our people's enthusiasm. For we wanted them to realize that we were yet on the march and the goal had still to be reached. There were many difficulties and obstacles on the way and our journey's end might not be so near as people thought ...

Our hearts were heavy also with the terrible tragedy of Calcutta ... The freedom we envisaged ... was for all the people of India, and not for one group or class or the followers of one religion ... Why then this strife, this fear and suspicion of each other?

Broadcast from New Delhi, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1946, from *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Volume One* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), Third Impression, 1967.

## SECONDARY SOURCE 2

Narendra Singh Sarila's (2005) commentary on the entry of the Muslim League into the Interim Government:

The League's entry into the Interim Government signified a great victory for Jinnah and the viceroy and a major debacle for the Congress Party. Jinnah and his party leaders had been taken into the government without compromising his stand: the League could now proceed to sabotage the workings of the Nehru Government from the inside and once again prove that the parting of the ways may be the best for all. This indeed they successfully accomplished within a few months after their men, led by Liaqat Ali Khan, entered the Viceroy's Executive Council. Liaqat Ali Khan was given the finance portfolio; Jinnah did not join.

*The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, Narendra Singh Sarila. (HarperCollins India, 2005, pp.236-237)

Source 3K



Indian politics, *Daily Mail*, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1946.  
Acknowledgement: © Daily Mail. Used with permission.

**The conference in London, 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> December, 1946**

SECONDARY SOURCE 3

Narendra Singh Sarila's (2005) commentary on the conference:

... the opening of the assembly was fixed for 9 December 1946. In the circumstances, Attlee had to take the risk of giving a clarification on the grouping provision but thought it might be best to discuss the issue in a conference before making his official statement and thus soften the blow for the Congress Party as far as possible ...

The conference could not reconcile the irreconcilable even though an effort was made to fudge the disputed issue by proposing that the Constituent Assembly, after the Muslim League had entered it, might refer this matter to the Federal Court.

Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, (HarperCollins India, 2005 pp. 251-2)

## The Constituent Assembly

### Source 3L

The House knows that there are many absentees here and many members who have a right to come here have not come. We regret that fact, because we should have liked to associate with ourselves as many people, as many representatives from the different parts of India and different groups, as possible ... I do hope that they will come, and that this house, in its future stages, will have the benefit of the cooperation of all.

... There is another person who is absent here and who must be in the minds of many of us today – the great leader of our people, the Father of our Nation – who has been the architect of this Assembly and all that has gone before it and possibly of much that will follow. He is not here because, in pursuit of his ideals, he is ceaselessly working in a far corner of India. But I have no doubt that his spirit hovers over this place and blesses our undertaking.

Speech in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1946, from *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Volume One* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), Third Impression, 1967, pp.7-8.

### Questions on the sources (pages 26-32)

1. Who were the three members of the Cabinet Mission, as identified by their initials, in Sources 3A and 3B?
2. **Show your critical awareness:** What do you think is the main message of the cartoonist in Source 3A concerning the Cabinet Mission?
3. Why did the British delegates face a difficult task, according to Source 3B?
4. In Source 3C, what does Jinnah mean when he talks about the Cabinet Mission having “negated Muslim demand for the establishment of a complete sovereign state of Pakistan”?
5. In Source 3D, what rationale does Jinnah give for recommending that the Muslim League accept the Cabinet Mission proposal?
6. **Show your critical awareness:**
  - (a) Taking Sources 3E and 3F, what attitude towards minorities (such as Muslims) does Nehru display in setting out Congress Party policy in the Constituent Assembly in Source 3E?
  - (b) According to Source 3F, what was the response of the Muslim League to the expression of such attitudes by the Congress party?
7. In Source 3F, what charges are made against the British Government in explaining the reasons for withdrawing acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals?
8. In Source 3G, what justification does the Muslim League offer for its call to ‘direct action’?
9. **Show your critical awareness:**
  - (a) What clues are there in Source 3G as to what ‘direct action might mean’?
  - (b) Does 3H give any further clues as to the kinds of action that are expected to be taken?
10. **Show your critical awareness:** What evidence does Source 3I provide as to why the call for ‘direct action’ led to widespread violence?
11. **Show your critical awareness:** What evidence is there in Source 3J that Nehru and others saw 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1946 as a significant day for India?
12. In Source 3J, why does Nehru say that “our hearts are heavy also”?
13. According to Secondary Source 2 [page 30], why was the entry of the Muslim League into the Interim Government “a major debacle for the Congress party”?
14. **Show your critical awareness:**
  - (a) In Source 3K, what impressions does the cartoonist create of the three leaders, Jinnah, Nehru and Gandhi?
  - (b) Which leader is portrayed most sympathetically, in your view?
15. **An historian’s view:** According to Secondary Source 3 [page 31], what was the issue that caused the failure of the London conference, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1946?
16. In Source 3L, who were the main absentees from the meeting of the Constituent Assembly? Why were they absent?
17. In Source 3L, to whom is Nehru referring when he talks about the “Father of the Nation”?
18. According to Nehru in Source 3L, the “Father of the Nation” is in a “far corner of India” in pursuit of his ideals. To what is Nehru referring here?

## Step 4 of the enquiry

### Why did British plans for India undergo a number of changes during 1947?

#### Relevant factors and developments

- On 20<sup>th</sup> February, Attlee announced that power would be handed over *not later than* June 1948. He also announced the appointment of a new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten.
- On 8<sup>th</sup> March, the Congress Working Committee (which was considering the kind of constitution that India should have once the British withdrew) passed a resolution relating to on-going communal tensions in the Punjab; it recognized the need to divide the province into two parts, one largely Muslim, the other largely non-Muslim.
- On 24<sup>th</sup> March, Mountbatten was sworn in as Viceroy and Governor-General.
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Mountbatten's initial plan was brought by air to London, by Lord Ismay, Mountbatten's Chief-of-Staff. On 11<sup>th</sup> May, Nehru rejected the plan.
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Mountbatten published his revised plan for withdrawal: an early transfer of power on the basis of dominion status to two successor states, India and Pakistan. (Princely states were expected to opt to join one or other of the new states.)
- Mountbatten, in an address to the Chamber of Princes on 25<sup>th</sup> July, advised the leaders of the princely states to forge relations with the new state that was nearest to them.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> August, at midnight, power was transferred to two new independent states, India and Pakistan.

#### Show your critical awareness

1. What do you think is the likely reason for Attlee announcing a deadline for British withdrawal? (You will need to check your answer against evidence available to you, for example, in Secondary Source 4 [page 35]).
2. What significance may the decision of the Congress Working Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March have had for future developments?
3. What specific questions would you need to ask to help you understand (a) why Nehru rejected Mountbatten's initial plan and (b) why Mountbatten's revised plan included an early transfer of power?
4. Based on your knowledge of what happened between 1945 and 1947, what reasons do you think Mountbatten had in June 1947 for deciding that there was a need to create two new states?

## Related sources

### Attlee's announcement of 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1947

#### Source 4A

#### Attlee's statement of 20<sup>th</sup> February (excerpts)

Should it appear that ... a constitution will not have been worked out by a fully representative Assembly before the time mentioned [June 1948], HMG will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on the due date, whether as a whole to some sort of Central Government of British India or in some areas to the existing Provincial governments or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people,

TOP, IX, p.438

#### Source 4B

#### Khaliq-uz-Zaman, one of the Muslim League leaders, wrote in his memoirs:

This [Attlee's] statement gave great relief to the League as it had no intention of entering the Constituent Assembly or framing the Central Constitution, thus keeping the door open for the partition of India ...

Khaliq-uz-Zaman, *Pathway to Pakistan* (Longman Green, London, 1961, p.375)

## SECONDARY SOURCE 4

#### An Indian historian's judgement:

The hope was that the date would shock the parties into agreement on the main question and avert the constitutional crisis that threatened. Besides, Indians would be finally convinced that the British were sincere about conceding independence ... The basic reason why the Attlee Government accepted the need for a final date was because they could not deny the truth of Wavell's assessment that an irreversible decline of Government authority had taken place ...

The statement was enthusiastically received in Congress circles as a final proof of British sincerity to quit.

Bipan Chandra et al., *India's struggle for independence, 1857-1947*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1988, p.495)

### Congress recognition of need to divide the Punjab and Bengal

#### Source 4C

#### An American perspective:

The Congress efforts to make Pakistan as unattractive as possible – by demanding partition of the Punjab and Bengal – Congress leaders have in effect abandoned the tenets which they supported for so many years in their campaign for united India. They have also agreed by implication [to] Mr. Jinnah's allegation that Hindus and Muslims cannot live together, a charge which in the past Congress has – quite rightly I believe – denied.

The US chargé d'affaires in India, George Merrell, in a telegram to the State Department, cited in Narendra Singh, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*. (HarperCollins India, 2005, pp.264-5 )

## Mountbatten's appointment as Viceroy

Source 4D

Attlee wrote to Mountbatten as follows on 18<sup>th</sup> March as follows (excerpts):

It is the definite objective of His Majesty's Government to obtain a unitary Government for British India and the Indian states, if possible within the British Commonwealth, through the medium of a Constituent Assembly, set up and run in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plan ...

Since, however, this plan can only become operative in respect of British India by agreement between the major parties, there can be no question of compelling either party to accept it.

From British Library website, <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/>

## Mountbatten's initial plan for withdrawal

SECONDARY SOURCE 5

Narendra Singh Sarila's commentary on Nehru's rejection (11<sup>th</sup> May) of Mountbatten's initial plan:

The ... plan had a bewildering impact on Nehru. He stayed awake till 4a.m. and the next morning the viceroy received a handwritten note, later followed by a longer typewritten one, rejecting the plan in the most emphatic terms. The concept [that] ... Muslim-majority areas might be shed ... was one thing. To give the various parts of the country the initial option of independence - creating numerous potential successor states and then their combining to form one, two or more dominions - was quite another. Nehru wrote that the plan would Balkanise India, lead to a breakdown of the central authority, provoke civil conflict and greatly demoralize ... the Army, the police and the civil services.

Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, (HarperCollins India, 2005, p.292)

## Communal violence and the mounting pressure for a solution

Source 4E



Free India, *Daily Mail*, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1947.

Acknowledgement: © Daily Mail. Used with permission

Source 4F

Four thousand people have been killed and many more thousands injured in riots in India during the last six months. Since the British Government's promise to withdraw from India entirely by June, 1948, all the bitterness that used to centre on the British Raj has been turned to communal strife; and Hindu, Moslem and Sikh are beating each other to death in their streets in their effort to achieve a formula for independence.

The British Cabinet Mission's scheme ... has come to nothing, and now it seems there can be no answer but partition. The Moslem League will gain its demand for a separate state-Pakistan.

### PAKISTAN

The State of Pakistan which the Moslems demand would embrace five provinces. The two most important, the Punjab and Bengal, are on different sides of India ...

With independence for India so near, the passions of these different communities have flared up into riots of the utmost violence.

"War and Partition – India's Story", report in *Irish Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1947

## Mountbatten's plan, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1947: reactions

### Source 4G

Nehru's broadcast, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947, on the partition of India (excerpts)

... These months have been full of tragedy for millions ... My mind is heavy with the thought of the sufferings of our people in the areas of disturbance, the thousands who are dead ... We must see to it that such tragedies do not happen again ...

... You have just heard an announcement on behalf of the British Government. This announcement lays down a procedure for self-determination in certain areas of India. It envisages on the one hand the possibility of these areas seceding from India' on the other it promises a big advance towards complete independence ...

It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course. For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent India. The proposals to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one ...

The united India that we have laboured for was not one of compulsion and coercion, but a free and willing association of a free people ...

We must make it clear that political ends are not to be achieved by methods of violence now or in the future.

[British Library website,

[www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition7/index.html](http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition7/index.html)]

### Source 4H

M.A. Jinnah's broadcast, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1947, on the partition of India (excerpts)

... I most earnestly appeal to every community and particularly to Moslems in India to maintain peace and order ... I pray to God that at this critical moment he may guide us to enable us to discharge our responsibilities in a wise and ... statesmanlike manner having regard to the sum total of the plan as a whole.

It is clear the plan does not meet in some important respects our point of view, and we cannot say or feel that are satisfied or that we agree with some of the matters dealt with by the plan ...

But so far as I have been able to gather, on the whole reaction in the Moslem League circle in Delhi has been hopeful ... I must say that I feel that the Viceroy has battled against various forces very bravely and the impression that he has left on my mind is that he was actuated by the highest sense of fairness and impartiality, and it is up to us to make the task less difficult, and help him, as far as lies in our power in order that he may fulfil his mission of the transfer of power to the peoples of India in a peaceful and orderly manner,

[British Library website,

[www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition7/index.html](http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiapakistan/partition7/index.html)]

### Source 4I

From an *Irish Times* report "India Wins Independence And Partition", 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1947.

So India is to have independence – and partition. That is the effect of the plan announced by the British Prime Minister. Before the end of this year the British will leave India. They will hand over power not to one government but two.

It was the only solution, but it has brought little joy to any party. The Moslems insisted on partition, demanding their own State of Pakistan, refused to join with the Hindus (300,000,000 to the 92,000,000 Moslems) in a united India. They have won partition – but Pakistan will be much smaller than the area they claimed, and it will be without its one great city of Calcutta.

The Congress Party mainly Hindu, worked for an independent India. A partitioned India is only a shadow of its dream. The Sikhs of the Punjab face the dismal prospect that they may be divided between the two states.

## Mountbatten's address to Chamber of Princes, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1947

Source 4J

Narendra Singh Sarila, eyewitness account:

The meeting of the Chamber of Princes on 25 July 1947 was its last. I, standing in for my father, was a witness to Mountbatten's performance at this meeting. The viceroy appeared on the podium in the white uniform of an English admiral with an imposing array of civil and military decorations. For a moment, in the hushed silence, he stood still, very upright, but slightly moving his head to the left and to the right in perfect showmanship ... Mountbatten made two points: First, that the princes were being provided with a political offer that was not likely to be repeated ... and, that after 15 August he would no longer be in a position to mediate on their behalf as the representative of the King Emperor with the Government of India. He succeeded in creating the impression that he was a friend who was trying to help the princes and his bearing and enthusiasm were infectious.

... In the days that followed, an overwhelming number of states acceded to India.

Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, (HarperCollins India, 2005, pp.316-7)

### The transfer of power, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947

(See source extracts and questions from *Guidelines for Teachers* on pp.6-7.)

Source 4K

Jinnah's speech on the inauguration of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947

Your Excellency, I thank His Majesty the King on behalf of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly and myself for his gracious message. I know great responsibilities lie ahead ... and we are grateful for his assurance of sympathy and support ...

... It will be our constant endeavor to work for the welfare and well-being of all the communities in Pakistan, and I hope that everyone would be inspired by the idea of public service, and they will be imbued with the spirit of co-operation and will excel in their political and civic virtues which go to make a great nation ...

I once more thank you and Lady Mountbatten for your kindness and good wishes. Yes, we are parting as friends and sincerely hope that we shall remain friends.

<http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/Quaid/speech05.htm>

Source 4L

Nehru's address to the Constituent Assembly in New Delhi on the eve of independence, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 (excerpts):

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

... The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over. ...

Speech in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, from *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Volume One* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), Third Impression, 1967, pp.25-26.

## Source 4M

Mountbatten's last report as Viceroy of India, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 (excerpts)

This last week of British rule in India has been the most hectic of any. We have been working longer hours and under more trying conditions, and with crises of differing magnitudes arising every day, and sometimes two or three times a day ...

62. The 15<sup>th</sup> August has certainly turned out to be the most remarkable day of my life. We started at 8.30 with the Swearing-In ceremony in the Durbar Hall in front of an official audience of some 500, including a number of ruling Princes. The official guests, including Ambassadors, Princes and the Cabinet, then drove in procession from Government House (ex-Viceroy's House) to the Council Chamber.

63. Never before have such crowds been seen within the memory of anyone I have spoken to. Not only did they line every rooftop and vantage point, but they pressed round so thick as to become finally quite unmanageable. At the Council Chamber it had fortunately been arranged that there should be two Guards of Honour ... of 100 men each. These 200 men joined with the police were just able to keep the crowd back sufficiently to let us get out of the State coach without being physically lifted out of it by the crowd.

Source: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelptregion/asia/india/indianindependence/>

### **British withdrawal from India: some British perspectives**

#### SECONDARY SOURCE 6

Mountbatten announced to widespread surprise and shock that independence would happen ten months earlier than planned, on 15 August 1947. Churchill was so appalled that his former Foreign Secretary and friend Anthony Eden had to keep him away from the chamber of the Commons. Having listened to the parliamentary statement, Enoch Powell was shattered enough to wander the streets of London all night, squatting in doorways with his head in his hands. No doubt millions of other British people felt equally that their familiar world was coming apart.

*A History of Modern Britain*, Andrew Marr (Pan Books, 2007, p. 38)

## Source 4N

Today sees the completion of a profound change in the relations of peoples whose institutions have been shaped for several generations under the authority of the British Crown. The Indian Empire disappears from the political map and the circle of the Dominions is enlarged ... by the admission of two Asiatic States ... That this enlargement of ... the Commonwealth ... should have been carried through smoothly and swiftly ... is a tribute not only to the statesmanship which contrived it but to the confidence of the British Parliament and people in the strength and adaptability of the British tradition of political freedom ...

*The Time*, editorial (edited excerpt), 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947

### **Postscript: War over Kashmir, 1947-1948**

#### SECONDARY SOURCE 7

The Hindu ruler [of Kashmir] played for time and had still not acceded to either side in October when a Pathan irregular force from the old frontier burst in and raced towards the capital Srinagar. In a panic the ruler acceded to India whose airborne troops saved the situation in the nick of time. From that time India has stood on the legal ground of accession, branding Pakistan an aggressor since the Pathans came from her territory. Pakistan called for a plebiscite to which initially Nehru agreed in principle. But he was never able to accept any proposals for carrying it out. A brief war flared up between the two dominions, settled by a United Nations truce in 1948.

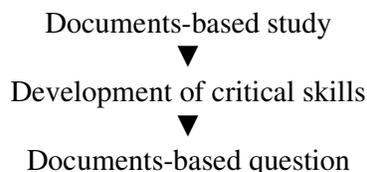
Percival Spear, *A History of India: Volume 2*, (Penguin Books, 15<sup>th</sup> impression, 2001, p.242)

### Questions on the sources (pages 35-40)

1. What insights does Secondary Source 4 [page 35] give us into the reasons for Attlee's announcement of a time frame for Indian independence on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1957 (Source 4A)?
2. What details in the wording of Attlee's statement in Source 4A gave "great relief" to the Muslim League as set out in Source 4B?
3. What contradiction did the writer of Source 4C see in the proposal of the Congress Party Working Committee to partition the Punjab?
4. According to Source 4D, what were the main planks of the British Government's strategy for Indian Independence in March, 1947?
5. According to Secondary Source 5 [page 36], on what grounds did Nehru reject Mountbatten's initial plan for independence on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1947?
6. **Show your critical awareness:** What do you think is the main message of Source 4E regarding the situation in India in late May, 1947?
7. Is there any evidence in Source 4F to support the message conveyed by Source 4E? If so, what is that evidence?
8. What does the writer of Source 4F see as the likely political outcome of the conditions that he describes?
9. Based on your reading of Source 4G, what factors appear to have influenced Nehru in accepting Mountbatten's independence plan of 3<sup>rd</sup> June?
10. In Source 4H, what attitudes does Jinnah express towards (a) the on-going communal violence; (b) the 3<sup>rd</sup> June independence plan; and (c) Mountbatten?
11. In Source 4I, what three groups are identified who will be affected by the independence plan? According to this report, why are none of the groups altogether happy with the plan?
12. Based on the evidence of Source 4J, for what reason/s did Mountbatten make a positive impression at the meeting of the Chamber of Princes?
13. What positive outcome followed on from Mountbatten's meeting with the princes, in the days that followed, according to Source 4J?
14. What expectations of future relations with Britain does Jinnah convey in Source 4K?
15. Why was it important for Jinnah, in Source 4K, to emphasise the importance of working "for the welfare and well-being of all the communities in Pakistan"?
16. In Source 4L, how does Nehru attempt to place the significance of the independence that has been achieved in an historical framework?
17. In Source 4L, whom does Nehru describe as "the greatest man of our generation"?
18. In Source 4L, what do you think Nehru has in mind when he hints that "our work" remains unfinished?
19. In Source 4M, what impressions of the independence day celebrations does Mountbatten convey? (Does the newsreel footage of the day support these impressions?)
20. Explain the writer's comment in Secondary Source 7 [p40] that, for Churchill, Enoch Powell and "millions of other British people", "their familiar world was coming apart".
21. In Source 4N, what "profound change" does the writer identify? **Show your critical awareness:** What is the essential argument of the writer in complimenting "the strength and adaptability of the British tradition of political freedom"?
22. In what way does Secondary Source 6 help us to understand why relations between India and Pakistan were frequently hostile after independence?

## A critical skills exercise

In order to focus student attention on some of the key issues relating to British withdrawal, it may be helpful to use an exercise such as that exemplified on the pages that follow. The rationale below is reproduced from the booklet used in Phase 5 of the HIST in-service.



The documents-based study is “the primary means of developing their skills in working with evidence”. (S.5)

The documents-based question, “will test candidates’ ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate a particular body of evidence”. (S.15)

### Rationale for the exercise

The intention of the exercise is to illustrate in a practical and active manner the type of critical skills that the documents-based study is designed to develop. The exercise is a group exercise designed to illustrate the type of critical skills that underlie the documents-based study, and one way in which these skills may be developed in a classroom setting.

Essentially, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to **THINK** by discussing snippets of evidence and attempting to make judgements on their significance by deciding whether they support or oppose a particular proposition. The **PLAY** element is important and the exercise should be an engaging one for students. The intention is not to come up with “answers” that are either right or wrong: much of the value of the exercise is in the process itself. That said, it should be possible to reach consensus in most cases and to clarify misunderstandings – where these arise – in the process.

### What is involved

Each group of 4-5 students is given an A4 sheet with a proposition at the top of the page and two columns headed, **Agrees** and **Disagrees**. Each group is also given an envelope containing 8-12 short documentary extracts – each on its own small strip of paper – and the task is to discuss with each other the appropriate column in which to place each extract. At least one or two of the extracts should be capable of generating uncertainty as to which column is the appropriate one. It is better if the provenance of the source is not revealed at the outset – although it is possible that some may be recognised by individual students – since the absence of such a contextual framework forces students to focus more closely on the extract as presented. When each group has reached its conclusions, the outcome of the exercise is discussed in a whole group setting. If deemed appropriate, the exercise can end with a “guessing game” where students are asked to link each extract to the correct name from a list read out by the teacher.

The following three pages contain materials that will be used to exemplify this approach.

**Proposition: Britain was to blame for the partition that accompanied its withdrawal from India in 1947**

Place each of the source extracts in the appropriate column, depending on whether you think it agrees or disagrees with the above proposition. If the group cannot agree on whether a particular extract agrees or disagrees with the proposition, place it along the dividing line in the middle and wait to hear what other groups have to say about the extract.

| Agrees | Disagrees |
|--------|-----------|
|        |           |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source A</b></p> <p>He [Jinnah] was impossible to argue with ... He was, whatever was said, intent on his Pakistan.</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source E</b></p> <p>The area of Pakistan [West Pakistan] is strategically the most important in the continent of India and the majority of our [Britain's] strategic requirements could be met ... by an agreement with Pakistan alone.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source B</b></p> <p>Britain has tried her hardest to achieve unity, has accepted partition only when every other plan for independence failed. Indians, not Britons are to blame for this division.</p>                       | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source F</b></p> <p>All the Muslims have been loyal to the British from the beginning, supplied a high proportion of the army which fought in both wars, none of our members has ever had to go to prison for disloyalty ...</p>            |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source C</b></p> <p>He [Sir Olaf Caroe, British governor of the North West Province] would not be unfavourable to the establishment of a separate Pakistan.</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source G</b></p> <p>[The Pakistan scheme has been inspired] by the British as a means of dividing and ruling, while placing Britain's main hope upon Pakistan,</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source D</b></p> <p>The British Government is not responsible for partition. The Viceroy had no hand in it. ... If both of us, Hindus and Muslims, cannot agree on anything else then the Viceroy is left with no choice.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source H</b></p> <p>... there is more likelihood of obtaining Hindu consent to Division than Muslim consent to Union.</p>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source E</b></p> <p>From a top secret COS [Chiefs of Staff] memorandum, 7 July 1947</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Singh Sarila, p.28</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source A</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mountbatten on Jinnah</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(from the report of the Viceroy's 13<sup>th</sup> staff meeting, 11 April 1947)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>TP, Volume 10, p.190.</i></p>             |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source F</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jinnah to Mountbatten</p> <p style="text-align: center;">April (?), 1947</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Singh Sarila, p.278</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source B</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jack White, report in <i>The Irish Times</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saturday, 14 June, 1947</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source G</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yuri Zhukov<br/>(Soviet participant in Inter-Asian conference held in New Delhi in March 1947)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">in a lecture on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1947<br/>Singh Sarila, pp.309-310</p>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source C</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">From a report by two US diplomats, Palmer and Leach, to the State Department, regarding a conversation with the governor on 26 May 1947</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Singh Sarila, p.30</p>                        |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source H</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Penderel Moon, sometime member of the Indian Civil Service</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In a note prepared for the Cabinet Mission of 1946</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>India after Gandhi, Ramachandra Guha (Macmillan, 2007, p.28)</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source D</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mahatma Gandhi</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Addressing a prayer meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1947</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Transfer of Power in India, VP Menon (Longman Green, 1957, p.382)</i></p> |

## Your conclusions on the enquiry



Based on the evidence you have encountered in the course of the enquiry, draw up a list of what you believe are the SIX most significant developments between 1945 and 1947 that led to the establishment of two states as the British withdrew from India in 1947.

Make your case in a written report, devoting one paragraph (or more) to each of the six factors.

OR

Now that we have looked at a wide range of evidence on the many happenings that led to the setting up of two new states, India and Pakistan, as the British pulled out of India in 1947,

- What do you think are the THREE main reasons why two states were set up as the British pulled out?
- For each of the reasons you give, you must back up your reason with evidence from the sources (such as newspaper reports, film clips and cartoons) that we have studied.