

## **POST WAR NATIONAL UPSURGES**



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## Post War National Upsurges

### INA trials

#### Origin and growth

The original idea of the INA was considered by an Indian officer of the British Indian Army Mohan Singh. During retreat of British army in Malaya, he decided not to join British but went to the Japanese army for help. Mohan Singh persuaded Japan to form a military wing consisting of Indians to counter British in different way. In accordance, Prisoners of war from India captured by the Japanese army were handed over to Mohan Singh. Their number grew tremendously by the end of 1942. Around forty thousand men joined the INA under the leadership of Mohan Singh.

INA though formed to counter British force by similar force would go into actual action only on the invitation of the Indian National Congress and the people of India.

The starting of the Quit India Movement gave a new boost to the cause of INA. Soon first division of the INA was formed. There was positive response from Japanese army because they were contemplating an Indian invasion. But sooner serious differences emerged between the Indian army officers led by Mohan Singh and the Japanese over the role that the INA was to play. Mohan Singh and Niranjana Singh Gill, the senior-most Indian officer to join the INA, were arrested.

#### INA under Subhash Chandra Bose

The second phase of the INA began under new leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose. Subhash Bose travelled to Germany, Japan and finally reached Singapore in mid-1943. Under his guidance, Provisional Government of Free India was established in Singapore. This provisional government declared war on Britain and USA and was recognized by Germany and Japan. He also set up INA headquarters, in Rangoon and Singapore. Large structural and functional reorganization began like new recruits were sought from civilians, funds were gathered, and special women's regiment "Rani Jhansi regiment" was formed.

#### First Action

One INA battalion which was commanded by Shah Nawaz was formed to work along with the Japanese Army. Its mandate was to proceed to the Indo-Burma front and participate in the Imphal campaign. It faced discriminatory treatment by the Japanese army like being denied rations, arms and being made to do menial work for the Japanese units. Such activity completely demoralised the INA units.

But, things started changing on global front with retreat of axis forces. The failure of the Imphal campaign, and the steady Japanese retreat nullified optimistic hopes of INA.

#### INA trials

The retreat of INA men with Japanese forces ended with the final surrender to the British in South-East Asia. INA had around 43000 soldiers out of which many perished, many fled and mixed with the civilians, but finally total of 16000 were captured. They were transported to India via Rangoon. Various detention camps had been organized in Jhingerghacha and Nilganj near Calcutta, Kirkee near Pune, Attock, Multan and at Bahadurgarh near Delhi.





When prisoners of war INA men were brought back home and charged with guilty of crimes, a powerful national movement emerged in their defense. An announcement by the Government about trials of the INA soldiers to those guilty of brutality or active complicity, was made in August 1945.

The soldiers of the INA were taken to court martial at the Red Fort of Delhi. Around ten courts-martial were held. The first among them was the joint court-martial of Colonel Prem Sahgal, Colonel Gurubaksh Singh Dhillon and Major General Shah Nawaz Khan. All of them were charged of "Waging War against the King Emperor" as well as Murder and abetment of Murder. The defence of the INA prisoners was taken up by many senior leaders like Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, K.N. Katju, J. Nehru and Asaf Ali.

The INA trials were landmark development because:

1. The campaign for the release of INA prisoners was conducted at unprecedented, high intensity level throughout India. It received huge press coverage and publicity. Publicly made threats of revenge and number of meetings were held at all places.
2. INA campaign witnessed wide geographical reach and active participation of diverse social groups and political parties. This had two aspects.
  - One was the generally extensive nature of the agitation
  - The other was the spread of pro-INA sentiment to social groups hitherto outside the nationalist pale like for example Municipal Committees, Indians abroad and Gurudwara Committees subscribed liberally to the INA funds.
3. The cause was supported by many organizations with varying degree like Congress, Muslim League, Communist Party, Unionists, Akalis, Justice Party, RSS, Hindu Mahasabha etc

### Three Upsurges – Winter of 1945-46

National upsurges turned into violent confrontations in many parts of India. There were three major upsurges:

1. Upsurge 1 (November 21, 1945) in Calcutta over INA trials

It was a student procession. They tied together flags of Muslim League, Indian Congress and red flags as a symbol of anti-imperialist unity against British Empire. They marched to seat of government in Calcutta. Police lathi charged these protestors who refused to disperse against official orders. They retaliated by throwing stones and brickbats.

2. Upsurge 2 (February 11, 1946) in Calcutta against seven year sentence to Rashid Ali

It was mainly protest by Muslim League students. Police arrested some protestors which provoked other students to defy Section 144. It resulted into more arrest and clash between police and protestors.

3. Upsurge 3 (February 18, 1946): In Bombay, strike by Royal Indian Navy. Naval Ratings of HMIS Talwar went on a strike to protest against:
  - Racial discrimination (demanding equal pay for Indian and white soldiers)
  - Unpalatable food
  - Abuse by superior officers
  - Arrest of a rating for scrawling "Quit India" on HMIS Talwar
  - INA trials
  - Use of Indian troops in Indonesia, demanding their withdrawal.



The rebellious ratings hoisted the tricolour, crescent and the hammer and sickle flags. Soon they went around Bombay in Lorries holding Congress flags threatening Europeans and policemen.

### Pattern of three upsurges

All three upsurges showed a similar three-stage pattern.

- I. A Group of protestors defies government authority and is heavily repressed
- II. Local or city People Join in the cause and show support  
Such participation resulted into deepening of anti-British mood and paralysis of normal working of Calcutta and Bombay. People participated through meetings, processions, strikes, hartals etc.
- III. People in Other Parts of the Country express Sympathy and Solidarity

### Significance of the Three Upsurges

- Fearless action by masses
- Revolt in the armed forces
- RIN revolt was major blow to government control on armed forces

### Effects of Three upsurges

British government granted some concessions as result of these upsurges:

- Instead of all trials for all INA soldiers, only those accused of murder or brutal treatment of fellow prisoners would be brought to trial
- Indian soldiers were withdrawn from Indo-China and Indonesia.
- Parliamentary delegation to India
- Cabinet Mission

### Causes of failure

- Direct and violent conflict with authority has limitations. It has limited participation.
- Short-lived and confined to a few urban centres
- Communal unity witnessed was more organisational than a unity among the people.
- Congress did not officially support these upsurges because of their tactics and timing.

## General Elections 1945

### Background

Viceroy Lord Wavell announced that elections to the central and provincial legislatures would be held in December 1945 to January 1946. It was also announced that an executive council would be formed and a constitution-making body would be convened after these elections.

Although the Government of India Act, 1935  
unwilling to take place because the government held

Consequently, rather than choosing 375 members, only 102 elective seats were to be filled. Hence the elections to the central legislature were held under the terms of the Government of India Act 1919.





## Importance of general elections 1945-46

- The Indian National Congress emerged as the largest party
- The Muslim League won all Muslim constituencies, but failed to win any other seats. This election proved to be a strategic victory for Jinnah and the partitionists.
- Even though Congress won, the League had united the Muslim vote
- These were the last general elections in British India; consequent elections were held in 1951 in India and 1970 in Pakistan.

## Results

### Congress' Performance:

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

### Muslim League's Performance:

- It got 86.6% of the Muslim votes.
- It captured the 30 reserved seats in the Central Assembly.
- In the provincial elections, it got a majority in Bengal and Sindh.
- Unlike in 1937, now the League clearly established itself as the dominant party among Muslims.

### Punjab:

A Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition under Khizr Hyatt Khan assumed power.

### Significant Feature of Elections

The elections witnessed communal voting in contrast to the strong anti-British unity shown in various upsurges due to

1. Separate electorates,
2. Limited franchise—for the provinces, less than 10% of the population could vote and for the Central Assembly, less than 1% of the population was eligible.

## The Cabinet Mission

Cabinet Mission was composed of three Cabinet Ministers of England.

- Sir Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India
- Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade,
- V Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

## Objectives

- Devise a machinery to draw up the constitution of Independent India
- Make arrangements for interim Government

The mission discussed with the various political parties, but it could not arrive at any agreed solution. So finally it announced its own recommendations.



## Major recommendations

1. It recommended an undivided India. There shall be a Union of India. It will deal with the defense, foreign affairs and communications. It also restricted the Communal representation.
2. All the members of the Interim cabinet would be Indians and there would be minimum interference by the Viceroy.
3. Formation of the constituent assembly on democratic principle of population
4. It recognized India's right to cede from the Commonwealth
5. The Union Government and its legislature were to have limited powers, dealing with Finance, Foreign Affairs and Communications. The union would have powers necessary to raise the finances to manage the subjects.
6. All subjects other than the Union Subjects and all the residuary powers would be vested in the provinces.
7. The Princely states would retain all subjects and all residuary powers.
8. A Constituent Assembly will be formed of the representatives of the Provincial Assemblies and the Princely states. Each province had to be allotted a total number of seats in proportion to its population.
9. The representation of the Provincial legislatures was to be break up into 3 sections.
  - i. Section A: Madras, UP, Central provinces, Bombay, Bihar & Orissa.
  - ii. Section B: Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, Baluchistan
  - iii. Section C: Assam and Bengal

Though the Cabinet Mission plan rejected the idea of separate Pakistan, yet it grouped the provinces in such a way that it gave weightage to the idea of Pakistan, because the Section B would get almost complete autonomy.

## Reactions to the Cabinet Mission Plan

- Congress
  - Accepted the proposals related to the Constituent assembly.
  - Rejected the idea of a weak centre and division of India in small states.
  - Against decentralization and for the idea of a strong centre.
  - Rejected the idea of the Interim Government as the Muslim league had been given disproportionate representation.
- Muslim league
  - When Congress declared that it could change the scheme through its majority in the Constituent Assembly, they rejected the plan.
  - Demanded for Pakistan as the only course left open to the Muslim League.
  - Called the Muslims to resort to "Direct Action" to achieve the land of their dream "Pakistan".
  - Fixed August 16, 1946 was as "Direct Action Day".

## Communal Holocaust and Interim Government

Muslim league's call for direct action day changed the Indian scene very rapidly. There were communal riots on unprecedented level. Calcutta, Bombay, Bihar, Noakhali etc. were worst hit by them.

There was changed government attitude to get congress form interim government even if League stayed out. This attitude was different from Viceroy Wavell's Shimla meet. Such action





was against long term British policy of encouraging communal forces, denying legitimacy to nationalist forces and those from congress.

### Interim Government

Finally an interim government was formed under leadership of Nehru on September 2, 1946. Even after forming interim government, Congress continued opposing compulsory grouping.

Muslim league initially opposed to be part of interim government but Wavell brought it even after Muslim League didn't agree to

- Withdraw from direct action
- Rejection to cabinet mission's long term and short term plans

### Working of interim government

Muslim league practiced obstructionist approach in the working of interim government. It didn't attend constituent assembly meeting. It also refused to attend informal meetings of cabinet to take decisions. The league started questioning decisions and appointments made by congress members. Finance minister of interim government Liaqat Ali Khan from Muslim League hamstrung functioning of other ministries.

For the Muslim League, it was continuation of struggle in one form or other. Many congress ministers threaten to withdraw their own nominees if League didn't change its attitude.

Finally Muslim League demanded the dissolution of constituent assembly.

### Attlee's Statement

British Prime Minister Clement Attlee outlined following points:

- A deadline of 30 June 1948 for transfer of power even if Indian politicians had not agreed by the time on the constitution.
- British would transfer the power to provincial governments or some form of central government or other if constituent assembly was not fully representative. Thus it had clear hint of balkanization of India into numerous states.
- British powers and obligations with respect to princely states would lapse with transfer of power.
- Mountbatten would replace Wavell as viceroy.

### Government's motive behind Attlee's statement

- Irreversible decline of the government authority was reality so quick withdrawal was necessary
- Government hoped to convince Indians about sincerity of British efforts and was keen to avoid any constitutional crisis.
- Fixed date would move things fast thus setting aside minor differences among various organizations.

### Reactions to Attlee's statement

- Congress
  - Accepted the provision of transfer of power to more than one center as current constituent assembly can form constitution for areas



- League
  - Launched civil disobedience movement

## Growth of Communalism

There are basically three broad stages of communalism in India

### 1. Communal Nationalism

A group of people belonging to a particular religious community has same secular interests even if these interests have nothing to do with religion.

### 2. Liberal Communalism

Two religious communities with different religious interests have different secular interests in the secular sphere also (i.e., in economic, political and cultural spheres).

### 3. Extreme Communalism

Different religious communities with different religious interests have incompatible secular interests; two communities cannot co-exist because the interests of one community come into conflict with those of the other.

## Characteristics of communalism

- The communalists claim to protect interests which do not exist, even by bypassing economic interests
- Communalism is a modern phenomenon emerged out of modern politics based on mass mobilisation and popular participation.
- Communalists are backed in their communal campaign by the colonial administration.
- India is a country where lack of education and low awareness of the outside world resulted into religion becoming a vehicle of communalism.

## Reasons-for Growth of Communalism

### 1. Socio-economic reasons

There was rivalry for jobs, trade and industry between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Economic backwardness of India and high unemployment added extra scope for the colonial government to use concessions, favours and reservations to fuel communal and separatist tendencies.

Late modern political consciousness among the Muslims and the dominance of traditional reactionary elements over the Muslim masses helped a communal outlook to take root.

### 2. British policy of divide and rule

After the Wahabi and 1857 revolts, Muslims were generally looked upon with suspicion. They were subjected to repression and discrimination by the Government. Introduction of English education had undermined Arabic and Persian learning. It further added to the economic backwardness and exclusion of the Muslims from service.

After the 1870s, with emergence of Indian nationalism and growing politicisation of the educated middle classes, the Government reversed its policy of repression of Muslims. Instead it started to push for concessions, favours and reservations, and used them against nationalist forces.





### 3. Communalism in history writing

Communal interpretation of Indian history portrayed the ancient phase as the Hindu phase and the medieval phase as the Muslim phase.

### 4. Side-effects of socio-religious reform movements

Reform movements such as Wahabi Movement among Muslims and Shuddhi among Hindus with their militant overtones made the role of religion more vulnerable to communalism.

### 5. Side-effects of militant nationalism

With the coming of militant nationalism, Hindu nationalist tinge was seen in the nationalist politics.

For example, Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals and anti-cow slaughter campaigns; Aurobindo's vision of an Aryanised world, Swadeshi Movement with elements like dips in the Ganga and revolutionary terrorism with oath-taking before goddesses etc.

### 6. Communal reaction by majority community

Majority community setting up militant organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh increased the difference.

## Mountbatten Plan

Lord Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as the Viceroy in March 1947. He resolved to the transfer of power at the earliest opportunity, and worked out a compromise after prolonged discussions with the leaders of congress and the league.

The 3 June Plan or the Mountbatten Plan envisioned the actual division between the two new dominions. The border between India and Pakistan was determined by a British Government Commissioned report usually referred to as the Radcliffe Award after Sir Cyril Radcliffe.

The main contents of the plan were

1. The Constitution framed by the Constitution Assembly would not be applicable to those parts of India who were unwilling to accept it.
2. Punjab and Bengal were to be divided into two parts.
3. Referendum was to be used to ascertain the public opinion in North-West Frontier Province and Sylhet district in Assam.
4. The British Government would cease to exercise Paramount over the Indian states after independence.

The Muslim league's demands for a separate state were thus conceded. The Congress' position on unity was also taken into account while making Pakistan as small as possible. Mountbatten's formula was to divide India and at the same time retain maximum possible unity.

## Dickie Bird Plan

Mountbatten prepared a "Dickie Bird Plan" earlier to June plan. The main proposal of this plan was that provinces should become first independent successor states rather than an Indian Union or the two dominions of India & Pakistan. As per this plan all the provinces were proposed to be declared Independent. The states later would decide whether to join



constituent assembly or not. Nehru rejected the plan right away and told him that this plan would invite Balkanization of India and would provoke conflict and violence.

Consequently, this plan was cancelled.

### **The reactions of Gandhi and Azad on Mountbatten Plan**

Gandhi and Azad reacted against the partition of India as envisaged in the Mountbatten Plan. Gandhi was very much distressed and advised people not to accept partition by heart. He called the people to fight to reverse it. He was of the view that the plan was against the fraternity that the freedom movement has built over the years.

Azad also vehemently opposed Congress, nod to the plan. According to Azad, it was object surrender to the demands of the league. He viewed the plan as a deal by the leaders who succumbed to power temptation.

However, later on they were forced to accept the plan.

### **India Independence Act**

The Indian Independence Act 1947 was as an act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that partitioned British India into the two new independent dominions of India and Pakistan.

#### **Main provisions**

The Act's most important provisions were:

- division of British India into the two new and fully sovereign dominions of India and Pakistan, with effect from 15 August 1947
- partition of the provinces of Bengal and Punjab between the two new countries
- establishment of the office of Governor-General in each of the two new countries, as representatives of the Crown
- conferral of complete legislative authority upon the respective Constituent Assemblies of the two new countries
- termination of British suzerainty over the princely states, with effect from 15 August 1947, and recognized the right of states to accede to either dominion
- division of joint property, etc. between the two new countries, including in particular the division of the armed forces

### **Why Congress accepted partition?**

- The partition ruled out balkanization of India which had even greater danger to Indian unity.
- The Congress was not consistent on the Partition.
  - In 1942, the Congress Working Committee criticized the secessionist idea.
  - But at the same time Congress committee said that it cannot think in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in the Indian Union against their declared and established will.
- From 1940 onwards, the trend was against India's unity. Both Gandhi and the Congress had accepted the principle of Partition, based on consent of the areas concerned. For example, Gandhi himself offered Jinnah his plan for "two sovereign independent States" with a Treaty of Separation on defense, foreign affairs, etc.





- Direct action day observed by Muslim league and the incidents of Hindu-Muslim riot made Congress believe that partition was the only option if otherwise there could be lasting peace even if British leave India. And so Congress accepted the partition.

## Last Years' UPSC mains GS questions

1. What was Mountbatten Plan? Discuss the reactions of Gandhi and Azad to the Plan.
2. The INA trial did more harms than good to British government.
3. Trace the origin of political mutiny of RIN and its impact on political situation in India.
4. Trace the salient sequence of events in the popular revolt that took place in February 1946 in the then 'Royal Indian Navy' and bring out its significance in the freedom struggle. Do you agree with the view that the sailors who took part in this revolt were some of the unsung heroes of the freedom struggle?
5. What was the cabinet mission plan? How was the grouping clause fundamental to it? What was its impact on the attitude of the congress and league?
6. What were the proposals of cabinet mission? Analyse the reactions of the congress and the league to the proposals.
7. Review the "dickie bird plan".
8. When and why did the revolt of the ratings of Royal Indian Navy take place? Why did they suspend the movement? What were the attitudes of Gandhi and Patel towards the movement?
9. What were the factors which eventually led to India's partition?
10. Narrate the last phase of India's freedom movement from the beginning of 1947 to attainment of Independence.
11. Do you think that the partition of India was inevitable? Discuss the attitudes of Gandhi, Nehru and Maulana Azad towards the crucial question of the partition.
12. What were the circumstances that led to the partition of India in 1947?
13. How did communalism manifest in Indian political scene? Explain the background of the passing of the momentous Pakistan resolution.
14. Why and how did congress come to accept the partition?
15. What were the main reasons for the decision for British government to leave India after transferring power to the people of "British India" and ruler of "Indian states"?

