

COLONIALISM IN INDIA BY THE BRITISHERS



British India During World War I

During World War I, Britain declared war on Germany on India's behalf, without consulting Indian leaders. About 1.5 million Indian soldiers and laborers were serving in the British Indian Army. A total of 60,000 Indian soldiers were killed or reported missing.

British India During World War II

When World War II broke out, India once again contributed hugely to the British war effort. In addition to troops, the princely states donated substantial amounts of cash. By the end of the war, India had an incredible volunteer army of 2.5 million men. About 87,000 Indian soldiers died in combat.

The Struggle for Indian Independence

Even as World War II raged on, Gandhi and other members of the Indian National Congress (INC) demonstrated against British rule.

Gandhi and the INC did not trust the British envoy and demanded immediate independence in return for their cooperation. When the talks broke down, the INC launched the "Quit India" movement, calling for the immediate withdrawal of Britain from India.

In response, the British arrested the INC's leadership, including Gandhi and his wife. Mass demonstrations were carried out across the country but were crushed by the British Army. Britain may not have realized it, but it was now just a matter of time before the British rule came to an end.

The soldiers who had joined Germany in fighting the British were put on trial at Delhi's Red Fort in early 1946. A series of court-martial trials were held for 45 prisoners charged with treason, murder, and torture. The men were convicted, but huge public protests forced the commutation of their sentences.

On August 17, 1946, violent fighting broke out between Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta. The trouble quickly spread across India. Meanwhile, cash-strapped Britain announced its decision to withdraw from India by June 1947.

Representatives of the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs agreed to divide India along sectarian lines. Hindu and Sikh areas remained part of India, while predominantly Muslim areas in the north became the nation of Pakistan. This division of territory was known as Partition.