DELICATE SUBJECTS, 1939-45

I. NEW CONQUESTS

A. SPREADING A MIDDLE EASTERN EMPIRE

The war actually spread the Empire further than ever before.

When Libya fell out of Italian hands, it went into the empire – though only on temporary loan.

Everyone agreed that it would be made an independent kingdom after the war, and so it was.¹

In Persia, Britain and Russia couldn’t afford to let the Nazis influence the government.

Too much oil was involved.

And Reza Pahlavi was all too friendly to Germany.²

So the Soviet Union occupied the northern end of Iran;

the British took over the southern end.

¹ Or anyhow, sometime after the war. The idea being that say, around 1955 it would be ready for independence. As it turned out, military occupation cost so much that Libya won its independence in 1951. See William Roger Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 265-68.

² Yergin, The Prize, 450. In fact, the plans had been in the works, even before Pahlavi gave offense, to get him out of the way, not because he was about to join the Germans, but because he would certainly resist giving the Allies a road from Russia to the Persian Gulf, and this they were hell-bent on having. In fact, they never bothered to ask the Shah to grant them the road, and gave this reason for his deposing only after he was out of the way.
What do you do with the Shah?

Britain hustled him out of there to the island of Mauritius.

Oh, he still got royal honors.

The governor made a tremendous silk flag to fly over the palace in exile.

The local military band was asked to play the Persian national anthem.

Which was.....?

Nobody had the faintest idea.

So the Governor, who remembered hearing somewhere that Persians were addicted to opium, had them play

“When the poppies bloom again.”

In Iraq, the British handled conquest all by themselves.

They had forced through a treaty in 1930.

Iraq was to help England in wartime,

It would have to let the British put a garrison on their soil.

The Iraqis did their part in 1939. They broke off with Germany.

They kicked out a few German teachers.
But mostly it dawned on their leaders, Saaaaayyy – now’s a really good time to cut a better deal!

England NEEEDS us. It needs us bad.

So bad it might let us become the big player in the Middle East –

And do we really want to back a loser?

Britain was letting Jews into Palestine – and the Iraqis weren’t keen on that.

And whoooo out there had a very low opinion of the Jews?

So in 1941 the army overthrew the government and started steering it towards the Third Reich.

Britain threw a military expedition into the country

crushed out the rebels

and put in a government they could order around.3

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3 It wasn’t as open & shut as events made it seem. Iraq had German and Italian aid – planes, and a lot of supplies sent by Vichy France from Syria – grenades, rifles, machine guns, artillery pieces, and trucks. Iraq had a good sized army, too, of 46,000 men. The flooding of rivers in southern Iraq made it hard for the British troops to move up from Basra.

What did it? German aid got there too late – about two weeks after the fighting began; and the British utterly commanded the air.

But there was something else. Most Iraqis weren’t going to lift a finger for Rashid Ali and the “golden square.” These guys had been part of the government all along – they were part of the problem. And they were Sunni. Most Iraqis were Shiites. And did any Shiite get the prime minister’s job in the 1930s? Noooo. Did they get
In 1943, it joined the war on the British side.

B. THE LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL

There was one place, though, that showed how thin Britain’s actual hold on the Middle East actually was: Palestine.

In wartime, the Jews were all for Britain winning.

The last thing any refugee from Naziism wanted was to have Kristallsnacht re-enacted in Jerusalem.

Palestine became a training ground for British forces.

Hagana, the Jewish militia, was eager to serve....

more eager than Britain was to recruit them.

any of the top offices? Noooo.

Or how about the Kurds? What did they care about the gummint in Baghdad? What did they care about ANY Arabs out there? What had they got from the Iraqi government? Or the Assyrians – who’d be walloped and massacred in 1933; and who was Prime Minister back then? Rashid Ali, wasn’t it? You think any love’s going to be lost there, either?
In the end, the Empire took just one brigade, and didn’t send it to Italy till late in the war.\textsuperscript{4}

But you can always fight one war and get ready for the next one.

And the dream of a Jewish national state burned as bright as ever.

Zionism was a coat of many colors.

Some looked to the Bible and the historic Jewish state that they saw as their right.

Others, like Abraham Stern, had visions of a Jewish empire in the Middle East, and for his model, looked on Mussolini’s Italy.

Either way, they knew that the British mandate stood in their way.

And every day brought the day nearer when the Empire did what it had promised in the White Paper:

handed Palestine over to the Arabs, with some concession not quite as good as nothing to Jews who wanted to rule themselves...

\textsuperscript{4} Jackson, \textit{Withdrawal from Empire}, 53-54.
the promise of toleration.

The Reich had shown them already what promises like that were worth.

It wasn’t just what Zionists believed; it was what they *did*.

– some, like Hagana, were all for giving Jews autonomy in the Mandate

Independence must come. A Jewish state must come.
But politics was the way to get it.

– others, like the soldiers in the Irgun Zvai Leumi, saw only one solution: a military one.

The only way to make a Jewish state was by force and terror.

Yet even they, at the start of the war, made common cause with the British

– and further out than Irgun, was the Stern Gang.
Stern and his gang weren’t softies.

They carried on assassinations.

They were too extreme for the Jewish leaders, who washed their hands of him and his doings.
But all through the war, Zionists of all flavors shared a common purpose.

They were readying for a fight for a Jewish – not a Palestinian state.

They did three things, to get ready for the day when the war was over:

1. turned the immigration quotas into waste paper, by bringing in crowds more Jews than they were allowed.

2. volunteered for service in the British forces of the Middle East, as a way of getting the military training they needed – and the guns – to beat the British after the war, if the Powers that Be really were serious about setting up a Palestinian state

3. organized support in the United States, to help pay for a war of liberation and to put pressure on British officials.\(^5\)

By 1944, a lot of the new Jewish army in hiding was run by Polish officers, many of them illegal immigrants themselves.

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One of the Polish refugees was Menachim Begin, who in the 1980s would become Prime Minister of Israel.

Now he commanded Irgun, the secret army of liberation

In February of that year, Begin declared war on the British Mandate Government. On Lincoln’s birthday, 1944, the war began, with the blowing up of immigration offices in Jerusalem

Haifa
Tel Aviv

Before the month was out, bombs had blown up the tax offices in all those cities.

As for the Stern Gang (otherwise known as the Hebrew Freedom Fighters) it assassinated the British Minister Resident in Cairo, Lord Moyne.

All in all, then, the war had let loose strong forces likely to pull the empire apart from within.

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* The name comes from its original leader, Abraham Stern, who, unlike Irgun, refused to cooperate with the British at any time during the war. Stern didn’t stay head of the gang for long. He was killed in a gun battle with Palestinian police in 1942. See William Jackson, *Withdrawal from Empire: A Military View* (London: BT Batsford Ltd., 1986), 54.
C. Collaborators

More disturbing was how many of the Empire’s subjects were ready to cheer the conqueror when he came.

In Palestine, the Arab leader, the Mufti of Jerusalem, went to Germany.

He came back, head of a Muslim Army of Liberation.

In Burma, Aung San was a leading Burmese nationalist, and came back from Japan to set up a Burma Defence Army.

As for India ... the Japanese were able to convert one prisoner of war in six from the Indian army to their cause, and it set up its own army....

The “Jiffs,” British folks called them – Japanese-Indian forces.

There was even a Gandhi brigade.

In Asia, the Japanese had found plenty of takers on the notion that they came to liberate.

Their coming to Burma had set the people free to kill their oppressors – most of them Indians, who came in with the British to act as civil servants and to get rich.

Burmese villagers set upon them and hacked off their heads and looted their shops.
900,000 refugees fled for India, and many starved or died along the way ...

found wells poisoned

and found ferryboats burned.

– and it hadn’t been the Japanese who did it.

On Malaya, the best you could say is that the Malays watched the Japanese beat the British.

Compare that to the Philippines, where the Filipinos fought and died by America’s side, to hold the Japanese army back, and mounted a terrific resistance movement under the occupation.

Was it, perhaps, because the Filipinos had been promised self-government after the war, and the Malays hadn’t?

It was something else, too: race war.

The Japanese were quite open about making this a war against whites – and, when it came to that, browns, too.

When they made POW’s sweep the streets in Singapore, it wasn’t to make them cleaner.

It was to humble the white man in front of Asians.

The maltreatment of white prisoners was to show those who
were watching that the whites were not the superior race, after all.

And race was one reason for the wanton murder of...
  administrators
  missionaries
  wireless operators

  in the Gilbert Islands.

The cry for race war was heard, and appreciated.

  They had seen race prejudice first-hand, from the white British rulers.

  They were glad to get some of their own.

**D. Out of Africa?**

Even where Britain found friends, there was something half-hearted there.

You take the Afrikaans.

  A lot of them didn’t want to go into this war at all.

  All through the war, there would be a party – the National Party – that wanted out of the war.

  And ten years after the fighting was over, they were THE rulers of South Africa.
Nowhere near as many soldiers flocked to the colors as in Australia, say ... or Canada.

South Africa could have sent 570,000 men.

It sent only a little under 190,000 – and most of them were like a Home Guard, never leaving South Africa at all.

Even getting them, the government had to use mighty odd tactics.

The big propaganda film was called Noordwaarts
(To the North)

Even while England was doing films, comparing Hitler to Napoleon, South Africa’s big picture was comparing him to Negroes!

Zulu chiefs!

That was the point: the Boers had fought their way north against treacherous black tribes, Zulus.

Well, it’s the same kind of enemy. 7

And so it was, all the way through. You don’t link the war to Empire.
You link it to Afrikaaner history.

You talk about it as like rugby – THEIR game.

You call your troops “commandos,” like the soldiers in the Boer War. 8


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As for the soldiers, they didn’t become Tommies.

They grumbled about being under English officers.

They resented being taken out of the country.

They were mad that you had to be an English-speaker to get promoted.

If anything, they came out of the war more convinced than ever that whatever future the Empire had, it wasn’t South Africa’s future.⁹

II. “QUIT INDIA”

India’s four hundred million were committed to war by their Viceroy, without so much as consulting the Indian politicians.


– which showed, plainer than anything else, that all the democratic machinery set up under the Government of India Act was just for show.

There wasn’t going to be any democratic process.

India went where the Viceroy said – and in an emergency, he had an autocrat’s powers.

**B. THE CRIPPS MISSION**

In the crisis, Churchill sent the one man who’d be likeliest to win the trust of the Indian parties.

He was the very opposite of an imperialist.

He was a Labour party man, and one of the left-est of them all.

... so much so that they nearly expelled him.

He looked a little like Woodrow Wilson, or a very prim schoolmaster.

He had that righteousness, that sense of his own importance, of Gandhi himself.

Churchill: “There, but for the grace of God, goes God.”

(Churchill couldn’t resist a good line. In fact he admired and liked Cripps, and they got along surprisingly well).
He was a vegetarian and a successful lawyer.

If anyone was a symbol of revolt at home, he was that man.

If anyone had the trust of the Congress, he did.

Cripps very quickly found that he wasn’t going to get much help from the Viceroy, but, then, he didn’t want much – or any.

Ignoring the usual channels, irritating every authority on the spot, he only made himself more plausible to the people who didn’t trust the usual channels.

And what he offered very nearly worked.

Cripps’s proposal

It was to set up a Union of India.

It would have full freedom to leave the Commonwealth – and Cripps made that clear – if it wanted it.

It would provide for Indian constituent assembly, that would be set up as soon as the war was over.

One clause, though, made very clear: nobody comes into the Union unless they want to, and they have the right to delay coming into the all-India constitution.
There’d be no other way to get the various Indian interests to agree to discuss further.

As Cripps explained, you won’t ever get a body of men into the same room to talk about their common needs, if you tell them that as soon as they come in the door, they will be locked in there forever.\textsuperscript{10}

The Indian Congress party refused to accept the right of non-accession.

The right is a fake, the Muslim League protested.

It’s a trick, to swindle Moslems of their right to make a separate state of Pakistan, and to lure them into a united India that Hindus will run.

Hindu leaders said it would disrupt India.

It’s a trick to split India up, and CREATE a Pakistan!!

The Depressed classes, so called, protested that it would mean that Hindu rule would sway over them, without any of the protections for untouchables that British government had given.

Sikhs were terrified that it would mean Moslem domination.\textsuperscript{11}

The War Cabinet admitted it wasn’t ideal.


So... you guys in India got a better?

We welcome the suggestions, if there are any.

But England’s problem was obvious and plain already.

If India can’t agree on a constituent assembly, amongst itself, how could one come into existence?

And if it couldn’t, what did Britain do then?

– by act of parliament FORCE India to become united and free?

– how did you force them to be united?

By guns, no doubt

– how did you force them to be free?

Well, the answer is, you couldn’t.12

The fact is, the only way that India could be free was by India acting itself.

By unifying, and coming up with a common scheme for freedom..

... as South Africa did

... as Australia did

... as Canada did

The different components found agreement with each other.

Their national freedom was built on the rock of their agreement.

Only on such a rock could the national freedom of India be built, too.

In fact, the real grounds that the Congress party took in public, was that Cripps would not let them take over the government – all of it – at once.

They would get to choose the Viceroy’s Council, yes.

But they wanted it turned into their own government.

And they wanted to handle the defense department.

... an invitation to India making a separate peace with Japan.\(^\text{13}\)

That would be a sure-fire catastrophe for the British cause.

It was impossible, and wasn’t granted.

### C. THE QUIT-INDIA CAMPAIGN

The failure of the Cripps mission set off a political blow up in India.

Gandhi led the way, demanding that Britain leave India at once.

\(^{13}\) Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 557-558.
Purified of colonial rule, then India could defend itself against Japan.

It would use the power of satyagraha – same old way.

True, Gandhi explained, “the resisters may find that the Japanese are utterly heartless and that they do not care how many they kill. The non-violent resisters will have won the day, inasmuch as they will have preferred extermination to submission.”

[my, how comforting to the ones exterminated!]

Up till Cripps’s visit, Gandhi had admitted that there would need to be a transitional period, to get an independent Indian government in order and get everyone to cooperate, before the British could leave.

Cripps had offered exactly that.

Now Gandhi declared: the proposal was unacceptable, because there should be no transition period at all.

But hadn’t Gandhi warned that by leaving all at once, there would be chaos – with Moslem against Hindu and every sect out for itself and states declaring they wouldn’t be part of India and having to be forced into it?

So he had. And so he did.

But so what? The British must “leave India in God’s hands, but in modern parlance to anarchy.”

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There might be a lot of killing.

But in the end, a “true India” would rise in the place of the false one that now existed.

It’s hard to call this anything except wildly irresponsible.

Gandhi was inviting a situation with plenty of killing and plenty of dead.

He knew well what happened to civilians who didn’t obey, in China. Japan had killed them by the hundreds of thousands.

If Japan saw India in chaos, it wouldn’t stand aside; it would march in and take over.15

But then, Gandhi’s view of the Axis powers was a little starry-eyed.

It would take a real optimist, on Christmas Eve, 1941 to write Hitler to urge him to take up the principles of nonviolence and to make an effort for peace.

It would take a master of fantasy to propose to the Viceroy that he, Gandhi, could make peace between England and Hitler, and that the war was both sides’ fault:

“The manslaughter must be stopped,” he wrote. “You are losing; if you persist, it will only result in greater bloodshed. Hitler is not a bad man. If you call it off today, he will follow suit. If you want to

15 Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India, 560-1.
send me to Germany or anywhere else, I am at your disposal.”

The offer wasn’t accepted. And since, at that point, Hitler was sending thousands of Jews to Auschwitz and Dachau, he probably would have been too busy to give Gandhi an audience.\textsuperscript{16}

Nor did the British really take well to Gandhi’s suggestion that the best solution to the war would be for them to let Hitler have whatever he wanted – their island, their buildings.

If they would just lay down their arms, what did they have to lose?

He couldn’t take their souls nor their minds – and that,

\textsuperscript{16} Robert Payne, \textit{The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi}, 488.
really, was all that mattered.\textsuperscript{17}

And it wasn’t all talk. Congress started gearing up, to press the point home with one more campaign of civil disobedience.

1. start by breaking a few minor laws, just as a token.

2. then withdraw all your cooperation with any level of Government

3. boycotts – strikes

4. disrupt the trains

5. cut the telegraph and telephone lines

6. refuse to pay rents or taxes

On August 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1942, the All-India Congress Committee demanded that the British “Quit India.”

And called on their followers to make the country ungovernable.

That was the kick-off. It was also all that the Viceroy needed.

He’d been intercepting their letters for months.

He knew more about their plans than they did.

Now, right at kick-off, the game was going to be called, on account of darkness.

\textsuperscript{17} Robert Payne, \textit{The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi}, 490.
... or, rather, a pre-emptive strike?

Hundreds of Congress leaders were arrested instantly and Gandhi was one of the first.

He was bundled into a palace, which served as a perfectly lovely prison.

The former Prime Minister of Bihar was jailed, too, and he can hardly have complained.

The Government let him have his daily massage with coconut oil.18

Headless, the resistance movement ran amok.

There was a week of riots.

Europeans were attacked.

Railways were torn up, stations burned down.

Mobs fought the police.

They burned the wives and children of policemen alive.

Revenue offices and police stations were burned and wrecked.

Telegraph and telephone lines were pulled down.

The Government responded by using fighter planes to strafe crowds of protestors and threw troops everywhere on guard duty where military hardware needed protecting.19

18 Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India, 564-69.
19 Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India, 566.
And, for all the talk of disaffection, the Indian army stood shoulder to shoulder with English troops to crush out the uprising.

Nor would the Muslim League.

Muslims had nothing but scorn for the rebellion.

They knew what it was about.

Gandhi wanted independence on his terms, and no others...

an independence where the Hindus who ran the Congress would set up a new government and where Muslims would have no way of getting out from under its thumb.\(^\text{20}\)

By the time the monsoons came that fall, the fighting was over.

Maybe two to four thousand protestors had been killed.

Over 1300 government buildings were in ruins

208 police stations had been destroyed

332 railroad depots wrecked.\(^\text{21}\)

Gandhi, from prison, threatened a hunger strike.

The Viceroy called his bluff.

\(^{20}\) Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 569-70.

\(^{21}\) Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 571-72.
The hunger strike was cut short.

Arresting and jailing so many Congress leaders left a power vacuum.

**D. ‘DIVIDE AND QUIT’**

Into it stepped Jinnah’s Muslim League.

His resolution was that Britain “Divide and Quit.”

The British played the Muslim card well.

They cozied up to the Muslims, who had given the war good backing.

In fact, over 30% of the army was Muslim.

The great granary of India, the Punjab, had a population about evenly divided between Sikhs and Muslims.

It was the great recruiting ground of the Empire, too.

Did the Muslim League want to found a newspaper?

The Government helped pay its way, by filling it with public advertising.

For three years, the Muslim League had the full rein to draw more Muslims away from Congress and to them.

It would be building strength – and by 1945, it couldn’t be denied, when it called for a partition and Pakistan.²²

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²² Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 583-84.
E. HOW THE CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE ACTUALLY WORKED

To win, the Empire would need to give ground, and give it did.

– in India, it all but promised independence, when the war was over.
– in Jamaica and on the Gold Coast, it added to the number of black people who could vote

– money was set aside for development inside the colonial empire, and economic expansion.

It was lucky, too, that the Japanese were a lot better at preaching racial solidarity than practicing it.

To them, other Asians weren’t a separate race. Or, anyhow, if they were, they were separate from Japanese, who were THE superior race.

Burma’s nationalists quickly discovered that they had exchanged a bad master for a worse one.

As for the Indian JIF’s, they were nowhere near as dangerous as they looked.

Most Indians had sympathized with the Chinese against the Japanese all along, and they still did.

The Indian National Army had lots of Japanese backing.

But it didn’t amount to all that much.
If Japan won, it would win.

If Japan started losing, sympathizers would melt away.

And from 1943 on, it was shackled to a corpse.

Maybe one member in five was a real sympathizer with the Japanese cause.

The Japanese never found good camouflage uniforms for them –
   nor up to date weapons –
   nor the supplies they found for their own soldiers.

When they grumbled, the Japanese threw off the mask:

   “You should be proud to be puppets of the Japanese,” one officer told them.

Their officers were not saluted by Japanese in other ranks – but every Indian had to salute a Japanese officer.

Their duties were usually guarding supply dumps and lines of communication.

Most of them didn’t live out the war.

Many deserted back to the British.

Others died of malaria and dysentery

Some surrendered. A lot of them never ended up being imprisoned.\(^\text{23}\)

Other Indian soldiers, who’d seen what the Japanese had done to their own kind in Burma, wanted nothing so much as

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\(^{23}\) Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 574-78.
to repay by some shooting of their own.

III. THE DISPENSABLE BRITISH

A. FROM ANZACS TO ANZUS

By 1942, Australia knew that it couldn’t count on British aid, if a Japanese invasion came.

They turned to Canada for supplies – and were turned down.

Instead, Australia and New Zealand’s arsenal came from the United States – 230 planes in six months.

50,000 GI’s were drafted to defend Australia.²⁴

Australians felt betrayed then. Britain cared more about India...
more about the Middle East.

They no longer could count on the empire.

If there was a turning point that ended the danger of invasion of Australia

²⁴ For the strategic considerations that shunted Australia to depend on the United States and weakened the commitment to Empire, see John Darwin, Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post War World (London, 1988), 44-47.
it happened when the Japanese fleet was beaten at the Coral Sea and at Midway in May and June of 1942.

But it wasn’t the British fleet that did that. It was Americans.

What did Lend-Lease mean for the Dominions of the Pacific?

Up to Pearl Harbor, Australia’s forces were equipped by the British Commonwealth and its arsenals.

At most, Lend-Lease sent 50 Lockheed-Hudson bombers (without motors)
   a few light tanks
   a few hundred trucks.25

With the opening of war with Japan, everything changed.

There were plenty of planes for the Australian air force then.

More important, the United States sent the machine tools to let Australia make its own weapons.

If by the end of the war Australia was the sixth among the munitions arsenals of the United Nations, it was

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Lend-Lease that made it become so.²⁶

The tin plate that Australia made into cans for army rations ..

The seeds and cultivators that raised food for the soldiers...

The trucks that kept supply communications behind the Allies’
lines ....

All were provided by Lend-Lease.

B. THE HEIRS OF EMPIRE: LEND-LEASE

When Australian aviators were shot down in the jungles of the south
Pacific, they always carried tobacco to pay the natives with, for
guiding them to safety, or to act as stretcher bearers.

... and it was American tobacco.²⁷

²⁶ In order, the others were United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, Canada, and India. See Stettinius,
Lend-Lease, 177.

What more obvious sign could India have, that Britain’s time was done, than the fact that American soldiers and American aid were propping up the British defense there?

But the proofs were strikingly clear...

The ground crews from bases provided by the British.

As Bombay and Karachi turned into THE ports where war supplies were unloaded, they needed to be re-tooled.

New cranes
and lighters

and engineers and port battalions to remake the docks and widen the harbors...

And on those docks war supplies piled up –
Arms for India and for China

Red Cross supplies
Planes
Spare parts
Fuel
Trucks for the Burma Road28

And all of these were of American make.

Karachi had been a dozy little city of small stucco buildings.

It hardly looked Indian; more like a Middle East village.

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But now it swarmed with soldiers ... American soldiers at that

The port widened, done by American soldiers
Karachi became an air base for the Allies.

... in fact, the largest airport in all India.29

India had stripped its railroads bare of their equipment, to help out British
needs in the Middle East.

But when it seemed as though India would be a battlefront, the
United States found equipment to replace it.30

Put all this together, and it shows that one Empire is in decline.

And another is doing the job instead.

How long can that older Empire hold on, when the people of India
see the facts, plain as they were?

C. THE DOMINIONS’ DAY

Even as Britain declined, its Dominions grew.

By war’s end, it fielded 3/4ths of a million men.

Its soldiers helped win back the Pacific –

as did the Australians and New Zealanders.

But if the Dominions got stronger, their ties to England got weaker.

Look at Canada, as a perfect example.

War made it into a minor world power.

In 1939 it produced 1.5 million tons of steel.
By 1943, three million tons.

Pig iron production – 846,000 tons, up to 1.7 million tons.

Aircraft industry made 3,811 planes in 1942 and 11,390 in 1944.

In 1942, she made 192,000 units of mechanical transport...
but 593,000 just two years later.

The 81 cargo ships she turned out in 1942 were nothing compared to the 249 she made in 1944.

Her Navy, Army and Air force had been 10,300 strong in 1939.
And were 765,000 strong when the war ended.

Six combat ships in their navy in 1939, and 250 in 1944.

All very well. But did a Canada that strong need England to defend her any more?
And did she owe England any more? There were $800 million in securities that Britain owned, in Canada when the war began.

Canadians bought just about all of them back in war time.

Canada bought out the British interests in the Canadian war plant... another $200 million worth.

It didn’t have to borrow from England to fight this war.

It lent England a billion dollars... no, it gave the money outright.

England borrowed to get American supplies, in Lend-Lease.

Canada didn’t. It paid cash on the spot.
It could afford to.

A country that strong no longer would have English creditors saying what its financial policy had to be.

It would no longer go where England said.

It had, effectively, BOUGHT its independence in wartime.

Australia could tell much the same story.

Even in wartime, it had been pulling apart the strands of economic policy that tied it to England:

– it had beefed up its own factories to fight this war.
Till now, Australia got its iron and steel goods from England.

But England couldn’t make ‘em in wartime ... not for shipping overseas.

And it didn’t have the ships to send them.

If the Aussies wanted iron, they would have to make it themselves.

Australia used to buy ships off the Clyde in Britain.
But when the ships didn’t come, Australia set up its own shipbuilding industry.

When the war was over, they could make ships cheaper than Britain.
They could make iron cheaper than Britain.

Were they going to buy it from the Mother Country any more?

And when Britain wanted to sell ships or steel in Asia, they’d find Australian salesmen already had their foot in the door.\(^{31}\)

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But Australia refused to cut down on its imports.\textsuperscript{32}

And there was the other plain fact:

If Britain couldn’t defend them, what good was it?

Regaining empire was all very well.

But it couldn’t make up for losing it.

The Burmese had driven out the Indians, when Japan gave them the chance.

They’d robbed them, harassed them, killed them.

Several hundred thousand perished.

Was Burma going to go back gently into the British empire, after all that?

Long after the shooting died away, the echoes of “Asia for Asians” still played loud and clear.

More than that: the Japanese had shown that the Empire was hollow, after all.

Its power nowhere what subjects imagined.

It had been broken before. It could be broken again.