

Nehru and Jinnah (August 21, 1947)

Abstract

In this article, released a little under a week after India's independence, the author predicts the direction of the country under Pandit (Jawaharhalal) Nehru, the country's new Prime Minister. The author assumes that the Soviet Union will serve as an important example for the country because of Nehru's belief in socialism, and that India will likely build a relationship with the Soviet Union, though the author also posits that India will never become politically dependent on any country. This assumption was somewhat correct, but underestimated the degree to which Nehru would seek independence from the Cold War axes: he was a fundamental force in the Non-Aligned Movement and sought his own path towards socialism instead of building a deep relationship with the USSR. The article also overestimates how anti-British Nehru would be. Before independence, Nehru was an ardent advocate of complete independence from Britain; however, after independence, Nehru negotiated a deal with Britain in which India would remain part of the Commonwealth (it remains a Commonwealth state to this day). Nehru was deeply pleased with this agreement; he was content that the old conflict between India and the British had been resolved in a friendly way and saw the country's Commonwealth status as an integral piece of maintaining positive relations with Britain.

Source

Pandit Nehru, together with Gandhi, fought thirty years for the independence of India, which, in recent days, has finally become a reality. Only released from prison in the summer of 1945 after being held on charges of civil disobedience, he is now the first prime minister of the Free Indian Union. Indeed, he is far more than this. For the peoples of Asia, Nehru is the symbol of freedom and a leader of the colored people in their struggle for equality. "No European country, without exception, has the right to employ its troops in Asia," is his protest cry against the Dutch actions in Indonesia. And the untold populace of this vast land, who cheer him wherever he appears and who transform his every journey through the country into a veritable triumphal procession, are convinced that although today he merely has the right to speak in this manner, within a few years he will also possess the power to act accordingly. What he regards as excessive devotion and enthusiastic worship once even led him to write an anonymous pamphlet warning against Pandit Nehru on the grounds that "we do not want any Caesars."

Nehru is a firm believer in progress. This is clearly manifested in his hopes for industrial development and the exploitation of India's great riches, especially in light of the social misery and famine plaguing his country. This is also his prime motivation for wanting to abolish the caste system and to introduce universal equality, which in Nehru's eyes, merely requires the introduction of a modern social constitution, the sole prerequisite for achieving maximum national productivity and efficiency. Accordingly, Nehru is a socialist and, moreover, is fundamentally opposed to orthodox religion, since he views it as an ossifying force that stands in the way of any vital advancement. For the same reason, he is also an uncompromising opponent of Great Britain. As he reveals in his autobiography, he adopted his anti-British stance almost against his own will and solely because of his hatred of "British imperialism." This he sees as hindering India's economic development and making social progress impossible by favoring certain groups and perpetuating their position of power. It is a testament to Pandit Nehru's superiority as a human being and a statesman that he is apparently completely free of any personal resentment towards England, although he has had to suffer countless prison sentences as a consequence of his fight for India's independence. He has spent a total of 16 years of his life behind bars.

Nehru ostensibly envisages a total revolution in social and economic conditions in India. We can assume that the Soviet Union will serve as an example in many areas here, especially in terms of agricultural reform, the importance of which he stresses constantly. He also speaks of the necessity of state ownership of basic industries, although he does not want to abandon the notion of private property. He characterizes himself as an individualist, yet he demands the restriction of certain personal freedoms in favor of freedoms for society as a whole. On various occasions, Nehru has expressed the wish to strengthen India's friendship and relations with the people of the USSR. It is in this spirit that that he is currently sending his own sister to Moscow as the first ambassador of the Indian Union. The Russians will most certainly respond to this gesture by appointing a similarly prominent personality. Maisky, the former ambassador to London, has recently been mentioned.

One thing, however, is certain. Nehru will never become politically dependent on any country in either the West or the East. Correspondingly, he did not think it politically wise in 1942 to aid the Japanese in order to bring an end to the hated hegemony of the English. Similarly, during the final struggle for liberation, he never played the Russia card.

In origins and outward appearance, Jawaharlal Nehru, to use his actual name, is by no means a born revolutionary. He comes from a wealthy, aristocratic Brahmin family. Like the sons of many wealthy Indian families, he was educated entirely in England, where he first attended school at Harrow at the age of sixteen and then studied at Cambridge. His command of the English language is considered by all who know him to be second to none. As a young man, Nehru attracted attention in all social surroundings because of his almost classical beauty. Even today, he still displays an elegant appearance. There are probably very few European statesmen who are his superiors in terms of education, knowledge, and culture. An eloquent testimony to this is his book *The Discovery of India*, which was written during his final period of imprisonment and covers some four thousand years of history on the Indian subcontinent.

If, in our materialistic age, religious considerations can influence the demarcation of borders of newly emerging states, one would expect the leaders of the preceding *religious struggles* to credibly embody these theological convictions. This can hardly be said in the case of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League. His family belongs to a Shiite sect, which stands in open opposition to orthodox Islam. Nor is he particularly well versed in classical Islamic-Arabic scholarship. Nonetheless, he is now the governor general and head of the new Indian state of Pakistan, for which he has struggled in the name of India's Mohammedans, although actually no one, least of all Gandhi, the great sage, understood why a new *nation* had to be formed and the unity of India destroyed for reasons of religious difference.

Jinnah is the son of a rich merchant family from Karachi. He was also educated in England and acquired a reputation first there and later in India as a successful and ambitious lawyer. He is a brilliant speaker. His clothing, character, and style of thinking are, for the most part, European, and he has never completely lost his sympathies for England. In essence, Jinnah is clearly not a spiritual person and is far more a party manager than a statesman. This is why he has always emphasized what divides the two largest Indian demographic groups, rather than promoting what unites them. He has been uncompromising whenever representing the interests of Mohammedans, wishing to protect them from possible marginalization in a predominantly Hindu unified state. Whether he regarded this as a religious imperative or merely a political goal offering the possibility of personal power remains to be seen. On the other hand, the question may be answered by the fact that his first act in government was to adopt as his official designation the title *Quaid-i-Azam* or "Great Leader." Today, Muhammad Ali Jinnah is the head of state of the largest Mohammedan country in the world. What is unique about his position, however, is that in his capacity as governor-general, his actions are coordinated with those of Lord Mountbatten, the governor-general for the Indian Union. In light of the situation in India as well as in the Middle East, this has certainly proved to be an expedient and far-sighted measure by England.

Source of original German text: Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, "Nehru und Dschinnah," *Die Zeit*, no. 34, August 21, 1947. Accessible online at: <https://www.zeit.de/1947/34/nehru-und-dschinnah>

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Recommended Citation: Nehru and Jinnah (August 21, 1947), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-5224>> [July 10, 2025].