**CHY4U Unit 4, Activity 1**

**Timeline of British Imperialism in India and the Process of Decolonization**

**Decoloniziation =** the process by which countries gain independence from their colonial rulers; the end of imperialism. It has leftovers as well that could affect all aspects of society even after independence.

**Methods varied from country to country**: not always peaceful, armed struggle/violence/guerrilla war, protests, strikes, formation of political parties, elites (educated native upper classes) often became nationalists, possible involvement of outside powers (UN, US-USSR because of Cold War tensions and the desire to have allies)

* See chart on page 403 of textbook for independence dates of colonies of major imperial powers.
* Being tied to the mother-country didn’t necessarily end with independence; often there was economic dependence on the former mother-country.

**INDIA**

In the **1700s** British interest in India began with trade. In **1756** the British won the battle of Plassey resulting in the British East India Company winning a large slice of Indian territory in Bengal. Following the **1857-1858** Sepoy Mutiny against Britain (called the Great Rebellion by the British) the British government gained control over India, beginning the Raj. In the **late 1800s** British rule was facilitated with the assistance of a native-born civil service elite educated in the British manner. However, the Indian officials didn’t hold top ranks in the government, army, or courts. Economically, in **1869** the Suez Canal opened, shortening travel time between Europe and India. When Victoria became Empress of India in **1876** she stated that Indians had the right to practice their own religious traditions. Religiously India was majority Hindu but the Muslim population was large as well. Especially in northern India, Hindus and Muslims lived side by side.

Meanwhile in Indian internal politics,theIndian National Congress (INC) was founded in **1885**; it was a nationalist group that wanted to have more Indians in government and pay less to Britain to run India. Muslims and Hindus worked together in the early years of Congress. Its most famous member was Mohandas Gandhi, however from **1893-1914** he wasa lawyer in South Africa, where he developed his *Satyagraha* tactics involving peaceful, non-violent civil disobedience – refusal to obey unjust laws. Relations with Britain became further complicated in **1905** when the British partitioned (divided) Bengal, a state with a Muslim majority population. This made some Indians feel that the British were trying to divide Hindus and Muslims. Nationalist tensions ramped up from **1905-1908** during the *Swadeshi* (‘of our own country’) movement which encouraged an economic boycott of cheap factory-made cloth textiles produced in Britain. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, an INC member, was a leader of this movement which included other forms of non-cooperation such as with the British court system and taxation.

Eventually the INC demanded home rule, an elected parliament and more autonomy within the British Empire. Finally it extended its demands to full independence in **1929**. However, there were religious factors that complicated the situation. In **1906** the Muslim League was created to advocate for a separate Muslim state (Pakistan). Many Muslims felt that they were not fully represented in the INC, including eventual Muslim League Leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and that Muslims faced more discriminatory treatment by the British and the Hindus.

Over one million Indians fighting for the British Empire during WWI. Everyone supported declaration of war by Britain (including Tilak, Gandhi, INC, the princes). The INC assumed Britain would give India something in return. The contribution was very large; India sent a lot of equipment, wheat, steel and other raw materials to Britain, and India paid for its own troops. With 150 000 casualties including 36 000 deaths, Indian felt it was owed. Relations with Britain worsened after the war despite high hopes for more autonomy. In **1919** the British killed 379 unarmed protestors in 10 minutes at Amritsar where protests against British rule had been staged. This prompted many people to turn against British rule. Given this, between **1921 and 1935** the British proposed self-rule reforms that would have seen India governed as a federal model like Canada, with states having certain responsibilities; however this was a British plan conceived without Indian support. In 1935, Winston Churchill, British imperialist politician said: “Gandhism and all it stands for must ultimately be grappled with and finally crushed.”

Gandhi had become popular amongst the Indian masses for his protest leadership.For instance, in **1930** Gandhi’s Salt March protested the British monopoly on salt, resulting in thousands of arrests. There were continued protests and riots throughout the **1930s**. In **1937** elections the INC became the government in seven provinces, leaving the Muslim League feeling left out. With millions of Indians serving in WWII for the British Empire, by **1942** Britain offered an independence plan to India. INC initiated its “Quit India” campaign. Leaders were constantly imprisoned during a new wave of protests. By **1946** the British government realized it could not retain India by force any longer. It sent a representative to India to negotiate a future constitution. Hindu and Muslim leaders did not agree on the plan. The British government agreed to partition India. INC eventually agreed that partition was better than civil war. Independence was granted to India and Pakistan in August **1947**. Millions of people moved from one side of the border to the other: ten million refugees were created, one million were killed (mostly Muslims) as violence erupted. Jawaharlal Nehru of INC became the first prime minister of India. Gandhi remained a symbol of the desire for peaceful unity but he was assassinated in **1948**.

**Follow-Up Activity:**

**From the perspective of the imperial power:**

* How could they have kept India?
  + What lessons could they have learned from the way they ‘lost’ India? Think about the fact that the British had many colonies in other parts of the world, particularly Africa, and probably didn’t want to lose all of them.

**From the perspective of the colonized country:**

* How could they have gained independence in an easier, less disruptive way?
  + What lessons could they have learned from the struggle for independence?

Curriculum Expectations:

* analyse the impact of Western colonization on both the colonizer and the colonized;
* analyse the processes and implications of imperialism, decolonization, and nation building in various parts of the world.