

Document A: Gardiner's *English History* (Excerpted from Original)

THE INDIAN MUTINY.

(1857, 1858.)

Troubles in India.--In the year after the Crimean War was ended the attention of men was fixed on a country still farther to the East than Turkey. In 1857 exactly a hundred years had passed since Clive had won the battle of Plassey. The religion of the Hindoos, who form a great part of the natives of India, teaches many things which seem very strange to Englishmen. Among other things they are taught that they will be defiled if they eat any part of a cow. By this defilement they will meet with much contempt from their fellows, and will suffer much after their death in another world. The bulk of the army in India was composed of Hindoos, and it happened that an improved rifle had lately been invented for the use of the soldiers, and that the cartridges used in this rifle required to be greased, in order that they might be rammed down easily into the barrel. The men believed that the grease used was made of the fat of cows, though this was not really the case. There was, therefore, much suspicion and angry feeling among the native soldiers, and when ignorant men are suspicious and angry they are apt to break out into deeds of unreasoning fury. The danger was the greater because a great many of the native princes were also discontented. These princes governed states scattered about over India, though they were not allowed to make war with one another. Many of them had governed very badly, had ruined their subjects by hard taxation, and had spent the money they thus obtained in vicious and riotous living. The English Government in India had interfered with some of these, and had dethroned them, annexing their territories to its own, and ruling the people who had been their subjects by means of its own officers. The consequence was that some of the princes who had been left in possession of authority thought that their turn would come next, and that they too would be dethroned before long. These men were therefore ready to help against the English, if they thought that they had a chance of succeeding.

Source: Gardiner's *English History for Schools*, an *English textbook edited for American students*, 1881.

Document B: Sir Colin Campbell (Excerpted from Original)

THE ORIGIN OF THE MUTINY

As to the origin of the mutiny there are many opinions. It seems to be conceded on all hands, however, that an uneasy feeling, at times approaching to insubordination, had been visible amongst the Bengal native troops for some time past. Lord Hardinge is said to have been afraid to assemble them in large numbers; and the letters and dispatches of Sir Charles Napier abundantly show that he had no great confidence in the fidelity of the army of Bengal. The chief source of this doubtful confidence seems to have been the principle of *caste*, which, as it is intimately connected with the mutiny, we proceed to explain briefly.

In the Bengal army, says a writer who served under Sir Charles Napier, "there is a principle at work, unknown to the European soldiers, which operates with tremendous force on the mind of the native. This principle is *caste*. Now the predominating race in a Bengal regiment is the Hindoo, the followers of that religion being to the Mahometans in the proportion of five to one. A regiment a thousand strong will therefore be found to contain about eight hundred Hindoos. Of these it often happens that more than four hundred are Brahmins or priests, about two hundred Rajpoots (a high caste, but lower than the Brahminical order), and the rest of a lower caste. The Brahmins are the most influential, as they are the most bigoted, of the whole race of Hindoos. Their curse is dreaded as a fate worse than death itself, whilst their protection is earnestly sought after by means of small presents, and of what to them is more valuable, constant prostrations or salaams publicly performed, so as to show the world the extent of the belief in their mighty power. The manner in which their influence can be brought to bear on a regiment may be easily conceived. We will suppose that one company is composed of 20 Mahometans, 40 Brahmins, and 40 Rajpoots and lower-caste Hindoos. The influence of the Brahmins over the 80 Hindoos is paramount, and the Mahometans, being a small minority, would not contest the palm with them. The whole company may, therefore, be said to be under Brahminical influence. Thus, if a low-caste Hindoo happened at the time to fill the responsible post of subahdar, he would be entirely under the spiritual guiding of the Brahminical clique. Were a mutiny hatching in the lines, he would not dare to divulge it, from the fear of a penalty more dreadful than even death--excommunication. It is very evident, therefore, that by means of this pernicious system of caste, the men of a Bengal regiment, though nominally subject to the British Crown, are really under the orders and control of a Brahminical clique, formed in each regiment, constantly corresponding with one another, and acting without any sense of responsibility whatever."

It is easy to see, then, that any considerable offense offered to the Brahminical order, or the the prejudices of the religion which it represents, might seriously endanger the fidelity of the native troops; and there seems to be little doubt that offence *has* been given. Injudicious attempts to convert sepoy to Christianity have been made, and whether mistaken or not, it is undoubted that they were at length imbued with the idea that a general attempt was to be made to over-ride one of the most tender prejudices of their faith, and, in fact, that they were to be converted by compulsion.

On the other hand it is alleged that the revolt is Mahometan, and not Hindoo; and therefore has little to do with Hindoo fanaticism. The fact may prove to be that the discontent of the Hindoo furnished ready fuel, while the restlessness and ambition of the Mahometan supplied the fire. At the same time it is impossible to dissociate the revolt and the deposition of the Mahometan king of Oude.

The province of Oude had always maintained its independence, which, in fact, the continued loyalty of its kings to the interests of England well deserved. More than once they made large loans to the Company. But at length the system of government became too bad to be tolerated; the court was a mere hot-bed of oppression, intrigue, and sensuality; and Lorde Dalhousie, the late Governor-General, determined to close this career by the annexation of Oude to the British territory.

It has never been disputed that this was a merciful change for the people of Oude; but the people are not always governed by reason. Prejudices--religious, national, and social--have paramount influence even in a civilised country; how much more, then, were they to be looked for in a region sunk into barbarism? The King of Oude, says the writer of the pamphlet from which we have previously quoted, was the sole remaining independent Mahometan sovereign in India; as such he commanded the regard of all the members of the Mussulman persuasion. "To depose him, then, would excite a general feeling of discontent amongst a very numerous and powerful class of our subjects--men of shoe the Cavalry regiments were chiefly composed, and who supplied at least 200 bayonets to each regiment of Native Infantry. From Oude, indeed, our army was almost entirely recruited. The Hindoo and Mahometan sepoy alike came from Oude; he transmitted all his savings to that country; and when he left service in our provinces he was invariably proceeded thither to invest his money in land." Colonel Sleeman, for many years our agent at the court of Lucknow, is said by this writer to have expressed his conviction that the annexation of Oude would produce disaffection in the native army, "principally because it would transfer the family of the sepoy

from the operation of the regulations and justice of the King of Oude to our own civil courts." A more important matter is, however, that upon the annexation of Oude, two-thirds of the King's army were disbanded, and these, of course, would be ripe for revolt.

Source: Sir Colin Campbell, Narrative of the Indian Revolt from Its Outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow, 1858.

Document C: Sita Ram (Excerpted from Original)

It chanced about this time the *Sirkar* sent parties of men from each regiment to different garrisons for instruction in the use of the new rifle. These men performed the new drill for some time until a new report got about, by some means or other, that the cartridges used for these new rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. The men from our regiment wrote to others in the regiment telling them of this, and there was soon excitement in every regiment. Some men pointed out that in forty years' service nothing had ever been done by the *Sirkar* to insult their religion, but as I have already mentioned the *sepoys'* minds had been inflamed by the seizure of Oudh. Interested parties were quick to point out that the great aim of the English was to turn us all into Christians, and they had therefore introduced the cartridge in order to bring this about, since both Mohammedans and Hindus would be defiled by using it.

I reported this curious story to my officer but no notice was taken. He only told me not to talk about it. Some time later an order was read out to the regiment from the Commander-in-Chief, or Governor-General *sahib*, saying that the *Sirkar* had not used any objectionable fat but that in future the men could make up their own cartridges and use their own grease. They could then be satisfied that the *Sirkar* had no intention whatsoever of hurting their feelings or breaking their caste. However the very reading out of his order was seized upon by many as proof that the *Sirkar* had broken our caste, since otherwise the order would never have been issued. What was the use of a denial if it had not been the Government's intention originally to break our caste? . . .

I now discovered that I was being watched. I was suspected of giving information to the civilian officials. One day a large party of *sepoys* from one of the mutinied regiments came through my village, and I tried to persuade them to go quietly to their houses. I explained to them the folly of going against the English Government, but these men were so intoxicated with the plunder they had taken, and by their hope of reward from the Emperor of Delhi, that they turned on me and were about to shoot me on the spot for having dared to speak out in favour of the English Government. They called me a traitor, and ended by taking me prisoner. . . .

The leader of this party was a *sepoys*, although there were two *subedars* with it. He came one day and showed me a proclamation from the King of Delhi. It called upon all the *sepoys* to rise and destroy the English, promising great rewards and promotion if the men of any regiment would mutiny and kill their officers. It stated that the English *Sirkar* intended to make all Brahmins into Christians, which had in fact been proved correct, and in proof of it one hundred Padres were about to be stationed in Oudh. Caste was going to be broken by forcing everyone to eat beef and pork. The *sepoys* were exhorted not to allow this to happen, but to fight for their religion and drive the detested foreigners out of the country. It also stated that the king had received information from the Sultan of Turkey that all the English soldiers had been destroyed by the Russians; there were only left the few regiments remaining in India; and these were all separated by great distances and could easily be surrounded and destroyed. This proclamation was printed on yellow paper and was said to have been issued by order of the king. Every man who heard it believed every word of it. Even I was impressed by it. I had never known the *Sirkar* to interfere with our religion or our caste in all the years since I had been a soldier, but I was nevertheless filled with doubt. I remembered the treatment of many regiments with regard to field allowance—how it had first been promised and then withheld. I could not forget that the *Sirkar* had seized Oudh without due cause.

I had also remarked the increase of Padre *sahibs* during recent years, who stood up in the streets of our cities and told the people that their cherished religion was false, and who exhorted them to become Christians. They always maintained that they were not employed by the *Sirkar*, but how could they have acted like this without the Government's sanction? Everyone believed that they were secretly employed by the Government; why else should they take such trouble? Then I remembered how the *Sirkar* had been my protector, and that I had eaten its salt for over forty years, and I was determined never to betray it so long as it continued to rule but to do all that I could to support it. But, my Lord, you must not forget that I was bound with chains at this time, and to all appearance being taken to a terrible death. As each day passed and I heard that city after city, garrison after garrison, had fallen into the hands of the local population, I must confess that the thought passed through my mind that the mighty Company's rule was passing away. All its guns had been captured, and also all its arsenals—how could I help think otherwise? However I still had faith in the incredible good fortune of the *Sirkar*, which had always been so wonderful and marvelous. I also believe that those who had broken their word and committed such crimes could not expect to have good fortune for long.

Source: *Sita Ram*, From *Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, A Native Officer in the Bengal Army*, Written and Related by Himself, ca. 1860s.

Document D: Sayyid Ahmed Khan (Excerpted from Original)

[0.22] The non-admission of such a member proved a hindrance to the development of the good feeling of the Indian subject towards the Government and of their good intention towards it; on the contrary, contrary effects were produced.

The evils which resulted in India from the non-admission of natives into the Legislative Council of India were various. Government could never know the inadvisability of the laws and regulations which it passed. It could never hear as it ought to have heard the voice of the people on such a subject. The people had no means of protesting against what they might feel to be a foolish measure, or of giving public expression to their own wishes. But the great mischief lay in this, that the people misunderstood the views and intentions of Government. They misapprehended every act, and whatever law was passed was misconstrued by men who had no share in the framing of it, and hence no means of judging of its spirit. At length the Hindustanees fell into the habit of thinking that all the laws were passed with a view to degrade and ruin them, and to deprive them and their fellows of their religion. Such acts as were repugnant to native customs and character, whether in themselves good or bad, increased this suspicion. At last came the time when all men looked upon the English Government as slow poison, a rope of sand, a treacherous flame of fire. They learned to think that if today they escaped from the hands of Government, tomorrow they would fall into them; or that even if they escaped on the morrow, the third day would see their ruin. There was no main reason with them, no one to point out to them the absurdity of such ideas.

When the governors and the governed occupy relatively such a position as this, what hope is there of loyalty or of good-will? Granted that the intentions of Government were excellent, there was no man who could convince the people of it; no one was at hand to correct the errors which they had adopted. And why? Because there was not one of their own number among the members of the Legislative Council. Had there been, these evils that had happened to us, would have been averted. The more one thinks the matter over, the more one is convinced that here we have the one great cause which was the origin of all smaller causes of dissatisfaction.

I see no force in the argument that the Government was allowed a perfectly free Press, forbidding it merely to print abusive or seditious language or language of an inflammatory nature. Nor was it of any use to circulate laws before they were finally passed so that every man should have an opportunity of speaking his mind out about them. It was not by such measures as these that evils such as I am writing about could be remedied. Far from it, these half measures were useless.

I do not wish to enter here into the question as to how the ignorant and uneducated natives of Hindustan could be allowed a share in the deliberations of the Legislative Council; or as to how they should be selected to form an assembly like the English Parliament. These are the knotty points. All I wish to prove here is that such a step is not only advisable, but absolutely necessary, and that the disturbances are due to the neglect of such a measure. As regards the details of the question, I have elsewhere discussed them, and those who wish to enter into it can read what I have said.

[0.23] The outbreak of rebellion proceeded from the following five causes.

This mistake of the Government then made itself felt in every matter connected with Hindustan. All causes of rebellion, however various, can be traced to this one. And if we look at these various causes separately and distinctly we shall, I think, find that they may be classed under five heads.

1. Ignorance on the part of the people: by which I mean misapprehension of the intentions of Government.
2. The passing of such laws and regulations and forms of procedure as jarred with the established custom and practice of Hindustan, and the introduction of such as were in themselves objectionable.
3. Ignorance on the part of the Government on the conditions of the people; of their modes of thought and life; and of the grievances through which their hearts were becoming estranged.
4. The neglect on the part of our ruler of such points as were essential to the good government of Hindustan.
5. The bad management, and disaffection, of the army.

I shall now proceed to consider these five heads, and under them may be classed their subheads, distinctly, and in detail.

[1.0] CAUSE I -- Ignorance on the Part of the People, That is, Misapprehension of the Intentions of Government

[1.1] Misunderstanding on the part of the Indians.

I would here say that I do not wish it to be understood that the views of Government were in reality such as

have been imputed to them. I only wish to say that they ere misconstrued by people, and that this misconstruction hurried on the rebellion. Had there been a native of Hindustan in the Legislative Council, the people would never have fallen into such terrors.

[1.2] Apprehension of interference of Government with the religious customs of the Indians.

There is not the smallest doubt that all men whether ignorant or well-informed, whether high or low, felt a firm conviction that the English Government was bent on interfering with their religion and with their old established customs. They believed that Government intended to force the Christian Religion and foreign customs upon Hindu and Mussulman alike. This was the chief among the secondary causes of the rebellion.

It was believed by every one that Government was slowly but surely developing its plans. Every step it was thought was being taken with the most extreme caution. Hence it is that men said that Government does not speak of proselytising Muhammadans summarily, and by force; but it will throw off the veil as it feels itself stronger, and will act with greater decision. Events, as I shall presently show, increased and strengthened this conviction. Men never thought that our Government would openly compel them to change their religion. The idea was that indirect steps will be taken, such as doing away with the study of Arabic and Sanscrit, and reducing the people to ignorance and poverty. In this way, it was supposed, the people would be deprived of a knowledge of the principles of their own faith, and their attention turned to books containing the principles of the Christian Creed. It was supposed that Government would then work on the cupidity and poverty of its subjects, and on conditions of their abjuring their faith, would offer them employment in its own services.

Source: Sayyid Ahmed Khan, The Causes of the Indian Revolt. Medical Hall Press, 1873.

Document E: Joseph Coohill (Excerpted from Original)

There were many causes of the Indian Rebellion. The traditional explanation of the offensive rifle cartridges causing the initial outbreak of mutiny is only part of the story. Many native infantryman (sepoys) believed that these new cartridges introduced in early 1857 had been greased by cow and pig fat. The sepoys were required to bit open the cartridges, and would come into direct contact with the cow and pig grease, which was insulting to Hindus and Muslims respectively. But the cartridges were only the catalyst for a revolt that was based on long standing grievances.

Sepoys in the East India Company had seen their pay (and therefore their status) decline in recent years, and many felt that the new officers serving in the Company army since the 1840s did not have the same respect and sympathy for sepoys that had been a hallmark of the previous generation of Company officers. Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India (1847-56) introduced the so-called Doctrine of Lapse, a formula which allowed the East India Company to extend its control into Indian territory when a native ruler died without what the Company considered a legitimate heir. Indian tradition held that adopted children had the same inheritance rights as birth children. But the Company did not recognize adopted heirs. In Oudh, the application of the Doctrine was considered a final outrage of British conquest. Oudh was such a rich and historic part of India that this seizure was seen as a cultural insult. The outbreak of hostilities in the army would not have spread so quickly or gained much-needed local support had not the sepoys' grievances been echoed by discontent in many parts of Bengal, both rural and urban.

Source: Joseph Coohill, "Indian Voices from the 1857 Rebellion," History Today, 2007.