British History in Perspective

General Editor: Jeremy Black

PUBLISHED TITLES

- Rodney Barker **Politics, Peoples and Government**
C.J. Bartlett **British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century**
Jeremy Black **Robert Walpole and the Nature of Politics in Early
Eighteenth-Century Britain**
Anne Curry **The Hundred Years War**
John W. Derry **British Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool**
William Gibson **Church, State and Society, 1760–1850**
Brian Golding **Conquest and Colonisation: the Normans in Britain,
1066–1100**
S.J. Gunn **Early Tudor Government, 1485–1558**
Richard Harding **The Evolution of the Sailing Navy, 1509–1815**
Angus Hawkins **British Party Politics, 1852–1886**
Ann Hughes **The Causes of the English Civil War**
Ronald Hutton **The British Republic, 1649–1660**
Kevin Jefferys **The Labour Party since 1945**
T. A. Jenkins **Disraeli and Victorian Conservatism**
D. M. Loades **The Mid-Tudor Crisis, 1545–1565**
Diarmaid MacCulloch **The Later Reformation in England,
1547–1603**
A. P. Martinich **Thomas Hobbes**
W. David McIntyre **British Decolonization, 1946–1997**
W. M. Ormrod **Political Life in Medieval England, 1300–1450**
Keith Perry **British Politics and the American Revolution**
Murray G. H. Pittock **Jacobitism**
A.J. Pollard **The Wars of the Roses**
David Powell **British Politics and the Labour Question, 1868–1990**
David Powell **The Edwardian Crisis**
Richard Rex **Henry VIII and the English Reformation**
G. R. Searle **The Liberal Party: Triumph and Disintegration,
1886–1929**
Paul Seaward **The Restoration, 1660–1668**
W. M. Spellman **John Locke**
Robert Stewart **Party and Politics, 1830–1852**
John W. Young **Britain and European Unity, 1945–1992**
Michael B. Young **Charles I**

(List continued overleaf)

History of Ireland

D. G. Boyce **The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868–1996 (2nd edn)**

Seán Duffy **Ireland in the Middle Ages**

David Harkness **Ireland in the Twentieth Century: Divided Island**

History of Scotland

Keith M. Brown **Kingdom or Province? Scotland and the Regal Union, 1603–1715**

John F. McCaffrey **Scotland in the Nineteenth Century**

Bruce Webster **Medieval Scotland**

History of Wales

A. D. Carr **Medieval Wales**

J. Gwynfor Jones **Early Modern Wales, c.1525–1640**

Further titles are in preparation

Please note that a sister series, *Social History in Perspective*, is now available. It covers the key topics in social, cultural and religious history.

British History in Perspective

Series Standing Order

ISBN 978-0-333-71356-3 hardcover

ISBN 978-0-333-69331-5 paperback

(outside North America only)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

BRITISH DECOLONIZATION, 1946–1997

*When, Why and How did the
British Empire Fall?*

W. DAVID MCINTYRE

*Professor of History,
University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand*

© W. David McIntyre 1998

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 1998 by
MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS
and London
Companies and representatives throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-64438-6 ISBN 978-1-349-26922-8 (e Book)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-26922-8

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98

Typeset by Footnote Graphics, Warminster, Wilts

Published in the United States of America 1998 by
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS INC.,
Scholarly and Reference Division,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
ISBN 978-0-312-21307-7

CONTENTS

<i>Maps: The British Empire in 1946</i>	vii
<i>Commonwealth Members, 1997</i>	viii
<i>Table of independence dates</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction: The Empire in 1946 and Decolonization	1
 PART I When did the British Empire fall?	 11
1 The Dominion Model	13
2 The Attlee Government's Decisions of 1947–8	21
3 The Ambiguous Fifties	38
4 Macmillan and the 'Wind of Change', 1957–63	45
5 Wilson and the Withdrawal from East-of-Suez, 1966–76	58
6 Closing the Files on the Pacific, Caribbean and Southern Africa	68
 PART II Why did the British Empire fall?	 79
7 The Metropolitan Dimension	81
8 The Global Dimension	89
9 The Colonial Dimension	95
 PART III How did the British Empire fall?	 101
10 Transfers of Power	103
11 Republics in the Commonwealth	110

12	The Commonwealth: Disillusionment, Detachment and Rediscovery	119
	Conclusion	129
	<i>Notes and References</i>	133
	<i>Index</i>	147

COMMONWEALTH MEMBERS 1997

TABLE OF INDEPENDENCE DATES

1946	Mar 22	Transjordan [Jordan from 1949]
1947	Aug 14	Pakistan
	Aug 15	India
1948	Jan 4	Burma [Myanmar from 1989]
	Feb 9	Ceylon [Sri Lanka from 1972]
	May 14	Palestine [Israel]
1951	Dec 24	Libya
1956	Jan 1	Sudan
1957	Mar 6	Gold Coast [Ghana]
	Aug 31	Malaya [part of Malaysia from 1963]
1960	Jun 31	British Somaliland [part of Somalia, 1 July]
	Aug 10	Cyprus
	Oct 1	Nigeria
1961	Apr 27	Sierra Leone
	Jun 1	Northern Cameroons [as part of Nigeria]
	Jun 19	Kuwait
	Oct 1	Southern Cameroons [as part of Cameroon]
	Dec 9	Tanganyika [Tanzania from 1964]
1962	Jan 1	Western Samoa
	Aug 6	Jamaica
	Aug 31	Trinidad and Tobago
	Oct 9	Uganda
1963	Sep 16	North Borneo [Sabah] } [as part of Malaysia]
		Sarawak }
		Singapore }
	Dec 10	Zanzibar [united in Tanzania from 1964]
	Dec 12	Kenya
1964	Jul 6	Nyasaland [Malawi]
	Sep 21	Malta GC
	Oct 24	Northern Rhodesia [Zambia]
1965	Feb 18	The Gambia
	Jul 26	Maldives
	Aug 9	Singapore

1966	May 26	British Guiana [Guyana]
	Sep 30	Bechuanaland [Botswana]
	Oct 4	Basutoland [Lesotho]
	Nov 30	Barbados
1967	Nov 29	Aden [South Yemen]
1968	Feb 1	Nauru
	Mar 12	Mauritius
	Sep 6	Swaziland
1970	Jun 4	Tonga
	Oct 10	Fiji
1971	Aug 15	Bahrain
	Sep 3	Qatar
	Dec 2	United Arab Emirates
	Dec 16	Bangladesh [seceded from Pakistan]
1973	Jul 10	Bahamas
1974	Feb 7	Grenada
	Feb 16	Papua New Guinea
1976	Jun 29	Seychelles
1978	Jul 7	Solomon Islands
	Oct 1	Ellice Islands [Tuvalu]
	Nov 3	Dominica
1979	Feb 22	St Lucia
	Jul 12	Gilbert Islands [Kiribati]
	Oct 27	St Vincent and the Grenadines
1980	Apr 18	Southern Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]
	Jul 30	New Hebrides [Vanuatu]
1981	Sep 21	Belize [British Honduras to 1973]
	Nov 1	Antigua and Barbuda
1983	Sep 19	St Kitts and Nevis
1984	Jan 1	Brunei Darassalam
1990	Mar 21	Southwest Africa [Namibia]
1997	Jul 1	Hong Kong [returned to the People's Republic of China]

PREFACE

In this book I try to do three things: to provide a concise narrative of the sequence of decolonization; to summarize, briefly, the debate about why it happened; and to consider what was distinctive about the way the events unfolded. Because the main landmarks are so recent – indeed they took place in my own life-time – the editor's invitation to contribute to this series induced unusual introspection. Was I part of the last imperial generation, or the first post-imperial generation? As a young teenager, I stood in Oxford Street to watch the Victory Parade in 1946, with its array of 'colonial contingents', but I never set foot in a British colony before its independence. At school and university, I do not recall being taught anything about the British Empire. However, my headmaster, a distinguished historian, had been professor of history at the University of Rangoon in the 1920s and 1930s and he fascinated sixth formers by his frequent asides about 'When I was in Burma ...'. Otherwise, my awareness of the British Empire was first aroused by quite disparate manifestations. First, in stamp collecting I became aware that 'British colonials' were more valuable and decorative than 'French colonials', which were legion. Secondly, the locomotives which hauled me off to school were mainly of the LMS Jubilee class, eighty-five of which were named after imperial dependencies or provinces numbered (as I later came to realize) in a quite proper constitutional order. Thirdly, street names commemorating far-away battles excited curiosity. However, it was not until post-graduate work in American history at an American university in the 1950s that I studied any 'colonial history'. My first whiff of 'decolonization' (as opposed to the thirteen colonies version) came from some African fellow-students who, in 1955, introduced themselves with great joviality as hailing from the Gold Coast – 'which is a British colony; but not for long!' By the time I completed a Ph.D. at the London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1959, the 'Wind of Change' was gusting strongly. A subsequent career teaching mainly Colonial and Commonwealth history has involved the chastening experience of seeing all my lectures and writings rapidly

overtaken by events. And comfort is not in sight. Any temptation to imagine that what appears below can be a settling of accounts is qualified by the realization that, as the last flags come down over distant enclaves, the debate about decolonization has hardly begun. This is offered as a brief introduction to it.

I wish to acknowledge the support over many years of the University of Canterbury, especially the University Library and the History Department. Sam Adshead, Ian Campbell, Ian Catanach and Chris Connolly kindly commented on an early draft. Judy Robertson must be thanked for her word-processing and managerial skills, and my admiration is unbounded for Marcia, who mastered voice-recognition and talked my scribble into text.

W. David McIntyre
Christchurch