

CHAPTER FIVE

FERMENT IN THE FAR EAST

(1912-1917)

Zalun or Myoka Rebellion

(1912-1913)

The first concerted action on the part of the patriots of Burma after the great Burmese War was the Zalun or Myoka Rebellion of 1913. In 1912 preparations were secretly made by a band of youngmen to strike against the Government at a particular place, and everything going on well, to encourage uprisings at different places. The plan was to attack Zalun on September 18, 1912, and to hold on as long as possible against the Government forces. At the first signs of the rebellion military force was rushed to the field of action and the rebels had to retire after suffering severe loss in life.

The police and the military were despatched to search the neighbouring places to find out the rest of the participants of the fight. They were successful in capturing the two leaders of the group, GAMON SAYA *alias* Po Mya and his lieutenant MYA HPORNGYI (Hrongyi) *alias* U Wethedda in the course of the screening of the area.

On March 14, 1913, the two arrested persons together with a large number of their followers numbering about fifteen were placed on trial before the Sessions Judge, Henzada, and were sentenced to death.

Others belonging to the group, about fifteen in number, were tried by the Sessions Court for conspiracy and or participating in the risings and ten of them were awarded capital punishment. On appeal to the Higher Court the sentences of eight were reduced to transportation for life.

Thus ended one of the earliest attempts to rise in rebellion

against the Government in an organised manner. Unfortunately the names of the rebels are not available.

Burma Conspiracy

(1915)

The revolutionary stirrings in India did not fail to influence the tenor of Burmese political life in a considerable degree. There had been no time when Burma was completely free from attempts, however feeble, to drive away the foreigners and to revive kingship in their ancient land.

The first organised effort by the Indian revolutionaries to introduce sedition and something more became noticeable during the World War I and contact was firmly established between the two countries through secret channel. Taking advantage of the War and war preparations, the Indian revolutionaries made serious attempts at establishing centres in and outside India, and Burma was reckoned by them as a convenient place not up to then turned very much into a beehive of the police and its spies.

In Burma, the main programme in 1914, was to cause defection in and stir up mutiny among the military forces thereby making the overthrow of the Government possible from inside its own ranks.

There had been Bengali revolutionaries in Burma a few years before the World War I who had been establishing contact with the local people for the dissemination of ideas subversive of Government authority through literature and holding public meetings wherever possible.

Arrival of seasoned revolutionaries and literature from the U.S.A. added strength to the hands that had been silently working against odds. Gradually infiltration of a larger number through the eastern borders brought together a band of young men of exceptional ability, resourcefulness and culture with whom no risk was too great where the freedom of the country was concerned. The main stream of revolutionary ideas flowed from the organisation in U.S.A., the *Ghadr* party, and its members entered Burma from the Far Eastern countries especially through Thailand (Siam) and the movement got its support from its headquarters in Bangkok.

The mouthpiece of the movement was the *Ghadr* newspaper which was sent free to all Indians, especially to those residing at Bangkok. More copies than one were sent to the same person subscribing to the idea with a request to the reader that his copy should be passed on to others after he had finished with it.

One of the recipients of such bundles was 'Arya Prince Charlie at Bangkok', a assumed name no doubt, and his share used to be a roll comprising fifty copies of each issue which were meant obviously for distribution.

Gradually censorship was introduced over entry of foreign newspapers and other articles coming through post and the number decreased with complete stoppage by interception.

Another Paper doing its bit was the *Jahan-e-Islam* started in Constantinople in May 1914, which contained articles in Arabic, Hindi and Turkish. Due to its violent attack on the British and her allies, this was also dealt with in the same manner as the *Ghadr*, but not before it had succeeded in its mission exceedingly well. The Urdu section of the Paper published in its issue of November 20, 1914, a speech of Enver Pasha of Egypt to the effect that declaration of independence should not be delayed any further. In his own language it was:

"The magazines of the English should be plundered, their weapons looted and they should be killed therewith. The Indians number thirty-two crores at the best and the English are only two lakhs; they should be murdered: they have no army. The Suez Canal will shortly be closed by the Turks, but he who will die and liberate the country and his native land will live for ever. Hindus and Muhammadans, you are both soldiers of the army and you are brothers, and this low degraded English is your enemy. You should be *ghazis* by declaring jehad, and by combining with brothers murder the English and liberate India." (*Report of the Sedition Committee*, 1918, p. 169).

The conspiracy organised in Burma had the support of the Turkish Government and persons with extreme detestation for the British were placed in positions at the disposal of the Turkish Government whose Consul in Burma at the time proved to be of immense help to the movement.

The attempt to spread disaffection amongst the army stationed in Rangoon, particularly the 130th Baluchis succeeded to a certain extent and there was open revolt against the Government in January, 1915. The rising was brought under control after both

the originators and participants had paid for the miscalculated revolt with their lives. The number of persons punished with varying terms of imprisonment was more than two hundred. The other insurrections were caused by the Malay State Guides and the 5th Native Light Infantry.

The organisers took immense trouble and risk inasmuch as one of them reached Mandalay by way of Manila and Singapore and others from Bangkok *via* Siamese frontier. The centre of revolution in Burma kept itself busy in collecting money and arms as best as it could and it had been humming with activity of grave portents.

By the month of April 1915, the Government obtained evidence of a *Ghadr* plot in Burma and serious steps were taken to tackle it with vigour. *Ghadr* literature was found in several places, particularly in Myawaddy near the Siamese frontier. Enlistment of supporters had been going on apace mainly amongst the Sikhs and the Punjabi Mahomedans. Many names, very prominent in subsequent trials, came to the knowledge of the police. The main offence attributed to the prisoners was waging war against the King, tampering with the loyalty of the Army, and spreading inflammatory reports to assist the King's enemies. There was open exhortation done through a pamphlet, *A Message of Hope to Military Brethren*, to the native officers of the military police who "were invited not to be tempted by medals and badges of slavery but to throw them away, wash out the old stain of servitude and adorn their breasts with the insignia of freedom."

It subsequently became known that brisk preparations had been going on from 1911, mostly by some young men coming from distant Punjab. At least two of these had knowledge of manufacturing bombs; another possessed materials for the purpose. They rented a house in Rangoon where frequent meetings were held with the common object of overthrowing the Government.

The *Ghadr* paper was duplicated in this premises. They maintained regular contact with workers in Bangkok and in India. Subscriptions were collected for the advancement of the cause and their activities grew in volume. Some of them sincerely believed that an all-out rebellion was imminent and success was bound to come.

The conspirators had not been depending solely on their own resources. The German Government took a good deal of interest in the affairs of the *Ghadr* party in U.S.A. They undertook the training of Indians

“returning to India to the use of arms in places along the railway which was being built in Northern Siam in the direction of Burma largely by German Engineers and Punjabi workmen and to invade Burma and foment rebellion by Indian troops and the military police.”

In the Far East intense revolutionary activity requiring great tact, intelligence and other resources was noticeable at various places. Bangkok was one of the important centres where representatives of the secret society from India met those coming from San Francisco and from the different centres in Burma, working hand in hand with different groups of Indians. The British Government became extremely alert and adopted measures to meet the emergency. Because of its early knowledge the rising contemplated in October, 1915, on the *Bakr-id* Day was easily foiled by the police. The Military Police Battalion at Pyowbe incited to the point of action also failed at the scheduled time due to defections in the ranks and by prompt Governmental action. The extent of the preparation in this particular case, with revolvers, dynamite and other explosives, was bigger than in most other places. The revolutionaries had shown their mettle in a risky game, but a few timid and covetous souls brought failure and dismay to what might have proved a grand *finale* to a glorious chapter in the history of Burma, attaining with India, independent status during the World War I.

Kachin Rebellion

(1914-1915)

While in a bigger field preparations for armed rising had been going on in collaboration with the Indian revolutionaries, a few incidents took place in different parts of Burma indicating the presence of secret societies ready for immediate direct action.

Early in 1914, NGA PO THAIK began to speak of himself as *Mintaung* (a leader with magical powers) and carried on secret

propaganda amongst the Burmese to win support for his cause. He recruited able lieutenants, three of them being very prominent, and journeyed into the Kachin country with the object of rising in rebellion. PO THAIK and his three comrades were to overrun vast tracts of land in the face of opposition from the Government forces. NGA KYI was put in charge of the 'liberated territories' and he was able to keep hold over it for a fairly long time.

The plan for an attack on Sin Po Poi godown stuffed with military and other stores was regarded as a very bold venture. The rebels assembled at Mawang, a place between Malikha and Myithyma Putao Road, and preparations were set on foot to attack the ration godown at Shinghoi. In the course of the attack they were encountered by the 64th Pioneers under two European military officers. There was an open fight between the two parties at Wawang and the gun battle continued for a much longer time than was expected. The rebels used seven to ten separate guns, a tangible proof of extensive preparation that had been made in the meantime. Wawang was rushed and burnt down but the rebels did not seem to relax their activity. The military was attacked while returning from their field of operation and a few sepoy were wounded. Two Kachins were killed.

NGA KYI was the most active agent in preaching PO THAIK's crusade among the Kachins and was mainly responsible for whatever success they attained. He called himself as *Hawsaing* and PO THAIK as *Mintaung*. NGA KYI was given the credit of making plans which considerably advanced the cause of a short-lived rebellion.

The other two rebels NGA NI and NGA SO BEN accompanied PO THAIK in his travels from place to place in his mission and took active part in hastening the rebellion. Their presence lent great prestige and influence to the *Mintaung*, PO THAIK.

In 1915 the Government became alert and realised the Wawang incident as part of big plan for waging war against the King.

A special Sessions Judge was appointed to try this particular case at Myitkynia and

- (i) NGA PO THAIK,
- (ii) NGA KYI,

- (iii) NGA NI, and
- (iv) NGA SI BON

were hauled up as accused. After a short trial on September 1, 1915, judgment was passed and all the accused were sentenced to death.

Kamaing Rebellion Case (1915)

Shortly after the Kachin Rebellion Trial, the accused in the Kamaing Rebellion Case, the details of which are lacking, had to face a prosecution by the Government on the charge of waging war against the King. All the four Shans, the accused in the case, were sentenced to death and on September 26, 1915, the Judicial Commissioner, Upper Burma, confirmed the sentence. The Lieutenant Governor having declined to interfere all the accused were hanged in due course.

Namti Shan Case (1915)

There were three accused in the Namti Shan Case, all charged with the offence of waging war against the King. They were convicted and sentenced to death. They submitted petitions for reconsideration of the case to the Lieutenant Governor which were rejected on September 25, 1915.

Mandalay Conspiracy (1915)

The revolutionaries of India residing in foreign lands had early conceived the idea of attacking Burma from the neighbouring countries. The idea appealed to SOHANLAL, a veteran worker for the cause of freedom, and he worked heart and soul to give this idea a shape. He was in Siam in 1910, where he was held in high esteem by the Sikh residents. In early 1911, he went to Lahore and thence to U.S.A. in 1912, where he remained up to 1914. His complicity with the party becoming known to the authorities, he had to leave the place and make Siam

his centre of activity with Amar Singh as his lieutenant. He came back to Siam at the end of the year and forthwith got into touch with the old friends and comrades, who were staunch supporters of the *Ghadr*.

He took upon himself the task of carrying his gospel of revolution to Burma and became the central figure of a great conspiracy. Before reaching Burma he had sent two of his confederates as forerunners to find out a suitable premises to receive '*Ghadr* pilgrims' and to continue his activities quietly and without interruption.

Sohanlal called a conference at Pakko which was attended by a large number of workers in the same line. Men were selected and commissioned with special duties. One of them, who saved himself by becoming a Crown witness in the subsequent conspiracy case, was sent by Sohanlal to proceed to Yunnan and Chipintin to meet the German officers who had been training about 200 Indians intended for invading Burma at the proper time. It was so arranged that Sohanlal, Mujtaba Hossain and Amar Singh would go in advance to Burma to prepare the ground for a bigger show.

He came to Burma in the first part of 1915, and tried forthwith to establish contact with the soldiers stationed there. Out of devotion to his task and a desire for speedy result, he threw all caution to the winds and at times would take the risk of meeting soldiers in open places and trying to convince them of the evil of British rule and the degrading position of Indians under British superior officers.

On August 14, 1915, he met one Jemadar and three other men, Havildars, etc., all belonging to the Darajat Mountain Battery stationed at Maymyo. He exchanged salutations with one of them, asked what part of India did he come from and became friendly with him through conversations relating to India. Worming up his position slowly, he tried to explain the pitiable economic condition of India. He gave out that there were many organisations which had been working to stir up discontent amongst the people while preparing themselves for an open fight at the opportune moment. It was better for the Indian soldiers to help them in every possible way and to side with them and

render passive help by not participating in any Government endeavour to quell disturbances and more directly by joining hands with the insurrectionists.

In one of his daily rounds one of the soldiers arrested him and brought him to Maymyo and placed him before the Officer-Commanding. Before Sohanlal could make any attempt to get out of the clutches of his captors he was securely held and his person was searched on the spot. He was carrying on him at the moment :

(i) two loaded Browning automatic pistols and a number of cartridges;

(ii) a small tattered book with green paper-cover written partly in Arabic, partly in Urdu and partly in Turkish entitled *Jahan-i-Islam*, printed in Constantinople;

(iii) four copies of a *fatwa* in Arabic made by a photographic process;

(iv) two pages of formulae for the manufacture of bombs, some money, a watch and a few other articles.

Sohanlal was put on trial on December 14, 1915, in the court of the Sessions Judge, Mandalay, under Rule 2 of Section 2 of the Defence of India Act, 1915; 124, 124-A, 131 I.P.C. (spreading inflammatory reports to assist the King's enemies, sedition, attempting to seduce soldiers from the allegiance to the King). He was further accused of circulating statements with the intention of promoting feelings of enmity and hatred between different sections of His Majesty's subjects; attempting to seduce the soldiers of the Mountain Battery, Maymyo, from their duty by distribution of highly inflammatory and anti-government literature.

The accused was condemned to death on December 15, 1915. His appeal was dismissed on January 7, 1916. After the judgment was passed he was requested by one of his friends to appeal for mercy when he exclaimed: "With tyranny and injustice all on their side, it is they who should beg forgiveness and not I."

Sohanlal was executed in January, 1916, in the Mandalay Jail.

Burma Conspiracy Case

(1915-1916)

In accordance with the resolution taken in U.S.A. amongst the members of *Ghadr* Party several persons entered Burma by different routes, particularly by way of Siam, at different times.

A batch of Punjabis, some of whom were highly educated, influential and held positions of trust and responsibility in the society, reached Burma in 1915 with the express object of starting a revolution. They set to work without delay and rented several premises in Rangoon. They visited different parts of Burma, openly preached sedition, mixed with all sorts of Burmese people, particularly with those having sympathy for the nationalist cause, introduce the topic of rising in rebellion wherever possible, take steps for smuggling the *Ghadr* inside Burma. When police vigilance was intensified and the newspaper could no longer be imported, they made arrangements for its duplication locally. At times they openly advocated mutiny and would say that arrangements had been completed for receiving foreign aid and mass support from the revolutionaries in India.

The centres of activity were scattered over a wide area and one who would join in Singapore would at once establish communication with another in Rangoon. One of the accused left Singapore after the mutiny and went over to Rangoon at the end of February, 1915. Gradually Burma, particularly Mandalay and Rangoon, became the two important cities in the Eastern countries where an all-out attempt was made for a future rising. Arms and ammunitions, dynamites and other explosive materials were collected to the extent allowed under the peculiar circumstances of the case. One of the accused, closely associated with Sohanlal, came to Burma with materials for waging war against the British.

Preparations had been nearing completion when the police came into possession of the fact, swooped upon the organisation, and arrested seventeen Punjabis. In due course the accused were placed before a Special Tribunal at Mandalay on March 6, 1916, for trial.

They were accused under the omnibus charge of waging war against the King, making preparations for an uprising, helping the enemy with material information, seducing the military police from allegiance of the authorities, conspiracy, sedition (121, 121-A, 122, 124-A, Rule 25 of the Defence of India Consolidation Rules 1915, etc.).

On July 31, 1916, judgment was delivered when sentences of death were passed on

- (i) HARNAM SINGH
- (ii) CHALLIARAM
- (iii) NARAIN SINGH
- (iv) BASSWA SINGH
- (v) NARINJAN SINGH
- (vi) PALLA SINGH
- (vii) Another.

The rest excepting one was awarded transportation for life.

On August 16, 1916, the local Government passed an order remitting the sentence of forfeiture of property of all the convicted persons. Harnam Singh, Challiaram and Narain Singh did not submit any petition for consideration of their cases and the question of reducing their sentence did not arise.

Three other prisoners' appeal for mercy was rejected. The seventh accused escaped death with transportation for life. There was one other accused Bhai Balwant Singh, whose appeal for mercy was also rejected.

All the condemned persons were executed between August 19 and 22, 1916, in Burma.

Mandalay Supplementary Trial

(1915-1917)

The *Ghadr* movement in the U.S.A. spread its influence far and wide and workers were sent abroad to kick up revolution wherever possible. The Far East was deemed to be one of the most suitable regions for carrying on with their project and ultimately to use as a spring board for attack on India.

Four persons amongst the many that had gone to Burma from time to time took upon themselves to go ahead with their work connected with a rising. The leader of the group was Moolchand, *alias* Mujtaba Husain of Jaipur; and his co-workers were Amar Singh of Ludhiana, Ram Rakka *alias* Bahle of Hoshiarpur and Ali Ahmad Sadiq of Sahzadpur, Fyzabad district.

They maintained contact with Sohanlal and worked with the common object of driving away the British from the shores of India. Mujtaba Husain, also known as Mahomed Jaffar, extensively travelled the Far Eastern countries.

About his peregrinations something is known from his letter written on October 30, 1915, from Singapore. From Calcutta he went to Chandernagore and on October 3, he sailed as a first-class passenger to evade police notice for Hong Kong travelling *via* Penang and Singapore. He left for Japan on November 3, with an American traveller meaning to go to America, to live there for three years to qualify himself for a naturalisation certificate with which he would be able to return to India safely.

But subsequent letters written from Yokohama and Nagasaki revealed that he had changed his mind and proceeded towards Manila. He became so immersed in the affairs in Burma that he could think of nothing else than to play his part in the great drama in the best way possible.

Mujtaba managed to receive *Ghadr* literature from the U.S.A. and widely circulated it among different centres in such manner as to reach the barracks occupied by Indian soldiers, particularly to those stationed in Sandakan Island between Mindanao and North Borneo.

They were successful to a great extent in their aim and some sort of a mutiny occurred in the Indian army that was suppressed with utmost ruthlessness. It was remarkable that Mujtaba Husain succeeded in persuading a Subedar of a regiment to refuse to go to the front. The Subedar was court-martialled for insubordination by the Officer-Commanding and was ordered to be shot. He met the situation with absolute unconcern and there was no expression of fear or regret on his face. Before he received the bullet in his chest, he quietly asked his comrades present there to avenge his death for a cause which should be very dear to the heart of every Indian.

The very next day the Commandant's *orderly* killed the Commandant with the inevitable consequence to the *orderly*. The Sepoys got out of control, broke the jail and released a large number of prisoners. Instances of indiscipline in the army was not infrequent and this particular incident bears proof of the influence that Sohanlal, Mujtaba Husain and his comrades wielded over those whom they were able to contact.

Amar Singh was a resident of Siam and was a naturalised Siamese subject. He made common cause with Mujtaba.

Ram Rakka engaged himself in collecting materials for the manufacture of bombs, which he had to secure from Bangkok where they were available. He was absent when the mutiny broke out but reached Singapore only a few days after the event. He believed that once the revolution had started the Germans would not be very late in coming to their aid. A resolution was taken in Rangoon to cause the uprising on the *Bakr-id* Day, 1915, which had to be abandoned at the last moment due to paucity of arms and ammunition. This was postponed to the Christmas and it never came to pass.

Acting on information gathered in connection with the First Mandalay Conspiracy Case, the police arrested the four revolutionaries at different times not very distant from one another and started the Mandalay Supplementary Conspiracy Case in 1917. The trial commenced on March 28, in Mandalay and the accused were charged with the offence of waging war against the King, conspiracy, tampering with the allegiance of the army, etc. Evidence covered many aspects of the *Ghadr* party in U.S.A., German collaboration in the rebellion, connection with the Indian

revolutionaries and the individual responsibility of the accused persons.

Judgment was delivered on July 6, 1917, and

- (i) Mujtaba Husain, *alias* Moolchand *alias* Muhammad Mujtaba, *alias* Muhammad Jaffar of Jaipur,
- (ii) Amar Singh of Ludhiana,
- (iii) Ali Ahmed Sadiq of Sahzadpur, Fyzabad District, were condemned to death.
- (iv) RAM RAKKA *alias* Bahle of Hoshiarpur was sentenced to transportation for life.

All property belonging to the accused were confiscated to the State.

The Lieutenant Governor in reviewing the case on appeal confirmed the judgment with modification regarding forfeiture of property. A Rangoon Press Note issued on December 7, 1917, announced that the death sentence of each accused had been commuted to one of transportation for life by the Governor-General-in-Council.

Ram Rakka was sent to the Andaman Cellular Jail to serve out his sentence. He came into conflict with the prison authorities for not submitting to the humiliating conditions and resisting the inhuman treatment to which the prisoners were subjected. He was mercilessly assaulted for forcing him to submission. In protest, he resorted to hunger strike. Before he succumbed, he had been vomiting blood but nothing could be forced down his throat to make him live. He expired in 1919.

Strictly speaking the particular incident does not come under the purview of the book, all the accused having escaped death. But omission of such an important chapter in the history of rebellion in the Far East was likely to be more inexcusable than the exception that has been resorted to as a very special case.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the most significant reprieve that was granted by a Viceroy concerned the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (Main). Twenty-four persons were condemned to death on September 13, 1915. The Viceroy was approached and it was announced on November 14, that excepting seven (p. 287) the capital punishment of the rest seventeen, viz., (i) Balwant Singh, (ii) Harnam Singh II, (iii) Jaggat Ram, Hoshiarpur, (iv) Hirda Ram, (v) Kala Singh,

Amritsar, (vi) Keshar Singh, Amritsar, (vii) Khusal Singh, Chuga, (viii) Nand Singh, Ludhiana, (ix) Nidhan Singh, Ferozepore, (x) Prithi Singh, Ambala, (xi) Parmanand, (xii) Ram Saran Das, (xiii) Rula Singh, Bhakna, (xiv) Sawan Singh, Amritsar, (xv) Waswas Singh, (xvi) Bhai Parmanand, Jhansi, (xvii) Sohan Singh, Amritsar, was reduced to one of transportation for life. ¶

5th Native Light Infantry Revolt

(1915)

During World War I, the insurrection by the 5th (Native) Light Infantry Regiment, stationed at Singapore in 1915, was one of the worst that the British administration had to face.

Inspired by Sohanlal and others some were successful in sowing seeds of discontent in 'the Regiment' which was in addition to one that had been lurking in the minds of the troops due to arbitrary promotions and indiscreet deployments. When the particular Regiment, about 900 in number, was asked to get ready for proceeding to Hong Kong, the simmering fire burst into flame and they openly refused to obey.

The army authorities were completely taken unawares, their espionage system having failed miserably. The revolt broke out without warning at 3 p.m. on February 15, 1915, the Chinese New Year's Day, and it at once assumed serious proportions. The rebels tried to influence the entire force comprising the Regiment and some amongst the loyal element having refused to join were shot dead or ordered not to interfere with their action in any way.

According to a premeditated plan settled in consultation with the revolutionaries primarily responsible for the outbreak, the insurrectionists opened fire on the sentries and guards round the German concentration camp and those who were not killed or wounded fled leaving the prisoners an easy chance of escape. The rioters then started for the town. A number of houses by which they passed in their march were sacked and burnt. They besieged the quarters of the Officer-Commanding with whom there had

been some other high military personnel in the Alexandra Barracks. The relief operations could be started only with eighty men of the British war sloop then waiting in the harbour.

Without having much of an opposition the insurgents marched towards the golf links and opened fire at random on those that were present there and the number of civilian casualties were the largest at this place.

Firing continued all through February 16, and went far into the night when it was very heavy. By the 17th, the rioters had spread over nearly the whole of countryside round the town and sound of firing could be heard simultaneously from various points. Some crossed into the mainlands and created a serious problem for the authorities. At 5 p.m. on February 16, a detachment from a ship came under heavy fire from a hut in the Chinese Gardens to the east of Alexandra Road which was met by intensive firing by a squad of relieving party.

Fighting continued near Woodlands up to February 20, when two Russian sailors were wounded and at 4 p.m. four rioters armed with rifles opened fire on the Russian column proceeding towards a point in search of the rebels. It was estimated that there were eight rebels in all who attacked a Russian picket at about 7-15 p.m. and forced it to retreat to the Woodlands, a distance of about fifteen miles from the place. There was also stray firings from a pineapple plantation when two Russians were severely wounded.

On February 21, two raiders were shot dead, one being a native officer and the other an N.C.O. of the 5th Light Infantry.

The gravity of the situation can be imagined by the volume of forces pooled together to meet the emergency. There were, besides the local volunteers, civilian and armed constabulary, the soldiers of the Sultan of Johore (who were engaged especially in dealing with the rioters who had crossed to the mainland). Assistance was sought of the men-of-war waiting at the port during the first stage of the outbreak. In a short time French, Japanese and Russian warships landed detachments and joined the others in rounding up the rioters. Special volunteers and special constables were speedily recruited. Two hundred Japanese volunteers were also enrolled. Detachment of the 36th Sikhs

and eighty-two men of the Malay States Volunteer Rifles were actively employed.

Women and children were removed to ships from Jhonston Pier where launches were kept ready to take them on board the vessels.

Martial Law was proclaimed and orders warning persons who "by word of mouth, or in writing or by signal or otherwise, spread reports calculated to create unnecessary alarm or despondency would be liable to suffer penal servitude" were issued on February 20, 1915.

The revolt was suppressed with the utmost severity and most of the seventeen escaped German prisoners were recaptured. Court-Martial proceedings were started against the rioters and deserters of the Army under the charge of joining the mutiny and combining with other soldiers of the regiment to resist and offer violence to the superior officers and assisting in furnishing the mutineers with ammunition.

On March 3, 1915, three (according to another report, six) mutineers were sentenced to be shot dead by the Court-Martial and the judgment was read outside the main door of the criminal prison on March 1, at 8 a.m., before a large crowd of native population.

The three persons shot dead in the morning of March 8, were :

(i) RASULAH charged with murder of Captain Izard;

(ii) IMTIAZ ALI, who failed to exercise his authority on February 15, assisted the men of his regiment to break into the ammunition, which was used by the mutineers and proved to have been a leader; and

(iii) RAKHNUDDIN, who helped to serve out ammunition to the mutineers and threatened to shoot any man of his own regiment if he would not leave the place to make the movement of the mutineers easy.

Sentences were to be carried out outside the walls of the prison in the presence of the public for which ample provisions were made.

On March 13, 1915, a batch of forty-five men of the 5th Native Infantry were tried at Singapore by the third Police Court amongst whom there were four N.C.O's. They were :

(i) Band Havildar SULEIMAN,

- (ii) Naik MUNSHI KHAN,
- (iii) Naik JAFFAR ALI, and
- (iv) Lance Naik ABDUL RAZAK KHAN

“who joined in a mutiny by combining with others to resist and offer violence to their superior officers, refused to surrender when ordered to do so, and who loaded their rifles with intent to fire upon H.M.’s Forces.” Extreme penalty of the law was demanded by the prosecution against them.

Seven Sikhs were similarly charged. They were:

- (i) Baggat Singh,
- (ii) Attar Singh,
- (iii) Tannar Singh,
- (iv) Rulah Singh,
- (v) Hazarah Singh,
- (vi) Tamar Singh, and
- (vii) Veer Singh.

Of these, it is definitely known that rebel RULAI SINGH was shot dead and the fate of the others did not seem to be any better.

By March 22, 1915, besides those who were executed, sixty sepoys were killed in the fight or by drowning. Of the civil population, forty-three were killed and nineteen wounded.

Not in His Line

(1915)

A very rich man not much given to politics, revolutionary politics in particular, could not escape the patriotic urge that had been sweeping the Far East during the World War I. In the last part of 1914, CASSIM ISMAIL MANSOOR, a member of the well-known family of Indian merchants at Singapore, came in contact with some men of the native troops stationed in Rangoon and thought of helping them with equipment and facilities for movement as might be thought necessary.

In pursuance of his object Mansoor approached the agents of the enemy in Burma through letters. One such was addressed to the German Consul at Rangoon on December 28, 1914, for

securing two ships with help of his resources for transporting men out of Singapore.

The letter was intercepted and Mansoor was charged under eleven heads, nine of treason, tenth, giving intelligence to the enemy and eleventh, of waging war against the King before a Field Court-Martial on May 3, 1915. Quite in keeping with the spirit of the time a sentence of death by hanging was passed on the accused at one sitting.

Not much known to the outside world, a rich merchant who could lead a life of comfort and ease preferred death on the scaffold for the sake of the country.

Mansoor was executed in Singapore Criminal Prison in the first week of June 1915, far away from his native home at Rander, a suburb of Surat, Bombay.

[There is another (news-agency) report, dated Rangoon, May 21, 1915, to the effect that "a few days after the trial" by Field General Court-Martial which was conducted in secret, "the sentence was read out in the presence of the public" inside the jail "and the sentence of death carried out." (*The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, May 22, 1915)].

Out of His Way

(1915)

Men had come out of their way to help the cause of freedom and had paid the penalty with their life.

An Engineer of Pakoh, Siam, AMAR SINGH, took upon himself the risky task of receiving a portion of the arms to be carried by *Henry S.* and keeping it concealed under his care. His name was found in the list seized from an arrested person who was one of those connected with handling of German arms. Amar Singh was arrested on the information secured from the list, tried and sentenced to death. His execution took place in Mandalay, sometime in 1915. (Ref. *Sedition Committee Report*, 1918, p. 125).

Malay State Guides

(1915)

Another section of the army, the Malay State Guides, stationed in the Far East revolted against the British authority. The insurrection was not so formidable or alarming as the one caused by the 5th (Native) Light Infantry. The rising being simultaneously timed with the other added to the gravity of the situation. 'The Guides' were ordered to help the different forces engaged in suppressing the rebels, which they declined and some of them actively participated in the revolt. They refused to obey the orders of the superior officers and did not surrender when called upon to do so. They were further accused of "stirring-up and joining in mutiny".

In a Court-Martial some of them were tried along with a few of the mutineers of the 5th Native Light Infantry and the following five,

- (i) Subedar DUNDE (Dundo) KHAN,
- (ii) Jamadar CHISTI KHAN,
- (iii) 1890 Havildar RAHAMAT ALI (of Halwara, Ludhiana),
- (iv) 2311 Sepoy HAKIM ALI, and
- (v) 2184 Havildar ABDUL GHANNY

were sentenced to death by being shot.

On March 23, 1915, "in the presence of an immense concourse of people, outside the jail walls of Singapore and on the site of the old execution ground, troops and volunteers in garrison paraded in full strength, to witness the ceremony of promulgation of the latest sentences of Court-Martial" upon the condemned officers and men.

The statement of offence was read out to the prisoners who stood silently as rock. "The men were then marched on to the place of execution with hands tied behind them under a strong guard of prison warders. A firing party of the Royal Garrison Artillery and the Royal Engineers were in readiness" for finishing the job.

The sentence of death having been duly proclaimed "the Officer-in-Charge of the firing party raised the sword, gave

'Ready' as the order to load, then in quick succession, 'Present' and 'Fire'."

The condemned men fell and thus "Justice was done", according to the foreigners who held India in bondage under brute force resented by the people of the land. Seventeen other condemned men were made to stand on the other side of the moat each tied to a separate post. One hundred armed military men, half of whom were standing erect, the other half resting on one of the knees, aimed one hundred rifles and when the formalities had been gone through they were ordered to fire twice in quick succession. The first volley killed all the seventeen heroes; the second volley was to make sure that none had escaped the effect of the first. (Ref. Chakrabarti, P.: *Se yuger agneyapath*, p. 85)

Calculated Cruelty

(1915-1916)

An unfortunate lad, CHANDI CHARAN NAG, reached Burma in search of a job from Upalata, Hajiganj, Tippera, in May 1913. He secured an appointment in the Office of the Conservator of Forests, Pegu Circle, and had been putting up at No. 65, Louis Street, Rangoon.

The Government of Burma arrested Chandi under Ingress into India Ordinance, on October 5, 1915, and removed him to the Rangoon Central Jail. He was attacked with typhoid fever in December 1915, and his life was despaired of. For the first time after the arrest, his distracted father was informed, in reply to several representations enquiring about the whereabouts of his son, on February 15, 1916, that his son "was at one time suffering from fever in the Rangoon Jail but is now convalescent" and "unless some unforeseen circumstance arises he is likely to make good recovery" The father was refused any interview with the son (*The Pioneer*, June 13, 1917).

The Government of Bengal enquired confidentially at this time if the detenu could be removed to Calcutta to which the reply was (February 24, 1916) that "tuberculosis is suspected". On March 3, 1916, it was desired by the Government of Bengal that the prisoner "might be sent to Calcutta".

On March 7, 1916, The Burma Government informed Chandi's father that his son "is about to be released from the Rangoon Central Jail and will be sent to Calcutta." On the 11th, Chandi was released and the next day admitted in the hospital in an extremely precarious condition of health.

On April 25, 1916, Chandi was suddenly taken out of the hospital by the police and placed on board a steamer bound for Calcutta to be interned in his native village. He reached his place of detention on April 30, 1916.

After nearly six months of detention in an absolutely uncongenial and unhealthy surroundings, on October 21, 1916, an order was passed to the effect that "he is free to reside where he pleases". It was too late for recovery for want of proper or any medical treatment worth the name or removal to a healthy place for want of funds, and the youngman expired at 11-30 a.m. on January 29, 1917, much to the relief of the benign Government that put a useful life to an untimely death.

Well-matched

(1915-1917)

If the Government of India had been successful in planting informers and *agent provocateurs* amongst the Indian nationalists in the Far East, it was not an infrequent occurrence when such agents had been found out and properly dealt with.

It was a question of opportunity that such assassinations were not so common, otherwise men of daring and unmindful about their own life, were not rare for taking up the work in hand as and when occasion demanded it.

The secret report of the Government official visiting the Far East in 1915, to watch the attitude of Indians staying there, stated that "it is a melancholy fact that the Indian community in the East, taken as a whole, is completely honey-combed with disloyalty."

The said officer selected an efficient person, Harnam Singh, who was engaged in investigation in Siam into the Indian revolutionary plot. He had been doing useful work when another man,

Atma Ram, of the opposite camp crossed his path and changed the course of events.

ATMA RAM was known to be very active and highly intelligent. He ingratiated himself in the favour of the German Legation stationed in Bangkok. It may be mentioned here that he was instrumental in sending the message of German arms being shipped for India and make arrangements for unloading the ship.

The activities of the Indian revolutionary workers alarmed the Siamese Government and steps were contemplated for restricting their movements or deporting them from the country. Before any action could be taken against him, Atma Ram shifted his headquarters to Nanking.

Before leaving the Siamese territory Atma Ram took a bold step and was able to kill Harnam Singh. He was subsequently arrested by British Agents and taken to Shanghai. At the trial that followed Atma Ram took all the responsibility upon himself and said that he had killed Harnam Singh because he looked upon Harnam as the enemy of his country.

The spirited lad was executed in Shanghai on June 2, 1917.