

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SECOND FRONT IN THE STRUGGLE

Burma Rebellion

(1928-1931)

1928-1929

Near about half a century before the Burma Rebellion actually broke out in a violent form, there had been rumblings of discontent in a very large part of Burma, especially in and around Tharrawaddy. Sporadic outbursts were rather a common feature and came to be accepted as part of existence in that country. Moreover, the Mandalay conspiracy and rebellion at Kachin and other places in 1914, give an idea of Burma never being quiet at any time during British occupation.

The trouble was not limited to isolated spots and were found to occur in greater frequency in parts widely distributed in lower Burma. Thayetmyo, Tharrawaddy, Insein, Prome and areas contiguous to these districts were the chief centres of trouble. The General Council of Burmese Associations had laid the foundation and the superstructure of unrest was mainly raised upon it.

The first sign of mass disapproval of Government measure was resistance to Capitation Tax that was started in 1928-29; and the discontent generated by the agitation gradually shifted towards violent revolutionary activities.

The leaders with progressive thoughts were not slow to work up the mind of the disgruntled elements and the idea of a rebellion worth the name was conceived almost simultaneously with the Anti-Capitation Tax agitation.

The rebellion was planned on a large scale. It became evident from subsequent events that it was not merely a local outburst but part of a definite plan to organise insurrection in different parts of Burma. Preparations were made in absolute secrecy, and plenty of arms and ammunition were clandestinely or openly

collected. In the case of a successful raid, they would look more for arms than for any other booty.

Recruits were tattooed with *Galon* and were styled the *Galon Army*. The *Galon* or *Garuda* of the Hindu mythology is a fabulous bird which destroys the *naga* or snake. Here *naga* was the emblem of the foreigner. Thus the *galon* emblem was deemed to be a symbol of victory over the British.

There was a central organisation for giving effect to the plan but the method of operation followed the type of guerilla action where the fighters would avoid as much as possible any open combat with the Government forces. They kept themselves in hiding in the thick jungles at the foot-hills and started attacking the enemy when opportunity presented itself.

They developed a good espionage system and on information reaching early they would slip away further into the hills only to reappear when attack was found to be most convenient.

An old and experienced civil servant of Burma, Mr. Thirkell White, reported that "it was not a question of dealing with... organised resistance on a large scale as of suppressing countless small isolated gangs."

In the opinion of the Government of Burma the issue was complicated by the association of the Bengal revolutionaries with whom contact had already been established. With first manifestation of violence in its earlier stages twelve Bengalis were arrested from different parts of Burma of whom two were clerks in the office of the Port Commissioners, two were school teachers, six others at Rangoon following different avocations and one each was from Insein and Yamethin.

The *phongyis* or a large section of them joined hands with the malcontents and their assistance or collaboration added great strength to the movement.

The greatest incentive to the rebellion was intense hatred for all Britishers and of all those, particularly the Chinese, who helped the foreigners in the continuation of their rule. Restoration of Kingship was the dominant idea which suited to the traditional liking of the people. Further, there was a tremendous active and tacit support to the agitation from the public which made it more difficult for the authorities to suppress the rebellion within any reasonable period. The rising tide of nationalism, so much in

evidence in India at the time, touched the heart of every Burman who timed their insurrection with the great movements of open defiance to the authorities that had been convulsing India to her very depth.

1930

A proclamation of the Mindaung (rebel King) was issued in the middle of January 1931, under the signature of Thupannaka Galuna Raja (King of the Dragons) living in the city of Buddha to the effect that "war was declared for the benefit of Rahan, religion and the inhabitants of Burma."

It came to be known by November 1931, that the revolutionary activity covered an area over 20,000 sq. miles of the country, including a large portion that was dense jungle interspersed with hills here and there. The area infested gives just a remote idea of the magnitude of the rebellion.

It is admitted on all hands that of the many uprisings against the British rule in India (including Burma) the Tharrawaddy Rebellion was the most outstanding in many respects. With regard to the length of the period it covered without break, the magnitude of disorder, loss of life and threat to British occupation in India, it is to be regarded as only second to the great Sepoy War of 1857.

The recklessness with which the Burmans fought the well-organised army of the Britishers fully equipped with the implements of war of the highest effectiveness, surpasses the spirit of the Indian sacrificing their lives in India. More Indians were killed due to ruthless massacre not only of those who had any contribution in the great upheaval but also of a very large section of the civil population butchered as a reprisal for the indiscretion of the mutineers. In Burma, very much unlike in India, the Britishers, save and expect a very few, escaped with no loss of life nor even of property to any great extent. The police and the military personnel suffered a good deal in 1929-31, but there was a disparity between the number of casualty to the national heroes and their opponents, the former far outnumbering the latter in fatal cases.

In the following pages are related some of the many hundreds of cases of open clash with the police and military of the local

Government strengthened from time to time by battalions of soldiers brought from India. Only incidents of major importance and particularly those where there is report of death of the patriots have been enumerated. It will be seen from the total number of casualties, though it seems to be a bit exaggerated, that only a small part of the long series of fights could be collected and reported. Press reports or Government hand-outs are to be taken with a good deal of caution but having failed to tap any other source these are to be accepted for what they are worth.

Systematic acts of violence started from the third quarter of 1930. The party was held responsible for a political dacoity in Rangoon town in September 1930, and for the derailment of a mail train in October at Nyaungchi-Dauk in Toungoo district, in which high officials of the Government had been travelling. At this time a new feature of the activities was the wide distribution of revolutionary pamphlets among students and others directly inciting them to violence.

The first incident of any importance occurred on December 22, 1930, without warning, when some insurgents mobbed a village a few miles south-east of Tharrawaddy. The booty consisted of five guns and it resulted in the death of two Government employees and a raider.

The unrest soon spread to Insein on the 23rd. Two villages close to the Tharrawaddy border were completely looted. On the same night at Inywa, the railway station property and telegraph instruments were destroyed. The rebels were hotly chased by the civil and military police but they succeeded in entering their forest strongholds and evade arrest.

On December 24, 1930, the rebels surrounded and set fire to the Weywaw Bungalow and killed a European Forest Engineer, who arrived at the place for putting up for the night. His gun was taken away. The military appeared on the scene very shortly after and engaged the rebels at some distance from the place in a fight when four of them were killed. Nothing daunted, the malcontents raided a police post at Yedaik at dusk, a skirmish ensued and there was loss of life on both sides. The nature of the country was of great advantage to the rebels who could come out from hiding places and conveniently retire to their haunts.

On December 29, 1930, a platoon of Punjabis came in

contact with 200 rebels near Udokwin and attacked them at long range. Eleven rebels were killed in the fight.

The following day the forest camp at Okkan was raided by the rebels. who were in turn was attacked at Sitkwin. On the same day a rebel was killed in a fight with the police at Henzada.

On December 3, 1930, a very large number of rebels advanced towards Pashewegyam and were met by the police. A bloody fight ensued lasting for 90 minutes involving loss of life on both sides.

1931

The forest fastness at Alantaung was stormed by the military on January 1, 1931, and seven rebels fell fighting. The place served as the rebel headquarters where a 'palace' was found in the most inaccessible part of the forest. A huge quantity of petrol, dynamite and rifle cartridges were collected there. In the fight one of the rebel chiefs Po LWIN was shot dead and two others lost their lives in an attempt to carry the dead body away. There were seven other casualties on the rebels' side. With the leader a large number managed to escape in the direction of Minha across the Yomas towards Pegu. Fighting continued at Minha.

Villages far away from Tharrawaddy such as Taungbyat, north-east of Sitkwin, were found to be equally affected. The Government forces had to fight a strong detachment of rebels on January 3, 1931, of whom fifteen were killed on the spot.

At the beginning of January 1931, more cases of rebel activities were reported from some of the districts of the Province. One such of the year took place at Yamethin, 275 miles from Rangoon, on January 4, 1931, under the command of a *phongyi* where 39 rebels were found dead after the battle. Two villages, Hna Hmansi and Wadaw, about eight miles from Yamethin, were attacked simultaneously on the same day.

Rebel activities were noticeable in Okkan on January 7, 1931, where the rebels were engaged by the police. In the fight both the parties suffered serious loss, the rebels losing six of their men.

Pegu, Minlaung (Amherst district), Lanmadow, Okho, Htanbingon, Minha and other places could not escape contagion of the spirit of revolt.

Dedaye township in the Pyapon district was the next point of attack on January 7, 1931, supposed to be carried out under the direction of the head of the rebellion. It became known that practically all the inhabitants of four or five villages in the extreme south-east corner of the district close to the sea participated in the rising.

The areas of operation of the rebels in this particular case was an open paddy plain very much unlike Tharrawaddy which was covered with dense jungles. On the appearance of the police the rebels, undaunted by the risk of remaining exposed to enemy guns, started attack on the police and had to retreat leaving thirty to forty dead behind them.

So far as could be ascertained that up to January 5, 1931, the insurgents had lost 300 combatants as killed, more than 200 were wounded or captured. It became evident that the insurrectionists had collected a very large quantity of firearms, a good portion of which consisted of guns. Near about Minha, Okko, firearms including a few guns were seized by the military.

The rebels carried on attacks almost without a respite, in the first quarter of 1931, at several places not very close to one another. Thintawya Forest Reserve was the scene of one encounter. Townships or villages overrun, and the list is very much incomplete, were Dedaye (Pyapon district), Yamethin, Gangaley, Datchoung, Thayagong, Zigon and Gaungda. At some places the raiders were encountered by the Government forces and at others there was no resistance worth the name. At Dedaye and Yamethin the rebels lost about fifty combatants.

Against the hope of the rebellion coming to an end, increased activity was noticeable in causing dislocation of railway traffic. Dynamite was used on March 1, 1931, to blow up bridges and tamper with railway lines between Inywa and Lethadaw and at several other places.

Though severely handicapped due to lack of military equipment, the activities of the rebels showed little signs of abatement. On Tharraw branch line Zibyugon station was attacked and the Station Master killed. On January 13, 1931, attacks in different parts of Tharrawaddy continued as before. Signs of rebel attack were visible in Insein proper at about this time.

The seriousness of the concern felt over the present rebellion

was reflected in the promulgation of an Ordinance on January 31, 1931, to expedite trial of insurgent cases. The existence of a terrorist organisation partly working in consultation with those in Bengal was admitted and given proper stress regarding its gravity.

On or about February 5, 1931, in a free fight between the military and the rebels, three of the latter were killed and six wounded at Laptadan in Tharrawaddy district. About 44 villagers were bold enough to attack on February 20, 1931, a party of forty military police at Zaingthwe, ten miles west of Inywa and four and half miles from Tharrawaddy.

It was now the turn of Henzada. The township office of Irgabu at Dodan, and another at Hamandan were raided on February 23, 1931. On the rebels' side there were some deaths, six at the former and three at the latter place.

Rebel activities were very much intensified in the last week of March; police patrol posts were openly attacked and dacoities were committed in an increasing number. A Deputy Conservator of Forests and a District Medical Officer were seriously injured.

About forty miles from Rangoon a tree was laid across the road and a bus carrying a posse of constables was attacked by a number of rebels who were lying in ambush.

The Kampadi outpost in east Okkan in Insein district was attacked for the third time by about 65 rebels on March 25, 1931, when four rebels were killed.

While the police party had been returning to the camp, the rebels reappeared and inflicted serious injury to some of them while losing two of their comrades.

At the same time, on March 25, 1931, when the Kampadi battle was being fought, a police contingent while out searching the Magayi forest reserve in Tharrawaddy, found a rebel camp and at once engaged the rebels in an encounter and killed 22 of whom two were prominent local leaders.

Not being satisfied with the results obtained, the Government sought the services of aeroplanes to locate rebel concentrations in Pegu and Tharrawaddy in particular in March, 1931. Naturally enough the insurgents were put to a disadvantage but with them it was "even if the flesh creeps the spirit upholds."

With all Government victory proclaimed hitherto, the Okkan

police station on the border of Tharrawaddy and Insein was raided on April 6, 1931, the officers attached to the police station were killed with one casualty on the side of the attacking party. One other rebel died in an encounter not very far from Okkan.

Pegu and Toungoo districts were very much affected by the rebel activities in April 1931, especially the northern part of Pengwogon where civilians, suspected of helping the Government, had to suffer a good deal at the hands of the rebels.

On or about April 6, 1931, following a suspect making purchases in a bazar, the police traced a rebel haunt in the jungle at Pegaung in Tharrawaddy, opened fire on the camp occupied by the insurgents and killed four of them including a leader.

In the first week of April 1931, a young Bengali was sentenced to three years' hard labour for distributing inflammatory leaflets urging the people to get rid of the Government by all means. Investigation disclosed close connection between the activities of this youngman and the Bengal revolutionary associations.

A total of fifteen rebels were killed in Hlepyidin, Tharrawaddy, Issin and Insein villages in the first week of April, states a message dated April 8, 1931.

The trouble in Thayetmyo district had been steadily increasing and on April 11, 1931, the rebels raided Poon village in Kama township where the headman of the village and a police officer were killed and firearms removed. The rebels paid their share of loss in human lives.

Skirmishes of more or less serious nature had been taking place near Kyaukpyok, Ton in Thayetmyo, Henzada on or about April 10, Bassein, Thanton, Henzada (Kazinda) on April 27, and again on April 28, when five rebels were killed at Kanthoa on March 29, 1931.

In the morning of April 12, 1931, the rebels and the police accidentally came face to face at Zaloke under Bo We. The fight lasted for a short while and one insurgent was killed. It was reported on April 18, that in an encounter at Leedi at least five dead bodies of rebel were found at the place.

Thayetmyo proved to be a focal point of enemy attack where repeated raids were carried out in quick succession. On April 21, 1931, a party of several hundred attacked a military police out-

post of 25 men and was bold enough to come to very close quarters. The rebels lost 25 lives in this encounter.

Even after the repluse of the raiders with heavy loss, reinforcements had to be rushed to the area. But the rebels showed absolute recklessness by attacking again on April 23, at Imbe or Imbai, a few miles north of Kama. The mounted infantry were reinforced by a platoon and the rebels were driven away with a further loss of 42 lives.

By degrees the Government came to realise that the movement was more deep and widespread than what had hitherto been believed. Fresh troops, the 2nd Manchester Regiment, had had to be imported into Burma from India to augment the fighting strength of the Government forces. There was no doubt by now that the principal object of the revolutionists was to drive away the British lock, stock and barrel and to restore Burma's ancient monarchy.

A report from Rangoon of May 1, 1931, stated that a large force of rebels was encountered near Kawinza and five rebels had been killed in a sharp fight that ensued. Two others were killed when their camp near Kanthaya was attacked unawares. At Insein two rebels died from police-firing.

The rebels about sixty in number attacked a police post at Myoma village near Wettigan on May 5, 1931 and carried away the Deputy Superintendent of Police and a few other policemen. Succour was rushed to the post and in the encounter that followed seven rebels were killed.

Reports of enemy attacks at Thayetmyo, Henzada, Hanthawaddy, Dedaye, Pyapon, Insein, Tharrawaddy causing serious damage to Government property and death of some headmen and police officers reached Rangoon by the middle of May. On May 11, 1931, the (British) Parliament was informed from an unconfirmed report that nearly 1,000 rebels had been killed and more than 2,000 captured up to that time.

The Shwebo and Maymyo areas had to be reinforced by a large contingent of troops reaching Burma and curfew had had to be enforced in Henzada from May 12, 1931.

A report was received on May 6, 1931, that a whole party consisting of a European District Superintendent of Police and his posse of constables were ambushed while pursuing rebels near

Prome. None could be found alive. With reinforcements from the headquarters the rebels were hunted down in the neighbouring areas of whom seven were killed.

The rebellion was pursued, observers remarked, with unparalleled recklessness and in spite of heavy casualties, "the rebels' murderous activities seemed to be getting more and more imposing".

In an engagement at Mezali in Thayetmyo on or about May 12, no less than 21 rebels were killed.

No place, big or small, was safe from the rebels' attack. The police outpost at Letu was overtaken, four police officers and men were killed. A considerable quantity of ammunition and several guns were taken away on May 15, 1931.

A high European Official of the Survey Department was ambushed and killed in Maymyo on May 18, 1931, and his body, riddled with bullets, was found later on at some distance from the place of occurrence.

A military camp, one of the many newly constructed punitive police stations, situated in Henzada district was attacked unawares by a body of rebels on or about May 19, 1931. They killed a number of sepoy while left three of the attackers dead.

In Thayetmyo, the Kama column while moving through a thick jungle in search of rebels was savagely attacked on May 23, when the Commander of the military party and two rebels were killed.

A rebel camp was discovered on May 25, 1931, in the Tharrawaddy district seven miles from Hlelangu and forthwith attacked. Four rebels died while others managed to escape. The camp was completely destroyed. On the same day another rebel was killed in Thayetmyo.

On May 26, 1931, the secret camp of one of the topmost among the rebels was attacked by the military and four rebels fell fighting, two of whom were identified to be righthand man of the leader of the rebellion.

By the end of May 1931, the local authorities declared the happenings at Tharrawaddy to be a "situation of grave peril" and it was thought imperative to requisition the services of other battalions from India.

Prome and Insein were very much disturbed in the third

week of May 1931, and a high European official with others were killed.

A surprise attack was made on a stronghold near Henzada, when the Government suffered a few casualties. At Kyaukma on or about May 18, near Thayetmyo, the military and the rebels met in a violent skirmish, there being seven deaths on the part of the rebels.

Events assumed a gloomier shade, so said a note issued from Simla of May 21, 1931, and it became imperative to bring from the Nizam's State more than one infantry brigade with signal units and transport to meet the anxious situation in Burma. Three infantry battalions were to form the Brigade, composed of two Indian and one British units. It was admitted on all hands that the situation was beyond the control of the local force and it would well-nigh be impossible to face the onslaughts of the raiders at several points during the three months of torrential monsoon that had been fast approaching.

Kanyutkin (Toungoo) was raided and in Tharrawaddy not less than five points were ransacked to the dismay of the authorities concerned.

Two rebels and an army personnel lost their lives in an encounter with the military (on or about May 23, 1931) in Minoon township. Reports streamed to Rangoon of violent rebel activities from Tharrawaddy, Insein, Henzada, Thayetmyo, Hanthawaddy, Pyapon, and where not. It seemed that the Government had ceased to function and the revolutionaries could do as they pleased. A police outpost at Taungbokauk in Henzada district was attacked on May 23, 1931, where three of the attackers lost their lives. Maubin also suffered at this time at the hands of the rebels.

Pyapon, Myaugmya, Henzada reported, (May 28, 1931), cases of violent attacks on Government outposts, and cases of arson of private holdings particularly of the headmen became more frequent. Dacoities at Toungoo, Tharawaddy, Insein were committed where property of considerable value together with five rifles were looted. All other measures having been found insufficient, the Government declared 98 Burmese Associations including 45 under women in the Upper Chindwin district, unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. New police outposts, about ten, were opened in Tharrawaddy district alone.

The situation in almost all the affected areas remained unchanged even up to the third quarter of 1931. The Burmese Government, feeling helpless with the available forces, sent frantic messages to Simla for sending a cavalry battalion. The request was turned down on the score of heavy loss of horses in the encounter with the enemy as well as from a local disease and advised the Burma Government to raise their own mounted infantry with the hardy Burmese ponies which were acclimatized to the country and its peculiarities. The inhabitants of the affected areas lost all confidence in the Government and most of them began to flock around well protected towns and seashores where attacks were much less frequent.

On May 31, 1931, as a result of rebel activity, the Rangoon-Mandalay Mail crashed over a bridge about 116 miles from Rangoon and reports of serious tampering with the line, burning of railway quarters on May 31, reached Rangoon, which made the Government feel nearly helpless.

On June 1, 1931, about 500 rebels from Kwingyi, Inya and other places attacked the Wettigan police station in revenge and departed after causing serious damage to Government properties.

In the face of serious Government attacks on Kyauktaungdi in Prome, a village south of Wettigan, Insein and Kama, Mmegyigaung, Henzada, the rebels did not show any sign of relaxing their activities. Here they lost twelve of their ranks while they carried depredations in Tharrawaddy with unabated vigour attacking several houses in the course of two days. They felt so unperturbed that they dined in one of the raided houses and then quietly disappeared picking up booty as they pleased. Houses of Europeans and persons suspected of helping the Government were burgled or robbed in open defiance of the law which seemed to have vanished from the land.

On June 2, 1931, after a severe fight at Wetto near Pakhaung in the Prome district a total of eighteen corpses were discovered in the village which the rebels had used as a base for their stores and provisions.

Rebel activities continued unchecked and by June 1931; the suggestion of throwing into Burma a full division with ancillary troops was mooted in all seriousness. On the Rangoon-Mandalay railway service the running of all trains at night between

Nyaunglebin and Pye was completely stopped. All important trains, even in daytime, were arranged to be piloted by armed trains.

The rebels who were engaged in creating trouble around Kama and attacked Thalegyi, Padaung P. S. on June 6, 1931, had been in hiding at Kyaurgu and retired quietly from the field of operation leaving one dead. On the same day, the police rushed from Prome, about 30 miles from the place, and surrounded the village. A short fight resulted in the death of one rebel.

In the meantime, emboldened by the rebel sorties, the villagers of Thabeyon, Prome, attacked a police party of one Sub-Inspector and thirty constables in the middle of June 1931, unfortunately losing eleven men as dead including the leader. Mindon, Thayetmyo, was looted on June 12; in Myaungmya, Moulmein, extensive cases of arson were perpetrated and the districts of Tharrawaddy and Insein reported series of dacoities of both private and public properties.

A rebel haunt was surrounded by the police, stated a report of June 18, and one rebel was killed while others escaped.

New trouble in the shape of jail-breaks and attack on jail officials were caused at the Nyaunglebin sub-jail by fifteen undertrial Burmese prisoners who escaped to the hills after looting the jail armoury and throwing the city into panic. Hotly pursued they covered their escape with a shower of bullets. There were casualties on both sides but nothing serious to the escapees happened. A few of them were subsequently arrested from different places.

Getting exasperated at somewhat unsatisfactory results of military operations (Simla, June 19, 1931) the Government measures exceeded all limits and reached the verge of barbarism. On or about June 13, 1931, in a serious engagement with the police at Wetto near Paukkaung the insurgents lost 22 as killed. Sixteen of these dead bodies were decapitated and the severed heads were stuck on the ends of poles and paraded through the villages to terrorise people who might have the least sympathy for the insurgents' cause. The heads were brought to Prome and kept on show for the public for days together.

Loss of life in the rebel fighting force was serious and twenty-two rebel corpses were found after an engagement at Wetto near Pankkaung about June 15, 1931.

The entire disturbed area suffered from dacoities in the third week of June; rather there was a large number of cases than before. Rebel activity was renewed with greater force (Rangoon, June 24) at any number of places.

Injured rebels detained in hospital under guard escaped and could not be traced reported a message dated June 27.

The haunts and places of hiding were distributed over a large part of Burma and one such was located and attacked in the thick forests of Okshit Hill, a few miles west of Padaung on June 29, 1931. In the encounter four of the rebels were killed.

At break of July, simultaneous outbursts of lawlessness caused consternation to the authorities in the districts of Tharrawaddy, Insein, Henzada, Pyapon, Thayetmyo and Prome.

The wave of unrest swept a vast area and sometimes it was difficult to think that occupation of those areas could be regained.

Besides military operations stern action was taken against villagers suspected of harbouring or assisting the rebel in any way. A large number was detained under strict surveillance or deported to places far away from homes and detained in camps constructed for the purpose.

By July the Government forces could sufficiently arrange their points of attack and the rebel showed signs of weakness in their operations but their depredations continued.

Still then, several dacoities were committed in Bassein, Henzada, Thayetmyo, Pegu and Prome with casualty to the rebel, one each at Prome and Bassein. The military was successful in locating rebel haunts in deep jungles of Wanetchaung and Taikkyi townships. At one place there was a free exchange of shots in which a rebel leader was killed. Rebel casualties were on the increase by the middle of July 1931; four died fighting on the Prome Road. Thayetmyo witnessed one of the worst outrages; villagers were killed and a large booty was lifted in several operations by the rebels. In one encounter two rebels lost their lives. Bassein, Pyapon and Toungoo had their usual round of looting (Rangoon, July 14); so suffered also most of the other disturbed districts.

In the Shan States

The Shan States could not escape infection. A fight between the rebels and the police became a matter of very common occurrence by July 1931. In the early stages a Burman revolutionary visited the monastery of Makinau, a Danu village in Hsumhsai, a sub-state of Hsipaw. Makinau is about 45 miles from Maymyo on the Mandalay-Lashio Railway Line.

Here he began to recruit men in the name of the Galon Society. A local band was formed which was to be subsequently joined by Galons from Burma. This was intended to overrun Hsipaw town.

The leader built a *Aungbale Myo* (Victory City) in Pingbaw in Lawksaw State. On July 1, 1931, the Northern Shan States Battalion with local police and military officers surrounded the place. There was a sharp exchange of shots in which forty rebels died. Guns and other war materials were seized.

A Baluchi battalion went into action on July 3, 1931. In the Shan States a band of 150 rebels was attacked by the military of which seventy were killed. On or about July 7, a Lewis gun section accompanied by sowars and signallers attacked the rebels at Lahio when the Government forces suffered heavily, two sepoys being killed and a large number wounded.

On July 6, the rebels made a desperate attack on a military base at Nawnkhiogyi in the Northern Shan States where the military suffered heavily particularly in prestige. Nine rebel corpses were found strewn in the field when the action was over.

On July 8, 1931, a fierce battle took place at Leptadan, a Karen village, Tharrawaddy, between the villagers and the rebels when about twenty rebels were killed by the villagers assisted by the military.

In the Zalur area, Hienzada, a fight took place between the rebel and the Karen irregulars when three rebels were killed on July 9. In the Hanthawaddy district the rebel leader TEE TEE was killed in an action on the same day.

To meet the situation police force was further strengthened and the 2nd/5th Mahratta Light Infantry was rushed to the affected territory.

In Prome, the troops came upon the rebels most unexpectedly

in Myoma, Wetigan area, on July 22, 1931; seized fighting equipment and killed an absconding rebel leader who tried to rush through the cordon.

The Burma Emergency Powers Ordinance, V of 1931, was promulgated by the Viceroy on August 1, 1931, covering at the initial stage the districts of Pegu, Haunhawaddy, Tharrawaddy, Prome, Bassein, Henzada, Thayetmyo, Maubin, Myaungmya, Pyapon, Toungoo and Insein. Under the Ordinance the control of post and telegraph offices and the Press was taken over by the Local Government. It further provided for the arrest and custody of persons believed to be connected with the rebels.

At one time it was seriously thought of placing Burma under Martial Law because "for some months" the situation in Burma "has been a cause for grave concern" to the Government of India and the Local Government. The rebellion which broke out in Tharrawaddy in December 1930, "has spread to several other districts and there is danger of further extension in some areas."

The provisions of the Ordinance were to be "exercised for the suppression and prevention of rebellion and for the protection of life and property of all classes of His Majesty's subjects."

There was a severe set-back to the rebels by the arrest of one of their foremost leaders and the death from the military firing of at least three others. Trials were being held in different districts with penalties of death to scores of the accused, while the rebel activities continued though greatly subdued.

On July 12, 1931, there was a severe encounter at a place 21 miles up the Pegu river when fifteen rebels were killed and six guns were captured. In a different engagement, 28 miles from Rangoon four rebels were killed.

Wettu Kayinzee, a village of great importance was attacked by the rebels on July 10, resulting in two deaths on the part of the rebels.

A village in Padaung township near Kama border was attacked on August 6, 1931. A police party rushed to the place of action. One rebel was left dead on the spot. Others, hotly pursued, had to sacrifice another two to the military firing.

A series of dacoities were committed in Pyu Forest Reserve, Henzada, and also in Toungoo, Thayetmyo and certain other areas of Lower Burma in the first week of August 1931.

A police patrol party was attacked in a village on the bank of Irrawaddy about 32 miles from Tharrawaddy on August 14, by a band of rebels and a sanguinary skirmish ensued. Many rebels including the leader was killed.

A police outpost at Theindaw, Tharrawaddy, was attacked and burnt down by the rebels on or about August 17, when in a counter attack many rebels were killed.

The Henzada territory suffered from the rebels' attack at various places and in one of these a Sub-Inspector of Police was murdered on August 27.

Stray cases of dacoity were reported from different places and one in Rangoon proper displayed a great daring on the part of the attackers. The rebel hideouts in Thayetmyo, Prome, etc., were gradually decimated by military operations. All these districts affected by the rebel activities showed signs of revival principally through dacoities and attacks on Government posts.

Two rebel camps were sighted and attacked at a place eight miles from Mindon on September 9, 1931. Several rebels including some leaders were killed in the action.

The rebels suffered serious set-back by the death at Tandawgyi of two trusted leaders in charge of all the rebels in the valley of Pegu river on September 15. A few others were also killed.

The Government forces collected forty guns and considerable quantity of ammunition in Thayetmyo district in the last week of September 1931.

There was heavy casualty, seven of the rebel ranks and two leaders had to lay down their lives, in an encounter at Taufaung, Pegu district, on September 25. In the Prome district the rebels successfully raided a village and took away two guns with a number of cartridges.

It was reported on September 24, that rebels had raided the Padigon Railway Station, Prome district, and retired leaving four dead. Nine others were captured. Later it was found that the telegraphic communication had been completely destroyed.

Forty rebels entered a village in Paung-deh area, Prome, on September 26, surprised the gun-holders and looted guns and a considerable quantity of ammunition. Another party damaged a forest bungalow in the same district.

A dense jungle in Thayetmyo, ten miles west of Kama was the scene of a serious fight on September 27, in which two rebels were killed, one of which the leader, Po HTAIK, brother of Saya Nyan, a lieutenant of Saya San.

In an encounter with the military on October 12, 1931, in a village near east of Tharrawaddy two rebels were killed and one or two more seriously injured.

The next rebel attack of considerable violence was at Inwagyi, Prome district, on October 17, where the rebels dined and slept in the village as if absolutely unconcerned about the danger they were hemmed in. Next day they visited the neighbouring village, enjoyed meals at the cost of the villagers and quietly left the place having collected a considerable sum from the people.

An increased number of violent crimes was reported on October 15, eleven cases in a single day; and marked by intense activity around Shewebandaw township, Prome district, where the rebels met a contingent of mounted police. Six rebels were killed at Insein and one at Prome during the same period.

On October 24, the Government forces consisting of two platoons and a large number of civil police surrounded one *phongyikyaung* (monastery) harbouring the "Tiger Army" and there was a bitter fight between the two contending forces at the place. The loss on the rebels' side was rather heavy, the number being fifteen, including two leaders Do Po HTIN and Bo TA DUN, the first belonging to the Tharrawaddy and the second to the Prome districts.

A rebel camp situated nine miles north-east of Spinkarlan, Tharrawaddy, was attacked, so a report of October 24, announced. CHIT TI, the leader with five other comrades-in-arms was also killed on the spot. Several guns, rifles and ammunition were seized.

Further reinforcements in Burma was found necessary and the 4th Indian Divisional Signals were ordered to proceed to Burma from Poona, Bombay, on October 27, in accompaniment with a wireless telegraphy section of the Corps of Signals, "A" and "B" of the 3rd Indian Divisional Signals.

A new cult of the Sun and the Moon attributed to a *phongyi* of Magwe district was noticeable after an encounter taking place on or about October 27, in which two leaders SAYA CHIT and YAN GYI AUNG of the Padiathin were killed.

The police gained a distinct advantage over the rebels when a party of civil police from Thegon, according to a report dated November 5, 1931, attacked a band of rebels killing the leader who commanded the forces that infested Shwedaung hills between the Irrawaddy and the Prome railway.

A rebel camp near Kyaukse, Thayetmyo, was raided by the military on November 13, 1931, and in the fight that ensued one rebel was killed. Two others were killed by the Burma Rifles in a village in Prome district on November 16.

Near a stream south-west of Sinsakhan the troops met some thirty rebels on November 11, and succeeded in killing the leader.

A party of irregulars encountered a band of rebels on November 22, at an obscure place and killed two on the spot.

In a village in Prome district another successful raid on the rebel camp on November 11, resulted in the death of two rebels and seizure of one gun. Another rebel was killed in an action that occurred in the same district.

Paung-deh, Prome district, was visited again by the military on November 27, and SAN GYA, a leader of great prominence, was killed in action.

In the Pegu district the police attacked a village haunt of rebels on December 24, 1931, and one rebel was killed.

In a jungle in Prome district a fight between the rebels and military on December 3, resulted in one rebel being killed.

Prome saw one of the worst encounters for the rebels on December 27, when Simizwe detachment of the military unit attacked one of the biggest concentrations of the rebel with Lewis gun. The head of the group popularly known as the 'Lion Army' together with another prominent leader and five other fighters fell dead. Five guns, a large quantity of ammunition and other articles were seized.

A Rangoon message of January 22, 1931, reported that Bo GYAW, a rebel leader belonging to the Henzada district, was shot dead by the military police, operating in the area.

In Prome a noted rebel leader with men was found by the villagers in an exposed place on February 3, 1932. The intensity of the rebellion having abated considerably the villagers mustered courage and attacked the rebel with guns. There was a sharp exchange of bullets in which a few insurgents lost their lives.

Near the Henzada-Tharrawaddy border in a stiff fight Bo We, the most important of the Henzada group, was shot dead on April 15.

Attack on Government property including quarters of high European officials, robbery of mail bags, attempt at derailment of trains, dacoity, arson and other forms of rebel activities continued right up to the first quarter of 1931. The Government measures including speedy trials by Special Tribunals, massacre through sham trials, awarding sentences of death of nearly four score accused in a single trial became the feature of Burma administration during the post-rebellion period. Complete calm could never be achieved but the situation seemed to have been brought under control by the middle of 1932.

Unbending

(1928-1929)

Amongst those who had kindled the fire of independence in the hearts of the people of Burma, the HPOONGYI U. WIZAYA of Kyaungone, Bassein, occupies a place of great eminence. Not long before the Tharrawaddy Rebellion, the fight for the political awakening of Burma was carried on by the Buddhist monks who had renounced worldly affairs, possessed no property whatsoever and toiled for the welfare of the masses.

Wizaya was a monk of the Buddhist order. But his activities in the field of politics earned for him on July 10, 1921, simple imprisonment for twenty months, from a magistrate at Pyapon. He suffered another imprisonment for about the same period from which he was released on February 28, 1928. This could not subdue his spirit. For a speech that came under the purview of sedition he was arrested on April 4, 1929, enjoying a freedom lasting for thirty four days only and was put, on April 6, in the jail lock-up as an undertrial prisoner.

His limited liberties in the jail were interfered with and he resorted to hunger-strike on April 9, 1929. Then he demanded (i) special diet as a political prisoner, (ii) privilege of being allowed to wear the yellow robes on certain festival days and

(iii) to fast twice a month. This demand was turned down by the authorities and he was charged for violating jail-discipline by refusing his diet.

His trial for the original offence was held inside the jail and he was awarded six years' rigorous imprisonment. On appeal this was reduced to three years.

He continued his hunger-strike which lasted for one of the longest periods ever known. Force-feeding of milk did him more harm than good and after a fasting for 163 days the indomitable patriot expired on September 20, 1929.

How many are there who know him even by name!

Warrior to the Last

(1930-1931)

The Burmese Rebellion of 1929-32 was one of the gravest that Britain had to face in its administration of India. There was a large number of leaders to give shape to the outburst on an unprecedented scale but the chief credit goes to one who had played the part of an outstanding leader showing great skill and ingenuity in organising and fomenting a rebellion of vast magnitude.

SAYA SAN is a name that will go down in history as one of the bravest revolutionaries that fought the British forces tooth and nail on the soil of Burma. He would move with the speed of a shooting star from place to place infusing spirit into the drooping hearts, finding new recruits to carry on till the foreigners had left the land and supplying fighting equipment where they were needed most. He was attributed with magical powers perhaps not without reason. Next to Sohanlal of the Mandalay Conspiracy Case fame he carved out an immortal niche in the hearts of the Indians and Burmans alike. Anybody speaking of Tharrawaddy Rebellion would at once think of Saya San first and of all others next.

For his unique position and the various activities and the power of elusiveness he acquired various names and one that was frequently talked in the company of foreigners was the "Scarlet

Pimpernel of the Burmese Revolution". In the secret circles of the Burmese people anybody would know who was meant by the "Golden Crow" or "the King of Galons". For his safety and as a fugitive evading the law he had to assume several *aliases* and the last being known as 'Nyana' of 'Nyna' at the time of his arrest. His parents gave him the name of San Sha. He was a native of the Shwebo district in Upper Burma, a district which furnished most of the recruits to the army of the Burmese Kings.

He spent a considerable part of his life in Lower Burma and in Siam changing his profession as often as he liked. He settled down in Tharrawaddy in 1930, and began his preparations for the rebellion before November of the year. At the initial stage he concentrated his attention for the rising in Tharrawaddy, Insein and Pyapon.

The Government forces failed to get any clue of his whereabouts and because of the love and respect of the people in which he was clothed, nobody would even whisper anything amongst themselves about him that might lead to his arrest.

In the Government circle Saya San was accepted as the originator and the undisputed leader of the Tharrawaddy Rebellion having conceived the idea as far back as 1928. It was alleged that he proclaimed himself as the King of Burma. Tracking the steps of a stray man trudging along an unwonted path of Alantaung, the police came to know of a 'palace' in the thickest part of the forest in Alantaung which was being used as a stronghold by the rebels. The place was stormed on December 31, 1930, and a large quantity of arms and ammunition together with indigenous weapons for fighting were seized.

Some five or six rebels were killed on the spot and a person suspected to be Saya San, was captured. Subsequently it transpired that the arrested happened to be a prominent man but undoubtedly not Saya San. The resourcefulness of that elusive personality stood him in good stead at this hour of peril and he slipped out of the place deftly when it was found that the game was lost.

After the incident at Alantaung Saya San moved from place to place as he discovered now that Tharrawaddy had become absolutely unsafe for his stay any longer. He visited Myingyan

and the famous shrine on the Mandalay Hill recruiting and conferring benedictions on men while proceeding northward.

After many narrow escapes and ever kept on the run by the police and the troops he arrived at Loikaw in the Shan State. He proceeded further to the fastnesses of the Northern Shan State but could not rest content having left his followers behind.

For the time being recruitment improved and he tried to gather his scattered men to try conclusions with the Indian forces then being manned by European officers. He measured strength of his men at different odd places and the result did not inspire much hope for the future.

Saya San, known as *phongyi* Nyana at this time, passed over to the Shan States and continued his struggle as best as he could. Though handicapped to a certain extent by the death of two of his most trusted lieutenants the joy of prosecuting an unequal warfare in the cause of country's freedom sustained him and maintained the buoyancy of his spirit.

Since the middle of July 1931, rumours were current that the rebel gang headed by Nyana, lately operating in the Shan States, had been driven down to the Mandalay district and that they had encamped somewhere in the north-east of the town.

All roads from Maymyo and other places leading to Mandalay were closely guarded by military pickets and nobody could pass through them without being interrogated or closely examined.

On July 29, 1931, one of the police parties under the Cantonment Police Station stopped a bus on the Mandalay-Mandaya Road and they found in it three persons, two Shans and one Burman. They were arrested on suspicion and sent to the Criminal Investigation Department for thorough examination.

Acting on the information extorted from the persons in custody a rebel haunt suspected to be sheltering Saya San was raided on July 30, 1931, but no capture was possible because the other side of the high range (Yoma) afforded an easy escape for the party. But valuable war materials, stores and particularly a diary of the leader were recovered from the place.

On August 2, 1931, a *phongyi* was arrested in Hsumhsi State in an exhausted condition with five followers. Men competent to identify were sent for and it was established that the *phongyi* was no other than the much sought for rebel, Saya San himself.

He was apprehended at 3 o'clock in the afternoon at Hsipand in a layman's dress in an extremely bad condition of health suffering from the diseases of privations and unremitting worry.

Thus came to a close the meteoric career of a man for the capture of whom the Government of India had declared a reward of Rs. 10,000 and the Shan State another Rs. 500. He was kept in custody at Nawngkhio in Shan States till he was brought down to Tharrawaddy in a closed carriage which was attached to a train on August 14, 1931, heavily escorted by armed police.

On August 15, 1931, he was brought to the Court of the Special Tribunal and placed in a specially constructed dock. According to the prevailing practice he had to put on a red jacket which was worn by a person accused of murder.

The principal charges were his connection with the rebellion at Insein, Tharrawaddy and Henzada, founding a 'palace' on Alantaung Hill which was used as rebel stronghold, the forming of Galon Associations, of gathering a rebel army, issuing a 'Proclamation' signed by BUDDA RAJA under his signature. He was further charged with the murder of a Forest Engineer and a Deputy Superintendent of Police, of other headmen and villagers by his men, of attack on Inywa, a railway station, and several other villages.

The list was not exhaustive. Further charges were that he or his men attacked the Crown Forces including the Punjabi Regiment.

It was contended that his preaching was intended to affect Dedaye, as well as Moulmein, Henzada and Pegu areas. His guilt of conspiring and waging war against the King Emperor was advanced in the trial.

Regular hearing of the case began on August 20, and the accused refused to engage any lawyer for his defence. His only answer was that he was NOT GUILTY, a plea worthy of a revolutionary of the eminence of the Uncrowned King of Burma.

On August 30, 1931, after a short trial, Saya San, the great leader of a mass rebellion, was sentenced to death.

On November 28, 1931, the hero of hundred battles, was executed. Thus went out the beacon light that had kept the Burmese sky illumined for some years.

The Aftermath

Alantaung Rebellion Case

One comprehensive case for incidents occurring between December 22 and December 31, 1930, was started in Tharrawaddy before a Special Tribunal with thirty seven rebels as accused. The court sentenced eleven persons to death. An appeal was preferred before the High Court and it confirmed the death sentences of nine commuting the punishment of two to transportation for life.

Dedaye Rebellion Case

A miniature rebellion was started at Dedaye, a township in the Pyapon district on January 7, 1931, by a band of rebels apparently under the orders of Saya San, their leader. The fight lasted for nearly an hour and a half when about thirty to forty rebels were killed on the spot.

A large number of survivors and their supporters were arrested in due course and before the Special Tribunal seventy-two accused were placed on trial under the omnibus charge of waging war against the King, conspiracy, etc. of which eighteen were sentenced to death. The High Court confirmed the sentence of fifteen. Petitions for mercy were submitted to the Government, all of which were granted excepting four who were executed in due course.

Htihlaing Rebellion

For a none too-important uprising in Htihlaing twenty seven rebels were placed on trial of which two were sentenced to death. The High Court on the appeal before it remarked that the case against U. THATHALAWKA had been amply proved and his appeal was dismissed. The appeal of the other persons met with the same fate.

Kama Rebellion Case

On June 5, 1931, a band of insurrectionists attacked Thalegyi Padaung Police Station and effected considerable damage to Government properties. When confronted by the police they had to leave the place with one dead in the fight. On the charge

of mass rising, quite a large number of people were placed on trial before the Special Judge of Thayetmyo who condemned seventy-five accused to death. The High Court, on August 9, 1931, reduced the punishment of thirty-five and confirmed the sentence of the remaining forty accused to be executed.

Kinpadi Rebellion Case

The principal charge against 75 men out of 125 arrested was the murder of the headman of Kyibinala, attack on police party stationed at the Kinpadi Saw Mill and an encounter with the Punjabi soldiers in Magayi Reserve. On October 6, 1931, the Special Tribunal condemned three persons to death. On appeal the High Court confirmed the death sentences of two.

Mindon Rebellion

Insurrection at Mindon was one of the series of many such that occurred almost everywhere during the long series of turmoil that formed part of the Tharrawaddy Rebellion of the thirties. From the enormity of the sentence it can be guessed, details being absolutely lacking, that it was something more than that of any common occurrence. On September 27, 1932, the High Court disposed of the appeal of several accused charged with the offence of waging war against the King, conspiracy and some other crimes in its train and of the sentences on thirty passed by the Special Judge, it confirmed that of twenty-four and commuted to transportation of life of the rest.

Tharrawaddy Trials

(a)

A case started on the basis of a battle at Tandaw where a series of skirmishes took place between the police and the villagers for resisting realisation of Capitation Tax. The preparations were made at the house of one of the leaders, (Aung Hlaw), who in a separate case was awarded a punishment for transportation for life, where people got initiated into the revolutionary cult for which special ceremonies were held and oaths

were administered to the new recruits. A number of people were killed in the fight and no less than ninety-five persons were placed on trial for the offence of waging war against the King and a host of allied offences.

On May 9, 1931, judgment was delivered by the Special Tribunal convicting seventy persons of whom fifteen were sentenced to death. Amongst these fifteen were BA SEIN and HE ADMAN SANKHAN, sons of a very prominent leader undergoing a long term of imprisonment.

(b)

Before a Special Tribunal forty-nine persons were placed on trial on May 14, 1931, for starting an insurrection at the border of Insein and Tharrawaddy when groups of villagers collected and began marching towards Alantaung, attacking police pickets, looting guns and Government properties on the way. In the course of their march they met a group of military police and a battle ensued. No less than eight rebels lost their lives in the encounter.

(c)

In another trial before the Special Tribunal on May 21, 1931, forty-nine persons were produced as accused for organising a revolt, participating in a fight and causing injury to the police and military with the common object of rising in rebellion. Eight were discharged and the trial proceeded against forty-one. All of them were convicted and seven were condemned to death on August 8, 1931. A petition of mercy by

- (i) NGA PO THUN,
- (ii) NGA BO GAUK,
- (iii) NGA THAN MYAING,
- (iv) NGA PO THIT,
- (v) NGA PO SAUNG,
- (vi) NGA BA THAW, and
- (vii) NGA PO HTA

was rejected by the Governor-General and they lost their lives on the gallows.

(d)

In a supplementary trial of 153 accused of which 94 had been absconding, 51 were placed before the Special Tribunal. The case was started in connection with the incidents in the Tharrawaddy Rebellion. Twelve accused were sentenced to death and twenty-six to transportation for life.

Thayetmyo Rebellion Case

In the course of a rebellion in and around Thayetmyo several rebels together with four policemen and two Burmans lost their lives. In an omnibus case for waging war against the King and other grave offences a large number of accused were convicted, not a few receiving the highest penalty of the law. Fifteen men appealed to the High Court and judgment was delivered on January 13, 1932, in which all the appeals were dismissed the capital punishment of eight being confirmed. The rebel leader was killed in one of these series of encounters.

Tiger Army Rebellion Case

The accused, forty-six in number of which YE GYAN was the principal, were charged with the no-tax campaign in Paungde sub-division in 1927, resulting in a serious riot in Padinbin. In the encounter one Burman Sub-Inspector of Police was killed.

Ye Gyan with another was sentenced to death.

Some other leaders of the Tiger Army were killed in action in Thayetkon on October 24, 1931. Bo WE, the leader, lost his life and one gun and fifty cartridges were recovered from him.

Zigon Rebellion Case

Zigon in the Sinmizwe area of the Prome district was the theatre of a serious encounter between the rebel and the Govern-

ment forces on December 12, 1931, in which the leader of the Lion Army (as a section of the rebels was named) with five lieutenants was killed.

A Special Judge tried the Zigon Rebellion case inside the Tharrawaddy Jail and judgment was delivered on August 18, 1932, in which nine accused were sentenced to death.

Burma Executions

In connection with the Tharrawaddy Rebellion in Burma, the Home Member, Burma Government, stated on February 24, 1933, that 274 persons were sentenced to death of whom fifty-one had already been executed and the number of persons undergoing transportation for having taken part in the rebellion was 535.