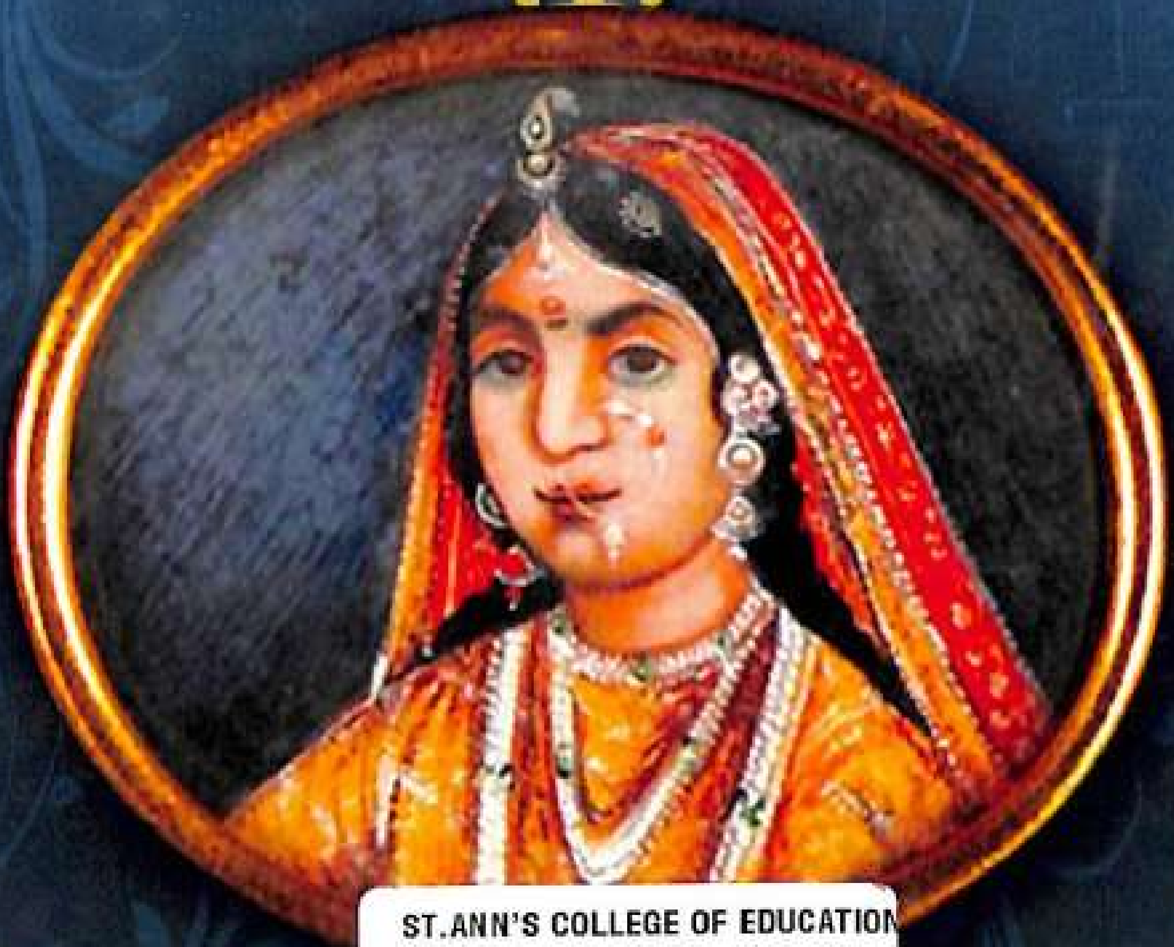
Rani Lakshmibai

Indian Nationalism



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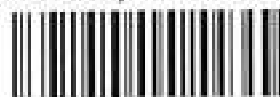

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Dr. Shiv Gajrani
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Rani Lakshmibai

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In the year 1853, Gangadhar Rao fell sick and became very weak. So, the couple decided to adopt a child. On 21st November 1853, Maharaja Gangadhar Rao died. British rulers refused to accept the child as the legal heir. The British authorities confiscated the state jewels. Also, an order was passed asking the Rani to leave Jhansi fort and move to the Rani Mahal in Jhansi. Lakshmibai was firm about protecting the state of Jhansi.

In January 1858, the British army headed it's away towards Jhansi. The conflict went on for two weeks. Finally, the Britishers succeeded in the annexation of the city. However, Rani Lakshmibai managed to escape along with her son, in the guise of a man. She took refuge in Kalpi, where she met Tatya Tope, a great warrior. She died on 17th June, during the battle for Gwalior.

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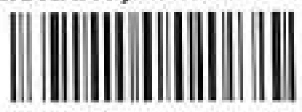
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Preface

She was born to a Maharashtrian family at Kashi (now Varanasi) in the year 1828. During her childhood, she was called by the name Manikarnika. Affectionately, her family members called her Manu. While pursuing studies, she also took formal training in martial arts, which included horse riding, shooting and fencing.

In the year 1842, she got married to the Maharaja of Jhansi, Raja Gangadhar Rao Niwalkar. On getting married, she was given the name Lakshmibai.

In the year 1853, Gangadhar Rao fell sick and became very weak. So, the couple decided to adopt a child. On 21st November 1853, Maharaja Gangadhar Rao died. British rulers refused to accept the child as the legal heir. The British authorities confiscated the state jewels. Also, an order was passed asking the Rani to leave Jhansi fort and move to the Rani Mahal in Jhansi. Lakshmibai was firm about protecting the state of Jhansi.

Jhansi became the focal point of uprising. Rani of Jhansi began to strengthen her position. By seeking the support of others, she formed a volunteer army. The army not just consisted of the men folk, but the women were also actively involved. Women were also given military training to fight a battle.

In January 1858, the British army headed it's away towards Jhansi. The conflict went on for two weeks. Finally, the Britishers succeeded in the annexation of the city. However, Rani Lakshmibai managed to escape along with her son, in the guise of a man. She took refuge in Kalpi, where she met Tatya Tope, a great warrior. She died on 17th June, during the battle for Gwalior.

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Contents

Preface v

Chapter **Pages**

1. Historical Background 1
2. Grievances of the Sepoys 20
3. Jhansi and Lord Dalhousie 28
4. The Revolt and its Progress 37
5. The Participation and its Impact 69
6. Jhansi and Leadership 97
7. Other Battles 113
8. British Strategy 146
9. The Last Battle 171

Index 185

1 Historical Background

DISTURBANCES IN BENGAL AND EAST INDIA

Revolt of Mir Qasim

The history of British rule begins with the acquisition of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and the earliest manifestations of the spirit of defiance naturally occurred in this region. The first challenge came from Mir Qasim who was raised to the office of Nawab Nazim of Bengal when Mir Jafar was dethroned in 1760. His qualifications for the post, according to Warren Hastings, were, "his timidity, the little inclination he had ever shown for war." But Mir Qasim belied the estimate of Warren Hastings. He showed an unexpected spirit of independence and deep concern for the welfare of his subjects. He refused to submit to the unlawful and extravagant demands of the English merchants for internal trade without payment of duties, the acceptance of which caused the impoverishment of the Indian merchants and zamindars and the ruin of the country. He was forced to desperation by the Council in Calcutta. In the struggle which ensued, Mir Qasim secured the support of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah of Oudh and Emperor Shah Alam, and together they set up a united front against the enemy. But the allied troops were no match for the trained forces of the Company. They were ignominiously defeated at Buxar (1764), and Mir Qasim had to live the life of a wanderer till his death in 1777.

The collapse of the Nawab's power, however, did not mean an end to opposition. All over the districts of Bengal,

the districts of Bihar south of the Ganga and the districts of Chhota Nagpur, there were frequent outbreaks of rebellion and disorder. These disturbances were mainly due to the subversion of the traditional political order, and the harsh land revenue policy of the Company. Moreover, interference with the country's traditional customs and the unfamiliar judicial system established by the British, added greatly to popular discontent.

In north Bengal in the districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur heavy assessments, exactions of farmers of revenue, and other oppressive measures led to open defiance of authority in 1783, and force had to be employed to quell the rising.

In West Bengal the harsh treatment of the Rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur, famine, enhancement of rents combined to cause widespread discontent. The unruly elements took advantage of the prevailing conditions and in 1789 started a campaign of marauding and banditry, causing a breakdown of government. Eventually order was restored, but the effects of disturbances continued to be felt for a long time.

Risings of the Hill Tribes

In the vast region of hills and forests inhabited by hillmen and aboriginal tribes, there were numerous petty rajas, some of whom claimed descent from Rajput families, and some traced their lineage to ancient times, previous to the advent of the Turkish conquerors in Bengal. It was a difficult task to establish here an administrative system based upon rigid Bengal Regulations. The attempt led to resentment and defiance.

Chuar Risings

There was almost continuous disorder in the tracts inhabited by the aboriginal tribe. From western Midnapur across southern Bihar, Chhota Nagpur and Orissa, there were repeated risings among the Chuars of the Jungle Mahals, the Hos of Singhbhum, the Kols and Mundas of Chhota Nagpur, the Bhumij of Manbhum, and the Santhals of Rajmahal hills. In Orissa the Khonds, and in Assam the Khasis, created serious disturbances.

Famine, depredations of wild animals, increase in assessments, harsh realisations of revenue, all contributed to economic distress and social discontent. Disbanded soldiers, ruined peasants and uprooted artisans, formed roving bands of freebooters, who marched through villages and plundered and terrorised them. As a result, clashes were inevitable, and serious outbreaks occurred.

The Chuars or the Bhumij inhabited the Midnapur district of Bengal which then included the Mahals of Manbhum and Barabhum. The district of Midnapur had passed into British hands in 1760 and the Mahals in 1765. But the zamindars were refractory. The Raja of Dhalbhum, Jagannath Dhal, led the resistance (1768) and followed a scorched-earth policy. He gathered the Chuars under his banner. The Rajas of Kailapal, Dholka and Barabhum joined the revolt and the zamindars of Nawabganj and Jharia withheld the revenue. The disturbed conditions continued for nearly thirty years and then quieted of their own.

But, in 1832, Ganga Narayan led the tribes to a fresh revolt. He attacked government offices in Barabazar and took possession of Barabhum. Then rallying the Hos of Singhbhum, he created a situation so serious as to require military operations. The deaths of the leaders in the fight did not discourage the rebels and they continued to resist till Kolhan was occupied by government forces.

The Hos of Chhota Nagpur and Singhbhum had also old scores to settle. In 1773 the Rajas of Porahat, Kharaswan and Saraikela had been compelled to enter into engagements concerning the rebel refugees. But in 1820 the Raja of Porahat had accepted the position of a feudatory of the British to humiliate Kharaswan and Saraikela and subdue the independence-loving Ho tribesmen. He asked for British aid and the British forces entered Kolhan and moved to Chaibasa. But the Hos resisted fiercely and for two years (1820-22) ravaged Dhalbhum and Bamanghati and penetrated into Chhota Nagpur. They continued to fight until they were forced to submit in 1827. But peace was not even then completely restored. In 1831, there were insurrections in Chhota Nagpur,

Singhbhum, Manbhum and the tribal areas, when the Mundas of Chhota Nagpur rose and the Hos joined them.

Kol Risings

The Kols rebelled (1831-32) because their villages were being transferred from Kol headmen (Mundas) to foreign farmers— Sikhs and Muslims. The upheaval started in Ranchi and spread to Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, Palamau and western parts of Manbhum. Extensive military operations had to be undertaken before it was quelled.

Santhal Risings

The Santhals had migrated from Hazaribagh and Manbhum into the region of Rajmahal hills, and by 1836 had occupied more than four hundred villages in Damanikoh. They were a simple folk. The heavy demands of rents compelled them to depend upon money-lenders and they easily fell a prey to their sharp practices. The revenue officials, too, treated them harshly. The railway authorities who employed them did not pay them their wages and, what is more, insulted their women. These provocations led to bitter resentment. Further fuel was provided by a religious enthusiast who claimed divine revelation, and proclaimed that the country was to be taken away from the *Sahibs* because of the prevalence of falsehood and corruption among the officials, the extortion of the *Mahajans* and the oppression of the police. The grievances accumulated and, in 1855, the Santhals rebelled. But bows and arrows were no match for guns, and they were subdued. It was felt that a special administrative system was needed for them and a separate district of Santhal Parganas was formed.

Rising of Orissa Zamindars

Orissa had been annexed by the Company in 1803. But the chiefs had not become reconciled. The Raja of Khurda, an important landholder, rebelled in 1804, but he was obliged to surrender. Then, the Paiks, the landed militia, rose against the revenue collector and the police. Their leader Jagabandhu attacked Banpur, looted the government treasury and burnt buildings in Khurda. The government officers fled and for a

time all traces of British rule were wiped out. By the end of the year 1817, the British had succeeded in reoccupying only Khurda, but Puri continued defiance. Ultimately, however, order was restored. Martial law was proclaimed and the rebellion was suppressed. After a long pursuit, Jagabandhu surrendered at last in 1825, but owing to his influential position, he was pensioned off and allowed to reside in Cuttack.

Khond Rising

The Khonds occupied the Khondmals, the hilly tract lying to the south-west of Angul and surrounded by the tributary state of Baud and the Ganjam district. In 1815, the Government of Madras arrested Dhananjay Bhary, Raja of Gumsur, and confiscated the estate of Khurda. Then, in 1835, they took over the administration from the Raja who fled to the hills and sought the support of the Khonds. In 1836, the Khonds rose under Dora Bisayi, but the reinforced British forces crushed the resistance. In 1846, the Khonds again rebelled and their leader, Chakra Bisayi, threw the country into ferment. From Baud Khondmals, the rebellion spread to the low country of Gumsur. The Raja of Angul and other chiefs who were in sympathy with the rebels, were forced to remove Bisayi from their estates. But the Government remained suspicious and deposed the Raja of Angul and his estate was annexed. Chakra Bisayi now went into the hills and remained quiet for six years. In 1854, however, he again started to give trouble to the Government. In order to deny him the protection of the Khonds, the Raja of Baud was deposed and Chakra Bisayi forced to leave the Khondmals. He became a fugitive, wandered from place to place and eventually disappeared.

The revolt was suppressed after many years of fighting. In 1855, another rising took place which ended with the transfer of the Khondmals from the jurisdiction of Madras to that of Cuttack. The Raja was arrested and sent to Hazaribagh as a prisoner.

Risings in Assam

On the north-eastern borders of Bengal was the ancient kingdom of the Ahoms. In 1824, on the outbreak of the first

Burmese war, a British force marched through their territory to expel the Burmans. The princes and the nobility of the old Ahom court had been given to understand that the British would, on the conclusion of the Burmese war, withdraw and restore their government under British protection subject to the payment of tribute. But the pledges were not kept. On the other hand, arrangements for revenue collection and administration were begun, and the powers and privileges of the Assamese Court were taken away. The result was discontent among the Ahom nobility.

In 1828, the Assamese proclaimed Gomdhar Konwar of the Ahom royal family as the king and proposed, with the co-operation of the Ahom nobility, to march to Rangpur. Among the leaders of the enterprise were Dhananjay Bargohain, an ex-minister of the Ahom government, and other functionaries of the state. The attempt proved premature; it was suppressed in October 1828. Gomdhar surrendered and was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

A second revolt was planned in 1830. Letters were sent to the chiefs of border tribes—Khamtis, Singphos, Moamarias, Manipuris, Nagas, Khasis and Garos—for combined action against the common enemy. Rupchand Konar was set up as the as the Raja. Peali Barphukan, Jeuram Dhulia Barua and other scions of the nobility joined together and with a small force marched towards Rangpur, but their plans were previously known to the British. They were all apprehended and convicted of treason. Peali Barphukan and Jeuram were sentenced to death and the rest to banishment for 14 years. Their property was confiscated. In 1833 amends were made and upper Assam was handed over to Sir Maharaja Purandar Singh Narendra, and a part of the kingdom was restored to the Assamese Raja.

REVOLT OF THE SANYASIS

But the most remarkable among the early rebellions was that of the *sanyasis*. They were the followers of the great Indian religious philosopher Sri Sankaracharya (8th century), the exponent of the doctrine of absolute monism *(Advaita Vada)*.

Sankaracharya's disciples were divided into ten orders, and the rebel *sanyasis* belonged to the order of the *Giris* among them. It is impossible to say when they took to the military profession. But they are first heard of as a fighting order in the times of Akbar. According to Farquhar, Madhusudan Saraswati began the enrolment of *Kshatriyas* in the *sanyasi* order. Armed *Nagas* and *Giri sanyasis* fought in the armies of the eighteenth century. For instance, a contingent of armed *Gosains* formed part of the army of the Nawab of Oudh when he marched to Panipat in aid of Ahmad Shah Abdali against the Marathas. At the battle of Buxar, five thousand *sanyasis*, under the command of Gosain Himmat Giri, fought for Mir Qasim to drive out the British from Bengal. *Sanyasis* were also employed in the armies of the Maratha Sardars, Holkar and Sindhia, and the Rajas of Jaipur.

The intervention of the *sanyasis* in Bengal affairs followed the establishment of British rule there. The early years of the Company's administration formed a period of extreme distress for the people. The zamindars, peasants and artisans were ruined as a result of the land revenue policies of the British, and the severity with which they collected the revenue. Then, the famine of 1770 plunged Bengal into chaos and misery. In these conditions, lawlessness and defiance of authority were inevitable. The President and Council of Fort William in Bengal informed the Court of Directors in 1773 that bands of *sanyasis* and *faqirs*, with their ranks swollen by crowds of starving peasants, came down "upon the harvest fields of Lower Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging, in bodies of fifty thousand men."

The steps taken to prevent their activities in Bengal and the restrictions imposed upon the pilgrims to visit the holy places, were the main causes of the *Sanyasi* rebellion. As early as 1763, the *sanyasis* had begun raiding factories. Then, in large bands, they came into conflict with the British forces. They swooped down upon a district, exacted contributions from the inhabitants, and then rapidly scattered. Battalions of sepoys were sent to pursue them, but they could not be easily brought into open encounter. Moreover, the Company's

sepoys were lukewarm in their loyalty on several occasions and the government troops met with disaster.

Gradually, the activities of the *sanyasis* ceased. They found it more and more difficult to carry armed raids into Bengal. Their attention, moreover, was diverted to affairs in other parts of India, to the internecine conflicts in the Deccan and to Bihar and Rajasthan. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, after a stormy career of nearly half a century, they disappeared from the scene, leaving behind only memories of their bold and reckless adventures.

RISINGS IN GUJARAT AND SAURASHTRA

In Gujarat and Saurastra the discontent took a similar form. When Captain Outram visited this region in 1835, he found the chiefs in revolt. In his report, he wrote : "The chief strength of the rebel chiefs, the source of their confidence in opposing us and the instigators to feuds, are foreign mercenaries who live by the brawls and warfare they themselves excite. They are chiefly Muckranees Scindhis, Seedies and Gossais and some Arabs." And he added : "The ease and impunity with which the natives of Gujarat find they can insult and plunder British officers must if not speedily checked, bring the European sway in this part of India to the low ebb of the mere physical power of a handful of British against millions of disaffected natives, no longer standing in awe of our power."

Waghera Rising

The report referred to above, deals with the disturbances which occurred in Cutch from 1815 to 1832. Besides, there was the revolt of the Wagheras of Okha Mandal who resisted the imposition of British rule from its inception. The mulkgiri levies of the Gaekwar of Baroda and the support which the British Government gave to him to enforce his exactions, were largely responsible for their disaffection. In Surat there was a long tradition of opposition. The citizens resisted the introduction of disagreeable measures, like the salt tax and standard weights and measures. They closed their shops, boycotted Government servants, prepared petitions to which

thousands of signatures were affixed, till the Government was forced to cancel the unpopular measures.

Bhil Risings

The Bhils, an aboriginal tribe living in Khandesh and in the hilly territory in the Aurangabad district, controlled the mountain passes between the north and the Deccan. They professed deep attachment to the Rajput chiefs and showed much loyalty to them.

The closing years of the eighteenth century were a period of great distress to them, for their region was devastated by Maratha wars, Pindari depredations, misgovernment and famine. On top of all this, came the occupation of their country by the British in 1818. The ferment caused by the revolt lasted for nearly thirty years, but ultimately died down as a result of severe military operations combined with judicious conciliatory measures.

Koli Risings

The Kolis, the neighbours of the Bhils, and living in the hilly country traversed by the Sahyadris, were by nature a turbulent people. They used to be employed to garrison the forts. But, when the forts were dismantled by the British, they lost employment. There was consequently much discontent among them which led to risings in 1828, 1839 and 1844-48. But, by 1850, the Government succeeded in subduing them.

UNREST IN RAJPUTANA

Rajputana had long suffered from disunity and rivalry among its more than a score of independent princes. Their mutual jealousies and rival claims against one another had brought humiliation and loss of independence upon them. In the 18th century, Rajputana was laid under tribute by the Marathas, whose campaigns for its realisation inflicted great misery upon the country. Although British intervention saved the princes from Maratha oppression, they had, in fact, only exchanged masters. Subordination to British authority may have been then, in some ways, better than Maratha rapacity, but it could not soothe the wounded self-respect of the Rajput princes, because of the loss of autonomy. In addition, the introduction

of a new system of administration, the abolition of some of their old and cherished customs, the high-handedness of some of the princes assured of British support, the establishment of British cantonments which became a standing reminder of subordination, and the apprehension that their tradition and religion stood in danger of extirpation, caused widespread dissatisfaction.

Maharaja Man Singh of Jodhpur was the centre of anti-British agitation. But he became so disgusted with his helplessness that he preferred to renounce his *gaddi*. The attempts of Jootha Ram and Maharao Kishen Singh of Kotah, and the conspiracies of the jagirdars of Mewar and Marwar, all go to indicate how excited Rajputana was during the first half of the nineteenth century. Popular approval of the spirit of rebellion found expression in the bardic poems of Kaviraj Bankidas and in the writings of Mahakavi Suryamal Mishra.

DISTURBANCES IN UTTAR PRADESH

Northern India, between Bihar and the Punjab, came under British control and protection between 1765 and 1805. In the earlier period, the Nawabs of Oudh had administered a great part of the Doab under British direction, but over the rest of the region the Marathas were supreme. After the Third Maratha War, the Marathas were excluded from the Doab and Bundelkhand, and the area under the Nawabs was also reduced. By 1856, direct British rule was established over the entire region.

The interference and direction of the British was irksome to the Nawabs of Oudh and caused continuous bickerings between the two. Many of the ills from which Oudh suffered were due mainly to the unnatural system of government, by which responsibility for administration lay on the shoulders of the Nawab while the real power was in the hands of the British. The inevitable result was the ultimate annexation of Oudh in 1856, and during the intervening period, a plethora of distressing incidents.

Rising in Gorakhpur

The first of these incidents was provoked by Col. Hannay, an officer of the Company. In 1778, the Nawab of Oudh took

him into his service and gave him the administration of the districts of Gorakhpur, Bahraich and Basti. Hannay ruled his charge with a heavy hand and enriched himself. He leased the right of collecting revenues to contractors who rack-rented and pillaged the villages. Revenue demand was enforced with the greatest severity. Within less than three years, the country which was in a flourishing condition, was reduced to misery and desolation. Driven to desperation, the people rose against the oppressor. The zamindars inhabiting the country east of the Ghagra river took up arms, seized the forts of Gorakhpur, Belma and Domariaganj, and cut off the communications. Warren Hastings, who had his own reasons to believe the allegations against the Begums of Oudh and Maharaja Chait Singh of Banaras, was persuaded by Col. Hannay that they were accomplices in the outbreak. The British enforced measures of suppression so severely that the whole tract was laid waste.

Rising of Wazir Ali

In the scheme of the Company's diplomats, Oudh was the subordinate, ally and was to act as a buffer between the Company's eastern provinces and the country powers to the west. Wazir Ali refused to toe the line and pay the increased subsidy. He was deposed in 1799. He was suspected of working against British interests and organising a league of Rajput and Maratha chiefs and Muslim princes, the more important being the Sindhia of Gwalior and Zaman Shah of Kabul. The Nawabs of Murshidabad and Dacca were also involved in the plot. When Wazir Ali was ordered to leave Lucknow and to proceed to Calcutta, there was an insurrection. Attacked by British forces, Wazir Ali fled, but was captured and exiled to Vellore.

Rising in the Rohilla Country

In Rohilkhand, which was transferred to the dominion of the Company by the Nawab of Oudh in 1801, signs of popular discontent manifested themselves early. The Rohilla chiefs who lost their status and were treated as equals of their retainers, found the situation humiliating. As usual, the main cause of discontent was the new system of administration of revenue

and justice. The measure which immediately incited rebellion was the imposition of a police tax for the maintenance of chowkidars in the town of Bareilly under Regulation XVI of 1814. The people's protests went unheeded and a Maulavi who was revered by them was manhandled. This drove the mob into fury and they broke all restraints. As the forces at the disposal of the magistrate proved ineffective, troops had to be called to disperse the rebels.

Daya Ram of Hathras

The enhancements of revenue in the Aligarh district had caused great distress among the petty zamindars. They could not pay the assessed amounts and their estates were sold out for arrears. The disbanded soldiery and refractory land-holders combined to produce a state of lawlessness and disorder. Gangs of Mewatis and Badhiks aggravated trouble. Daya Ram, a taluqdar of Hathras, who owned a number of villages in the district and lived in a fortress protected by high walls and a deep moat, was called upon to dismantle the fort and to disband the troops. To enforce the order, a whole division was sent. Against the most powerful assemblage of artillery hitherto witnessed in India, the defence could not be sustained long and the fort fell to the British; but Daya Ram escaped. Ultimately, he submitted on the offer of a pension.

This summary survey shows that dissatisfaction and rebellion were recipient throughout the period, and came into the open, from time to time, in different parts of the country. Identical factors, were operating all over the British dominion in India, the chief among them being the introduction of a new system of land-revenue administration which reduced the authority of the landowners and laid extremely heavy burdens upon the land. This system brought about a revolution in the social and economic order and naturally aroused opposition from both zamindars and peasants whose rights were affected and the age-old economy was disturbed. But though the causes were similar, the manifestation of opposition to the Government was conditioned by the situation in the region. The revoits were local or sectional.

They lacked coordination and unity and therefore, were easily suppressed.

THE WALIULLAHI MOVEMENT

During this period, the movement which offered the most serious challenge to the British supremacy was the preaching of *Jihad* (holy war) by a section of the Muslims. The leader of the movement was Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli, a district in Uttar Pradesh. He was born in a family of noted divines who traced their descent from the Prophet. Syed Ahmad was intensely nervous by temperament and saw visions which summoned him to dedicate his life to the service of religion.

His naturally ardent mind was influenced during its formative period by the revivalist atmosphere of the school founded by Waliullah (1703–62) which, after his death, was presided over by his son Abdul Aziz (1746–1823), who proclaimed by a decree *(fatwa)*, in 1803, that India had ceased to be *Dar-ul-Islam*.

In this puritanical and revivalist atmosphere, the tendencies and incrinations of Syed Ahmad reached their fullest development. He was, however, not a mere visionary longing for the ineffable experience of the state of union with the Divine; his soul thirsted or action. He desired to walk in the footsteps of the Prophet, to revive the ways of Muhammad *(Tariqa-i-Muhammadiya)*. He aspired to regenerate the fallen community by means of a threefold programme—the exaltation of the word of God, the revival of the spirit of faith in word and deed, and the practice of holy war. As a men of action, he laid the greatest emphasis upon practice. Of the five pillars of religion—prayer, confession, charity, fasting and pilgrimage—he considered the last to be the most meritorious form of the worship of God.

By 1808, Syed Ahmad's education was complete. So he returned home and married. Then he set out in the quest of his mission and came to Tonk where Amir Khan held independent sway. He served in his army, fought in his wars, and acquired the needed training in military tactics and strategy. However, in 1817, when Amir Khan accepted British vassalage, he retired from his service.

On return from Tonk, he first went on a tour of the western districts of Uttar Pradesh. He visited the important towns and villages in Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur districts. A second tour was made of the eastern districts—Allahabad, Banaras, Kanpur and Lucknow, and a third of Rohilkhand.

In all the places he visited, Syed Ahmad was enthusiastically received and lavishly entertained. People attended his sermons in large numbers. He preached the doctrines of Islam according attempt to impose his own views of law and morals on the tribal people of the Frontier antagonised them and converted the *Jihad* into an internecine feud. The total disregard of the vast majority of Indians in schemes of political reconstruction isolated them and foredoomed their efforts to failure.

Syed Ahmad's movement failed, but it left a trail of far-reaching consequences. It gave a strong impetus to separatist tendencies in Indian society. Syed Ahmad's emphasis upon rejection of all customs and habits, whether good or bad, important or trivial *(Bidat-i-Hasana* or *Bidat-i-Su)*, acquired through residence in India in contact with the Hindus, and reversion to purely Arab traditions of the Prophet's time, were sure to widen the gulf between the two communities. From this movement a current of thought has continued to flow which has strengthened isolationist tendencies and exclusiveness.

The revivalist propaganda among the Muslims received impetus from the movement. A new phenomenon made its appearance in Indian history. The political leadership of the men of sword and crowned heads, ceased with the occupation of Delhi by the British and the men of pen and priests began to play that role. With this transfer, politics tended to be dominated by religious dogma. Yet, the memory of Syed Ahmad's movement kept alive the desire for freedom among the Muslims. The maulavis lent their powerful aid in all subsequent struggles against British rule, *e.g.* the Revolt of 1857.

SEPOY MUTINIES

Agrarian discontent and wounded religious sentiments aggravated the resentment caused by alien domination. They were the exciting causes of outbreaks among the rural classes—peasants, landlords, tribal chiefs and their retainers. They operated in the case of the Indian sepoys, too, who served in the Company's armies and fought for their masters to fasten the yoke of slavery on the necks of their own countrymen. Their effect was aggravated by the worsening terms of service in the Company's army.

The first mutiny of the Indian sepoys occurred in 1764, when a whole battalion from Munro's forces opposing Mir Qasim at Patna broke ranks to join the army of the Nawab. They were, however, overtaken by the troops loyal to the Company's salt and then court-martialled. Twenty-four were tied to the guns and blown away.

The mutiny of Vellore in 1806 was a more serious affair. The reorganisation of the army in 1796 had enhanced the privileges of the British officers, but weakened discipline. Many of them had taken advantage of the benefits of pension to retire and return to England. The army was left with officers who did not know their men intimately, and felt little attachment to their battalions.

By 1803, the exciting wars waged by the Company against Tipu Sultan (d. 1799) and the Marathas, had ended in establishing the supremacy of the British in India. The officers, inspired with a new zeal, were entertaining schemes of military improvements. They forced new rules of behaviour and new fashions of dress and drill. The sepoy was ordered to shave his beard, to remove the caste mark from his forehead and earrings from his ears and wear a stiff round hat with a flat top, a leather cockade and a standing feather, instead of his turban. The leather of the cockade was made from the skin of either the unclean pig or the sacred cow.

These new-fangled ways, enforced without concern about the feelings of the sepoys, naturally created all kinds of apprehensions in their minds, and gave a sharp edge to their

suspicions. The long-standing grievances assumed a new urgency and magnitude. The English officers' rudeness was more resented, the disrespect shown to Indian officers by British soldiers cut more to the quick, ordinary words and actions carried more sinister implications, and service at vast distances from home appeared more burdensome. A spirit of unrest and of strained feelings lay over the Karnatak and the Deccan.

The powder-keg was ready. It was set ablaze as the lighted match was applied by the sons of Tipu Sultan who were living in the fort of Vellore under British surveillance. Early in May 1806, a battalion rebelled, but was put down and discipline vindicated by flogging the ringleaders. There was a lull, then the storm broke out afresh on the 10th of July. The Indian soldiers rose at the dead of night, slaughtered the sentries, killed the main-guard, shot some of the officers, and hoisted over the ramparts the tiger-striped standard of Mysore amidst cries of "Din! Din!" Then the sepoys forgot all discipline, an unruly mob joined them and massacre and loot drowned the original purpose of overthrowing British domination.

When the news of the rising reached the British at Arcot, a contingent under Gillespie marched to the fort. The walls were scaled, gates forced open, and the mounted cavalry streamed in. The Indian troops which were a disorderly crowd had no capacity to resist and were cut down in hundreds. Some escaped over the walls, many surrendered and begged for mercy. The mutiny was crushed. The storm passed away as rapidly as it had risen.

Not long after Vellore the discontent in the Bengal Army led to an outbreak in 1824. Here, too, changes in the regimental arrangements and the concentration of authority with the higher commanders were creating a wide gulf between the men and their immediate officers. The exigencies of the Burmese war compelled the Government to lay irksome duties upon the Indian sepoy. But the one which he resented most, both on the ground of religion and convenience, was to march over the frontiers of Hindustan and to cross the seas. To fight in a country wholly different in climate, with a people whose

language, race and customs were utterly strange to him, was highly distasteful.

When, for lack of transport, the sepoy was required to carry his own baggage, the proverbial last straw had been provided. The 47th Native Infantry refused to proceed to Burma without a guarantee of a hundred per cent increase in the allowance. The Commander-in-Chief who was a martinet, determined to crush the mutiny. He marched to Barrackpur with two European regiments and a battery of European artillery, called the 47th to the parade ground and ordered them to march or ground their arms. They did neither. Then hell-fire was let loose upon them. Those who survived were court-martialled and hanged from the gallows. The name of the 47th was struck off the army list.

Subsequently, other regiments in the Bengal Army, too, showed signs of disaffection. The terrible disasters of the first Afghan War had shattered the prestige of the British. Tales of a speedy British debacle and evacuation of the country circulated in the bazaars. The sepoys were in no mood to obey orders which they considered unreasonable. Unfortunately, the Government thought fit at this moment to annoy them! During the wars with the Amirs of Sind, they were given a double allowance in addition to salary. After the conquest, Sind became a part of the dominion and the allowances for active service in a foreign country were stopped. The retrenchment exasperated the sepoys and they decided to defy the orders.

In February 1844, the 34th Regiment at Ferozepur refused to march into Sind. The 7th Bengal Cavalry and the 64th Regiment followed suit. The mutinous troops had to be marched back, their ringleaders were punished; the 64th was deprived of its colours, and the 34th was disbanded. The Bengal garrisons were replaced with contingents from the Madras and Bombay Commands. The discipline of the Bengal Army, however, was badly shaken.

The fires of the Sind trouble had hardly died down when turmoil broke out in Bihar. Patna had been the centre of the

movement for *Jihad*. The maulavis were now endeavouring to induce the Muslim troops to desert the Company's service and join the holy war. The British forces were being withdrawn from the eastern cantonments and concentrated near the north-western frontier for the impending war against the Sikhs.

The news was circulated in the army and added to their excitement. Then secret confabulations took place and the sepoys were assured of service under the King of Delhi if they deserted the Company's service. A report of what was going on was made to the British commanding officer and through him to the Government. The offenders were brought to book and paid the penalty for their indiscretion. The Governor of Bengal issued a proclamation assuring the people that the Government had no intention of interfering with anyone's religion. The victories of the British army over the Sikhs restored prestige, and the excitement died down.

The scene next shifted to the Panjab, where the Bengal Army had won laurels in the war against the Sikhs. But the sepoys were chagrined to find that the conquest brought them, instead of any gains, actual loss of allowances. The regiments thus affected took counsel together, sent messengers from station to station, and resolved to resist orders. The 22nd Regiment at Rawalpindi refused to receive their pay and the regiments at Wazirabad and Jhelum intended to follow suit. Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-Chief, toured that region and found unmistakable signs of a confederation of many regiments determined not to serve in the Panjab except on higher pay. Mutiny was in the air. It broke out in the open at Wazirabad and then at Govindgarh where the 66th Regiment was posted. But prompt and ruthless measures by Napier succeeded in subduing the outburst. High scales of compensation for allowances were sanctioned to reduce discontent, and Gurkhas were recruited to replace the Brahmans from the Doab.

The first century of British rule in India was thus a period of mounting distress and unhappiness. The old ruling classes fell that zest had gone out of their life. The opportunities for

high achievement and heroic adventure, which constituted the joy of life, were denied to them.

The prospect before the Indian was indeed dreary. In his own home he was relegated to a servile position. He had to dwell apart in the humble outhouse where he shivered in cold, while his alien lord and master lived in the warm and ample comfort of the palaces he had erected. Uncertain of his present and doubtful of his future, he cringed before the conqueror from afar who decided his fate and shaped his ends. Deprived of participation in the framing of policies which determined his destiny and excluded from all positions of authority and command, he was politically humbled and morally dwarfed. Never before in history had he been reduced to inferiority so galling.

He strove hard to break the chains that bound him, and the revolts and mutinies of these hundred years are a proof of his yearning for liberation. But his failures demonstrated the inadequacies of his endeavours. There was no chance of success for such isolated efforts which were motivated by limited medieval concepts of social welfare and public good. The Revolt of 1857 in which these efforts culminated was the last despairing struggle of the medieval order. But it differed from them as it comprehended all the impulses and aims of its precursors, and included almost the whole of India in its sweep.

2 Grievances of the Sepoys

The sense of wrong which rankled in the minds of the upper classes was shared by the indian sepoys of the Bengal army, a majority of whom were Brahmans and Rajputs. But they had special grievances of their own too. Among them were unsatisfactory conditions of service, encroachments upon religious customs, and offences against their dignity and self-respect.

So far as conditions of service were concerned, the questions of promotion and pay were most serious, because they touched the very basis of their service and loyalty. In the earlier days, when the Company was fighting in the South for its very existence against the French rivals and the Deccan princes, Indian soldiers could rise to the position of officers in independent command of European and Indian troops. After the conquest of Bengal, the influx of British officers and the enforcement of the policy of anglicisation by Cornwallis, the door of such promotions was completely shut. The Indians were reduced to the dead level of rank and file with no prospect of rise to the status of commissioned officers. For soldiers of the upper classes who had provided commanders of the highest rank to the Mughal government and to the armies of the Indian chiefs, this was a humiliating reminder of Indians' subordinate status under the British.

The question of pay was more complicated. In the first place, the absolute rates of pay were low, and, secondly, they compared very unfavourably with the emoluments of the

European soldiers. The Indian soldier belonged to highly respected groups in society. He felt great pride in his profession and entertained high ethical and professional standards. In contrast, the European soldier commanded little respect in his own society and his morals were far from exemplary. The disparity between the two was striking and the difference of the salary galling. But although there might have been some justification for the different scales of pay and allowances on the ground of their respective standards of living, there was absolutely no excuse for the uncertainties and vagaries which affected their pay and allowance after every war. Already Sir Henry Lawrence had pointed this out, when he wrote: "Of all the wants of the Army, perhaps the greatest want is a simple pay code, unmistakably showing the pay of every rank, in each branch, under all circumstances. ... There ought to be no doubt in the matter. At present there is great doubt ... though there are volumes of Pay and Audit Regulations."

The withdrawal of allowances after the conquest and annexation of a province and then posting the same troops in those very territories on reduced salaries, was naturally a very irritating measure. For the poor sepoy received Rs. 7 a month as salary, out of which he spent Rs. 3.8 on food and another Rs. 2 to 2.8 on other necessaries of life, and with difficulty saved a rupee or a rupee-and-a-half. To the poorly paid sepoys the main attraction of service at a distance from his home was the prospect of a little additional income which he could remit to his family; but this was denied to him.

To this ever-present source of simmering discontent during peace time has to be added the shock administered to the religious scruples of the Brahman and Rajput soldiers by the ill-conceived and inconsiderate decision to send them outside India to fight in Afghanistan and Burma in violation of their contract. To live among Muslims and to take food and water from them was totally repugnant to their ancient customs, and to cross the seas tantamount to abjuration of their *Dharma*. Either step involved loss of caste, the sheet-anchor of their social existence.

His financial anxieties and religious provocations thus inclined the sepoy to believe the stories circulated regarding British intentions to convert Indians to Christianity. Sir Henry Lawrence reported to Lord Canning that a Jamadar of the Oudh artillery who was a man of good character, was convinced that "for ten years past Government has been engaged in measures for the forcible or rather fraudulent conversion of all the natives."

What is more, the treatment meted out by 'white' officers—commissioned and non-commissioned—was deeply resented. Sitaram, a Subahdar in the Company's Army, who remained loyal even when his son joined the revolt, is a witness. Says he: "But many of them (European sergeants) could not express themselves, or make the men understand their meaning, and these sort of men had recourse to low abuse, and were in the habit of striking the sepoys, and cuffing them about. Numerous complaints were made to the Adjutant, but he nearly always took the part of the sergeant against the sepoys, and very little or no redress at all was obtained."

The behaviour of commissioned officers was no better. They regarded the sepoy as an inferior creature. "He is sworn at. He is treated roughly. He is spoken of as a 'nigger'. . . . The younger men seem to regard it as an excellent joke, and as an evidence of spirit and as a praiseworthy sense of superiority over the sepoy to treat him as an inferior animal."

The testimony of Lieutenant Colonel William Hunter bears this out. Concerning the discourtesy of European non-commissioned officers, he points out that the system in vogue "always keeps them (Indian officers) in the background, and subjects them to the authority, not only of the youngest and most inexperienced European Subaltern in the regiment, but, what appears a strange anomaly, also to the authority, and not unfrequently to the vulgar and unmerited rebukes of the European non-commissioned officers."

Under the system, it was not possible to foster good relations between the officers and their men. In fact, the two lived in two different worlds. The European officer kept himself aloof from the Indian sepoys and Indian officers.

Outside of the official duties there was little social intercourse between them. After the reorganisation of the army in 1824 the Officer Commanding knew his men less and less. The increase of facilities for intercourse with Europe which the introduction of the steamboat created, greatly changed the outlook and the interests of the European officer. His devotion to his regiment, to his men and Indian mistresses, slackened as the opportunities to associate with the men and women of his own race increased. The utilisation of the services of army officers for civilian work in the survey, public works, and political departments, also affected the efficiency of the army. Discipline deteriorated and the men's respect for the officers declined.

The situation was made worse by the lax discipline of the European officers. They were greedy, improvident, extravagant, ready to denounce, and even disobey the Government on questions of pay and allowances. Such behaviour excited contempt and set a bad example for the sepoys. The word of the officer had lost its value, and the sepoy placed little trust in his promises. The instances of breach of faith were numerous. In fact, according to a retired officer of the Bengal Army "almost all the mutinies of India, whether in Bengal or elsewhere, have been more or less produced, or at least have had in some sort the initiative, from ourselves. There has usually been some departure from contract, some disregard of the feelings, health or convenience of the native soldiers." The illustrations are Java, Vellore, Barrackpur the troubles of 1843 and 1844 in the Bengal and Madras armies, and the mutiny in the Panjab (1849-50).

Composition of the Company's Armed Forces

So far as the armed forces were concerned, the stations under the Bengal Command were all affected. Among the armed forces of the Company which were organised in three commands, the Bengal Command was by far the largest. Its jurisdiction extended over a vast area, from the Bay of Bengal to the borders of Afghanistan. The whole area was placed in charge of a Commander-in-Chief under whom there were seven divisional commands. Under each division there were

several first and second class brigade areas commanded by brigadiers.

The Bengal Command consisted of 1,10,000 infantry, ten to twelve thousand cavalry and thirty thousand European troops of all arms. The composition of the Indian troops was one-eighth to one-tenth Muslim and the rest Hindu.

Of the divisional areas, Bengal was one and it had three main cantonments round Calcutta and three small stations on the fringes to keep a watch over Assam and the eastern hill chiefs. The main cantonments of Barrackpur, Berhampur and Dum Dum had five Indian infantry regiments between them, a corps of irregular cavalry, an Indian battery and a rifle depot guarded by a small detachment. The minor stations at Chittagong, Dacca, and Jalpaiguri possessed altogether six companies of Indian infantry.

Bihar constituted the second divisional area. Its headquarters were at Dinapur. It controlled seven contonments and disposed of five infantry and two irregular cavalry regiments, a European battalion, and one European artillery battalion. The North-Western Province formed two commands—Kanpur and Meerut—and possessed more than twenty cantonments. At least ten regiments were stationed in them with a considerable number of irregular cavalry, some Sikh troops, and a few artillery battalions together with ordnance depots.

Further west the concentration of troops increased precipitously. The area was divided into three commands—Sirhind, Lahore and Peshawar—with about twenty military stations. The number of Indian troops was more than thirty infantry regiments, a considerable strength of cavalry and artillery, altogether about 65,000 strong. Most of the European troops were detailed in the Panjab. Except for four battalions with a few European batteries stationed between Calcutta and Delhi, the bulk of the European force—over 15,000 men—was in the Panjab. From Meerut to Peshawar, there were more than nine regiments of European infantry with several troops of horse artillery and field batteries.

In Central India and Rajputana there were large Indian contingents of the Company's troops, some irregular cavalry and Indian field batteries, and troops of the Indian chiefs. There were about a dozen cantonments in the region. Gwalior was the largest station. It had a contingent of 8,000 troops, two cavalry regiments, ten infantry battalions, four companies of artillery. Jabalpur, Mhow and Nagod had one regiment each, stations with two infantry regiments each with cavalry and artillery. Jabalpur, Mhow and Nagod had one regiment each, and Deoli, Beawar, Erinpura and Kherwara had smaller units. Ajmer had an ammunition depot.

So far as communication and transport of the Bengal army was concerned, in the absence of railways, waterways constituted the main channel. The Ganga, the Jamuna and the Indus and their navigable tributaries were most important for northern India and therefore cantonments and arsenals were established along their courses.

In the composition of the Bengal army the upper class Hindus and Muslims preponderated. But this was not so in the Bombay and Madras armies. Under the Bombay command which included Sind, there were 23 cantonments and they accommodated 26,000 troops, besides some Baluch regiments. One-third of the troops consisted of northern Hindus and Muslims, one-third of the Marathas and the rest of the lower castes, Mahars chiefly. No upper caste Marathas, Brahmans, Prabhus or Saraswats were recruited.

The Madras army was recruited locally, and contained sepoys from many tribes and castes. As there was no warrior class in Madras and the Brahmans did not take to soldiering, the Madras army was largely composed of Hindus of the lower castes and Muslims, mostly north Indians. In Madras and Bombay their composition was one-third Muhammedan and two-thirds Hindu.

The Greased Cartridge

The part played by the greased cartridges in bringing about the revolt is unduly exaggerated. Major Bontein, commanding the depot of musketry at Dum Dum, testified

that even though the Indian soldiers were greatly agitated about the greased cartridges, when he paraded them, "at least two-thirds of the detachment immediately stepped to the front, including all the native commissioned officers. In a manner perfectly respectful they very distinctly stated their objections to the present method of preparing cartridges for the new rifled musket." General Low, Member of the Supreme Council, writing about the Irregular Infantry of Oudh, stated : "It appears to me that probably the main body of this regiment in refusing to bite these cartridges, did so refuse, not from any feeling of disloyalty or disaffection towards the Government or their officers, but from an unfeigned and sincere dread... that the act of biting them would involve a serious injury to their caste and to their fature respectability of character."

But the greased cartridge was only one among the numerous grievances of the sepoy. Its introduction added to his apprehensions and aggravated his excitement. But the fact is that in the conditions prevailing then, "the normal state of the Bengal Army was Mutiny." How could it be otherwise? The Indian sepoy was a pure mercenary. He joined the army partly because of his caste traditions and partly because the Indian armies which had provided him with his living in the past, had ceased to exist and the Company offered him regular pay and pension, and a profession to which he was accustomed. Victories of the Company's Army gave him a feeling of self-importance, and in the early days he was treated on terms of equality which tended to evoke a sense of personal loyalty and *camaraderie*. With changes in the system the situation changed for the worse, and estrangement grew between the European and the Indian.

The pride of the Indian was wounded. Royal families were humiliated. The nobility was divested of influence. The people lay prostrate before the might of the foreigner. The ancient seats of power were in ruins, the ancient ways and manners all in eclipse. New men of another race, alien in religion, language, culture, lorded over the sons of the soil and heaped contempt upon them. Is it surprising that both the civilian

and the soldier were exasperated and ready to take up arms against the foreign ruler? The country was ripe for rebellion.

Foreign rule by its very nature is repugnant to a conquered people. The British were aware of it. Sir John Shore had realised it when he wrote, "Whatever may be the benefit of the British system of government, the evil of foreign domination more than counterbalances all those benefits." Macaulay had said, "The heaviest of all yokes was the yoke of the stranger." John Stuart Mill, the philosopher postulated : "The government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality, but such a thing as government by one people over another does not exist. One people may keep another as a warren or preserve for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm, to be worked for the profit of its inhabitants; but if the good of the governed is the proper business of a Government, it is utterly impossible that a people should directly attend to it."

3 Jhansi and Lord Dalhousie

Jhansi lapsed to the Raj in May 1854 along with Jaloun. Both were brought under the supervision of Capt. W. C. Erskine, Commissioner of Saugor and Nerbudda territories at Jabalpur. A new superintendent of Jhansi and Jaloun, Capt. Alexander Skene, and deputy superintendent, a captain named Gordon, were placed under the authority of Erskine. Erskine in turn answered to Lieutenant Governor Auckland Colvin of the Northwest Provinces at Agra in the chain of command in the new official dispensation.

When Skene first arrived in Jhansi in late June 1854 to assume his new duties, rumours were circulating among the populace that the state would ultimately be restored to the adopted son of the maharaja. No doubt the Rani's many appeals to Fort William had helped to foster these rumours. The effect of these reports, Skene found, was "to unsettle the minds of the inhabitants," and he accordingly had Gordon issue a proclamation that the annexation of the state was total and irrevocable and calling on the inhabitants to "conduct themselves in every way as subjects of the British Government."

Many details of administration had to be settled following the lapse of Jhansi. The Rani was required to vacate her splendid fort, it having been deemed a public building that had lapsed along with the state. She was allowed, however, to keep the palace in town as her private residence. A pension of five thousand rupees per month was authorized for the

support of the Rani and her retinue, the sum originally recommended by Ellis and Malcolm. Other arrangements occasioned dispute among the officials involved. Revenue was a focal concern of the Raj everywhere in India, and Skene was ordered to submit correspondence regarding revenue and administration and to assume immediate charge of both. The problem was a matter of accounting: when should the Rani's collection of revenue cease and the East India Company's begin? Ellis, who remained in Jhansi until the transfer of Jhansi to the Northwest Provinces, disagreed with Malcolm over the precise date when the Rani's collections should cease. The disagreement arose because of a disparity in the methods of reckoning the fiscal year; British and Indian fiscal years did not coincide. Erskine said he was inclined to differ with Malcolm's definition of the official year and to agree with Ellis.

The first of May was finally fixed as the dividing point between revenue collected on the Rani's account and that collected on behalf of the Company. All disbursements made by Major Ellis between 1 May and the date of transfer to Captain Gordon had to be adjusted on "Major Ellis's responsibility." The new officials announced, moreover, that both Malcolm and Ellis had had only temporary control over Jhansi affairs that appointments made by them were subject to review.

British officials also failed to agree over arrangements for the Rani's support. Malcolm proposed that the private property of the late maharaja be given to his widow contingent on payment of her husband's debts. This suggestion infuriated Lakshmi. Even Dalhousie found Malcolm's suggestion unacceptable. "It is beyond the power of the Government," Dalhousie responded, "so to dispose of the property of the late Rajah, which by law will belong to the boy whom he adopted. The adoption if regularly made was good for the conveyance of private rights though not for the transfer of the principality."

Lakshmi at first refused to accept the property willed to Damodar Rao on the ground that she was required by Ellis to give security for it. Fort William ruled, when Hamilton inquired, that Ellis had been in error in requiring her to execute

a written agreement, and that it should be made over to her upon simple receipt, but that she should also be responsible for "the debts of the state, as far as the assets go." This condition was likewise unacceptable to the Rani, who argued that she should not be held responsible for debts of state, since the property in question was private. The debts were state debts, not personal debts contracted by herself, and the pension was for her personal support and maintenance. Angered, she initially refused the pension with its attached conditions and considered leaving Jhansi to return to her birthplace, Varanasi, to live.

Hamilton was asked by Lieutenant Governor Colvin to visit the Rani to urge her to accept the pension and to try to dissuade her from leaving Jhansi, "as her so doing would be most injurious to her Town." She received Sir Robert in her palace in full durbar, in the presence of Damodar, Moropant, and other of her advisers. Sir Robert found her "civil and polite, quite the lady, and easy in manner and in conversation." He did not comment on her appearance or detect any signs of hostility in her manner during this first interview. He wrote Sir John Kaye, "My impression was that she was a clever, strong-minded woman, well able to argue and too much for many."

Hamilton was accompanied during the long interview by the two new officers at Jhansi, Skene and Gordon. When Hamilton inquired if the Rani was planning to move to Varanasi, she pointed to Gordon, saying, "The Sahib *wishes* me to go Benares." She commented that Skene was a good man and her friend, but hinted that her feelings toward Gordon were not as friendly. Hamilton then asked if she intended to accept the pension. She replied that she could not, since it would mean acknowledging the lapse of Jhansi, something she could never do. In several fictional accounts she cries, "I will never give up my Jhansi" Hamilton then urged her to take the income from the pension, and she promised to consider the suggestion.

Hamilton noted that on one issue—that of the police entering the palace precincts—the Rani was very irate. She

threatened to leave Jhansi—apparently her chief bargaining ploy—if the police were allowed to enter her palace. Hamilton begged Lakshmi to remain until he could convey her views to Colvin and promised she would hear from him further. In his report to Colvin, Hamilton supported Lakshmi's view that the state debts were unrelated to her pension. He suggested that if this principle were recognized it was probable that she would prefer to remain in Jhansi but exempt from the jurisdiction of the magistrate. Hamilton's recommendation regarding state debts did not prevail with Colvin.

Hamilton again visited Jhansi during April 1855 on a tour of Inspection of "the seven houses of Bundelkhand" and received an invitation to call on the Rani. At this second meeting the Rani received Hamilton in the durbar room, but she observed purdah and remained seated behind a curtain. A year after his first meeting with the Rani, Hamilton noted no change in her. "She talked very cleverly and clearly." She made it plain that she was hurt by Colvin's decision to make her responsible for the maharaja's old debts. Hamilton expressed sympathy, feeling she had been harshly if legally treated in the matter.

The Rani made no mention during the interview of her appeal regarding recognition of her husband's adopted heir, which by now she must have seen as a hopeless cause. Instead, she thanked Hamilton for not placing her under the jurisdiction of British courts and police. Her purpose in requesting the meeting with Hamilton, according to him, was to request that she be placed under his authority as governor-general's agent for Central India rather than another arrangement, a "degradation" in her view. She must have realized that she might expect better treatment under Hamilton than under Colvin. He was favourably inclined regarding this request and wrote that he felt it would not be inconsistent with the decision to exempt her from the jurisdiction of the government's courts. He again noted that otherwise she might leave Jhansi for Varanasi, a possibility viewed by the people of Jhansi with "great sorrow and apprehension, as such a step would entail a serious loss on the town, in which she was the cause of a good deal of money being circulated."

Lakshmi pleaded earnestly, leaning forward against the curtain so that Hamilton was able to see her despite the barrier that separated them. He also saw that she was completely alone this time, without attendants of either sex. He was impressed with the firmness of her appeal and assured her that the government had no desire to degrade the widow of someone who had held so high a position and been so faithful to the government. He recalled later that he urged her to continue to maintain her high reputation. It is interesting that Hamilton felt his advice on this topic might carry weight with her.

Hamilton's favourable report on his visit to the Rani continued by recounting what Skene and Gordon in Jhansi had said of the Rani's conduct. They had assured Hamilton that the Rani had responded in a very satisfactory way to various requests they had made in carrying out the arrangements for the resumption of her state. She had vacated the fort without protest. This suggests that none of the officials directly concerned with Jhansi had any sense that she might be resentful at Dalhousie's decision. This is of particular interest in view of accounts by contemporary British historians that she was harboring resentment and nursing grudges.

The Rani's wish that she be put under the authority of Hamilton was interpreted by Erskine at Jabalpur as "either oriental flattery, or possibly she thought she would have a better chance of having the State restored to her or her adopted child." Erskine agreed with Colvin that this arrangement would cause confusion, conflict of jurisdiction, inability of magistrates to pursue criminals if in the palace, and would further lower Superintendent Skene and Deputy Gordon in the eyes of the people of Jhansi. Erskine suggested that he, himself, be appointed agent to the governor-general in Bundelkhand and Rewah and that Skene be made his political assistant, combining the Revenue and Police departments.

Hamilton and Erskine were vying for authority over Jhansi. Hamilon's solution to the disagreement was to combine the agency at Bundelkhand and Rewah with the agency for Central India at Indore, to put both agencies under himself, and create a political assistant post at Rewah, where Ellis had been

posted. He argued that such an arrangement would be more economical, pointing out, too, that communications between Indore and both Jhansi and Gwalior were direct via a well-used dak road. Malcolm was out of the picture, having been transferred from Gwalior to Baroda by this time. It is noteworthy that both the Rani and Hamilton showed willingness to mediate at this juncture. It is also tempting to conjecture what the result might have been had Hamilton's suggestion been accepted regarding supervision of Jhansi.

The grudging nature of measures taken for the Rani's support was apparent in areas other than her pension and inheritance of property. Erskine, for example, proposed that she be given grassland for her use for life but added, "I see no reason why she should have a firewood preserve also, as fuel can be purchased in any quantity in the town of Jhansie." Skene had suggested she be given a firewood preserve. Jhansi grasslands had been the private property of the maharaja and were claimed as such by Lakshmi. Erskine had also directed that a promissory note from the Court of Directors to the maharaja be cancelled, though Ellis had protested this action. State buildings were pronounced state property and therefore considered to have lapsed to the government, except for the palace.

Several official measures taken after the lapse offended the religion of the Rani and the people of Jhansi. Refusal to allow Lakshmi to draw on the maharaja's trust for Damodar Rao for the boy's ceremonial investiture with the sacred thread was an affront to all Hindus. Another measure particularly galling to the Rani as to all Hindus was the lifting of the ban on cow slaughter. Before November 1854 the slaughter of cattle had been strictly banned in Jhansi. The prohibition was common to all Hindu native states at the time and remains a factor in Indian politics today. After the lapse this restriction was removed over the Rani's protest, whereupon she and her subjects protested again. Although these pleas were referred through several echelons of Company officials, they were ultimately rejected, and cow slaughter was allowed by Fort William. It has been suggested that one possible motive on

the part of the government may have been to curry favour with the Muslims. If so, the attempt was singularly unsuccessful; Muslims played a prominent part in events of the uprising at Jhansi.

Yet another offense to religion related to the support of the temple of Mahalakshmi east of the town wall, a temple closely associated with the Newalkar family and frequented regularly by the Rani for worship. Some years previously an ancestor of Gangadhar Rao had made over the revenue of two villages for the support of this temple, and the arrangement had been continued by Gangadhar Rao. Gordon, the new deputy commissioner, recommended that the arrangement be continued. He was overruled, however, and it was ordered that these two villages be resumed along with the rest of the state. Lakshmibai's protests were futile. The resumption of these villages was about to take effect when the insurgence erupted at Jhansi. These measures were a significant factor in fostering wider popular resentment. Their abhorrence to Hindus must have fanned the fear widespread among Hindu and Muslim alike that the people were about to be forcibly converted to Christianity.

As late as 6 January, 1856 the Rani was vainly persevering in her pleas to the governor-general. All her appeals had been ignored. Her husband's debts had been deducted from her pension; the ban on cow slaughter had been lifted; revenue from the two villages supporting the temple was being resumed; and she was not allowed to draw on the trust for her son's sacred thread ceremony.

The previous November, Hamilton had forwarded to her a confirmation of the resumption order from the Court of Directors in London. In her response Lakshmibai referred to the order as "only a confirmation of my bad fortune." She cited her own letter of May 1855 to the governor-general in which she requested to be placed under Hamilton's authority and explained that her only motivation had been the preservation of honour and name. "The delay in the same being complied with . . . .assures me of the influence of my

adverse luck." Nothing else could explain the rejection of such a request by one who could "without any difficulty grant a chief help or create a King." She referred again to her personal honour and the record of obedience of her family to British authority. "You are well aware that as a fallen party, whose state had been lost, I have stretched out my supplicant hands for the protection and favour of this Government," she remarked. She recalled Hamilton's visit to Jhansi and his advice to her to accept the stipend. She recollected too, that her only desire was to avoid disgrace, "being looked down upon" by neighbouring chiefs. She expressed her hope that the loss of her estate would not bring with it the loss of the honours due to her rank. "I have been exempted from the jurisdiction of the Courts. I pray to be relieved of the degradation which separation from the Agency must involve." The financial arrangements were for her, "a disgrace which renders it quite impossible . . . to live from day to day." Fort William remained silent.

Several features of these exchanges are especially noteworthy. One is the tone of the Rani's appeal. She consistently portrays herself as helpless, at the mercy of Hamilton and Fort William, at the same time referring repeatedly to her honour and status as widow of a chief. Another point is her curious mention twice in the 1856 communication of her adverse fate, a conviction that was becoming increasingly prominent in her consciousness and calculations. Still a further concern of the Rani that also gains significance in light of subsequent events was her desire to avoid being looked down on by neighbouring states and chiefs, who were, she said, watching events in Jansi. And finally is the fact that the governor-general continued to ignore her many pleas. All these issues, including the repeated failure of government to respond to specific points in her appeals, must have had a cumulative impact on the Rani's sentiments regarding the East India Company. That she was still addressing the British in early 1856, despite the rejection of all previous entreaties, is also a matter of some importance in assessing her role in the Jhansi uprising of the following year.

What emerges in the Rani's response to the lapse is a dogged, unrelenting determination to retrieve her state or, at the very least, to have her case heard in Fort William and possibly London as well. Instead the list of measures taken by Fort William in disregard of her protests merely lengthened. It is no wonder that Englishmen of the day, when contemplating this list, expressed the view that the Rani must be harboring resentments. Yet British officials at Jhansi anticipated no problem there in early 1857. As was generally the case in most of India among the hundreds of officials and army officers who manned the apparatus of the East India Company, complacency prevailed as May of 1857 approached.

4 The Revolt and its Progress

So the explosion occurred and it convulsed the whole country. Its shock was felt in every region. Such a widespread political upheaval was a new phenomenon in Indian history. In the past, conquerors had come, dynasties had toppled over, but only the surface of life had been disturbed. The political change ensuing from a conquest was often localised. If the Panjab was rocked, the rest of the country remained quiet, as happened during the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. The British conquered Bengal but the overthrow of Sirajud Daulah hardly caused a ripple in Lucknow, Delhi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Poona or Madras. The risings of the Jats in the Doab or of the Sikhs in the Panjab remained without an echo elsewhere. The Maratha fight against Aurangzeb was a lone struggle against a mighty empire whose echoes were but faintly heard outside Maharashtra. The risings and outbreaks during the first half of the nineteenth century remained isolated episodes.

But far different was the character of the uprising of 1857. Now the greater part of the country was directly or indirectly involved in the defiance of British authority. The excitement was general and extended all over the country. In some parts the rebellion took the form of an open and bloody war involving millions of men and thousands of soldiers, in other parts there were armed risings in different places and in still other civil disturbances occurred. But there was no part of India which did not cause anxiety to the rulers, and where there was no apprehension of revolt.

Northern India from Bengal to the Panjab was in open rebellion. In other provinces, although the peculiar conditions of the respective regions prevented the discontent from breaking out into a general rising, nevertheless, disquiet prevailed. The only class which did not support the rebellion was the new middle class which had received western education; but, their number was small and they were largely confined to the Presidency towns. About them Trevelyan writes : "Instead of thinking of cutting the throats of the English, they were aspiring to sit with them on the grand jury or on the bench of magistrates. Instead of speculating on Panjab or Nepalese politics, they were discussing the advantages of printing and free discussion, in oratorical English speeches at debating societies which they had established among themselves."

Under the circumstances, educated Bengal did not respond to the call of revolt. But the army which consisted of upper India sepoys rebelled. On the 29th March, 1857, at Barrackpur, which is 16 miles from Calcutta, Mangal Pande broke the lines and called upon his comrades to strike a blow for their religion. In the succeeding weeks and months there were repeated apprehensions of outbreak at Calcutta and the Europeans were in a state of prolonged panic. Outside Calcutta there were risings and alarm in many places, for example, Birbhum, Bankura, Jessore, Krishnagar, Malda, Dacca, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Tipperah, Sylhet, Chittagong, Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

Assam

In Assam since 1833 events had moved fast. Purandar Singh, the last King of Assam, was forced to surrender his dominions. Under the British administration which was clamped upon them, the people groaned under oppression. Then Diwan Maniram Dutta in 1853 memorialised the Government pointing out: "In the Shastras it is written, that rulers ought to practise righteousness and govern their subjects with justice while studying their welfare. These are not now done, but the very contrary; and for such sins and negligences, due rewards will be meted out even in a frontier state," and

demanded the restoration of the former native administration. But the appeal was turned down both by the local officials and the Governor-General.

Maniram was in Calcutta when the Revolt of 1857 broke out. Angered by the repulses he had received, he resolved to throw in his lot with the rebels. He addressed letters to the members of the old nobility and they resolved to rise on the eighth day of the moon in 1857, and place Kandarpesvar Singh, grandson of the last King of Assam, on the throne.

But the plot was divulged through the carelessness of a messenger and the Government took immediate steps to crush it. Kandarpesvar Singh was captured in his palace, and Maniram arrested in Calcutta. Assam was combed out for patriots. Maniram and Piali Barua were tried and hanged together on February 26, 1858. The others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and the attempt of the Assamese nobility to regain their independence was crushed.

Orissa

In Orissa conditions were different. After its annexation by the British in 1803, two-thirds of the Oriya Zamindars were completely wiped out and replaced by Bengali Zamindars. The cultivating class was also hard hit, and among them the Paiks who had formed the peasant militia of the Orissa rulers, were subject to extortion and suppression by the underlings of the Company's Government. For decades, Orissa had been in turmoil as the chiefs of Goomsur, Baud and Angul defied the suzerainty of the British. The Khonds, an aboriginal tribe, who inhabited the region were another aggrieved factor.

In the year 1857, the dissatisfied elements joined hands and trouble began. The princes of Sambalpur, Surendra Sahi and Ujjal Sahi, who had been held as prisoners in the Hazaribagh jail, were now rescued by the rebellious sepoys and took the lead. The flag of rebellion was hoisted and the authority of the British Government challenged. The whole country in the neighbourhood of Sambalpur passed temporarily into the hands of the insurgents, and it was not

till 1862 that Surendra Sahi surrendered and was deported. Even then the landlords and ryots petitioned the Government to restore him to the gaddi.

In the Zamindaris of Parlakimedi, the Savaras, an aboriginal tribe of Ganjam, led by Radha Krishna Dandasena rose in rebellion. There was revolt of the Kutiya Khonds too.

Chhota Nagpur

In Chhota Nagpur, then a part of Bengal, there were risings in the districts of Palamau, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Singhbhum, Manbhum, and Sambalpur. The situation became so tense that the British officers had an "arduous task of repelling attack, of checking petty risings, of suppressing pretenders to power, of hunting down armed freebooters, of recovering places which had been surprised, and of avenging the injuries."

The participants in these troubles were the aboriginal tribes and landowners. The aim of the rebellious troops and disaffected zamindars was to join their forces with those of Babu Kunwar Singh. The Kols of Singhbhum led by the Raja of Porahat, and the Chero and Khairwar tribes of Palamau rose against the British and carried on guerilla warfare for months.

Northern India

In the vast plain which stretches from the border of Bengal to the Panjab the revolt was widespread. Even those who were inclined to belittle its range and compass, were constrained to admit that in this region at least the rising assumed the form of a popular movement. In Oudh, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, the Allahabad, Agra, Meerut divisions and western Bihar, "the great bulk of the people rose against British rule," and "the risings of the people and the Sipahis were almost simultaneous in point of time."

Duff judged its nature correctly when he wrote in his letter to Dr. Tweedie on 10th December, 1857: "That it is a rebellion, and a rebellion, too, of no recent or mushroom growth, every fresh revelation tends more and more to confirm—a rebellion which has been able to array the Hindu and Mohammedan in

an unnatural confederacy, a rebellion which is now manifestly nurtured and sustained by the whole population of Oudh, and, directly or indirectly, sympathised with and assisted by well-nigh half that of the neighbouring provinces."

Bihar

In the eastern part of this region, *viz.*, Bihar, the first signs of rebellion appeared at Rohini in the Santhal Pargana where Indian troops attacked their officers. Soon the whole of Bihar, which had been simmering with discontent, was in open rebellion. In the northern districts across the Ganga from Purnea in the east to Champaran everywhere the smouldering embers started to burst into flames. The districts of Shahabad, Patna and Gaya were the main centres where the revolt was at its hottest. Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur and after his death, his brother Amar Singh commanded the rebel forces. For a time British authority was supplanted in parts of Bihar.

The insurrection began in the sepoy army, but soon spread among the civil population too. A British army officer wrote, "At first, apparently, a mere military mutiny, it speedily changed its character and became a national insurrection. The Rajpoot villages in Bihar, those in the districts of Benares, Azimgarh, Goruckpore, in the entire Doab, comprising the divisions of Allahabad, Kanpur, Meerut and Agra, in the provinces of Rohilkhand and Oudh, shook off our rule and declared war against us." Samuells, Commissioner of the Patna Division, reported to the Bengal Government that the "movement in Shahabad assumed all the dignity of a national revolt." Tayler had informed the Government that "the people of the districts to the west of Chupra are in open revolt."

The Hindus and Muslims of Bihar fought shoulder to shoulder. They had co-operated against the Government in 1845-46. When the outbreak of 1857 occurred they maintained their common front. This unity did not quite suit the tastes of the rulers and they liked to think of it as a Muslim conspiracy which utilised Hindu grievances. But there is no doubt that in Bihar as well as other places in the country, the people of the two religious communities were up in arms. In the case of Bihar

this was confirmed by Tayler, Commissioner of Patna, who had already suggested that the old police force should be disbanded and a new force raised in which "no Rajpoots, Brahmins or Mahomedans are to be admitted." In view of the general character of the revolt in Bihar, the whole of northern and southern Bihar was placed under martial law.

Both the Maulavis and the Pandits encouraged the rebels. In the Patna division the Muslim leaders like Pir Ali fomented trouble. Both Rajput and Muslim zamindars joined their ranks. The Maulavis of Sadikpur, the heirs of Namdar Khan, the zamindar of Narhat, and the Hindu and Muslim landholders of Nawada, Jahanabad, Rajgir, Amarthu, Amana, etc. acted in concert.

The outstanding leader of Bihar was the aged Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur, in the Shahabad district. He was the central figure of the movement. His courage, organising skill and brilliant strategy impressed even his enemies. All the groups, those led by Pir Ali, Yusuf Ali, Imadud Din and others, and the partisans of Delhi, namely, Ali Karim, Waris Ali, etc., co-operated with him. When the troops rebelled at Dinapur they shouted slogans in favour of the Padshah of Delhi and proclaimed Kunwar Singh their Commander. Kunwar Singh operated from Bihar and extended his operations to Rewa, Banda and Kalpi, and aided Nana Sahib in the fight against the British in the Kanpur district. From Kanpur he proceeded to Lucknow and then returned to Bihar, where he died after a gallant fight in April 1858.

Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh (then known as the North-Western Provinces and Oudh) the spirit of rebellion was most fierce. This was the homeland of the sepoys, the region which constituted the heart of the Mughal empire. Here were the holy places of the Hindus and their famous centres of ancient and medieval culture—Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Mathura, Ajodhya, Prayag and Banaras, whose names evoked memories of an unforgettable past. With them were associated the ardent aspirations and the bright achievements of the Indian people.

The Red Fort of Delhi stood as the symbol of India's bygone power and glory.

Each one of the eight divisions of Uttar Pradesh was seriously perturbed and in many areas British rule ceased to function. Restlessness and agitation were widespread, but the outbreak in Meerut on May 10, 1857, was the signal for a general uprising all over the province. In some places where there were no troops of the Company the civil populace took the lead; in other places the Indian sepoy regiments rebelled first and were immediately followed by the civilians.

Among the civilians the leaders came from the class of landholders. In the western parts, Gujars, Jats and Ranghars, etc., were prominent; but Rajputs—Chauhans, Bais, Bachgotis, Gaurs, Panwars, etc., who were scattered throughout the country—were the main support of the movement. The Rohillas in Rohilkhand and the Muslim zamindars all over the province joined and, in fact, constituted the spearhead of the revolt. Maulavis and Pandits played an important role in rousing the people both in the towns and in the countryside as they did in Bihar.

Everywhere the bands of rebels in considerable numbers defied British authority. Apart from the sepoy army, the numerous soldiers in the employ of the princes and chiefs and the retainers of landholders joined in the rebellion. Metcalfe estimated a force between 40,000 and 60,000 in Delhi during the siege. In Kanpur some 58,000 followed the flag of Nana Sahib; among them about 20,000 were Sepoys. Khan Bahadur Khan commanded a force of several thousand Rajputs and Rohillas. In Fyzabad district Rana Beni Madho Singh of Shankarpur had a personal following of 15,000, and there were nearly 85,000 rebels fighting against the British. In the Gorakhpur division 51,000 men led by Gajadhar Singh defied the Government from the jungles of the Tarai. The Nazim of Gorakhpur, Muhammad Hasan Khan, had a force of ten to twelve thousand men of whom half were sepoys. It would not be an exaggeration if the total number of active fighters was reckoned at over half a million men, which is indeed a very large number.

It is true that not all the landlords joined the revolt and that quite a number remained loyal to the British or sat on the fence. At the same time, there is no doubt that a considerable number of them threw themselves into the struggle. There were examples of Mir Muhammad Hasan of Gorakhpur and of Mehndi Hasan of Sultanpur, whose activities inspired many disaffected chiefs, both Hindu and Muslim, to join the movement. Much disturbance was caused particularly in Bahraich, Gonda, Churda and Chandausi, etc., etc. In Banda, "there was not a village that had not more or less committed itself."

Delhi

The tocsin of revolt having been sounded at Meerut, on the 10th May, 1857, the rebel troops marched to Delhi and appealed to Bahadur Shah to resume his lawful position as the sovereign and Emperor of India. In spite of the terrible risks involved, he overcame his early reluctance and accepted the crown of thorns. The gesture had an electric effect. The pretensions of the Company were exposed. In law and morals, the Company stood condemned as a usurper, a rebel against the sovereign who had granted to it the office of tax-collector, *i.e.*, the *Diwani* of Bengal. The Company was now condemned as the repudiator of its allegiance and the perpetrator of violence against its master. A wave of defiance of British rule and of determination to end it, spread from place to place and in every direction. Its effects were felt in every cantonment where there were Indian sepoys, as well as in many towns and villages all over India.

In the central region of northern India the insurrection became a mass movement. The whole of Uttar Pradesh including Oudh, many districts in Bihar, Chhota Nagpur, Central India and Malwa, Bundelkhand and the Central Provinces, were up in arms. War and violence prevailed everywhere. Passion and fury were let loose, and gruesome atrocities were committed. Delhi was the centre towards which all eyes in this region turned. The assumption of authority by Bahadur Shah furnished a rallying point to all those who endeavoured to exterminate British dominion. The

first impulse of the rebel sepoy regiments was to march to Delhi, and the rebel leaders proclaimed themselves regents or deputies of the Mughal Emperor.

The events of the siege of Delhi from May 11th to September 20th when the city fell into British hands, constitute a mixed story of heroism and treachery, of mounting difficulties of civil administration and military operations, of divided counsels among the chief advisers, and of rock-like firmness of some of the leaders. Amidst them all flits the figure of Bahadur Shah, solicitous for unity and order in the city and anxious for vigorious measures to raise the siege. A council was organised to discharge governmental functions and to take decisions on all civil and military matters. It consisted of the representatives of the army and the civilian authority.

In the beginning the Mughal princes were in command, but when early in July, Bakht Khan arrived from Bareilly, he was entrusted with the chief command. But the fight was between two unequal sides—one well-organised and with daily increasing resources; the other confined within narrow limits, led by inexperienced administrators and sepoys, and with means of warfare fast depleting. In spite of all these handicaps, Delhi put up a stout resistance and made repeated attacks on the investing force. It converted the besiegers themselves at one time into the besieged. But at last large reinforcements from the Panjab turned the scales and Delhi surrendered.

The fate of the surrounding districts was linked with Delhi. In the district of Gurgaon the chiefs and the people had thrown in their lot with the Emperor. Hissar and Rohtak were in revolt in sympathy with Delhi, and shared its fortunes.

Revolts Outside Delhi

From Delhi the flames of rebellion spread in widening circles to the whole country. At first they enveloped the districts in the neighbourhood of the capital. On the 11th and 12th May there were risings in Sardhana and Baghpat. Roorkee was freed on the 13th May, in Bulandshahr a Mughal governor was

appointed on the 26th May. Muzaffarnagar was in revolt on May 14th, Aligarh on May 20th, and Saharanpur on. June 30th. Thus most of the westernmost divisions of the Province were in the throes of rebellion. In Rohilkhand the revolt started in May, and Khan Bahadur Khan took over the administration on the 31st May. The outbreak in Bareilly was followed by risings in Rampur, Muradabad, Amroha, Bijnore, Badayun, and Shahjahanpur. In Farrukhabad the sepoys accepted the rule of Nawab Tafazzul Husain Khan, and Fatehgarh and Sitapur also recognised his authority.

Agra

The Agra division consisted of the districts of Agra, Mathura, Mainpuri and Etawah. Agra was the capital of the Province and the Lieutenant-Governor resided there. Signs of the storm appeared as soon as the news from Delhi arrived. The incidents in Aligarh and Bulandshahr led to revolt in Mainpuri on May 23rd and in Etawah on the 20th, and Agra soon fell into the hands of the rebels. Bharatpur troops mutinied early in July. The rebels defeated the British forces at Sassiah, near Agra, on 8th July and forced the Lieutenant-Governor and the British residents in Agra to take refuge in the fort. Hathras, Mathura and the neighbourhood were in open hostility before the end of May.

The Allahabad division was early affected, and here both sides were guilty of some of the most reprehensible deeds. In the beginning of June there was a rising in the city of Allahabad. Soon, however, when Maulavi Liaqat Ali took over the command the whole countryside was in flames. "This man, a weaver by caste, and by trade a schoolmaster, had gained some respect in his village by his excessive sanctity; and on the spread of the rebellion, the Muhammedan zamindars of the pergunnah Chail, ready to follow any leader, placed this man at their head, and marched to the city, proclaiming him Governor of the district, in the name of King of Delhi." Fatehpur, Banda and Hamirpur soon joined the revolt.

Kanpur

But Kanpur which was the headquarters of a military division of the Company's army became the scene of revolting

deeds of blood-curdling virulence. There was excitement among the sepoys since 14th May, and they were noticed sending away their families to their villages. The outbreak was expected on 24th May, the day of the Id festival. Actually it occurred on the 4th of June, when the rebels seized the treasury, opened the gaol, took possession of the magazine and the public offices, and started to march towards Delhi. Nana Sahib was chosen leader, and Azimullah was his chief adviser. They had gone as far as Kalyanpur when the programme was altered and the return to Kanpur was ordered. The rebels attacked Wheeler's camp and obliged the British troops to surrender after three weeks' siege. Nana Sahib was proclaimed the Peshwa.

Jhansi

Bundelkhand had been a part of the Maratha dominion. It included Jhansi and Banda—both under Maratha princes. In 1854, Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi died without an heir, and Dalhousie in contravention of the treaty of 1817 annexed the principality. The widowed Rani Lakshmi Bai, remonstrated without effect. Feelings were further embittered when the grants to the temples were stopped. Frustration led to desperation. On June 4, the sepoys incited by Lachman Rao, a Brahman in the service of the Rani, began to hurl defiance at their officers, and committed violence and murder. The Rani was proclaimed the head of the State. She provided a spirited lead to the rebels and fought heroically against the British forces, meeting her death on the battlefield.

The Nawab of Banda, a scion of the Peshwa's house, threw in his lot with the revolutionaries and lost his estate.

Banaras

Banaras was the easternmost division of the North-Western Provinces. It was not only the sacred place of pilgrimage for the Hindus and the seat of the Maharajah, but it was also the residence of some members of the royal family of Delhi. Early in May the British officials mooted plans to retreat to Chunar but as tranquillity was not disturbed the plans were dropped. But on 21st of May insurrection broke out. On 4th of June the

sepoys were disarmed, and this led immediately to a mutiny. Martial law was proclaimed, but the rural districts were abandoned to the rebels. "A great movement from within was beginning to make itself felt upon the surface of rural society."

Azamgarh was already in flames. In Jaunpur an outbreak took place on 5th June and the Sikh Regiment from Ludhiana took part in it. The sepoys in Gorakhpur refused to obey orders on June 6th. On the following day the prisoners attempted to force open the jail gates, and the sepoys planned to capture the treasury. But soon after the arrival of the Gurkhas their plans were frustrated and they had to surrender arms. But the district remained in turmoil, for Ghazipur was in revolt, and the sepoys at Singahi had broken out. Early in August the situation worsened and the British were forced to abandon Gorakhpur. Then as a result of the whirlwind campaign of Kunwar Singh, Azamgarh had also to be evacuated again.

Oudh and Siege of Lucknow

Oudh after annexation was most unhappy due to the rapacity of the British officers. The charge against them was that they "had turned the stately palaces of Lakhnao into stalls and kennels, that delicate women, the daughters or the companions of kings, had been sent adrift, homeless and helpless, that treasure-houses had been violently broken open and despoiled, that the private property of the royal family had been sent to the hammer, and that other vile things had been done very humiliating to the king's people, but far more disgraceful to our own." Canning's efforts to institute an enquiry into the allegations were rendered nugatory by his representative at Lucknow. Thereupon discontent deepened.

The deposition and exile of Wajid Ali Shah caused profound resentment. Nor were men wanting who possessed the capacity to exploit the situation. Among them the foremost was Maulavi Ahmad Ullah Shah, who in the winter of 1856-57, toured the northern provinces and roused the people for a holy war. He is reported to have addressed large meetings

in Lucknow, and other districts of Oudh. Nana Sahib and Azimullah also visited Lucknow.

On the 30th of April there was a show of disobedience to other districts of Oudh. Nana Sahib and Azimullah also visited were on the verge of mutiny, but were disarmed. The news from Delhi gave a warning to the British and they immediately took necessary precautions. In the last week of May the storm burst, and on the 30th started the insurrection of the sipahis. The flames engulfed Lucknow and soon spread to Sitapur (3rd June), Muhammadi (4th June), Lakhimpur Kheri (4th June), Faizabad (8th June), Bahraich (9th June), Sultanpur (9th June), and Gonda (10th June). Thus, before the end of the month there was hardly a district in Oudh which was not in the hands of the insurgents.

In Lucknow Birjis Qadr, the eleven-year-old son of Wajid Ali Shah, was declared *Wali* under the regency of his mother Hazrat Mahal. The administration was conducted by a committee consisting of Hindu and Muslim advisers. They found that the British had fortified the Residency where they awaited the arrival of a relieving force. The revolutionaries' strategy consisted in preventing such forces from entering Lucknow and starving the besieged to surrender. The struggle for the Residency which commenced in the middle of June 1857 continued with varying fortune till March 21, 1858, when at last the British troops occupied Lucknow. Maulavi Ahmad Ullah Shah continued to fight bravely till the very end. Hazrat Mahal riding on an elephant encouraged her army by her presence on the field of battle. When Lucknow was lost, Maulavi Ahmad Ullah Shah started guerilla warfare, marching from place to place, sometimes fighting in Rohilkhand and then appearing in Oudh. When, however, he had established himself at Muhammadi, he was treacherously killed by the Raja of Powain. Begum Hazrat Mahal refused to surrender, and fighting her pursuers escaped into Nepal.

In Fyzabad, which was then the most important town of Oudh after Lucknow, there was a garrison consisting of the 22nd Regiment of the native infantry, a squadron of 15th irregular cavalry and a horse battery of native artillery. The

garrison threw off its allegiance. It was joined by revolutionaries from Azamgarh and Banaras and supported by the talukdars. Maulavi Ahmad Ullah Shah supplied the inspiration to the movement. The rebels fought with great courage against heavy odds, but after the fall of Lucknow their resistance died down.

In short, when the revolt commenced the British Government was almost paralysed. The entire Doab repudiated its authority. But unfortunately lack of co-operation among the leaders of the revolt and their inability to organise a single system of administration for the whole of the province, deprived them of the fruits of their revolutionary zeal.

Outside the Gangetic valley and towards the west there were various centers of trouble for the British.

The Panjab

The outbreak in Meerut on 10th May, the march of the sepoys to Delhi on the 11th and the assumption of independent authority by Bahadur Shah, created an immediate and stupendous crisis in the affairs of the Panjab. The Panjab had been annexed to the British dominion only recently and it was difficult to foretell how the defeated Sikh Sardars and disbanded Sikh soldiers would react. The attitude of the Afghans, too, was of vital concern to the British. Peshawar and the frontier territory which Maharaja Ranjit Singh had seized from the Afghans had passed under British rule on the overthrow of the Sikh kingdom. The Afghans might be tempted to take advantage of British embarrassment to try to regain the lost territory. The embers of the *Jihad* movement which Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli had started were still aglow in the frontier and it was easy to fan them into a raging fire. Besides, there were turbulent elements among the tribes, for instance, the Ranghars on the western and the hillmen in the eastern parts of the province. The people of Hissar, Rewari and Gurgaon were hostile.

In the Upper Provinces the spearhead of the revolt were the Hindustani sepoy regiments. In the Panjab also there was a large concentration of them. These were all crack troops

which had won renown in many a battle. But they were suspected of sympathizing with the plans of insurrection which were brewing.

Thus the situation in the Panjab was most critical. But the Sikh chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej states were staunch in their support of the British, and the Muslims of the western districts also extended help. Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir had been "cajoled into active allegiance," and the fate of the British in the Panjab was at his mercy. The old Sikh nobility had been stunned by its total defeat and was in a state of rapid decay. There were no great landlords in the Panjab, because "neither the Muhammadan empire, nor the Pathan conquerors, nor the later Sikh rulers, ever allowed the local chiefs such power as belonged to the Taluqdars of Oudh or the Zamindars of Bengal; consequently, they never grew into landlords." The disbanded Sikh soldiery was leaderless and their appeals to the Panjab chiefs for support went unheeded. The years of peace had been utilised by a corps of able British officers to turn the hostility of the people into an appreciation of British rule. They had also taken the precaution to disarm the population.

So far as the Afghans were concerned, their ruler Dost Muhammad was won over by gold. To him "love of English money was stronger than hatred of the English race."

Then although the number of Hindustani sepoys was considerable, the European infantry, cavalry and artillery was proportionately large. Of the total number of 59,656 soldiers stationed in the province, the Hindustanis or Purbias (chiefly regulars) were 35,900, the Panjabis (irregulars) 13,430 and the Europeans 10,326. There was in addition a military police force of about 9,000. Among the Hindustani regulars there were some Panjabis. Most of the European corps were massed either in Simla and Ambala or in the Peshawar valley.

But the factor which helped the British most was the lack of a definite aim and unity of counsel among the Indian revolutionaries. The British officers knew from intercepted correspondence "that the whole mine of revolt had been laid with deep and wary cunning." So immediately on receipt of

the information of the rising at Meerut on the 10th May they acted with energy and resolution. On the morning of the following day the entire Indian army, consisting of two infantry regiments and two squadrons of light cavalry, was ordered to the parade ground and disarmed. Lahore was saved and an example was set.

On the other hand, the appeal of Taj-ud-din, a rebel leader of the Panjab, to Emperor Bahadur Shah on 29th May, 1857, evoked no response. He wrote a letter describing the conditions in the Panjab after 10th May and pointed out that all the Hindustani troops were eager to join his forces, that the Panjab Chiefs were hesitant, and the hot weather made it difficult for the Europeans to undergo the rigours of a campaign. He was sure that if an army of five or six thousand troops was despatched under a capable commander, the whole of the Panjab, including Peshawar, could be cleared of the British.

The bold manoeuvre of the British officers at Lahore was immediately followed in all other military stations—Mian Mir, Phillaur, Gobindgarh, Ferozepur, Jullundar, Kangra, Multan, Peshawar, Naushera, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Sialkot, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur. With the exception of the regiment at Khelat-i-Ghilzai Hindustani troops at all other stations were disarmed and disbanded. The order of surrender of arms under the threat of the rifles of the British infantry find the guns of their artillery was irresistible.

But it was far from a walk-over. There was an *emeute* in the 9th Irregular Cavalry, a regiment which had won renown in Afghanistan. It was regarded so reliable as to be despatched for service against Delhi. But soon it was found to be in sympathy with the Indian cause and was ordered back to the Panjab. When it reached Kalabagh it rebelled. The leader Vazir Khan was "the oldest and most distinguished Risaldar in the Regiment." The rebels were overtaken opposite Jhang and the gallant Risaldar and his men were all slain.

At Mian Mir the Indian cavalry refused to surrender their saddles and on the morrow of disarmament went off to Ferozepur accompanied by 1,400 sepoys of the disarmed

regiments. They fought with the Europeans and killed one hundred of them.

The disarming of the sepoys at Mian Mir sent a thrill of fear amidst the Hindustani troops in the Panjab and they all became disaffected. Many of them found themselves helpless. But some resisted. They left their barracks with the intention ultimately of reaching Delhi. But Delhi was far away; they were pursued and destroyed. Brutal punishment was inflicted on the 26th Native Infantry. Two hundred and eighty-two of its men were captured in flight, and conveyed to Ajnala where it was decided that "they should all die." "Ten by ten the sepoys were called forth. Their names having been taken down in succession, they were pinioned, linked together, and marched to execution, a firing-party being in readiness." Thus two hundred and thirty-seven marched to death, many in the most strict calmness, some singing and dancing. The remaining forty-five refused to come out of the bastion in which they had been imprisoned. When however the doors were forced open, "they were nearly all dead."

The Hindustani army ceased to exist as a fighting force. Their place was taken by an equal number of newly recruited regiments of the Sikhs, Afridis, Khataks and Mohmands. But the Panjab's troubles were not confined to the army. In Kulu hills Raja Pratap Singh and his brother Vir Singh headed a rising but they were arrested, tried and executed. The sepoys of the disbanded regiments, the 14th Native Infantry of Jhelum, the 46th of Sialkot and the 26th of Mian Mir, who had escaped to the Jammu hills had resolved upon fight. They crossed the Ravi and entered the town of Madhopur, the headquarters of the Bari Doab Canal, but were driven out by the Sikh guard. In Sialkot the sepoys occupied the station and spread out into the country, but the European escaped by "the mercy of God, who turned aside the mutineers' bullets."

In September the Khurrals, Khattis, Huttoos, Fatawans and other Muslim clans, twenty to thirty thousand strong, living in an area of 3,000 sq. miles of the Multan district, broke out into insurrection. They had obtained arms from Bahawalpur and Ferozepur. They surprised the police posts,

disarmed them, cut off communications between Multan and Lahore, and levied contributions. The military police sent against them were defeated and even the irregular cavalry was forced to take refuge in a Sarai at Chichawatni. Then the insurgents retired into the deserts of Gogair, where they were surrounded by British troops and cut down.

Sind

Sind became involved because the sad memories of the way the Amirs had been displaced by the English, caused dissatisfaction among the people. Shahzada Pir Muhammad, a scion of the ruling family of Herat and a pensioner detained at Shikarpur, Imam Bakhsh another chief and Alif Khan a pensioner, joined together in an attempt to overthrow British rule in the province, but they failed.

Rajasthan

In the eighteenth century conditions in Rajputana were confused. The period was one of decay and of jealousies and rivalries among the chiefs of the leading clans. There were four important ruling principalities, besides numerous minor states and jagirs.

Kotah happened to be the most revolutionary anti-British centre in Rajasthan. Here the Political Agent Major Burton was murdered. Among the officers Jai Dayal and his brother Har Dayal took the lead of the movement. The Residency was surrounded and the Maharao was made a virtual prisoner. This state of affairs lasted for several months until General Roberts, at the head of a British army of five thousand five hundred strong reinforced by a Karauli contingent, bore down upon the rebels and defeated them with heavy losses; their leaders were mercilessly dealt with; fines were imposed on traders and artisans suspected of sympathy with the movement, and Jai Dayal was blown off from the mouth of a gun.

But although active rebellion was crushed, many Rajputs continued to give aid to the rebels. Tatya Tope received shelter in Rajasthan and the chiefs of Salumbar and Kotharia helped the refugees.

Central India

The Central India Agency consisted of a number of large and small States sprawling between Bihar and Chhota Nagpur on the one side and Rajputana on the other. Uttar Pradesh lay to its north. It was thus surrounded by territories in the throes of insurrection. In the Agency the main centres of Indian troops were Gwalior, Indore, Bhopal and Mhow. When the news of the rebellion reached these places the Indian soldiers rose in support of their comrades in spite of the unfavourable attitude of the ruling chiefs, and most of the districts were in great commotion. There were outbreaks in Saugor, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Nowgong, Nagpur, etc. There the Indian troops rebelled and were aided by some chiefs like the Raja of Banpur and the Gond Raja Shakar Shah.

In Gwalior the Maharajah was loyal. He had been highly impressed with the might of the British Raj during his recent visit to Calcutta. But the Sepoy regiments in Gwalior tied by blood and caste relationship with the rebels, sympathised with them. Their numbers exceeded eight thousand. When they received the news of Jhansi massacre on the 14th June they broke into open rebellion. But their success was short-lived as the British regained control of the situation and the Maharajah was reinstated.

The chiefs and nobles of the Bhopal royal family were not well-disposed towards their ruler, Sikandar Begam. Naturally the outbreak of revolt in the adjoining British territories came like a windfall to them. They took the fullest advantage of it, and sided with the disaffected rebels, and on several occasions induced the "Vilayaties", *viz.*, the Pathans and the State troops, to rise and declare a religious war against the British.

Colonel Durand, Agent to the Governor-General, summed up his review of the insurrection in Central India, on 13 August, 1857, in these words : "The means of coercion at our disposal are extremely inadequate to restoration of order, and to the stay of anarchy wherever that exists. The Gwalior contingent has wholly gone from our colours and is now with

its well-equipped artillery, in Scindhia's hands, and, of course, at his disposal. It may be against us; it can never ask (sic) for us. The Malwa contingent has lost all its cavalry, a body of 800 good horse, and the infantry so misbehaved at Indore that it is impossible not to hold the whole body in suspicion. . . . . The Bhopal contingent, after its disgraceful and treacherous behaviour at Indore, is now in open mutiny at Sehore. The Bheel Corps is in course of reassembling. ... At Nagode . . . there is not a gun, there is not a sabre, there is not a musket which can be called in aid of the maintenance of order and British supremacy."

This brief narrative shows that the whole of northern India from the Himalayas to the Narbada and from Calcutta to Peshawar was in revolutionary furore. Its intensity differed from region to region, but no part was wholly free from disaffection.

SOUTHERN INDIA

Maharashtra

In the Deccan and Southern India, too, there were many centres of trouble. Outbreaks took place in Central India at Indore, Mandasor, Mhow, Dhar, Amjhera, etc., and caused great anxiety to the Government, because the region was contiguous with Maharashtra where there was much 'brooding discontent'. Loss of independence, disappearance of Peshwa's rule and degradation of Poona which had been the centre of Maratha power, rankled in the minds of the people. The historic families which had played a prominent part in the affairs of the old state were specially affected. The confiscation of numerous estates at the instance of the Inam Commission, the ban on adoption on the failure of natural heirs to the owners of landed estates, and the close relations between the families of Nana Sahib and the Patwardhan chiefs, had created an explosive situation.

Pratap Singh, the young prince whom Elphinstone had raised to the gaddi of Satara, turned out to be a prince of independent character, and became suspect in the eyes of the British officers. In 1839, he was deposed and sent into exile.

His appeals for justice were rejected, and on the death of his successor in 1848, the State was annexed to the Bombay Presidency. The Southern Maratha country, as a result of the activities of the Inam Commission, and Kolhapur, because of the heavy indemnity imposed for the rising of 1844, were smarting under a sense of frustration and grievance. A little incident could instigate these elements into rebellion out of sheer 'audacity of despair.' This is what actually happened.

The Indian troops in Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Aurangabad, Belgaum, Kolhapur and Bombay, and the discontented Muslims plotted a revolt. In Satara Rango Bapuji Gupte, an old and faithful servant of the house of Shivaji, collected Ramoshi, Mang and Kali recruits, and gained some adherents among the Maratha Sardars to oust the new rulers and restore Shahu, the son of Pratap Singh, to the gaddi. Promises of support were obtained from Nana Ramoshi of Kundal, Kashi Raja, Daulat Rao Hari Pawar of Karad, Tatya Fadnis of Kolhapur, and others. Shivaram Kulkarni was the moving spirit, and Sitaram, son of Rango Bapuji, was entrusted with general supervision. Man Singh, a Rajput soldier, was chosen as a messenger to obtain support of the sepoy regiments. Unfortunately, the plot was betrayed and the conspirators were put to death.

In Kolhapur, Belgaum and Dharwar there was much discontent. The Indian sepoy regiments became greatly excited at the news of Nana Sahib's rising in Kanpur. The outbreak took place on July 31st. Twice, some sepoys attempted to take the town of Kolhapur, but failed. A second attempt in December succeeded in so far as the city was occupied and the gates closed. But the British forces blew up one of the gates and captured the town and the Raja's palace. The Raja's brother was sent as a prisoner to Sind. In Belgaum a Munshi incited the revolt, but before the rising could take place the British officers received information and suppressed it.

In Bombay there were three Indian regiments. They were planning to revolt on the occasion of the *Muharram*. But Forjett, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, was alert and his measures nipped the conspiracy in the bud.

The chief of Nargund, whose fears had been roused by the activities of the Inam Commission, took up arms and drew upon himself the wrath of the rulers. The Desais of Sawantwadi defied the Government from their forest fastnesses, but were ultimately subdued.

Lack of concerted action on the part of the people and the tact and vigilance of the British officers prevented the conflagration from being widespread. The outbreak in the Southern Maratha country remained a minor episode, confined mainly to a few chiefs, landholders and some north Indian sepoys. The Marathas and the Mahars had little in common with the Purbiya soldier and did not respond to the call.

The mercantile community and the small English educated class in Bombay, had no sympathy for the revolutionary cause.

Rising Hyderabad and Madras

In the Nizam's territories the Muslim population was greatly perturbed because of its sympathy with the Mughal ruler of Delhi. The Maulavis were preaching a holy war and as a consequence the Rohilla troops and a large number of their sympathisers rose and marched on the British Residency. But the young Nizam and his old Prime Minister Salar Jang remained loyal to their masters and the rebels were crushed.

In the Presidency of Madras, the discontent was not less acute, but leadership was lacking. The Indian troops were composed of the lower classes who had little sympathy for the wrongs committed against the practices of the higher castes. Then the establishment of the Ryotwari system had eliminated the class which bore the traditions of governing. The products of the western system of education were antipathetic to a movement which they regarded as reactionary.

Nonetheless, the news of the restoration of the Mughal rule in Delhi exicted the people in the South. The Muslim sepoys were thrilled. The attitude of the Muslim civilians was minatory. Kurnool, Cuddapah and Malabar were centres of considerable Muslim population. Arcot, Vellore and Trichinopoly had been under the rule of the Nawabs of Karnatak, and the memory of their rule which had been

recently extinguished was still fresh in their minds. There were discontented groups in Hyderabad and in Mysore too.

The rebels were active all over Madras. A Brahmin Sadhu, for instance, was found in the camp of the 13th Regiment of Native Infantry announcing the end of British rule and calling upon the Hindus and Musalmans to unite. There were many sepoys of the Bengal command in various parts of the Presidency whose object was "to tamper with our sepoys and excite mistrust and dislike towards our Government by false and malevolent rumours", states the official report. In September 1857 the situation was alarming. But the Government of Madras took adequate measures to suppress the excitement and to maintain order. Commissions were issued under Act XIV of 1857 for the summary trial of offences against the state, court-martials were established for acts of indiscipline committed by the sepoys, and fresh police forces were recruited in all centres. Thus all sporadic outbreaks were subdued. Although the state of feelings caused a great deal of anxiety to the Government, the spread of violence on a large scale was prevented.

A REVIEW

A study of the Indian situation, as a whole, leaves no doubt that the Revolt was very widespread, that both the sepoys and the civilians were involved in it and together they endeavoured to overthrow the alien rule. Contrary to the belief and against the hopes and expectations of the rulers, the Muslims and Hindus made a common cause. Although in some places there were communal differences, yet, on the whole, the two fought side by side, and fully supported each other. Bahadur Shah forbade cow slaughter in Delhi at the festival of *Baqr-Id*, and Khan Bahadur Khan foiled the efforts of the British to incite the Hindus against the Muslims in Rohilkhand. Bahadur Shah was recognised as the rightful Emperor of India by most of the rebel leaders. The government set up by the rebels consisted of both Hindus and Muslims. Separate courts of Hindu judges were set up to try the cases of the Hindus, and those of Qazis for the Muslims. Where *Jihad* or holy war was declared, it was specifically stated that it was against the Christian rulers.

The causes which were responsible for the Revolt were many. Commandant Ch. Martin observes : "Excellent for conquering this immense empire, the system followed up to now found itself incapable of withstanding the first shock, because it did not have in the country itself the strong auxiliaries upon whom it could rely, so that one party could fight against the other. Incapable of maintaining itself, the Company has been impotent to repress the rising without the support of the mother country, because, persisting in its time-honoured isolation, it neglected to propagate any fruitful idea, or sow any germ of Western civilization in the countries which had submitted to it. Unconcerned about the welfare, the morals, the life of its innumerable subjects, callous about every other thing except matters relating to exports and imports, monopolies, salaries, profits and dividends, it confined itself to the exploiting of India in place of civilizing it. It sought rather to render its inhabitants incapable of self-government, than to initiate them into the knowledge and the skills which normally inspire those who have the desire to emancipate themselves. This policy may have been clever but surely it was not generous. It is, therefore, just that the Company of India has been reproached for its bad faith, its ambition, its selfishness, and its extortions of all kinds."

Such a rule exercised for a century over the Indian peoples was bound to lead to disastrous consequences in which the whole country was involved. Alexander Duff rightly stated: "Everyone who is not positively and hopelessly blind knows that in hundreds and thousands of places where, through precautionary and other measures and special overrulings of Providence, no actual outbreak occurred, there was much discontent, much display of treasonable and rebellious feeling, and much real dread and apprehension on the part of the authorities."

The Revolt of 1857 shattered the delusion which the British rulers in their smugness had been hugging to their bosom. The movement made clear to them that although it was possible to impose obedience upon a subject people by might, it was impossible to evoke their loyalty by force.

The widespread nature of the great rebellion naturally raises the question of co-ordination and planning. There seems to be a strong presumption that the Indian regiments had some awareness of the impending explosion. Such suspicious events as the distribution of *chapattis* or red lotus flowers point to this conclusion. But the contacts of men like Azimullah Khan, the chief adviser of Nana Sahib, of Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah, who played an important role in Oudh, of the famous Maulavi Fazal-i-Haq Khairabadi and many other Maulavis, indicate that there were efforts to concert a general movement. Although the story of communications with Iran and Russia seems far-fetched, there is, by and large, sufficient evidence that Bahadur Shah was in correspondence with a number of Indian princes and chiefs and also with the Indian army personnel. There were rumours that the army would rise and strike at all stations on one fixed day, and that the 31st of May was chosen in this connection—one of the hottest days of the year in northern India, and therefore most suited for rebellion against the foreign rulers in the country. Apparently Bahadur Shah was taken by surprise when the sepoys broke into revolt at Meerut three weeks before the appointed day and he naturally hesitated to join a premature rising.

That there was some planning is indicated by the co-operation among the leaders on various occasions. For instance, in the Kanpur campaign, Shazada Firoz, the Gwalior troops, Babu Kunwar Singh and others, supported Nana Sahib. Bahadur Shah invited the Rajas, Nawabs and Chiefs of Rajasthan, Panjab and Northern India, to rally round his standard, but the response was poor. The newspapers in Urdu specially, support the theory of co-ordination. Their circulation in the different parts of India helped dissemination of the news of the events in Delhi and other centres.

Although old Bahadur Shah who sat upon the throne was Emperor only in name, yet at this fateful crisis in history the magic of his name had some influence. The old quarrels which had plagued the country in the last hundred years were temporarily forgotten, homage and loyalty were renewed and pledges of obedience were reaffirmed. Birjis Qadr, the

son of Wajid Ali Shah, whose ancestor had repudiated the Emperor's allegiance and assumed the title of King, made a declaration on accession to office as *Wali*, that he would implicitly obey all orders from Delhi.

Khan Bahadur Khan, a grandson of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, who had, carved out an independent principality in the Doab, on assuming the control of administration of Rohilkhand, was recognised as the Viceroy of the Emperor of Delhi. He possessed great military sagacity and knew the British military might and had a plan to meet them and beat them. This is proved by the following general order stated to have been issued by him: "Do not attempt to meet the regular columns of the infidels because they are superior to you in discipline and *bundobust*, and have big guns; but watch their movements, guard all the ghauts on the rivers, intercept their communications, stop their supplies, cut up their daks and posts, and keep constantly hanging about their camps; give them no rest.

Nana Sahib, the son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, assumed authority when the armies revolted in Kanpur, and marched towards Delhi for "they expected great things from the restored sovereignty of the Mughal." Before the revolt actually started Nana accompanied by his adviser Azimullah Khan had visited Delhi and Lucknow under conditions which raised the suspicions of the British officers. Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda who was an active supporter of Nana Sahib, in a letter addressed to the Raja of Shahgarh, wrote: "The Emperor's rule has, by divine mercy, been established." Sitaram Bawa in his statement before Mr. H.B. Deveraux, Judicial Commissioner of Mysore, stated: "Nana Sahib and Man Singh communicated with the King of Delhi and it was agreed that the Padshahi should be for the Mussalmans and Diwangiri for the Hindoos." These statements show that Nana was endeavouring to work in concert with the Emperor.

The chiefs at Patna, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Farrukhabad, Bareilly, etc., looked up to Delhi for recognition of their titles, and Delhi made efforts to secure co-ordination of all the forces—the Indian sepoy regiments as well as the

Indian princes and the aristocracy. The Emperor addressed instructions to the troops, and received petitions from many stations in northern India—Rajputana, Malwa, Central Provinces, N.W.P. and Oudh, and Bihar. Personal letters were also sent to the Rajas of Patiala and Gwalior, to the Rajas in Rajasthan, to Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir, and to other lesser Hindu and Muslim chiefs. Some of them professed allegiance, but many made excuses or refrained from direct action, because, according to their calculations, the chances of success of the rebellion were small, while in the event of failure there was the certainty of ruin.

In Madras the rebel troops raised the shouts of 'long live the Padshah of Delhi.' In Hyderabad and in the Panjab the Indian regiments were disarmed but many of the disbanded troops marched towards Delhi. In Rajputana, Central India, and in Maharashtra, the assumption of Peshwa's title by Nana Sahib gladdened the hearts of the chiefs.

Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that the planning if any, was of an exiguous character. The fact is that to leader of requisite organizing ability arose to guide the movement. The rebels were brave and capable of heroic sacrifices, but they were an undisciplined lot. There was no proper plan of campaign, no real understanding of the enormity of the task, no appreciation of the strategic needs, no regular supply of funds and ammunitions of war. Neither the organisation of government nor of its fighting arm measured up to the requirements of the situation. There were many rebellions, but no overall scheme of which they could become subsidiary parts united to achieve the common goal.

The great rebellion ran its wayward course for nearly two years, during which it was crowded with incidents both glorious and vile. If there were acts of sublime valour and supreme dedication, of reckless defiance, of heroic preference of death to surrender, equally were there acts of dastardly brutality, treachery, incompetence, cowardice and folly. Among the leading men and women there were some who showed firmness of purpose, loyalty to the cause, statesmanship in dealing with difficult situations, resource in

foiling the plans of their adversaries, and skill in the conduct of warlike operations. At the same time, it has to be admitted that there were many who had joined the movement out of fear or calculation of personal advantage, and were ready to betray their comrades. The behaviour of such people brought nothing but shame and disgrace to the fair name of their country.

While it is best to cast a veil of oblivion over the latter, history should not forget the spirited men and women who gave their all in the cause of redeeming their country from the yoke of the alien rulers. The royal house of Delhi gave to the cause a representative not unworthy of its noble traditions. Though young in age—for he was in his twenties when the revolt broke out—Prince Firoz Shah was a born leader of men. He raised the standard of independence at Mandasor and kept the British troops engaged in Central India. Driven out he appeared in Uttar Pradesh and campaigned in Rohilkhand and Oudh. Defeated he joined his forces with those of Tatya Tope in Rajputana and battling against heavy odds and evading his pursuers, he escaped into the jungle of Sironj. The revolt had by now fizzled out and the proclamation of Queen Victoria promising amnesty to those who submitted, had been widely advertised. Although in dire circumstances, he refused to barter self-respect, personal liberty, or the claims of his house for a life in durance vile and humiliating. He had been an intrepid fighter, and his faith in the destiny of his country remained unshaken till the end. He died in exile.

In Rohilkhand Khan Bahadur Khan, the grandson of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, who had reached the age of seventy, assumed the office of Viceroy under the Emperor of Delhi and governed the Hindu and Muslim population with statesmanlike wisdom, so that all efforts of the enemy to create discord between the two communities were frustrated. He defended Rohilkhand with great skill, defeating four columns of British troops which had converged upon Bareilly before he was forced to retreat into the forests of the Tarai. He was captured by treachery, tried and hanged. He died the death of a patriot undaunted and defiant till the end.

Besides there were many others whose names stand out for acts both of daring and defiance, for organisation of resistance, and instigation of revolt. Such were Bakht Khan who was the commander-in-chief of the forces in Delhi and who organised the council of administration; Ahmadullah Shah who was recognised even by his enemies as "a man of great abilities, of undaunted courage, and of stern determination, and by far the best soldier among the rebels." Maulavi Liaqat Ali of Allahabad, though a man of humble origin, ruled the city in the name of the King of Delhi.

The two central figures were Emperor Bahadur Shah and Nana Sahib. They were heirs of the two famous ruling houses in Indian history. The ancestors of Bahadur Shah had ruled an empire those renown had reverberated throughout the world for two centuries. Nana Sahib belonged to the line of the Peshwas who had carried the flag of the Maratha Raj from Kaveri to Attock. Unfortunately, around these names much controversy has raged.

Bahadur Shah and Nana Sahib were not cast in a heroic mould, and circumstances rather than choice thrust them into an unsought for role.

Bahadur Shah was over eighty years of age when he was obliged to assume the leadership of the movement. He had throughout his life been practically a recluse in his palace in the Red Fort of Delhi where since his succession to the throne he had held his levees. He was dependent upon the British who gave him an annual pension to defray his personal expenses. He had little experience of state affairs, for he was a King without a kingdom. But he was not without talent. He was a poet of considerable merit in both Hindi and Urdu and a patron of poets and literary men.

It is amazing that at his age and with his background he should have accepted a position whose cares and responsibilities even much younger men would have found difficult to discharge. But it stands to his credit that once he had launched upon the dangerous career, he never looked back. What is even more astonishing is that he exerted himself to the uttermost in holding together his people belonging to

different faiths, in maintaining order in the besieged city of Delhi, in sustaining the morale of his subjects, and in encouraging his forces to continue the fight till the bitter end. But the odds were overwhelmingly against him and his end was sad. His sons were shot in his presence and he spent his last lonely years with the Queen in exile in Burma, far from home.

Nana Sahib was the adopted son of the last Peshwa Baji Rao II, who, after becoming a tributary of the British, found his chains galling. Nana lived as an independent nobleman given to social pursuits, amusements and entertainments. When confronted with the dilemma presented by the uprising, he chose reluctantly to throw in his lot with the insurgents. But although recognised as their political head, the real authority lay in other hands. Driven by defeats to the Nepal border he refused to surrender and defiantly declared: "There will be war between me and you as long as I have life, whether I be killed or imprisoned or nanged. And whatever I do will be done with the sword only." Thereafter he disappeared for ever in the jungles of Nepal.

The revolt failed. The leaders paid with their lives; their liberty and their property were forfeited as the penalty of failure. Biased historians have, unfortunately, charged them with atrocious and inhuman deeds. Non of them seems either to have designed or ordered the massacres which sully the "chronicles of this rising, their main object being the overthrow of foreign domination. Most of the shameful acts were perpetrated either by sepoys who were maddened by religious fanaticism and stricken by terror, or by ruffians and criminals who had been let out of jails and who lusted for blood and loot. At the same time, Indians who behaved in a praiseworthy and humane manner were not wanting.

It is painful to refer to atrocities—no less inhuman—committed by the military officers commanding the Army of the Company. The incredible levity with which large-scale executions—in many cases without even a pretence of trial—were ordered; punishments inflicted with humiliation and degradation of the victims and the complete disregard of

ordinary human feelings; villages destroyed wholesale; constitute a woeful story of moral bankruptcy and human insensibility, the less excusable because their agents were not illiterate, disorganised and indisciplined riff-raff, but trained officers of a well-organised government, who took pride in the superiority of their religion aim civilisation

The failure of the Revolt was almost a foregone conclusion. It was actuated by pure negations. It was not inspired by any positive creative idea; it did not entertain either the vision of a higher social order or of a higher political system. It was a transient intoxication and not a settled permanent transformation of the will of the people. As it was an almost spontaneous episodic outburst, there was no stable well-ordered organisation behind the movement as a whole. It lacked plan, programme and funds. The only thing which united the rebels was the desire to eliminate foreign rule. But the rebels were so steeped in the medieval ways of feeling and thinking that the whole affair assumed in their minds a purely personal aspect. Elimination of foreign rule was equated with the physical destruction of the foreign personnel, independence identified with the restoration of the personal rule of those deprived of their rights find privileges by the foreigners. There was no understanding of the character of the enemy's political organisation, no realisation that the extermination of the individuals was not tantamount to the break-up of the system. It was dimly perceived that Hindu-Muslim co-operation was necessary, but it was not realised that the nation was an organic unity, that no mere temporary co-operation of independent units was enough and that a fusion of communities into a higher political organism alone could guarantee success against a modern power.

The cause for which they fought cannot be regarded unjust, but its ethos was inadequate. There was little discipline among the rebels, and their loyalties were fragile. Intellectually, too, they were no match for their adversary, whose military technique was based upon science, and whose processes of reasoning and action were more in accord with logical and rational principles. In strategy and tactics the British forces

were far superior to the Indian, and the British commanders were well-trained men and many of them possessed extensive experience of war. These forces worked under the orders of a highly organised Government in India which was backed by ample resources in men and money of the British people and the British Government. So long as the central organs of the Company's administration continued to function, the loss of peripheral territories could not be fatal, and so long as reinforcements could be supplied from across the seas, the citadel of British rule in India was safe from the storms that blew all round. The Revolt of 1857 was the last attempt of an effete order to recover its departed glory. With its demise the ground was cleared for the new forces to operate and for a new society to spring into existence.

5 The Participation and its Impact

1. NATURE OF EAST INDIA COMPANY'S RULE

By the time Dalhousie relinquished the reins of office, the British dominion in India had reached its natural limits. From the west to the east, it extended from the Indus to the Irrawaddy, and from the north to the south from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. Over these vast conquered territories the British imperial genius built up a system of government which served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it ended the anarchy which prevailed in the country in the eighteenth century, established peace and security of life and property; and created conditions for the political unification of the Indian peoples. On the other hand, the British secured for themselves an empire unequalled in extent, wealth and resources which gave to their small island-kingdom of Britain the hegemony of the world. The adventure which had commenced in the sixteenth century, under the stress of mercantilist forces for the achievement of wealth and power, had at last culminated in success unparalleled in history. This extraordinary phenomenon had three phases. In its first phase, the East India Company's activities were confined to trade; in the second phase, the Company entered into armed conflict with its European rivals, established its trade monopoly and acquired political influence in India.

In the third phase, which began with the battle of Plassey, the Company combined commerce with conquest and in both achieved success beyond its dreams. It gained a vast territory

endowed with abundant natural resources and inhabited by teeming millions of patient, hardworking and docile peasants and artisans. The revenues extorted from Bengal furnished not only the sinews for further conquests, but also the fluid capital for investment in the lucrative overseas trade. Thus it happened that with a modest capital subscribed by its shareholders and with a minimum cost in men, the English East India Company brought under its sway the greater part of India.

When the Company shed its commercial character, the profits from trade were thrown open to all Englishmen. But the Company compensated itself by further expansion of its dominions. Throughout this long period, the profit motive had been an important factor in the conflict with the European powers and the wars with the feckless and thriftless Indian princes. Besides, the lure of dominion was irresistible, and the ease with which it could be acquired acted as a spur to bring more and more of the fertile Indian territories under its rule. The desire to increase revenues, however, was matched by the solicitude, sometimes bordering on folly, for economy.

The aggressive wars waged by Lords Hastings, Ellenborough and Dalhousie, the annexations made on the plea of mismanagement by the Indian rulers and the appropriation of territories by refusal to recognise the adoption of heirs, were prompted by the desire for dominion. Disraeli recognised that the English policy was "to increase the revenue of our dominions by increasing our dominions themselves." Metcalfe explained the policy in these words: "Any acquisition of territory in the centre of India would contract the extent of frontier to be defended, or approximately the connections between the forces of Bengal and those of the other Presidencies, or give a surplus of revenue available for the payment of a military force, without the chance of involving us in any embarrassment beyond those to which we are already exposed. So far, therefore, from contemplating an increase of territory as an evil to be avoided, we ought to desire it, wherever it can be justly obtained, as the source of safety and power." Dalhousie, the chief architect of the policy of

'Lapse,' had himself written on the 30th August, 1848 : "I cannot conceive it possible for any one to dispute the policy of taking advantage of every just opportunity which presents itself for consolidating the territories that already belong to us, by taking possession of States that may lapse in the midst of them; for thus getting rid of these petty intervening principalities, which may be made a means of annoyance." Thus he "proclaimed the principle of extinguishing the native rulers on every opportunity that offered."

To themselves the British justified the annexations on the ground of intolerable corruption and misrule by the Indian princes, and the terrible misery and oppression of the down-trodden masses. But the truth is best told in the inimitable words of Bernard Shaw: "Every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing, he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who have got the thing he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. Like the aristocrat, he does what pleases him and grabs what he covets; like the shopkeeper, he pursues his purpose with the industry and steadfastness that comes from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude. . . . There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find an Englishman doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles; he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his King on loyal principles and cuts off his King's head on republican principles. His watchword is always Duty; and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost."

The annexations eventually augmented the revenues of the Company, but immediately the expenses were also increased and the Directors became apprehensive of their dividends and, therefore, enjoined measures of economy. In adopting them, little attention was paid to the consequences.

The measures included the stoppage or reduction of the pensions of the Indian chiefs, the glaring examples being the reduction of the annuity of Rani Jindan Kaur, the dowager queen of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, from £15,000 to £1,200; the termination of the pensions of Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II; and of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi; and the abolition of the titular sovereignty of the houses of Karnatak and Tanjore.

Savings were also effected and government revenues increased by resuming the *jagirs* and *inams* of the old families who had rendered services to the Indian rulers. Economies were effected even with respect to measures of social welfare. In 1813, a mere pittance of £10,000 was sanctioned for education. But no allotment was made for sanitation, medical relief, famine relief, and the like, and the allotment for education remained unspent for several years.

But the worst economy was made in the army expenditure. India had been conquered with the help of Indian soldiers, and law and order was being largely maintained by Indian troops. Indians had fought in Iran, Afghanistan, Sind and Burma, and there had been a proposal to send them to fight in Crimea too. They had given ample proof of their loyalty, bravery, and discipline in every field of battle. They were true to their salt, faithful to their masters, and devoted to their officers. But in the eyes of the Company, their chief recommendation was that they were cheap, that they were moved by mercenary considerations and, therefore, no political danger was apprehended from them.

The cost of maintenance of an Indian sepoy was one-third that of his British comrade. This economic factor was responsible for the fact that, in 1856, out of a total of about 300,000 troops serving under the Company, only twenty-four Royal regiments, numbering in all 23,000 men, and an equal number recruited in India were Europeans. Obviously this was giving too large a hostage to fortune. The dilemma which presented itself to British statesmen was hot to reconcile a large military establishment for the security and expansion of the empire with the claims of sound public finance, of

commercial profits and investments. Governors-General swayed from one horn of the dilemma to the other. In either case considerations of economy were the decisive factor.

On the civil side, the phenomenon was similar. The number of British officers was small, but they held all the posts of authority, of direction and control. Their salaries were the highest in the world. They worked through a large army of Indian subordinates whose wages were miserably low, and whose status was branded with inferiority.

An empire whose dominant interests were economic, was not altogether a new phenomenon in history. But Englishmen were so wrapt in self-righteous complacency that they never gave any serious thought to the human implications of their empire. Some of them did certainly talk of the distant goal of self-government for India, but the actions of most throughout their two centuries of connection with India, betrayed little real desire to reach that goal. Some indeed felt perturbed by the unnatural character of the situation, but even they could not conceive of an issue other than an unlimited continuance of British rule.

Lull before the Storm

When Dalhousie's term came to an end, Canning was selected to fill the post. He was a first-class classical scholar who had won a prize at Oxford for writing a Latin poem on Caractacus, the British chieftain, who defied the might of the Roman empire. At the farewell dinner given in his honour by the Directors of the Company, he made a remarkable speech in reply to the toast, which is a mirror of the confusions and perplexities the ruling class of England was subject to in those times. He started in the usual vein of the self-assured proconsul who was thrilled with a spectacle unequalled in world's history—"that of a hundred and fifty millions of people submitting in peace and contentment, in a country teeming with wealth, to the government of strangers and aliens." But as he proceeded, doubts seemed to assail him. Self-assurance seemed to ebb. The future appeared dark. He became grave and restrained in his utterance. He said : "I know not what

course events may take. I hope and pray that we may not reach the extremity of war." Then he continued grimly "we must not forget that in the sky of India, serene as it is, a small cloud may arise, at first no bigger than a man's hand, but which, growing larger and larger, may at last threaten to brust, and overwhelm us with ruin." And towards the end he threatened, "If, in spite of us, it should become necessary to strike a blow, we can strike with a clear conscience. With blows so dealt the struggle must be short and the issue not doubtful."

One wonders whether, while he studied his Indian dossier, Canning reflected upon the nature of the empire and whether it occurred to him to institute a comparison between the British empire in India and the two empires which had kept Britain in thrall—the Roman empire which represented the rule of a power exercising its authority over territory at a distance from the homeland, and the Norman empire where the conquerors settled down in the lands they conquered.

There is no record of Canning's musings on the fate of empires. It may, however, be presumed that he had become aware of the universal discontent which prevailed in India and threatened to break out in an ugly shape. The dangerous situation which was developing in India was inherent in the nature of the empire. Although the British in India could not behave like the Normans in England, for the conditions were wholly different, there is no reason why they should not have taken a leaf out of the book of imperial Rome and instead of treating India as the milch cow to be exploited for England's good, shown some consideration for the economic and political needs of her people. But, unfortunately, these considerations were disregarded and the baleful harvest of hatred and hostility had to be gathered in the summer of 1857.

2. CHARACTER OF THE UPHEAVAL

According to the British historians, the outbreak of 1857 was a mutiny. The fashion, in fact, was originally set by the Government of the day, for the then Secretary of State for

India, Earl Stanley, while reporting the events of 1857 to the Parliament used the term 'Mutiny.' Most English writers on the subject followed his lead. Thus it was that Charles Ball, G. W. Forrest, T. R. Holmes, M. Innes, J. W. Kaye, G. F. Macmunn, G. B. Malleson, C. T. Metcalfe, Earl Roberts, and others used the term 'Mutiny' to describe the upheaval.

All the same, the term is misleading. There is no doubt that the army was abundantly involved in the revolt. It is equally true that the drive was supplied by the Bengal Army, although there were signs of disaffection in some regiments in the other Presidencies too. But the outbreak was not confined to the army. Nor was it a mutiny in the ordinary sense of the term, that is, a defiance of the established pattern of deference and of obedience to constituted authority. Its causes were deeper than those involved in usual breaches of military discipline.

The real character of the upheaval was, in fact, recognised by Disraeli. While speaking in the House of Commons on July 27, 1857, he controverted the opinion of the Government, and declared that the movement was a "national revolt," and not a "military mutiny." Again, in his speech delivered at Aylesbury on 30th of September, 1857, he urged: "I believe it is now also the universal conviction that the description originally given of these unfortunate and extraordinary movements in India was not authorized by the circumstances of the case. Day by day, we have seen that which was at first characterised as a slight and accidental occurrence, is in fact one of those great events which form epochs in the history of mankind, and which can only be accounted for by considerations. Demanding the deepest attention from statesmen and nations."

Ellenborough who became the President of the Board of Control in 1858, censuring Lord Canning on his proclamation of confiscation of talukdaris on Oudh, wrote : "We must admit that, under the circumstances, the hostilities which have been carried on in Oudh have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion."

Justin McCarthy, after a close study of the subject, wrote : "The fact was that throughout the greater part of the north and north-west of the great Indian Peninsula there was a rebellion of the native races against English power. It was not by any means a merely military mutiny. It was a combination of military grievances, national hatred and religious fanaticism against the English occupation of India. The native princes and the native soldiers were in it. The Mohammedan and the Hindoo forgot their old religious antipathies to join against the Christian."

Charles Ball traces the development of events in these words : "At length the torrent overflowed the banks and saturated the moral soil of India. It was then expected that those waves would overwhelm and destroy the entire European element, and that, when the torrent of rebellion should again confine itself within bounds, patriotic India, freed from its alien rulers, would bow only to the independent sceptre of a native prince . . . .The movement, now assumed a more important aspect, it became the rebellion of a whole people."

The opinion of two independent French writers was : "The hour of Indian vespers is soon going to strike. Discontent has invaded all classes of the Indian population; they are going to make common cause with the sepoys."

Major Harriott, the Judge Advocate-General at the trial of Bahadur Shah, after a thorough study of the documents produced at the trial came to this conclusion: "The conspiracy from the very commencement was not confined to the sepoys and did not even originate with them, but had its ramifications throughout the palace and city."

Vincent Smith is constrained to admit that, "discontent and unrest were widely prevalent among the civil population, and in several places the population rose before the sepoys at those stations mutinied."

Even Canning revised his opinion when he wrote to the Secretary of State for India that he had no doubt that the "rebellion" had been fomented "by Brahmans on religious

pretences and by others for political motives"; and according to Kaye, "he soon ceased to speak of the mutiny and called it 'rebellion'—a 'revolt.'"

It is thus inappropriate to give the designation 'mutiny' to the events of 1857. But is it appropriate to call them 'the national war of independence'?

It has to be admitted that the war against the British was not inspired by any sentiment of nationalism, for in 1857 India was not yet politically a nation. It is a fact that the Hindus and Muslims co-operated, but the leaders and the followers of the two communities were moved by personal loyalties rather than by loyalty to a common motherland. Nonetheless, the upheaval of 1857 was a war for the liberation of India from the yoke of the foreigner. For the foreigner had given mortal offence to the dignity and self-respect of the ruling class, the class which had exercised social influence and carried the burden of administration; and he had antagonised the masses by his oppressive land revenue policy, and by his economic measures which ruined their arts and crafts.

Harvey, Commissioner of Agra, wrote on the 17th November, 1857: "In the first outburst and continuance, the insurrection of 1857 was neither exclusively Muhammedan nor of Hindoo contriving; that there have always existed causes sufficient to account for it; that circumstances and opportunity, and insidious mendacity, roused Mussalman troops . . . in order to avenge what was designated as indignity offered to their religion; and that some mysterious Hindoo prophecy largly circulated . . . induced the already disaffected of that creed to embark on the mutiny and rebellion which followed."

Here is also the testimony of Trevelyan. Says he "High and low, rich and poor, had only one idea of improving their political condition. The upper classes lived upon the prospect of regaining their former pre-eminence; and the lower upon that of having the avenues to wealth and distinction reopened to them by the re-establishment of a native government."

On the whole, the rising of 1857 was an attempt—the last attempt of the medieval order—to halt the process of

dissolution and to recover its lost status. It is true that the order was decadent. In any case it had failed to maintain the vigour of its political organisation and to stem the tide of foreign aggression, although in the middle of the nineteenth century its prestige outside the Presidency towns was still high. The solvent of western domination had not yet produced any radical change in the Indian social system, and the upper classes were still regarded as the leaders of the people, and the representatives of the interests of the Indians.

The uprising of 1857 was a general movement of the traditional *elite* of the Muslims and the Hindus—princes, landholders, soldiers, scholars and theologians (pandits and maulavis). The Emperor of Delhi, the King of Oudh, some Nawabs and Rajas, talukdars and zamindars, the soldiers—Pathans (Walaytis), Mughals, Rajputs and Brahmans of northern India—and the maulavis who were members of this order, comprised the main body of the rebels. The class composition of the insurgents reflects the geographical disposition of the movement, and sheds light upon the motives of the participants. There is little doubt that practically all those who belonged to this order were disaffected although some of them abstained from active participation because of their peculiar circumstances. The chiefs and landlords constituted the leadership of this rebellious host; the regular and irregular troops of the East India Company and of the princes its fighting arm; and their dependents and peasants the camp followers. They had common traditions and common grievances. They sympathised with one another in their misfortunes. The loss of territory and political power by the chiefs affected them all. If the higher section was deprived of the titles of authority—their estates, army commands and civil offices—the others had lost avenues of employment and positions of influence and profit. The learned-scholars, theologians and poets—and craftsmen and artists were left without patronage. Many of those whose hereditary occupation was fighting, were rendered jobless, and many were obliged to drift into the army of the East India Company.

The charge-sheets drawn up by the leaders of the movement against the British Government bear this out. Bahadur Shah, in the manifesto which was issued on 25th August, 1857, says: "It is well known to all, that in this age the people of Hindostan, both Hindoos and Mohammedans, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English"; and then he goes on to explain the five main heads of accusations as follows :

1. Concerning Zamindars : He accuses the British Government of imposing exorbitant *Jamas* (land revenue), of disgracing them by putting up their estates to public auction on account of arrears of rent, and ruining them by costly litigation entailing expense on stamps, court fees and dilatory proceedings.

2. Concerning Merchants : He denounces the infidel and treacherous British Government for monopolising the trade of all the fine and valuable merchandise, such as indigo, cloth, and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade of trifles to the people, and even there taking a share in the profits by levying customs, stamp fees, taxes, tolls and subscriptions.

3. Concerning Public Servants : He points out that natives employed in the civil and military services have little respect, low pay, and no manner of influence; and the posts of dignity and emolument in both the departments are exclusively bestowed on Englishmen.

4. Concerning Artisans : He relates how the English by the introduction of articles manufactured in England had thrown the weavers, the cotton-dressers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, the shoemakers, etc., out of employ; and by engrossing their occupations reduced to beggary every description of native artisan.

5. Concerning Pandits, Maulavis, and Other Learned Persons : He asserts that the Pandits and Maulavis are the guardians of the Hindu and Muhammedan religions respectively, and European the enemies of both, and, therefore, they are bound to take their share in the holy war.

This proclamation draws attention to the political and economic evils of the British rule and shows that the sufferings of the upper classes—landlords, higher grades of merchants, civil and military officials and Hindu and Muslim learned men—were the main, cause of the Revolt. Nana Sahib addressed letters to the Emperor of France which corroborate the charges enumerated by Bahadur Shah. Among the iniquities of the English Government, he mentions : "the annexation of the Maratha dominions by falsehood and deceit; the discontinuance of the pensions promised to Baji Rao II and his heirs; the overthrow of the Indian rulers by stratagem and political machinations; the establishment of courts which ruined propertied men by the heavy expenses of litigation and the promulgation of laws contrary to their sacred codes and offensive to their religious sentiments; the levy of heavy taxes on the proprietors at land and of custom duties on the products of their fields; the arbitrary proceedings by which more than 200 princes became victims of their manoeuvres; the violation of treaties and promises made to the Raja of Nagpur, the plunder of his palace and the sale of his precious articles by auction; the ignominy heaped upon the Emperor of Delhi, and the ruling chiefs of the Deccan and Sind; the dethroning of Dalip Singh, the minor successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; the deposition of the King of Oudh in violation of the treaties and engagements; the dishonouring of women and the destruction of temples and mosques the interference with the Hindu customs of Adoption and Sati; the resumption of endowments made for the support of temples and charitable establishments; and, above all, the plan to corrupt the religious rites and customs of the Indians; so that the sepoys cried out with one voice, 'it is through us that the English have conquered all the countries in Hindustan, for what have their soldiers done? Is it in order to lose our religion and our rites that we sacrificed our lives and our existence? We shall continue to fight till all our strength is totally exhausted and so long as a single individual remains alive.'" Nana Sahib sums up the tale of woe in one sentence: "The acts of injustice and perjury of the English Government blaze on all sides like the rays of the sun."

Birjis Qadr who was raised to the throne of Oudh by the rebels on 5th July, 1857, under the regency of his mother Hazrat Mahal, published a proclamation in justification of the revolt against the British. It runs thus: "All Hindus and Mussalmans know that four things are held dear by every human being: (1) religion and faith; (2) honour and esteem; (3) life of self and relations; (4) property. These four were protected under the rule of the Indians, under whose government no one interfered with religion; everyone followed his own faith and everyone's honour was protected in accordance with his own concern. Men of high class *(ashraf)* whether Muslims belonging to Sayyid, Shaikh, Mughal or Pathan families, or Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaish and Kayastha among the Hindus, were held in esteem and honour in accordance with their position. No mean person (*paji*), for example, sweeper (*churha*), leather-worker *(chamar)*, carder (*dhanuk*) or Pasi (village watchman) could claim equality with them. But no one belonging to either high class or low class was put in danger of his life, nor was anyone's property seized for any crime or offence," and added :

"But the English are the enemies of these four things. They want that the Hindus and Mussalmans should lose their religion, and that all should become Christian. Thousands have already been converted in their regime and others are changing their religion. They have brought the honour of the high classes on a level with that of the lower people—sweepers and leather-workers. In fact, the English show preference to the lower castes over the higher classes. On the complaint of a sweeper or a leather-worker, they seize the person of even a Nawab and a Raja and disgrace him. Wherever they go they hang men of high classes, and kill their wives and children. Their soldiers dishonour women. They dig up their houses, seize their property, and leave nothing."

The three documents emanating from the three most prominent leaders of the movement make it plain that the grievances of the army alone were not responsible for the events of 1857; but there was general discontent among the upper classes. The movement was not a communal outbreak

limited to a single community, nor did it derive its moving force from religious and ritualistic considerations alone. It was broadly a political movement which aimed at the elimination of foreign rule from India. It was the desperate attempt of the old order forcibly deprived of its power to reassert itself.

Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary, a friend of Outram, Henry Lawrence and Charles Trevelyan, and one of the founders of the Calcutta University, had very good means of ascertaining the facts, for he was in India during the period of the revolt. His testimony regarding the character of the revolt is valuable. In a letter to Dr. Tweedie, Convener of the Free Church of Scotland's Foreign Mission Committee, dated October 6, 1857, he wrote : "I feel more than ever persuaded of the reality of the conviction which I entertained from the very first, that this monster rebellion has been mainly of a political, and but very subordinately of a religious character.

3. THE INDICTMENT OF THE BRITISH

The indictment of the British by the leaders of the great rebellion is supported in every one of its charges by history. Take the case of the Mughal Emperor. Since 1803, he had been living under British protection. Previously his claims to honour and precedence were recognised. He used to address the Governor-General as 'beloved son,' 'faithful servant,' and the seals of the Governors-General bore the inscription 'humble servant.' *(Fidawi)*. Gradually a change occurred. Amherst made it plain to the King, "Your Kingship is but nominal, it is merely out of courtesy that you are addressed as King." The British Resident at the Court refused to stand in his presence when presenting *Nazr*. Auckland asked Bahadur Shah to abandon his claims and rights. He stopped the offering of *Nazr*, the privilege of granting robes of honour and holding Darbars. The *Diwan-i-Khas* and the *Diwan-i-Am* were closed. He was pressed to give up residence in the Red Fort, to abjure the title of King and to abandon his prerogative to name his successor. Dalhousie went further in the show of discourtesies. Russell says : "The position of the King was one of the most intolerable misery long ere the revolt broke out. His palace

was in reality a house of bondage; he knew that the few wretched prerogatives which were left to him, as if in mockery of the departed power they represented, would be taken away from his successors; that they would be deprived of even the right to live in their own palace, and would be exiled to some place outside the walls. We denied permission to his royal relatives to enter our service; we condemned them to a degrading existence, in poverty and debt, inside the purlieus of their palace, and then we reproached them with their laziness, meanness, and sensuality. We shut the gates a military preferment upon them—we closed upon them the paths of every pursuit—we took from them every object of honourable ambition and then our papers and our mess-rooms teemed with invectives against the lazy, slothful, and sensuous princes of his house."

It must be realised that although the occupant of the Red Fort was a mere puppet, still he enjoyed much respect, so much so that such semi-independent rulers as the Nizam, the Nawab of Bengal, the Peshwa, the Maratha Sardars—Sindhia and Holkar—and the Rajput Rajas, were eager to render homage and present *Nazr* to him, and to receive titles and robes of honour from him. Although he was powerless and resourceless, he was still regarded with respect as the heir of the mighty Emperors of the Mughal dynasty, Timur, Babar, Akbar and Shah Jahan. There is, therefore, little occasion for surprise that both Muslims and Hindus, prince and people, felt resentful at the humiliation of the reigning monarch, and abhorrence at the idea of the extinction of the dynasty.

It was then a piece of gross impropriety and ingratitude on the part of the holders of the *Diwani* of Bengal that they should have used their office and its revenues for aggrandisement and conquest and for contumacious ill-treatment of their lawful sovereign. And what is one to say about their faithlessness? In 1803, the Marquis of Wellesley gave the assurance to the Emperor Shah Alam : "Your Majesty may be assured that every demonstration of respect and every degree of attention which can contribute to the case and comfort of Your Majesty and the Royal Family will be

manifested on the part of the British Government, and that adequate provision will be made on the part of the British Government for the support of Your Majesty, your family and household."

Lake who forwarded Wellesley's letter wrote; "I am cordially disposed to render Your Majesty every demonstration of my loyalty and attachment and I consider it to be a distinguished honour, as it is a peculiar privilege, to execute Your Majesty's commands."

The conduct of the Governors-General shows that all this was rather insincere talk and that, in fact, the British wanted to use the name and prestige of the Emperor to find legal justification for the titles which they had acquired by force. Besides, they wanted to avoid international complications which an open claim to dominion would have aroused with the Government of France. But subsequently when they found that their own force was an adequate basis for authority they repudiated the old pledges. The Directors pronounced this policy in one of their despatches in these words: "We conceive that our power in India is at this day of a character too substantial to require that we should resort to the hazardous expedient of endeavouring to add to its stability by borrowing from the King of Delhi any portion of authority which we are competent to exercise in our own name."

The case of Oudh is equally deplorable. Transactions of the East India Company with Oudh since the days of Warren Hastings constitute a painful chapter in the history of the relations between the two powers. Ever since the battle of Buxar. (1764), the Nawabs of Oudh were kept under pressure by the Company. Gradually their powers were reduced while their responsibilities remained unchanged. In 1768, Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah was obliged to limit his forces to 35,000 men. He was forbidden to equip and drill more than 10,000 of the infantry men like the English troops. Later he was also prevented from entering into correspondence with any state without the Company's knowledge, and was thus relegated to a subordinate position. In 1798, Saadat Ali Khan was required to pay seventy-six lakhs of rupees a year, for the maintenance

of British troops.

Nawab Saadat Ali Khan was so depressed by his helplessness that he threatened to abdicate. But Wellesley made it clear to him that that would mean the end of his dynasty. Saadat Ali Khan acquiesced and devoted the later years of his rule to the improvement of his people's condition. He replenished the treasury and so well managed the affairs of his state that Bishop Heber who travelled through Oudh found the country "as populous and well-cultivated as most of the Company's territories." According to Irwin, "there was probably a good deal more wealth in Oudh at that time than in our own surrounding districts, taxation being lighter, and being expended inside the province."

Ghaziuddin Haidar, Saadat Ali's successor, who was induced by Lord Hastings to assume the title of the King in pursuit of British designs to denigrate the Emperor of Delhi, was obliged to loan three and a half million rupees, to provide financial help to the Company in its war against Nepal. He proved to be an incompetent ruler, and his son Nasiruddin was worse.

In 1837, on the death of Nasiruddin, a fresh agreement was imposed on his successor Muhammad Ali Shah, which sought to revise the terms of the treaty of 1801. Under Amjad Ali, who came next, things went from bad to worse. Sir Henry Lawrence himself gives the reason. He says, "It is the system that is defective, not the tools with which it has been worked. We have tried every variety of interference. We have interfered directly, and we have interfered indirectly, by omission as well as by commission, but it has invariably failed.

"One great error has been our interference in trifles, while we stood aloof when important questions were at issue. Another crying evil has been the want of any recognized system of policy in our negotiations with the Lucknow Court." Regarding the system he wrote, "If ever there was a device for insuring mal-government, it is that of a Native Ruler and Minister, both relying on foreign bayonets, and directed by a British Resident."

Then he advised: "Let the management of the province be assumed under some such rules as those which were laid down by Lord W. Bentinck (in his report to the Court of Directors in July 1831). Let the administration of the country, as far as possible, be native. Let not a rupee come into the Company's coffers. Let Oudh be at last governed, not for one man, the King, but for him and his people."

But the advice was disregarded by Dalhousie who had made up his mind to annex Oudh. The dethronement of Wajid Ali Shah sent a wave of resentment and anger throughout the country, for whatever the faults of the Nawab might have been no Indian looked with approval upon the transfer of the fairest province of India to the hands of the foreign rulers. Princes, taluqdars, officials, dependents and the fighting classes of Oudh—Hindu and Muslim—all were filled with hatred and dismay. Trust in British pledges was completely shattered.

Kaye's judgment on the annexation is worthy of note. He wrote: "But that the measure itself made a very bad impression on the minds of the people of India, is not to be doubted ... because the humanity of the act was soiled by the profit which we derived from it; and to the comprehension of the multitude it appeared that the good of the people, which we had vaunted whilst serving ourselves, was nothing more than a pretext and a sham".

The Kingdom of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was annexed on the 13th February, 1856, on the plea that "the British Government would be guilty in the sight of God and man, if it were any longer to aid in sustaining by its countenance an administration fraught with sufferings to millions."

Oudh was constituted into a Chief Commissionership. Lawrence who was appointed the first Chief Commissioner mixed freely with all sorts of people and tried to fathom their feelings. He doubted their loyalty to the British Government. He wrote on the 2nd May, 1857: "I have no reason to doubt the fidelity of the artillery, though much has been done to disgust many of the native officers. ... As far as I have ascertained, the bad feeling as yet, is chiefly among the Hindu Sepoys; . .

. the Muhammedans would soon become the most energetic and violent mutineers." He added: "Until we treat natives, and especially native soldiers, as having much the same feelings, the same ambitions, the same perception of ability and imbecility as ourselves we shall never be safe." The smouldering fire for revenge was kindled when on the 3rd May, 1857, before the Sepoys in Meerut had risen, the 7th Oudh Regiment became mutinous. The Sepoys refused to bite the new cartridge, and threw down their arms and fled. Henry Lawrence was convinced that the English would have to strike anew for their Indian empire.

The Panjab happened to be a frontier province and therefore the object of special attention. In the thirties events in Western Asia had created a new situation for the British empire. Russia had defeatead Iran, then dictated the Treaty of Turkmanchai (1828), occupied the Caucasus region and increased its hold in the Caspian area. In about two years Palmerston took alarm and raised the bogey which continued to haunt the minds of British statesmen throughout the nineteenth century and after. To prevent Russian expansion towards India became the main concern of British foreign policy, and to create buffers between the Russian and British empires the great task of diplomacy.

Encouraged by Russia, Iran sought to compensate her losses by reviving her claims against Afghanistan. Her intention in the region bordering on India disturbed the peace of mind of British rulers of India.

The Panjab, which was in the throes of civil commotion after Ranjit Singh's death, now became a source of greater concern to the British. Their manoeuvres provoked the Sikhs to war, and ultimately, led to the annexation of the Panjab. Fifty-thousand square miles of productive land and four million sturdy peasants passed under British administration.

To the defeat was added humiliation. Dalip Singh, the deposed prince, was converted to Christianity and exiled to England. The properties of the Lahore Durbar were auctioned, the Koh-i-Noor was sent to England to adorn the British

crown. Lord Dalhousie visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar and walked through its sacred precincts with shoes on.

The annexation of Nagpur is another glaring example of high-handednsss. Regarding it Dalhousie stated his reason in a minute thus : "I cannot bring my judgement to admit that a kind and generous sentiment should outweigh just and prudent policy." But what lay behind the policy was made clear by Disraeli in his speech before the Parliament, when he quoted the Governor-General's own minute. He said: "The incorporation of Nagpur would give to us a territory which comprises 80,000 square miles, producing an annual revenue of forty lacs of rupees and containing more than 4,000,000 of people. . . . It would completely surround with British territory the dominions of His Highness the Nizam." Dalhousie was so much attracted by the cotton-growing capacity of the Berar country, that he brushed aside all the cautious counsels of Col. Low and William Mansel, about the evil consequences of disregarding people's feelings and considerations of justice, and signed the death warrant of the Maratha State of Nagpur.

The conquest of Sind was a piece of cynical villainy, a foul aggression. Its perpetrator, Napier, confessed: "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be." False charges were trumped up against the Amirs based upon forged documents, and the muskets of the British troops rolled back in blood the mass of the gaily turbaned and gorgeously attired Baluchis who fought valiantly, but with medieval weapons—swords and spears. Behind this facade of banter and dare-devilry, however, there was a serious objective which Palmerston proclaimed, *viz.*, "to keep the eventual meeting of Cossack and Sikh as far away from India as possible."

A number of other princely houses were deprived of their territories or pensions by being denied their customary right to adopt heirs. Thus the houses of Satara, Raichur, Naldrug, Karnatak, Tanjore, Jhansi, Karauli and Sambhalpur etc., were also deprived of their possessions.

Harsh Treatment of the Landed Gentry

Next to the princely order came the class of the nobility and gentry—taluqdars, zamindars and higher government functionaries. Against them a war of extermination was waged; "it was the policy of the times to recognise nothing between the prince and the peasant." The destruction of the class was partly the result of the policy of extinction of the great principalities. The overthrow of the Indian administration and the substitution of civil and military establishments on the British model and composed of British personnel, naturally involved the displacement of the Indian governing class.

The nature of the land revenue administration established by the Company contributed towards the same end. In the Permanent Settlement areas, the old families were displaced by a new type of land-owner. In the *ryotwari* regions the landlords disappeared almost completely. In the territories brought under the British dominion following the Maratha wars, and the cessions of the Nawab of Oudh, "many able English statesmen, especially in Upper India, had no toleration for any one who might properly be described as a Native Gentleman. They had large sympathies and a comprehensive humanity, but still they could not embrace any other idea of the Native Gentry of India than that of an institution to be righteously obliterated."

North-Western Provinces and Oudh

In the Upper Provinces, for instance, there were three classes who possessed proprietary rights: (1) the zamindars, (2) the taluqdars, and (3) the rent-free tenure holders. The settlements made with them were in the beginning based on no definite principles; nevertheless, it was assumed that the state was entitled to the entire net assets of land. In 1822, five-sixths of the gross rental was prescribed as the standard land revenue. It was reduced to two-thirds of the rental in 1833. To T. C. Robertson, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, the operation of the settlement of 1833–42, appeared to be "of a decidedly levelling character

and calculated so to flatten the whole surface of society as eventually to leave little of distinguishable eminence between the ruling power and the cultivators of the soil. It is a fearful experiment, that of trying to govern without the aid of any intermediate agency of indigenous growth; yet it is, what it appears to me, that our measures, now in progress, have a direct tendency to bring about."

In 1855, the assessment was scaled down to 50 per cent by the Saharanpore rules. This rate was extended to Oudh, the Central Provinces, the Panjab and later to Madras and Bombay. But the relief came so late that it had little effect upon the events of 1857.

The exorbitant assessment was realised by exceedingly harsh methods. The result may be described in the words of Kaye: "Under the system, which we introduced, men who had been proprietors of vast tracts of country as far as the eye could reach, shrivelled into tenants of mud huts and possessors only of a few cooking pots."

So far as the taluqdars of Oudh were concerned, they possessed undoubted manorial rights. They formed the old landed aristocracy holding proprietary rights to the soil. At the time of the annexation of Oudh in 1856, two-thirds of Oudh was owned by them. But then the British Government looked upon them as only "middlemen employed to collect revenue." The Settlement Officers' theory was that "the Talukdar was little better than an upstart and an impostor. ... To oust a Talukdar was held by some young Settlement Officers to be as great an achievement as to shoot a tiger; and it was done.... There was something thorough in it that wrung an unwilling admiration even from those who least approved. It was a grand levelling system, reducing everything to first principles and a delving Adam."

And according to Holmes, "The settlement officers, however, inspired by the famous Robert Mertins Bird, were full of the idea of promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number; they branded the talukdars as a set of worthless drones; and they determined accordingly to

deprive them of the privilege if settling for every foot of land to which they could not show a proprietary title precise enough to satisfy an English lawyer." Kaye observes : "The great besom of the Settlement swept out the remnant of landed gentry from their baronial possessions, and a race of peasant-proprietors were recognised as the legitimate inheritors of the soil"

For example, Maharajah Man Singh, and owner of 577 villages, paying £20,000 annually to Government as land revenue, was dispossessed of all but six villages, and his revenue was reduced from £20,000 to £300. Another taluqdar lost 266 out of his 378 villages, and another 155 out of 204.

The second process by which this class was affected was the resumption of lands held on rent-free tenures. Most of the holdings were inherited from those who had rendered meritorious services to the State. It is possible some were acquired unrighteously during the disturbed times on the decline of the Mughal empire. A wholesale enquiry was ordered. What followed may be stated in the words of Kaye: "So the resumption officer was let loose upon the land. Titles were called for; proofs of validity were to be established, to the satisfaction of the Government functionary. It was an awful thing after so many years of undisturbed possessions, to be called upon to establish proofs, when the only proof was actual incumbency. A reign of terror then commenced. . . .That what ensued may properly be described as wholesale confiscation is not to be doubted."

Many of those affected were members of the learned profession—the Ulama, who had received grants in aid for maintenance and for religious services as divines and scholars. The sequestration of their rights and means of livelihood was a prominent factor in producing bitterness among them and thus driving them into hostility. It is well known that the Maulavis took a leading part in arousing the people to revolt against the British Government.

The land revenue system did not spare the smaller men. In fact, the petty zamindars were much more numerous; they belonged to many castes—Rajput, Brahman, Jat, Gujar, etc.

The attack upon vested rights hit them hard, and through them the sepoys. For the sepoys came from the families of petty landholders, whose income was inadequate to cover the expenses of the family. They adopted the profession of arms to eke out a living.

Discontent of the Peasantry

Nor was the peasantry happy. The official narrative of the events of the great uprising states: "In the Trans-Gangetic pergunnahs the causes which acted to excite the disturbances were different. Religion had little or nothing to do with it. The villages in these pergunnahs were owned at the cession by large Thakoor families in large talookahs. The old Zamindars, habitually extravagant, because by habit, livers on plunder, became ruined by their extravagance, and were sold up by our rule and by our laws. The cultivators and poorer classes still continued to look upon them with greater regard than the purchaser at auction, however long the latter may have been in possession of the property. The ex-zamindar and his family were still the most influential residents of the village. In most instance they received a kind of tribute from the poorer inhabitants, and helped them in return.

"The auction purchaser, on the other hand, was generally a resident of the city, and never visit his village, except for the hateful purpose of collecting his rents, or enforcing his decrees. The people therefore naturally sided with the Zamindars, to whom the outbreak seemed a grand opportunity of recovering their position. They first set to work to destroy and plunder everything European, and took forcible possession of their old estates."

In the ryotwari regions agricultural conditions were equally bad. In the Bombay Presidency the *mirasdars* who were hereditary owners of plots which they held subject to a fixed land tax and who could not be dispossessed so long as they paid the tax, were extinguished.

In 1824—28, Pringle fixed 55 per cent of the total produce as the Government demand. The result was that the cultivators abandoned their farms and large tracts went out

of cultivation. In 1835 the mistake was partially rectified. Yet, according to the evidence of Sir George Clerk before the Parliamentary Committee of 1852, the character of the population in ryotwari regions was that of the paupers. The revenue from land had nearly doubled between 1817 and 1835, from £868,000 to £1,535,000.

In the Madras Presidency conditions were no better. In 1820 operations for Ryotwari Settlement were begun, and in 1827 completed. The result in the words of Romesh Dutt was : "For thirty years the Province of Madras became a scene of oppression and agricultural distress unparalleled even in India in that age."

Panjab

Land settlement was undertaken in the Panjab after the final annexation in 1849. By then the experience of hardships caused by heavy assessements elsewhere had furnished a warning; hence the settlements in the Panjab were carried out with great circumspection. The surveys of lands, the valuation of crops and the assessments were conducted with the help of the local accountants and representatives of the village communities. The levy in 1856 was about 25 per cent less than that charged under the Sikh Government. The result according to the Report for 1857-58 was : "The agricultural classes were comfortable and quiet; none mere pinched in circumstances; none were looking forward for change."

The incidence of revenue was light and that was a factor in the comparative calm which prevailed in the Panjab during the Revolt.

Use of Torture

Elliot, Norton and Stokes reported in 1855 that torture was practised for the realisation of the government revenue. The use of torture for the collection of revenue and in police cases, which largely affected the common people, was a serious charge against the Company's Government. The matter was raised in the House of Commons on the 11th July, 1854, by Mr. Blackett on a motion for the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry. He pointed out that the assessments were

extremely heavy so that "the unhappy ryots were ground down beneath the monstrous exactions", that their greatest condemnation was that "it could not be carried out without the employment of means that converted it into an engine of the most intolerable oppression," and that the state of the people under the system "was perfectly appalling—prostrate physically and mentally, pressed down by debt, by destitution—exhibiting a dead level of squalid pauperism, misery and starvation," Mr. Danby Seymour alleged that "the great object of the Madras Government was to get 10s. a year out of a man who had only 8s. This was not always an easy task, and tortures, similar, their character to those which were applied in the beginning of the 19th century, were resorted to for the purpose of extracting the required amount." According to John Bright, "the land was unfertile, but so heavily taxed that there was scarcely any profit from working it" and he cited the evidence of Englishmen—Collectors and officials—to prove that torture was employed in collecting revenue. Mr. Otway speaking in the debate quoted Mr. Theobald, a Calcutta barrister, who had written to him that, "almost every vice, and abuse flourishes in India. Your discovery of the practice of torture is no news to me. I believe it is practised in every lock-up house in Calcutta. In the Mofussil I had personal proof of it not long ago."

The motion was defeated by five votes. Then the Earl of Albemarle presented a petition for the redress of the grievances of the people of India, in the House, on the 16th July, 1855, and referred to the report of the Commissioners for the investigation of alleged cases of torture in the Madras Presidency, which described the nature of the tortures prevailing in revenue matters and in police cases, and arrived at the conclusion that "personal violence practised by the native revenue and police officials generally prevails throughout this Presidency, both in the collection of revenue and in police cases."

Commander Martin, an independent French observer, expressed the view that the responsibility for the atrocities which had thrown many English families into mourning in 1857 should be attributed to the Company itself. He asked,

"Is it not to revenge themselves for the severities of the agents (of the Company), that the insurgents have committed the dreadful cruelties which have raised again them the indignation of entire Europe? Hardly one year before the outbreak of the revolt, an enquiry ordered by the Government revealed, in fact, the existence of a regular and horrible system of torture practised in Indians to which even women were subjected. After this enquiry England, the country of Howard and Wilberforce, was obliged to admit that atrocious tortures of unparalleled indecency had been used in the Indian possessions by the employees of the company."

British Contempt of Hindu Religion and Customs

British contempt for the Indian people extended to their religion and culture also. The Christian missionaries were most vociferous in decrying Hinduism in all its aspects—philosophical and popular—and many officers, both civil and military, considered it their duty to spread the gospel of Jesus in order to save the pagans of India from perdition; all this, perhaps, because of their woeful ignorance of Indian religious systems. In fact, William Bentinck, while expressing his own opinion on Abbe Dubois' work, remarked : "The result of my own observation during my residence in India is that the Europeans generally know little or nothing of the customs and manners of the Hindus. We are all acquainted with some prominent marks and facts, which all who run may read; but their manner of thinking, their domestic habits and ceremonies, in which circumstances a knowledge of the people consists, is, I fear, in great part wanting to us. We understand very imperfectly their language. ... We cannot see them in their houses and with their families."

Michael Edwardes points out : "In the eighteenth century, intercourse between Indians and English was between equals, between country powers. But as the century closed, the tensions that were to lead to the Mutiny of 1857 appeared on the surface. As the English became conscious of their powers they became more aloof and inaccessible, and that necessary concomitant of an imperial government, contempt for an inferior and conquered people, shows more and more as a characteristic of the ruling class." The British lived in almost

complete isolation from the people over whom they ruled. They paid no heed to Napier's advice, namely, "give them share in all things until we blend with them and become one nation."

The political and economic grievances of the various sections of the people were the main cause of the upheaval. The threat to religion was an additional and powerful source of perturbation, for the Hindus regarded religion as the mainspring of their life, the foundation of their being. Thrown out of his religion the Hindu or the Muslim was anchorless, rudderless, and without support. Nothing could be more frightening to him than a plunge from known and familiar surroundings into an unknown and unfamiliar world. The very idea was revolting

Propaganda of Christian Missions

Syed Ahmad Khan pointed out that the social measures of the Government, the activities of the missionaries, and the statements of government officials, combined to create the impression that the rulers intended the conversion of the people of India to Christianity.

The propaganda of the Christian missions was on the increase since the permission to settle in India in 1813 was granted to them. Their preachers were seen in the market places and at the fairs often with police escort. So wrote Sir Syed : "The missionaries too had introduced a new mode of preaching the Gospel. Religious tracts containing questions and answers now began to be printed and distributed among the people. .. Of their own accord they used to frequent Mohammedan mosques and Hindu temples, as well as fairs, for the purpose of preaching, to which no one dared object for fear of the authorities. In certain districts, moreover, they were even allowed chaprasi or policeman from the *thanah* (police office) to attend them. These persons did not content themselves with merely preaching the Gospel, but used to allude to pious men and sacred places of other religions in a highly disrespectful manner, which gave much offence and pain to their hearers, and served to sow in the hearts of the people the seeds of disaffection to the Government."

6 Jhansi and Leadership

As May of 1857 approached, a few British officers became apprehensive, warning of malaise among the Sepoys, of their anger at the possibility of losing caste by being posted overseas and their resentment at having their allowances reduced. They were reported to be especially indignant at the introduction of the greased cartridges of the Enfield rifles. Odious and defiling though the cartridges were to both Hindus and Muslims, the British viewed the ne rifles as a welcome improvement over the old muzzle-loading rifles. The Enfields had greater range (a ratio of four to one), speed, and accuracy. Because of these advantages they were introduced to units of the Bengal Army in the final months of 1856 and beginning of 1857.

Added to these very real causes of unrest amoung the Sepoys were rumours circulating not only among the troops but also among the civilian populace. In the Indian countryside rumour often looms larger than objective reality and can assume a power of its own for influencing events. Such was the case with the circulation of chapattis among the villages of North India, a situation that fostered an air of anticipation among villagers and a feeling of uneasiness among some English. The travelling chapattis suggested to those English who learned of them that all was not well, certainly that all was not under their control. Such was the case, too, with rumours among both Hindus and Muslims that forcible conversion to Christianity was imminent and that flour mixed

with ground cow bones was being sold in the markets. Yet those officers who warned their superiors of impending trouble were transferred elsewhere for their efforts.

Official opinion was no more responsive to princely resentment at the annexations of Oudh, Jhansi, Satara, Nagpur, and other states, as the Rani's case attests. Oudh was significant both as the recruiting ground for the Bengal Army and as the Bithur seat of the government of Nana Sahib, the last Peshwa's adopted heir and Lakshmi's childhood playmate. In Delhi, too, Bahadur Shah, last of the Mughal emperors, sat unhappily on his throne, nursing grievances. Not even the great numerical superiority of Sepoys to English officers and troops (a ratio of at least eight to one on a countrywide average) aroused much apprehension among most officers of the army in early 1857. British confidence and complacency formed an effective insulation against the real sentiments of Indians. Revenue treasure was left in the districts as a kind of proof of business as usual, of confidence in the Sepoys. Anything else would have been an admission of lack of confidence or failure of nerve on the part of British officers, even of their ineffectiveness as officers. Not even Sepoy outbreaks in February at Berhampur and Barrackpur over the introduction of the Enfield rifles shook the confidence of the British. But the spark that had been ignited in February would soon catch fire all across North and Central India in units of the Bengal Army.

Sunday, 10 May, dawned under a fierce sun in the town and district of Meerut, some forty miles northeast of Delhi. Two weeks earlier the native cavalry, which included high-caste Brahmins, had refused the greased cartridges; a court martial meted out sentences of imprisonment at hard labour. Some time later, on 9 May, at a general parade, the old commander, Maj. Gen. W. H. Hewitt, ordered the offenders dismissed and their sentences executed. Hewitt was deaf to the pleas of the offenders, Sepoys who had until then served in the army with unwavering allegiance. The Meerut cantonment was one of the largest military stations in India, covering an area five miles in circumference and including infantry, artillery, and cavalry regiments. The morning after

Hewitt's order, the servants vanished from the bungalows of the English officers, and men in the bazaars armed themselves. The sun set, marking the hour of the evening vesper service. Ignoring the warning signs, God-fearing Englishmen took their families to church. Meanwhile, as the troops were called to the parade, they shot their officer, a Colonel Finnis, and broke ranks in general revolt. Men from the bazaars ran along the British lines burning the bungalows, and Sepoys broke into the jail to release the prisoners. English men, women, and children emerging from the unfinished church service were all murdered. While the revolt was in progress in one part of the city, in another part, at the treasury, the Sepoy guard stood loyally at its post, revealing by its inaction the absence of a prior concerted plan.

The commanders at Meerut were caught off guard and failed to act in time to check the egress of insurgents from the city. The Sepoys left for Delhi, spreading revolt with them to the old Mughal capital. Three native regiments reached Delhi, where Emperor Bahadur Shah and his retainers waited, poised to join the rebels. In Delhi the arsenal inside the city wall was guarded by native troops only, as was the main magazine, which had been moved three miles from the city as a precaution. By sunset on the eleventh all the English in Delhi had been killed, captured, or had escaped or hidden, and the city was in the hands of its Sepoy liberators. The same afternoon the telegraph lines from Delhi were cut, and the city was isolated from British garrisons elsewhere. When the news spread, British India was numb with shock, English men and women were struck with terror at word of the Meerut massacre and the fall of Delhi. It was several months before the British could retake Delhi, and in the interim, rebellion spread in the Bengal Army across North Central India, leaving disruption and death, fear and hatred in its wake.

Uprising at Jhansi

Jhansi was situated strategically as it was in the heart of Bundelkhand at the junction of four important roads. One road ran northeast toward Kalpi, Kanpur, and Lucknow, and another north-west to Agra and Delhi all major centres of the Rebellion.

A third headed south across the Central Indian plateau to the Nerbudda River and South India, and the fourth ran east to Allahabad. The great strength of the Jhansi fort further added to its military significance. At this critical time the garrison there consisted entirely of Indian troops : the left wing of the Twelfth Native Infantry and the right wing of the Fourteenth Irregular Cavalry of the Bengal Army. The opposite wings of each of these units were stationed at Nowgong.

Sir Robert Hamilton, reporting on relations among the houses of Bundelkhand following his April 1855 tour, characterized the armies of the chiefs as an "assembly of idle, dissipated men in parties independent of each other, under no proper control, and ready for any broil." Bundela Rajput chiefs harboured grievances against the British for actions taken in their states as well as designs on each other. Raja Mardan Singh of Banpur hoped to regain the whole kingdom of Chanderi, the former possession of his ancestors. Many Thakurs (landlords) broke into rebellion in the region even before the troops rose at Lalitpur, the district headquarters. Mardan Singh was said to have visited the Rani of Jhansi following the death of her husband and thereafter to have kept in touch with her at frequent intervals. Some said the Rani had elicited promises of support from neighbouring landowners of Oodgaon, Nonir, and Jigna. Jawahar Singn of Nanikpur and Mangal Singh of Jakhlon were also disaffected because their states had been partially or totally resumed. Jawahar Singh began plundering before the outbreak at Jhansi. The British had intelligence too that the Thakur landowners of Karhra a few miles from Jhansi intended to attack.

At Almora another officer of the Salt Excise, an Englishman known locally for his knowledge of the language and customs, referred to the general atmosphere of unrest and disorder in Central India just prior to the Rebellion. "There were several gangs of robbers in Bundelkhand just waiting for an opportunity to plunder," he wrote. This explosive situation in Budelkhand belied the calm the English in North India displayed.

In Jhansi, Superintendent Alexander Skene was not particularly, alarmed when news of the revolt at Meerut

reached him. Though he had no English troops at Jhansi, he felt secure with his small contingent of native infantry and cavalry. "The troops here," he reported on 18 May, "I am glad to say, continue staunch and express their unbounded abhorrence of the atrocities committed at Meerut and Delhi. I am going on the principle of showing perfect confidence, and I am quite sure I am right." A few days later he reported signs of unrest in the town, especially among Thakurs, merchants, and bankers, but he was still confident: "All will settle down here ... on the receipt of intelligence of success."

Skene's nonchalance was reflected, too, in his offhand dismissal of the "small Rajahs and Chiefs." "They saw enough of rebellion, fourteen years ago, to give them a salutary dread of it. The Oorcha and Chutterpore and Ajeegurh men are children; the Dubbah man is off to Bithoor in a moribund state; and the Sumpther man is mad and a prisoner in his own fort; the Chirkaree man and the Punnah men almost the only chiefs worth mentioning, and they have kept out of everything of the king hitherto—so I trust we are all safe." He added, "But for the feeling that this mutiny is universal I should say the men here are perfectly staunch." Apparently none of the rumours yet disturbed Skene's sleep.

On 2 June, nonetheless, Skene finally took note of a rumour of an intended attack on Karhra by Thakurs and ordered Commander Dunlop to sent a party to protect the town. Forewarned, the Thakurs took no action. Skene's continuing confidence on 3 June is difficult to explain. Two days earlier in broad daylight two bungalows in the Jhansi cantonment had been burned. This was the signal in many districts that the Sepoys were ready, poised for revolt. Skene still sensed no great danger. Captain Dunlop was similarly trustful of his troops. Reports from his spies about their difficulty in infiltrating the Sepoy lines also failed to arouse his suspicions. Neither Skene nor Dunlop took any precautions following the firing of the bungalows.

Captain Dunlop did, however, forward letters by Skene and Gordon to Major Kirke, commander at nearby Nowgong, a few days before the eruption at Jhansi. The letters told of

rumours from separate sources that "Luchman Rao the servant of the Rani was doing his best to induce men of the 12th Native Infantry to mutiny." It was not known by these men, however, "if the Rani authorized these procedures." Dunlop still sensed no problem with the Jhansi troops.

Deputy Superintendent Gordon also had intimations that trouble was brewing in the ranks of the Sepoys. He was informed several days before the outbreak that "an adherent of the Rani named Bolanath used to hold long private conferences with the native officers of the Jhansi troops, who frequently visited the Rani's palace, and that some treachery was intended." The head writer for the deputy commissioner's office, a man named Scott, similarly claimed there was good reason to know that a mutiny was intended, and that the Rani and the troops were one." On 30 or 31 May, another Company employee by the name of Andrews went to Gordon and urged that precautionary measures be taken immediately regarding the fort and magazine. Andrews was convinced that the troops planned mutiny, and that the Thakurs were in collusion with the Sepoys. Gordon replied that he had already suggested some such measure to Skene, but Skene was convinced that any precautionary move would only precipitate mutiny at once. Faced with the obvious need to balance military preparedness and caution with a show of confidence in Sepoy loyalty, the Jhansi officers clearly opted for a show of faith.

Apart from these warnings, none of the Rani's protests—those over resumption of the state, lifting of the ban on cow slaughter, use of funds for her son's sacred thread ceremony, or resumption of the villages that supported the temple—convinced Skene of the need for any precautions. Nor is there evidence that he was very concerned about the Sepoy grievances and malaise over the cartridges, the rumorus of forcible conversion, or the night runners with their mysterious chapattis. After news of Meerut reached Jahansi, the Rani asked Skene for permission to raise a bodyguard of armed men for her own protection; Skene apparently agreed without hesitation.

The cantonment lay beyond the walled town of Jhansi, and within the cantonment the treasure and magazine were stored in an area called the Star Fort. It was this small fort rather than the Jhansi fort proper that was the focus of the first act of open mutiny. It happened on the afternoon of 5 June. A company of the Twelfth Native Infantry, cheered on by gunners, marched into the Star Fort and occupied it. Captain Dunlop and his officers rushed to the parade ground, where the other four companies of the regiment denied any knowledge of the actions of the offending company and professed that they would stand by their officers. Still credulous, Captain Dunlop called for a parade the following morning. This was the usual response of a British commanding officer when faced with the first signs of revolt.

The parade was intended to effect a show of confidence on the part of the British officers and to demonstrate loyalty and solidarity among the Sepoys. Dunlop, in fact, had implicit faith in the assurances of loyalty on the part of the Sepoys assembled at the parade ground that morning. After dismissing the troops, he made preparations to deal with the company that had occupied the Star Fort. He wrote letters and reports of the events and mailed them himself to other stations, including Nowgong. The same day he wrote Major Kirke at Nowgong saying simply, "The Artillery and Infantry have broken into Mutiny and have entered the Star Fort where are the guns and treasure. No one has been hurt yet. Look out for stragglers."

On the afternoon of the fifth, Captain Skene sat in his office hearing petitions when Sepoys begin firing in his direction. One shot fell at the door, the next flew over the house. Skene rose, rushed out the door and seeing the Sepoys firing, shouted for his wife and four children. At the same time he ordered his carriage made ready at the stable. Faced with delay, he hurriedly took his wife and children by the hand and led them on foot toward the main fort, leaving instructions to his servant to take the carriage to Captain Gordon. Gordon sat in his bungalow, writing a report when Skene's coachman and carriage arrived. He immediately took

the carriage and made for the fort, overtaking the **Skene family** on the way. They joined him in the carriage and the party arrived safely at the fort. Skene then ordered his coachman to take the horses and carriage to the Rani's artillery sheds. His confidence in her was unshaken. It was by then four or four-thirty, and the other English in the cantonment were all converging gradually on the fort, clutching a few possessions. Only four of the English inside the fort were military men.

Skene's servant related later that when the English entered the fort they tried to maintain their usual daily routine. A few servants were still able to slip unobtrusively into the fort with food and their English employes had them bring in dinner the first night and breakfast the following morning. The servants were directed to bring coal, wood, chickens, eggs, and sweetmeats to the fort on the night of 6 June. By later the same evening most of the servants had been apprehended. Skene's servant, however, testified that he was freed the next morning and made his way toward the fort again with same loaves of bread and bottles of milk. Gordon and Skene, looking over the fort wall, was the servant and lowered a rope to haul up the provisions. As the servant returned from the fort he was apprehended by insurgents for the second time and was unable thereafter to provide Skene and his party with food.

During the night of the sixth the armed watchmen and Thakurs who had entered the fort with the English deserted, either through fear or a change of heart. Some inside the fort suggested escape during the night as the only possible hope for the besieged English. Several possible routes were studied, but this prospect was abandoned as too dangerous. Dawn was already visible and the only two gates of the fort were being closely watched, both from without and within. From the main fort the English could see between 100 and 125 mutineers posted at the door of the magazine and around the treasury of the Star Fort.

During the morning of the sixth, Gordon wrote pleas for help to nearby Datia, Tehri, and Gursarai, all of whose chiefs professed loyalty to the British. He also wrote the tehsildar

(revenue collector) of Jhansi and several Thakurs for aid. Soon after the English made their way into their refuge, Gordon ordered the police to garrison the fort, which they did. Shortly thereafter, early in the morning, several cavalrymen came to the fort with a message from Captain Dunlop to the effect that only thirty-five Sepoys had mutinied and that the English might therefore return in safety to their bungalows. Skene, however, was not ready to trust this message.

Later in the morning, about nine o'clock, a second message arrived from Dunlop, this one in writing. This time Skene and Gordon, together with Dr. McEgan, the cantonment physician, returned to the cantonment to meet Dunlop. Dunlop told them that the mutiny was only partial, that only thirty-five men of the cavalry had mutinied and were holding the Star Fort. Dunlop tried to induce Gordon to let him have some powder and ammunition, reiterating that the mutiny could be quelled with those who remained loyal. Gordon, unconvinced, feared that the munitions would only fall into the hands of the insurgents to be used against the English inside the fort. Even after Skene and Gordon returned with McEgan to the fort at ten o'clock, Dunlop still sought their aid through written messages. The morning conversation between Dunlop, Skene, and Gordon was not recorded, but their servants understood the nature of their disagreement. The servants were ordered back to the bungalows to look after the houses and belongings of the English.

On the morning of the sixth when Gordon's servant again brought tea for Gordon and the others, it appeared that the whole force had mutinied; guards had been posted outside the fort and were clearly visible to the English inside. The guards were given instructions not to allow anyone to pass with food or water for the English or even to speak to them, according to Gordon's servant. There is some disagreement in both Indian and English accounts regarding the exact timing of events of the four days following 5 June.

Sometime after meeting with Skene and Gordon, probably the morning of the sixth, Dunlop took the precaution of preparing some shells and went to post his letters. Returning

from the post office, he passed near the Twelfth parade and was attacked and killed by men of the Twelfth Native Infantry, an ensign named Taylor with him. Lieutenant Campbell, officer of the Fourteenth Irregular Cavalry, was shot and wounded but made it into the fort clinging to the back of his horse. (In some versions it is Taylor, not Campbell, who rides into the fort wounded and clutching his horse's mane.) Another lieutenant, Turnbull, was on foot nearby and climbed into a tree to escape but was discovered and shot down.

Some accounts relate that a mullah named Ahsan Ali called all true Muslims to prayer as the signal for the troops to mutiny. The multineers stormed the jail and there the daroga, or warden, Bakhshish Ali, released the prisoners. This marked the beginning of the general plunder and burning of the bungalows in the cantonment. On the afternoon of the sixth the mutineers, joined by the freed prisoners and police, all joined the siege of the fort. The English officers inside returned the fire of the insurgents. The rebels brought a gun up to the Orchha gate and began firing on the fort wall. They attempted an escalade but could not get over the wall because of the English guns pointed at them through the parapets of the walls.

Gordon's servant testified that Gordon wrote a letter, which he threw down over the fort wall, calling on "the Rani's servants" to cease firing and take his letter to the Rani. The servants brought back a reply from the Rani, which the English pulled over the fort wall on a string. The Rani's reply, according to Gordon's servant, stated that she was helpless, that the Sepoys had surrounded her palace and accused her of protecting the English. She reported, moreover, that the Sepoys wanted immediate surrender of the fort and some assistance from her. She claimed she had replied to the mutineers that she had no power to evict the English from the fort, but in order to save her life she had sent some of her men and two guns to the mutineers. The servant later alleged that she advised the English that if they wished to save their lives, they must leave the fort and Jhansi as well, though she did not specify how. The besieged English replied by the same

messenger that if they had a carriage they would leave in whatever direction the Rani proposed. She did not respond.

Skene became increasingly convinced that the English could not hold out in the fort indefinitely. In his view the only hope lay in escape from the fort through the good offices of the Rani. Why Skene reached this decision after only two days in the fort is not clear. The fort had its own water supply, but undoubtedly the English were short of food and also suffering from shock and various discomforts. For whatever reason, Skene decided to sent envoys to talk with the Rani and solicit her aid. Four men were chosen: Scott, Andrews, and two Purcells. Of the fate of these men Kaye relates, "They were sent by the Rani to our own revolted Sepoys, who deliberately murdered them." According to Gordon's servant, Andrews disguised himself as a native in a turban and tried to seek a meeting with the Rani. Escaping from the fort, he made his way to the Rani's cowshed, where he was recognized by her servants. He offered them ten rupees if they would spare him. They took the rupees, murdered him, and threw his body onto a hayrick. The English in the fort were anguished to learn of the fate of their messengers.

The rebels moved a gun up toward the inner Ganesha gate and began firing at the fort wall. Within the fort, rifles had been distributed, women assigned the tasks of cooking and preparing ammunition, and even children enlisted to help pile stones behind the gates. Each person in the fort had an assigned post. The rebels were surprised at the vigor of the defence. On the morning of the eighth the mutineers tried to scale the walls of the fort but were shot down from the walls and the escalade aborted. Renewing their attack, the insurgents toward afternoon captured the lower part of the fort wall. Two Indians still inside the fort, anticipating that the escalade might succeed, had tried to open one of the gates to let the mutineers in. They were immediately shot by Captains Gordon and Burgess, but in the skirmish another captain, Powys, was killed. Captain Gordon's fire toward the gun at the Ganesha gate had kept the rebel gun silent for some time. He decided to look through one of the gun

emplacements on the wall to see what effect his firing had had and ascertain exactly what the rebel strength was. Just as he peered through the parapet emplacement a bullet struck him in the head and he fell dead. Gordon was the ranking officer in the fort and the key to the morale of the English defenders. The death of "the life and soul of the garrison" was a serious blow to the besieged. Attempts to get help from outside, from Gwalior, through Anglo-Indian messengers failed when they were intercepted and killed. Messages sent to Orchha and Datia similarly elicited no aid.

Massacre

On the afternoon of the eighth, three days after the beginning of the siege, Captain Skene hung out a flag of truce, hoping to negotiate terms. Despite the fort's water supply, the English were short of food. Gordon's death, furthermore, had ended any hope of continued military resistance from inside the fort, and there was still no sign of any relief from nearby stations. The intensity of the siege on the afternoon of the seventh and morning of the eighth was surely a factor in Skene's decision. Responsible for the lives of some sixty English men, women, and children crowded into the fort in these circumstances, Skene saw no alternative.

Leaders of the insurgents, among them the jail daroga, came to the fort gate to hear what Skene had to say. They "swore oaths, both Hindu and Muslim," that the English could leave safely if they would vacate the fort, lay down their arms, and surrender. The question of who authorized the promise of safe conduct has prompted much debate among historians. Many English accounts have it that the promise was given on authority of the Rani. It seems unlikely, however, in view of her earlier warning to the English of her helplessness against the Sepoys, that she would have given such an assurance, or, even if she had, that Skene would have been eredulous enough to accept it. Yet most accounts agree that Skene did accept someone's promise of safe conduct. No doubt he felt he had no other recourse. Skene, then, led all the besieged—men, women, and children—down out of the fort and into the area beyond the main gate. What happened next was one of the

horrors of the Rebellion.

The rebels tied the English together and led them in a procession through the town to an area called Jokhun Bagh beyond the city wall. Men were separated from women and children. The cavalry and infantry troops then declared they were acting under orders of the rissaldar, the cavalry commander. The jail daroga and his assistants began the massacre, Bakhshish All himself cutting down Captain Skene first. The rebels wielded swords and spears until every English man, woman, and child lay dead or dying on the ground. Gordon's servant watched the grisly scene and later related that "Captain Browne's sister begged very hard for her life. She said she would remain wherever they told her and held the hand of the Sepoy, but they would not spare her and she was killed too." Mrs. McEgan, the doctor's wife, threw her arms around her husband in a desparate attempt to save him, but she was beaten and pushed aside. Dr. McEgan was then killed, and his wife threw herself on his body, where she was killed also.

The bodies of the English were left for three days on the road where they fell and then were thrown into gravel pits and covered over. In the evening after the massacre the rebels issued a proclamation: "The people are God's; the country is the King's; and the two religions govern."

Only one adult escaped, an Anglo-Indian named Mrs. Mutlow, taking her two small children with her. She later told how she eluded the notice of the insurgents and hid with her children in a temple at Jokhun Bagh. She remained there in terror of her life for a month before she managed to get help and escape. Her husband was among those killed at Jokhun Bagh. Two other Anglo-Indians who had remained in the cantonment also managed to escape: a man referred to as Conductor Reilly and a clerk named Crawford. Reilly made his way toward Burwa Saugor, and Crawford somehow got out of the fort on the night of the seventh and went toward Samthar and Kanpur. Gordon's servant testified that he, himself, was detained in Jhansi for ten days before being allowed to return home to Saugor.

For a brief interlude it was uncertain if the rebels would allow the Rani to retain the throne. They brought to Jhansi a Newalkar relative and former claimant to the throne, Sadasheo Rao Narain, from Unao twelve miles away. The Rani was thus coerced into promising the rebels more money and aid than Narain had offered in order to retain her throne. The insurgents then issued a second proclamation: "The people are God's, the country is the padshah's, and the Raj is Rani Luchmee Baee's. With that the rebels took the road for Delhi on the eleventh. Narain also left Jhansi with three hundred men and on 13 June seized the small fort at Karhra. There he appointed his own officials, levied taxes, and proclaimed that he had seated himself on the throne of Jhansi. The Rani sent troops against him shortly thereafter, and he fled to Nurwar, in the territory of Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior. When Jhansi was retaken by the British, Narain was taken prisoner and transported for life.

The day after the departure of the rebels from Jhansi the Rani wrote the first of two letters to Erskine giving her account of events and deploring the murders. In it she reported that the government troops at Jhansi, "through their faithlessness, cruelty and violence killed all the European civil and military officers, the clerks and all their families." She expressed regret that, having "only 100 or 50 people guarding her house," she had been helpless to assist the victims. She had herself been victimized by the rebels, who "behaved with much violence against herself and servants and extorted a great deal of money from her." She had been compelled to pay large sums to the rebels in property and cash "to save her life and honour," as she had been threatened in messages "through the Tehseeldar of Jhansi the Revenue and Judicial Mukhtadar Courts and Superintendents Courts to the effect that if she at all hesitated to comply with their requests they would blow up her palace with guns." She had urged the police to remain at their posts after the outbreak and hastened to send this report to Erskine as soon as the rebels left Jhansi for Delhi.

Two days later she sent a second letter to Erskine, this time informing him that disorder and plunder were prevalent and

that it was "quite beyond her power to make any arrangement for the safety of the District." She had no funds and had sold her personal property "to save the town from being plundered." She was doing her best to maintain order in Jhansi but did not believe she could hold on much longer "without a competent Government force and fund." She therefore requested orders from Erskine. With this letter she sent a more detailed account of events at Jhansi. She related that when the English entered the fort (she dates this the fifth), she had "sent a few of her own guards to the Fort for their aid." On the night to the eleventh the rebels left and she hoped would "go straight to hell for their deeds." The mutineers had compelled one hundred fifty of her men to join in their assault on the fort on the eighth.

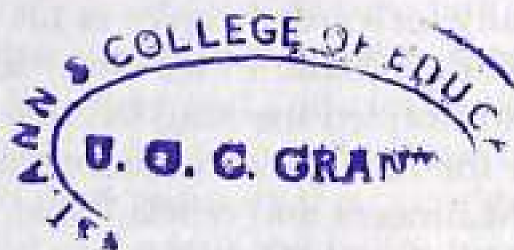
Erskine received both letters and sent a reply on 23 June, which he followed up with another dated 2 July in case she had not received the first. In his reply he gave on indication that he doubted the veracity of the Rani's report. He said he hoped to send officers and troops soon to restore order in Jhansi, but pending the arrival of a new superintendent in Jhansi, he authorized her to manage the district for the British government, collecting the revenue, raising such police as necessary, and making other proper arrangements. He assured her that the new superintendent would repay her for her losses and expenses and "deal liberally" with her. Erskine sent with the letter two proclamations: one with his seal authorizing the Rani to rule the district until further orders, and another issued on presumption of the retaking of Delhi.

Erskine naturally forwarded copies of his correspondence with the Rani to Fort William. In his cover letters describing the steps he had authorized the Rani to take, he commented, "It will be seen by the Rani's own account she in no way lent assistance to the Mutineers and rebels," that on the contrary she herself was plundered. Unlike Erskine, however, Fort William was unconvinced by the Rani's account. The governor-general's reply came through his secretary to the effect that he did not blame Erskine for accepting the Rani's account or for authorizing her to manage the government under the

circumstances. "Yet this circumstance will not protect her if her account turns out to be false," the governor-general warned. Moreover, from Major Ellis account, it appeared to Fort William that "the Rani did lend assistance to the mutineers and rebels and that she gave guns and men."

Erskine, to be strictly accurate, should have made it clear that in both her letters and account the Rani did state that she had complied with rebel demands, though under duress, and that her men had been compelled to participate in the assault on the fort. Erskine may have anticipated some official criticism, and in his attempt to support both his and the Rani's actions may have overstated the case for the Rani's non-involvement.

Fort William in October proclaimed a reward of one thousand rupees each for two men who were designated as ringleaders in the murders at Jhansi. The accused were Rissaldar Kalee Khan of the Fourteenth Irregular Cavalry and Ahmad Hassein, tehsildar (local revenue official) at Jhansi. It is noteworthy that neither the Rani nor the jail daroga were designated culpable at this time. Somewhat later, questions were raised by English officials regarding the Rani's role in the uprising and massacre at Jhansi.


COLLEGE OF EDUC
U. G. C. GRANT

7 Other Battles

I

The Battle at Koonch

As General Rose's force took the road to Kalpi after the Rani's flight, a distraught Hamilton wrote the governor-general suggesting a reward be offered for the capture of the raja of Banpur and "the Baee of Jhansi." The governor-general replied that he did not consider it expedient for the government to issue this offer of reward. He agreed, nevertheless with Hamilton's suggestion of offering "rewards of up to 10,000 rupees for the Nawab and 20,000 rupees for the Baee."

Both the Rani and Rose were headed, ultimately, for Kalpi, one hundred miles northeast of Jhansi on the road to Kanpur. It was the only important town remaining in rebel hands, critical too because it housed the principal rebel arsenal, a cache of guns and ammunition hidden within and under the fort. Kalpi was also an important crossing of the Yamuna River and could threaten the British advance base and communications center at Kanpur. Kalpi in rebel hands could prevent the union of the British armies from east and west, cutting them in two. Kalpi was, moreover, headquarters of Rao Sahib, the old cohort of the Rani and Nana Sahib. Though rebel forces had scattered in defeat, they were able to regroup at Kalpi, resilient and ready for yet another battle. Rao Sahib was joined there by Lakshmi and the raja of Banpur, and briefly, by Tatya Tope as well.

It was late April before Rose resumed his march northeastwards toward Koonch and Kalpi. The general, as was his habit, sent reconnaissance parties ahead. He hoped to clear Kotra, an important ford on the Betwa, of rebels before pushing on toward Kalpi. His reconnaissance groups found no rebels at Mau or Kotra, but at Koonch, forty-two miles southwest of Kalpi, they were present in force. Intelligence arrived on 27 April that the Rani was at Koonch, together with Tatya Tope, the subahdar of Koonch, the rajas of Banpur and Shahgurh, Rao Sahib, and an army of over ten thousand men.

When she fled Jhansi the Rani had ridden northeast, arriving at the Kalpi rebel headquarters the same day as Tatya Tope. At Kalpi, the last defence post of the rebels, a war council was held. Rao Sahib presided. By British accounts, the Rani implored Rao Sahib to "give her an army that she may go and fight." The following morning at a parade of the troops, Rao Sahib responded by publicly praising Lakshmi for her defence of Jhansi. The troops on parade consisted of some regiments of the Gwalior Contingent, some of the regular Indian Army, units of various rebel rajas, and remnants of the Jhansi garrison. Rao Sahib reviewed the rebel troops, then ordered Tatya Tope to lead them against the English.

Lakshmi was acutely disappointed at being overlooked by Rao Sahib. She must have blamed male disposition and bias for the slight and for clouding the military judgment of the rebel leaders. Many in Jhansi and Kalpi still say that had the Rani been selected to lead the army the outcome of the battles at Koonch and Kalpi might well have been different.

Although the Rani had not been given a command, she offered a tactical proposal. She suggested that the army should not ensconce itself in the Kalpi fort to await Rose's attack, but should go out on the offensive before the British could reach Kalpi and fight on ground favourable to the rebels. She suggested Koonch, to the southwest of Kalpi and back toward Jhansi. Though the fort was dilapidated, Koonch offered the rebels several defensive advantages. The town was difficult to approach, surrounded as it was by temples, woods, and

gardens, and protected by high mud walls. These features made Koonch difficult to attack and an ideal site for defensive retrenchments. The Rani urged Tatya Tope not to expend all his troops in the defence of Koonch but to keep some reserve for a fall-back position on Kalpi, and above all to watch his flanks. Tatya Tope failed to heed his friend's advice.

Rose, as he approached Koonch, decided that rather than mount a frontal assault, he would opt for a flank attack from the northwest of Koonch and at the same time threaten the rebel line of retreat toward Kalpi. He attacked in three columns on 6 May, a month and a day after the Rani's flight from Jhansi. Rose described the battle: "As nothing puts the Rebels out so much as turning their flank, or defences; and as the excessive heat of the day rendered it advisable that I should not undertake a long operation against Koonch, much less a siege, I made a flank march with my whole Force to the Northwest . . . This position threatened seriously the enemy's line of retreat from Koonch to Kalpi, and it exposed the northwest of the Town, which was not protected by entrenchments to attack."

It was a brief battle, lasting but an hour, with siege guns all the while directed against the town. The flank attack caused the rebels to drawback, but they continued a vigorous defence and maintained their lines. For a time Major Orr's Hyderabad Contingent was pushed back by a brief counterattack of musket fire and Maratha swords. The English were becoming exhausted by their effort, debilitated by temperatures that were 100 degrees at sunrise, intolerable by noon. One thermometer burst at 130 degrees in an officer's tent. English soldiers observed that Maratha tulwars were sharper than British swords. A native sword completely severed the arm of an English lieutenant, another cut off part of a dragoon's foot, shoe and all. Rose also discovered that the Enfield rifles no longer gave his men any advantage, for the heat made loading them extremely difficult and firing uncertain. Despite these difficulties Rose had Tatya Tope on the retreat. In the process the rebels abandoned all their nine guns and left behind nearly six hundred casualties.

Tatya Tope and his army withdrew from Koonch along the Orai-Kalpi road, this time in an orderly retreat toward their arsenal town. At Kalpi the English later found Tatya Tope's order book, in which he praised the spirit of bravery of his men at Koonch. "If they would only fight so a few times more the infidel English would be exterminated." Yet it is certain that the brief battle sowed dissension in the rebel camp. Infantry and cavalry accused each other of desertion and cowardice, and men in all units accused Tatya Tope of retreating more rapidly at Koonch than he had at the Betwa. Even the Jhansi cavalry was faulted for having left the field too soon. British accounts assert with a Victorian touch that the Jhansi force excused themselves "on the plea that they had felt bound to escort their Rani to a place of safety."

The battle had exhausted the English even more than the insurgents, and Rose marched back to Koonch rather than press the pursuit. It was late April, on the verge of the most intense heat of the year. The worst enemies of the English were not insurgents but sun, exhaustion, and lack of water. Sunstroke was common, and the general himself had suffered four times from it. It was virtually impossible to imagine the English launching an offensive under conditions that barely permitted most men to keep moving at all.

Rose was grateful to his men in the face of such formidable odds and might have allowed them more time to recuperate but for an urgent message from the civil officer at Koonch. The message warned Rose that unless he marched at once to the right bank of the Yamuna, Tatya Tope and Lakshmi at Kalpi and the nawab of Banda at Nowgong would cut him off from joining Brigadier Maxwell's Second Brigade. Rose reluctantly ordered his exhausted men to make a forced march to Golauli, seven miles from Kalpi on the Yamuna.

The Fall of Kalpi

The rebel army retreated from Koonch and fell back to Kalpi, their last hope. The fort at Kalpi was small but well situated for defence/poised as it was 120 feet above a bend in the Yamuna River. The original fort was built by the Chandellas in the tenth century, and later it housed part of

the Maratha treasury. Walls of the fort were nine feet wide and the fort covered an area 440 yards square. What made it formidable was that it housed what was left of the rebel arsenal. The fort was surrounded by walled temples built of masonry. Beyond the city and temples was a labyrinth of deep ravines, deep enough to inhibit the advance of any army using whatever means of transportation. The ravines were an ideal line of defence, but of course might also conceal an English advance. So long as this rebel stronghold remained in the hands of the insurgents, it would prevent the union of the British armies in the east and west.

Rao Sahib, the Rani, and the nawab of Banda were now the leaders in the fort. Tatya Tope, after the defeat at Koonch, had headed for Charkhari near Jaloun, where his parents lived. From there he disguised himself and made for Gwalior. His goal was to attempt to win over Scindia's well-disciplined army of ten thousand.

The army at Kalpi now included part of the Gwalior Contingent, in Rose's words, "the finest men, best drilled and organized troops of all armies in India." The nawab of Banda's army, some Bengal infantry, valayaties, and cavalry from Kotah completed the force. Rose related of the army, "All the Sepoy Regiments kept up, carefully, their English equipment and organization; the words of command for drill, grand rounds, etc. were given, as we could hear at night, in English."

The rebels prepared five lines of defence to protect the fort to the front, while to the rear it was protected by the Yamuna River and precipitous rocks below the fort. The first line was entrenchments on the Koonch-Kalpi road, ravines on each side of the road provided serious obstacles. The second line was eighty-four temples built of solid masonry, two or three miles from Kalpi. The third line was another outwork of ravines. Fourth was the town of Kalpi, and fifth another chain of ravines between the town and fort. The final fall-back positon was the well-armed fort itself. Guns and ammunition, the major ordnance of the rebels, were stored within and under the fort.

General Rose devised his tactical plans for the attack on the Kalpi arsenal. He had to take into account "a new antagonist, a Bengal Sun, at its maximum heat. This formidable ally of the Rebel cause was more dangerous than the Rebels themselves; its summer blaze made havoc amongst Troops, especially Europeans. . . already exhausted by months of over fatigue and want of sleep, by continued night watchings and night marches". Some of these same problems, of course, plagued their opponents. The temperature, already intolerable at Koonch, crept relentlessly upward as operations continued. One insurgent tactic was to attack in daytime, knowing the British with their light hair and complexions would be incapacitated by sunstroke and heat exhaustion. The sick list lengthened; worst afflicted was the Seventy-first Highland Light Infantry, newly arrived in India. All who suffered sunstroke collapsed and, unless they died had to be carried on the march in dhoolies, or palanquins. Rose himself collapsed and was put into a dhooly but insisted on getting up. He thereafter had a man follow him to pour water over his head to prevent a recurrence. Rose remarked that "the prostration of the whole force had become a matter of arithmetical calculation, so many hours' sun laid low so many men." A two-hour march prostrated half an English unit. The scarcity of water and forage added to the precarious situation.

Faced with these problems, Rose determined that a rapid assault on Kalpi was imperative. Moreover, in view of the logistic situation and lines of defence in front of the town and fort, he knew he could not concentrate a force against the mutineers' stronghold. He decided to break off to the right of the main road to Kalpi and at the Yamuna near Golauli to rendezvous with Maxwell's force, sent by Campbell to unite with Rose. From that point Rose would advance up the right bank of the Yamuna toward Kalpi, covered by fire from Maxwell's batteries from the other river bank. To mislead the insurgents Rose ordered the Second Brigade to follow the main road from Koonch to Orai and Kalpi in a feint and take up a position at the village of Banda. This plan was foiled when the brigade lost its way and followed Rose instead.

Rose marched the First Brigade to Golauli and ordered Major Orr to cover the rear of his march and keep up communication with the debilitated Second Brigade. The rebels destroyed bridges and commandeered all boats. Rose accordingly ordered pontoon rafts floated and was able then to unite his Central India Field Force from Bombay with Maxwell's force from the east. This rendezvous was an important feature of Rose's mission.

Rose mounted a flank rather than frontal attack against the Kalpi defences. Yet any advance against Kalpi meant advancing through the maze of ravines, a two-mile belt that could conceal friend or foe and provided an ideal cover for ambush. Against the heed for a rapid assault Rose had to balance the debilitated state of his men. "My game was a waiting one, and I abstained carefully from playing that of my adversary, which was to disorganise and prostrate my force by continued exposure to the sun." In planning the final assault Rose took into consideration also the nature of his adversaries. He noted, "The high descent of the Rani, her unbounded liberality to her Troops and retainers, and her fortitude which no reverses could shake, rendered her an influential and dangerous adversary."

This time Rose did not feel his opponents would repeat the story of the siege of Jhansi by shutting themselves up in the fort and becoming the "victims of an investment." Maxwell was constructing his battery on the opposite bank of the Yamuna to stage the shelling of the fort and to try to blow up its powder magazine and destroy its defences. As Rose had anticipated, the mutineers did not remain in the fort awaiting his attack but made their stand outside the walls. Rose crossed the river to select the battery sites. For a while the ravines were ominously quiet. Rose became suspicious of the stillness, convinced that the ravines were swarming with rebels. On 20 May the rebels in fact advanced through the ravines under cover of smoke.

Rose had fixed the twenty-third for the attack and refused to be drawn into action on the twentieth. When, on the twenty-second, Rose launched his attack on the left, the mutineers hit

his right flank, which he was careful not to abandon. Reinforced by Maxwell's Camel Corps and some Sikh infantry, Rose moved with them to the right. He heard the fire there get fainter while the enemy's grew louder, and he realized that his right flank was in danger. Just then an orderly came from Brigadier Stuart and begged Rose to reinforce the right. At the foot of a hill on which the mortar battery with three guns had been emplaced, the British soldiers dismounted from their camels and rushed for the summit, led by Rose. There they met volleys of musketry coming over the crest of the hill. At the top, they were stunned by the sight of rebel troops advancing in mass over level ground against the mortar battery. The rebels yelled in triumph as they came on with volleys of musketry that killed all the horses of the British staff officers. The British could not reply; their Enfield rifles had become leaded and would not fire, and the men were debilitated by the sun. Their guns fell silent.

Rose immediately took in the perilous position of his troops. He ordered the infantry and Eighty-sixth Cavalry to charge with bayonets. The Camel Corps gave a ringing cheer and dashed down the steep incline into the dense lines of mutineers, who far outnumbered them. For a brief moment the rebels stood, then wavered and turned, fleeing through rocky ravines followed by their English pursuers. The retreat spread to the whole insurgent line of battle. The fort offered no safety, as it was under a stream of shellfire from Maxwell's guns. Insurgents separated in their flight, in ones and twos across the difficult terrain to meet later at a predetermined rendezvous. This method of retreat made pursuit fruitless.

The Camel Corps had saved the situation for the British force but only at heavy cost; officers and men slumped to the ground in the heat. By evening all in Rose's camp were speculating on the capture of the fort and town the next day. By the next morning, however, the rebels had departed and the fort stood empty, the resistance evaporated. The Rani, Rao Sahib, and the nawab of Banda had all fled in the early hours of morning. The Rani's departure was reportedly hastened by one of Maxwell's shells, which burst into her room killing two attendants. The insurgents headed across

the rocky ravine-cut terrain toward Gopalpur, some forty-six miles from Gwalior, where they were joined by Tatya Tope.

Inside the Kalpi fort was the whole rebel arsenal, abandoned to the British. The English found a subterranean magazine of ammunition in the fort, excellent foundries, and facilities for the manufacture of guns. The quantity of weapons and ammunition amazed Rose. Also in the fort, Rose found a box of the Rani's correspondence which he hoped would throw "great light on the revolt and its principal authors." Everything pointed to the rebel view of the Kalpi arsenal as their final stand.

What remains of the Kalpi fort today is a white tomblike structure. The walls facing the river have eroded away. Local residents say that the British hanged thirteen people from a tamarind tree in a Kalpi courtyard when they failed to reveal where the rebels had gone. And in Kalpi the inhabitants still deplore the fact that the Rani was not in command at the battle of Kalpi.

Rose and the Central India Field Force and Maxwell's force were exhausted by their prodigious efforts. Nearly every man was suffering from sunstroke and exhaustion. The general thanked his troops for the conduct of the campaigns against Koonch and Kalpi and commended them for "the discipline of Christian soldiers," which had seen them through, "triumphant from the shores of Western India to the waters of the Jumna."

With the fall of Kalpi, the campaign mission of the Central India Field Force was completed. Commander-in-Chief Colin Campbell had planned that Rose's army would be dispersed to Gwalior and Jhansi following the Kalpi operation. General Rose was ordered by his doctors to return at once to Bombay for treatment. Before he could leave, however, news arrived that shocked the officers and forced Rose to alter his plans.

II

The British Assault

General Rose had no ready strategy for the siege and capture of Jhansi. He relied on Hamilton's knowledge of that part of

the country and his general plan for a two-pronged attack. Hamilton urged Rose to clear the country around Shahgurh and Charkhari of rebels before advancing on Janshi itself. Rose accepted the advice. He marched the Central India Field Force slowly toward Jhansi, reaching Raj was on 1 March. There he had to decide between two possible approaches to Jhansi : one through the Narhut pass, the othr through the Madanpur pass. The Madanpur pass, though guarded by the raja of Shahgurh, was thought to be the easier of the two. Rose determined to make a feint in the direction of the Narhut pass, which he learned the raja of Banpur had blocked with boulders, and then make for the Madanpur pass. The Madanpur pass was a narrow defile, overgrown with thick brushwood, good cover for entrenchments of the defenders. After a day's hard fighting Rose succeeded in driving the rebel forces from the pass, inflicting heavy losses, and so demoralizing the rebels that they put up no further resistance until Jhansi. Rose then advanced rapidly through Banpur and Talbehat, Rathgarh, Saugor, and Garhakota, capturing the towns in rapid succession.

The first brigade of Rose's force under Brigadier Stuart then besieged Chanderi as Rose advanced on Jhansi with the second brigade. What was intended as a combined operation suffered from lack of adequate communication between the two generals. Rose wrote Stuart on 14 March and excoriated him for not informing him of his operations. "I have several important operations on hand, but in consequence of the entire ignorance in which you keep me as to your proceedings I can do nothing." He complained, moreover, "When troops act together in combined operations, the first and indispensable condition for their success is the knowledge of their respective operations."

On the night of 20 March, Rose and his force were encamped just fourteen miles south of Jhansi. He sent an advance party to reconnoiter. As he prepared to follow his reconnaissance party the next day, he made preparations for the final march on Jhansi. Just then an express courier rode up with two despatches from the governor-general, one for

General Rose and the other for Hamilton. It transpired that the pro-British raja of Charkhari was being besieged in his fort by Tatya Tope and the Gwalior Contingent. The governor-general ordered General Rose to go immediately to the relief of the friendly raja, whose fort was eighty miles from Rose's present camp.

Rose was in a quandary. To follow the governor-general's order would mean abandoning the more important and closer fort at Jhansi, his main target. Rose was furthermore convinced that the best way to save Charkhari was to take Jhansi first. He made a difficult decision, particularly difficult for a disciplined soldier. He disobeyed his superior's order and proceeded with the campaign against Jhansi. Some British accounts of this decision offer an ingenious explanation. Rose was a general, a professional soldier incapable of disobeying an order from a superior. Hamilton, on the other hand, who also received the governor-general's letter, was not a soldier. He saw Rose's dilemma and offered him a way out. Hamilton would himself accept full responsibility for proceeding with the Jhansi campaign rather than being diverted to the less important Charkhari fort eighty miles away. This version of Rose's solution, however, overlooks the obvious fact that General Rose, not Hamilton, was general in command and had received a military order. However much some authors may wish to evade the implications of insubordination, the ultimate responsibility must rest with Rose. As it turned out, Rose's military judgment was correct, and those who were concerned with the chain of command did not press the point.

Thus General Rose and the second brigade of the Field Force arrived a few miles from Jhansi, still minus a tactical plan or even description of the Jhansi fort and city. Clearly the situation required detailed reconnaissance before Rose could begin a siege. What Rose glimpsed of the fort impressed him greatly. Like most forts in Bundelkhand, the Jhansi fort was visible for miles, from as far away as the eye could see, built as it was on elevated rock. Rose remarked in his report on the excellent, massive granite masonry, the thickness of the walls (sixteen to twenty feet), their height (up to thirty

feet), and the elaborate solid outworks with loopholes for musketry. The general concluded the fort would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to breach. He noted also that the fortified city wall protected the fort as well, except on the west, where the abruptness of the rock itself served as protection. A high mound, or mamelon, on the south guarded that face and was itself fortified by a circular bastion partly surrounded by a moat.

Rose's army was delayed by transport and supply problems, to say nothing of being plagued by the weather. There was no longer any hope for a cool day, which, as Rose remarked, was so salubrious to the health of European soldiers. Rose's force was running directly into the heat of the subcontinent in March, before the monsoon breaks. One ameliorating factor was that the Central India Field Force had been issued new tropical uniforms of loose cotton trousers and blouses. This uniform was far more suitable to the intense heat and less visible to the enemy than the traditional red and blue uniforms with their high collars and tight, heavy jackets. Yet the English found the terrain extremely inhospitable for infantry, even more for cavalry.

Rose's perspective as he marched toward Jhansi was far from negative, despite the many obstacles. Writing to General Whitlock on 18 March he remarked, "If they stand at Jhansi they must have improved since the last ten days, as it has been one general interrupted run." And, he continued, "They say the Palace is the best house in India and that it will make a charming barrack."

Relying on his reconnaissance, Rose determined before the siege commenced that there was no means of breaching the fort and city wall, except perhaps from the south. But the south was flanked by the fortified city wall and mound which Rose had noted and described. A rocky ridge east of the fort was an excellent site for a breaching battery except that it was too far from the fort wall for firing range, some 640 yards away. Rose concluded that capture of the fortified mamelon to the south was therefore the first priority of the operation because it not only abutted the fort wall but also commanded

the city and palace. The city would have to be taken before the fort. Concentrating fire on the mound would drive the defenders from the mound and south of the city and facilitate breaching the wall.

Rose on 23 March formed seven flying camps of cavalry around Jhansi as an investing force, each with outposts and guards. Each camp was to watch for any attempt to leave the fort. Rose found it surprising that Jhansi had no defensive posts outside the city but concentrated the entire defence effort on the fort itself and the city walls. The investment, which began with the right attack on the mound, erected a battery and cleared the mound of rebels. Rose ordered long rows of hayricks in the south of the city burned. The Rani and her officers fired from the white turret and tree-tower batteries in the fort, and other defenders fired from the Saugor and Lutchmen gate batteries in the town. Rose was impressed with the abilities of the artillery chief, commenting that from some batteries the defence "returned shot for shot" and rapidly repaired guns and resumed fire almost immediately. One of the guns, which the English nicknamed "Whistling Dick" "never gave us time for precaution (bobbing one's head behind sand bags), for the puff of smoke was scarcely seen before the shot whipped over your head, or came with a heavy thud on the battery." English attackers could see women working in the batteries and carrying ammunition. The resistance was unremitting. Rose's explanation was: "This was not surprising as the inhabitants, from the Rani downwards, were more or less concerned in the murder and plunder of the English. There was hardly a house in Jhansi which did not contain some article of English plunder, and politically speaking, the Rebel confederacy knew well that if Jhansi, the richest Hindoo city, and most important fortress in Central India fell, then the cause of the insurgents in this part of India fell also."

General Whitlock arrived from Madras on the twenty-fifth with the siege train and guns of the second army. The men worked all night constructing batteries on the rocky ridge and putting up cover for their guns for the left attack. By

morning the guns were positioned, and they opened fire on the walls and continued to pound them for three days. The heaviest equipment and the key to dismantling the fort's defences were two eighteen-pounders. One was deployed near the wall bastion of the mound. Rose reported that the fire of these two cannon was so efficient that toward sunset the parapets of the white turret, the black tower and the tree tower, which faced the left attack, were "knocked into shapeless heaps by the fire of the two eighteen pounders." Two ten-inch mortars also caused havoc inside the fort by blowing up a powder magazine.

Day and night the firing continued, but the thick granite masonry held and the defenders fired back. English artillerymen at the siege guns worked with wet towels wrapped around their heads against the heat of the blazing sun and the risk of sunstroke. On the fourth day Rose decided a breach was feasible. The Rani, meanwhile, personally supervised the defence, ordering the damaged wall retrenched with a double row of pallisades filled with earth. Rose ordered fire concentrated on this retrenchment, and as a result part of the stockade was destroyed.

The two batteries that put up the stiffest resistence were the wheel tower on the south and the garden battery on a rock to the rear of the west wall of the city. Rose directed that a new reenforced battery be constructed on a ridge to the east to silence the wheel tower and ordered a fresh assault on the garden battery. By the thirtieth most of Jhansi's guns were disabled and the defences of the fort itself dismantled. Rose noted, nevertheless, that the obstinate defence continued, especially on the white turret, where they made "an excellent parapet of large sand bags, which they kept always wet, and still ran up fresh in lieu of disabled guns."

The Rani's best artillerymen were killed during this siege, including chief gunner Gulam Gaus Khan and Khuda Bakhsh. Their tombs lie within the fort today. In the course of the siege the British exhausted so much ammunition that it became apparent that there was not enough left to effect a main breach in the south double wall of the fort.

The Rani was constantly on the minds of the English attackers during the entire siege operation. They directed their field glasses toward the fort wall, where they hoped for a glimpse of her. One army surgeon recalls, "The dauntless bravery of the Rani was a great conversation in the camp. Far-seeing individuals thought they saw her under an awning on the large square tower of the fortress, where she was said to sit and watch the progress of the siege." It was from this same turret, the white tower, that the Jhansi flag furled. Englishmen with field glasses thought they could see that the Rani was young and beautiful. Adding to the Rani's mystique was the rumour among some young Englishmen that she was unmarried. "In the cool of the evening," in the words of one soldier, "the Rani of Jhansi with her handmaids, wrapped in bright, radiant vesture, went to the batteries and roused the zeal of her soldiers by her presence and fiery words." One British account has it that a bombadier in charge of one of the breaching guns had in his gunsite one evening "the Queen and her ladies" as they visited a tower to see how the fight was going. He asked General Rose for permission to fire on them, "but he was told that kind of warfare was not approved." Both Indian and English versions of the siege feature such romanticized embellishments.

Given the shortage of British ammunition and the impregnability of the walls, the commander of the English artillery and engineers convinced General Rose that the only feasible way to take the city and fort was by escalade. Continuing the fire, Rose then made preparations on the thirtieth to storm the fortress walls. He hoped to mount the operation next morning near the mound. Meanwhile, however, something happened to delay Rose's plan for capturing the city by escalade.

Tatya Tope to the Rescue

On 29 March General Rose received intelligence from his telegraph on the hills east of Jhansi that Tatya Tope and the rajas of Banpur and Shahgurh were advancing from Mau Ranipur to the relief of Jhansi with at least fifteen thousand men, more likely, twenty thousand. The British referred to this

force as "the Army of the Peshwa." Tatya Tope had captured Charkhari after a siege of eleven days, thereby adding to his store of guns. This was the operation that prompted the governor-general's order to Rose to divert from the Jhansi campaign. Tatya Tope's reputation as a remarkable and elusive guerrilla leader had also been enhanced by his victory over the British garrison at Kanpur. This victory was reversed only by the later arrival of British reenforcements. The main feature of Tatya Tope's plan to relieve Jhansi was to make a surprise attack. This plan, however, failed when Rose got advance intelligence of the march of the rebel army toward Jhansi.

Tatya Tope and his relief force crossed the Betwa River during the night of 21 March. A bonfire was lit at sunset to signal the Rani of his arrival outside Jhansi. Tatya Tope's intelligence sources mistakenly informed him that nearly the whole of Rose's force was engaged in the siege and investment of the fort, and the few who guarded the camp could easily be taken.

At dawn the next morning the Rani's pickets sighted in the distance thousands of men moving closer to Jhansi, beyond the British batteries. A roar went up from within the fort, and salvoes were fired to welcome Tatya Tope and his army. The Rani saw the prospect of crushing the British in a pincer between the two armies; her childhood friend had saved the day.

Tatya Tope had a master plan: attack the British with his main force and send another part of his army across a lower ford in the Betwa to turn the left of the British flank. The rebel relief force marched on, carrying coloured banners, beating drums, and brandishing bayonets gleaming in the sun. But Rose, apprised in advance of Tatya Tope's strategy, ordered his first brigade to check the rebel maneuver. This movement left Rose minus a second line.

Rose quickly saw that the only way to prevent Tatya Tope from outflanking him was to seize the initiative, rolling up both enemy flanks in a lightning operation. He rapidly ordered both his flanks to advance against the rebel storm of fire. Three times Rose ordered the Hyderabad Cavalry to

charge the rebel battery, and three times the charge was repelled by showers of grape and volleys from the valayati matchlocks. One British officer described the battle: "The Velaities jumped up in hundreds on high rocks and boulders to load and fire, but before they could re-load their matchlocks, Captain Need, leading his troop . . . penetrated into the midst of them and for a time was so hotly engaged that his uniform was cut to pieces."

Tatya Tope's force, though it contained part of the crack Gwalior Contingent and was numerically superior, was fighting at some disadvantage. It was using the old slow-firing matchlocks; more important—though unknown to the Rani—90 per cent of the men were untrained raw recruits.

While Tatya Tope's army was attempting to outflank the let of the British force, they pushed too far to their right, leaving their left exposed. Rose himself dashed in at the head of the dragoons with artillery and cavalry, routed the left flank, and advanced in line against the rebel front. Tatya Tope's green troops, disconcerted, began to retreat in disorder as the British turned both their flanks. The retreating army set fire to the jungle. The first line retreated under cover of smoke and flame toward the second line and the Betwa River beyond "in wild disorder." Tatya Tope's crack troops fought desperately, "matchlock and tulwar in hand, at times lying down and cutting at their pursuers who dashed through the blazing jungle toward the Betwa." In their flight, however, Tatya Tope's inexperienced troops abandoned most of their guns, including an eighteen-pounder drawn by elephants. Nearly all the guns Tatya Tope had brought from his Kalpi arsenal fell into British hands during the rout.

The Rani and her officers watched in dismay from the fort walls as their rescuers retreated. On the right bank of the Betwa, Tatya Tope's troops dug in for a fresh stand but could not regain the initiative. Meanwhile, General Rose kept up the siege of the fort. Rose reported the rebels lost between fifteen hundred and two thousand men in the Battle of the Betwa. All was silent within the fort; all hope of relief was gone.

The Rani learned beforehand that her old friend Tatya Tope was advancing to relieve Jhansi. She calculated that with his numerical superiority he would be able to rout the English offensive and raise the siege. The rout of Tatya Tope's troops stunned her and made her realize that she could rely only on her own dwindling resources. One perplexing question remains. Why did the Rani fail to send out some of her forces from the fort on 1 April when Tatya Tope's army arrived and thereby effect a pincer against the English? Had she done so the English besiegers might have beep overwhelmed, trapped by the numerical superiority of the two armies. The explanation for the Rani's failure to do this, some Indian authors suggest, is that she feared her men would desert if they left the fort. Another, equally cogent explanation is that Rose's besiegers did not let-up their bombardment of the fort even with the advance of Tatya Tope. As it was, the Rani found it hard to believe that the massive army of twenty thousand had failed to raise the siege against a British force one-fourth its size, a force which still kept up its assault on the fort despite the fact that it had been fighting for several days in alien terrain. What she had no way of knowing was that most of the relief army were raw recruits.

The Escalade

With the defeat of Tatya Tope, General Rose turned his attention again to the problem of an escalade. On 2 April the commander of the engineers informed Rose that preparations for the escalade were completed and a twenty-four-pound Howitzer was in place for enfilading the wall. At three o'clock the next morning storming parties advanced by moon-light on both the right and left attack into "a savage fire of round shot, musket balls and rockets." Bugles blared from up on the walls, muskets cracked, rockets hissed, and cannon boomed. The cacophony of sound and the fire momentarily checked the British advance, and the attackers hid behind the shelter of rocks. Then the engineers reached the walls, and the infantry, under cover of smoke, began to creep forward. Two officers who reached the ramparts were bayoneted and shot from the walls, another was struck by a

rock in the face and fell. Three ladders broke, and the men on them were plunged into the ditch. The escalade on the right then failed because of the breaking ladders and because one ladder was too short for the thirty-foot wall. But the escalade on the left succeeded, punctuated by an Irish yell rising above the crack of musketry as men jumped over the wall. A column rushed through the breach that had been blown through a gate with a bag of powder, and English soldiers streamed into the city. Men clambering over the wall gained the mamelon and pushed into the streets. They fought from house to house in hand-to-hand combat. Skirmishing continued in the streets and houses as the English cut their way toward the palace against obstinate resistance.

The defenders set fire to trails of gunpowder laid against the entry of Rose's army into the palace. This ruse killed several of Rose's men. Rose concentrated both right and left attacks now on the palace, forming an oblique line from the northeast Burrahgong gate to the palace and a second line from the mound to the palace. The palace was defended with determined fury, and "the streets of the palace gate ran with blood." Clearing the city of rebels to the rear of the oblique line was only effected by bloody hand-to-hand fighting with heavy losses on both sides.

Defence of the palace stables by forty valayaties, the Rani's bodyguard, was described by Rose: "The sowars, full of opium, defended their stables, firing with matchlocks and pistols from the windows and loopholes, and cutting with their tulwars . . . they retreated . . . still firing or fighting with their swords in both hands till they were shot or bayoneted struggling even when dying on the ground to strike again." In the looting that followed the taking of the palace the English captured the Rani's flag and a silk Union Jack, the same flag given by Governor-General Bentinck to Gangadhar Rao's ancestor. Destruction continued, "the British soldiers eagerly exceeding their orders to spare nobody over sixteen years—except women, of course."

Townsmen and rebels who could not escape threw their wives and children into wells and jumped in after them. Jhansi

became "a slaughter pen reeking under the hot Indian sun." Some rebels escaped to a hill west of the city where they held out briefly. Among them was Moropant, the Rani's father, who was wounded, captured, and, on 20 April, hung with Lalloo Bakhshi in the garden at Jokhun Bagh, the same garden where the English had been massacred.

During the night of 3 April Rose issued orders for an assault on the fort the next morning. The assault began on schedule, but as it began Rose got the startling news that the Rani had escaped during the night. She had left the besieged fort with some three hundred valayaties and twenty-five sowars, and headed out the Bandher gate northeastward, in the direction of Koonch and Kalpi.

The Rani's Flight

The Rani and her officers realized that the British bombardment had seriously weakened the defence of the city and fort. The city was already invested by the English, and losses in the street fighting were heavy, estimated at up to three thousand on the Rani's side. A further problem—not apparent to the English until they entered the fort—was that the fort's water supply, a large tank covered by a tarpaulin, had gone dry. Without water the defence of any fort was limited to a few days. With a full reservoir a fort's defence could hold out for a month, maybe two. The cause of the drying up of the fort's reservoir is not apparent, but it must have been a significant factor in the Rani's reckoning on 3 April. No doubt the impending monsoon rains that were expected to refill the tank had not yet begun. Finally, and most crucial in the Rani's decision, was that the British had a firm foothold in the city and had captured the palace. The fort was the final target, and the Rani knew an escalade of the fort wall would come at any moment.

The Rani, by what exit is not certain, left the fort under cover of darkness on horseback with, as popular tradition has it, "her adopted son on her back." According to legend and ballad, she galloped the 102 miles to Kalpi in one night. Other sources suggest she reached Bhander, 21 miles from Jhansi,

though actually off the main road to Kalpi, and there she bivouacked for the night. The cavalry units sent by Rose in pursuit came upon her tent and unfinished breakfast, left behind as she resumed her flight. A British officer, Lieutenant Dowker, pursued the Rani and four companions across the town until he caught sight of her on her gray horse. He drew close enough to be wounded and struck from his horse. In the popular version, the blow was struck by the Rani's own sword.

Rose's army occupied the fort without resistance the morning of 5 April. The fort was virtually empty, the Rani and all her troops having evacuated. Thus ended the siege of Jhansi, "one of the most remarkable wars of the Mutiny." It demonstrated both British success and the spirit and vigor of the Rani's defence. Some British estimates of rebel casualties rose as high as five thousand. A medical officer with Rose's force wrote afterward, "In Jhansi we burnt upwards of a thousand bodies ... I believe we must have slain nearly 3000 of the enemy. Such was the retribution meted out to this Jezebel Rani and her people for the heinous crimes done by them in Jhansi ."

Rose was dismayed at the Rani's escape from the heavily guarded fort. A British account relates that her horse was brought to the fort moat under cover of darkness "with the connivance of a native contingent serving with Sir Hugh Rose, and that after being let down over the wall she was placed in the saddle, with her stepson in her lap, and thus escaped." It is noteworthy that just as Indian accounts in Jhansi refer to treachery in opening the fort gates to the English, so also English accounts advert to the treachery of a conspirator in Rose's force in the Rani's escape. Her dramatic nighttime flight from Jhansi fort became part of the Rani legend, the implication being that a fort under siege could no more hold her than it could other legendary Indian heroes. Stories of the Rani's flight also contain elements of myth and legend. Some versions relate that she leapt off the wall of the fort. Bundelkhand's history is studded with heroes making spectacular leaps from the heights of fort walls, leaps that would kill ordinary

mortals. The spot where the Rani is said to have leapt over is marked on the fort wall at Jhansi today.

The British press in India shared Rose's puzzlement at the Rani's disappearance from the fort. The Bombay *Telegraph and Courier* carried a report on 9 April. "We confess ourselves perfectly unable to comprehend this. Either the previous telegram must have greatly misrepresented matters or some connivance with our own native troops must have enabled the Rani to pass unnoticed through our Sentries and Pickets. Such a circumstance demands the strictest enquiry, and we hope it will not be slurred over."

III

The Revolt Spreads

The contagion of revolt spread rapidly across Bundelkhand. When word of the Jhansi uprising first got out, relief parties started out from several neighbouring stations, but each party was stopped either by insurgents within its own ranks or by news of the murder of the English at Jhansi. With nearly the whole of Bundelkhand inrevolt, Gwalior was regarded by most English as a safe haven, and many fugitives from the insurgents accordingly made their way toward Gwalior. Some arrived while others, less fortunte, were captured and imprisoned or killed along the way. In Lalitpur another Captain Gordon was coerced into signing over the administration of the district to the raja of Banpur out of fear that refusal would endanger the lives of his party of fugitives; he also distributed treasure among the cavalry as a means of guaranteeing the safety of the English. This Lalitpur party was protected by the tutor of the young raja of Orchha, Prem Narain. Narain later was rewarded by the government and subsequently by the Raja of Shahgarh, who himself vacillated between friendship and hostility toward the English. The party of fugitives finally reached the safety of Saugor on 14 September.

When news of the uprising at Jhansi reached the nearby state of Jaloun, some officers attempted to send relief. This was the plan of a certain Captain Browne, but before he could

leave Jaloun with a force, news came on the ninth of the massacre at Jhansi, and he abandoned the idea. Instead he accepted the aid of the Gursarai chief which the chief's sons had offered. As Browne left the town of Orai he found the whole of northern Jaloun in confusion—customs officials in revolt, police calling for their pay, and "petty chiefs ready to rise at any moment." Chief Kesho Rao of Gursarai took over the government of Jaloun in the name of the British government. He kept control briefly, protecting English fugitives from the mutineers, including two deputy collectors from Orai, before being deposed and imprisoned by the revels led by Tatya Tope.

Thakurs rose and plundered in other districts surrounding Jhansi when news of the Jhansi revolt became known. Disorder spread through Lalitpur, Chanderi, and Talbehat. In the view of Capt. J. W. Pinkney, some Rajput rajas, including the Banpur raja, were playing a double game, professing loyalty to the government and criticizing other Thakurs while at the same time actually siding with the mutineers.

At Almora station near Jhansi, Deputy Commissioner J. V. Sturt learned of the Jhansi outbreak immediately after it erupted on the fifth. He was ordered to go to the relief of Jhansi fort with half his small force of one hundred fifty men. Many of the men made excuses of family crises to avoid going with him. Several deserted, slipping away under cover of dark as Sturt approached Jhansi. Ten miles out of Jhansi Sturt got news of the massacre and was uncertain as to what course he should take. It was possible that his men might murder him and desert when they heard what had happened at Jhansi. Sturt quickly decided to go back to collect the rest of his men, but by then all his troops had deserted. Sturt's extant report notes, "The very men we trusted with such blinded sight were made the instrument of our destruction." He returned to Talbehat and, learning that the troops at Lalitpur had also mutinied, he ordered the gate of the Talbehat fort guarded. By dawn of the seventh, however, Sturt found himself alone except for a few domestic servants. He then disgused himself as a native, mounted his horse, and managed to persuade one servant to

accompany him. He took the road to Banda in hopes of reaching Fatehgarh to join his family. He avoided the roads through Jhansi and Gwalior and also skirted Mau Ranipur, which he discovered was in the hands of the rebels.

Sturt on the thirteenth met another European in flight and learned that both Kanpur and Fatehpur were in the hands of the insurgents and that Banda was expected to fall next. He subsequently encountered a party of Europeans fleeing from Nowgong and told them that their destination, Banda, was expected to fall momentarily. Sturt had his horse and all his money taken, and was separated from the party. He was then shown the road to Hamirpur instead of the road to Banda. After further harrowing adventures he reached Charkhari and was given asylum there for a month by the maharaja. He eventually made his way to Kanpur, where he volunteered in defence of the fort against the siege by Tatya Tope. Sturt's extraordinary escape was made feasible by his unusual command of local languages and ability to deal with villagers along his route. Sturt later related that he felt able to go into villages for food and water because he "looked native, knew every class of country lingo, and used the name Ram Gopal."

In Nowgong, where the opposite wings of the Jhansi units were stationed, Major Kirke received Dunlop's letter telling of the capture of Star Fort. Kirke prided himself on the loyalty of the right wing of the Twelfth Native Infantry as a show of confidence, the officers of that unit slept among their men. Nevertheless, when Kirke found some of his men inciting others to mutiny, he discharged them on the spot and sent them away from Nowgong under guard. When he got word of the uprising at Jhansi he dispatched a force of thirty cavalrymen to relieve the English there. The halted *en route*, however, when they heard that all the English at Jhansi had been murdered. Despite Kirke's confidence in his troops, on 10 June at sunset they too mutinied, three Sikhs taking the lead. Since it was apparent that the whole force was in revolt, the English fled toward Charkhari and Mahoba. Kirke and several other officers died during their flight.

At Mhow, another station near Jhansi, a deputy collector named Thornton made an unsuccessful attempt to raise troops to go to the aid of Jhansi. Thornton wrote Erskine that he had warned Gordon at Jhansi not to rely on the Sepoys there as it was "well known" that both at Jhansi and Nowgong the troops "were holding nocturnal meetings which boded ill for the English." Moreover, Thornton felt that "had the least precautionary measures been taken at Jhansi and even the local corps for which the Lieutenant-Governor given his sanction been raised, the catastrophe at Jhansi might have been averted." Unfortunately Skene and Gordon were so convinced that the men at Jhansi were staunch that they would take no precautions. Erskine in his report to Fort William noted that Skene and Gordon had sent off expresses in every direction for assistance and were trying in particular to get aid from the Jhansi Thakurs who, Erskine feared, "would be much more likely to plunder the Sepoys than to aid the European officers."

It was apparent by now to most of the English in India that the whole of North India was in revolt and no troops whose loyalty was assured were available to go to the relief of Jhansi or any other station in Bundelkhand. It would be several months before the situation could be reversed.

The Rani's Role

What precisely was the Rani's role in the uprising and massacre at Jhansi? Critical though this question is to an understanding of the motives and aspirations of the Rani, the evidence unfortunately is conflicting. From her own pen we have two letters from the time of the events in question, June of 1857. Similarly scant evidence remains from among her closest Indian contemporaries in Jhansi. Eyewitness testimony from the events of June comes from three individuals: the two servants of Skene and Gordon and the Anglo-Indian woman who escaped the fort with her children. These three accounts are at times conflicting (the servants, for example, contradict each other). There are also British accounts from three officials who dealt with the Rani and subsequently

assessed her actions: Erskine and an official under him at Jabalpur, Captain Pinkney, and Robert Hamilton at Indore. Other extant narratives from officials in districts near Jhansi also survive, for example, from Jaloun, Mhow, and Almora, but the information they provide on Jhansi is fragmentary and peripheral, often based on hearsay. Then there are numerous accounts by other British officials more removed in both time and place from Jhansi and the Rani. The accounts of writers such as Kaye, Charles Ball, and G. W. Forrest, leading early historians of the Rebellion, are among them.

The dearth of written sources from the Indian perspective is tantamount to silence. It is not until after the battles of 1858 that even oral Indian sources occur, and they begin ten or more years after the events. Beyond these categories there are numerous British memoirs of service in India, some of them nearly contemporary but reflecting the rumour and bias that permeated English official ranks. Finally, as is true of the Rebellion generally, there are secondary sources, assessments by present-day historians, both English and Indian.

Addressing the question of the lack of contemporary Indian accounts of 1857, the historian P. C. Joshi alludes to the traditional Indian disinclination to keep historical chronicles. He also suggests as an equally cogent reason for the gap in documentation the fact that any Indian attempt to keep records in 1857 was made at the risk of an Indian's life. Joshi therefore concludes that our understanding of the Indian side of the story is incomplete. Moreover, what sources we do have are likely to be partisan, inflamed by emotion and the horrors perpetrated by both sides.

Consider the Rani's predisposition before the uprising at Jhansi in May of 1857. What hard evidence is there regarding her views and attitudes, her goals and sentiments toward the English? It is clear from her own writing, or at least from the memorials submitted in her name during 1854 and 1855, that she was unhappy about a number of official measures taken by the British. But in 1856 and early 1857, apart from her distress over British policy, the Rani must have been mindful of the fact that Jhansi was a small state surrounded by many

rapacious Bundela Rajput chiefs, some of whom had designs on Jhansi and other neighbours. The threat from the rival chiefs became all too apparent to the Rani and her advisers following expulsion of the English from Jhansi in 1857. Under the circumstances, then, she must have felt in May that her security lay with the preponderant and paramount British power, a feeling that may have remained with her even in June.

Survival among the Bundela Rajput states in nineteenth century North Central India surely required considerable diplomatic acumen as well as military power. Chiefs who had succeeded before the British advent there did so through long decades of experience amid contending Maratha, Mughal, and Rajput rajas. In June of 1857 the Rani must have recognized her predicament: if she gave wholehearted support to the English she would be killed by the insurgents, while if she gave unequivocal aid to the rebels she would be killed by the English. It was hardly a situation to encourage complacency. There seems to be no quarrel with the view that her major concern was protecting, if not regaining, her lost state in the extremely precarious situation in which she found herself in June of 1857.

What are we to make of British allegations that she was "nursing grievances," waiting for an opportunity to avenge the wrongs done her? Pinkney's narrative provided an immediate source of this perception, and was subsequently widely quoted by contemporary English authors. Pinkney enumerated the Rani's grievances as evidence of the ill will she harbored toward the Company. "She wanted revenge," wrote Pinkney, "and she like many other Maratha women of rank, possessed a masculine spirit, well fitting her to carry out her designs." Pinkney's error in characterizing her as a "Maratha woman" reflects his inadequate knowledge of facts about the Rani, facts which have remained obscured by the errors of those who have relied on Pinkney subsequently.

Another English author referred to the Rani as "a woman of indomitable personality," whose perception of "real or fancied wrongs inspired ... a smouldering hatred of the British race."

This author admits, nevertheless, that there is room for doubt about the Rani's guilt in the massacre, since the Sepoys were not under her control at the time. Pinkney, on the other hand, referred in his narrative to the warnings of Head Writer Scott at Jhansi, who "mixed with the natives and had much better information of what was going on." Scott, according to Pinkney, "persisted in avowing that a mutiny was intended, and that the Rani and the troops are one." Again, Pinkney's assessment of the Rani's motives and actions is based not on direct evidence but on secondhand knowledge and conjecture of what the English guessed was going on in her mind. His report, it should be noted, was written in November 1858, several months after the Rani was killed.

English officials like Pinkney recognized the legitimacy of the Rani's grievances because many English acknowledged that she had been dealt with unfairly and unwisely. Apart from racial bias and hatred fanned on both sides by events of the Rebellion, some English no doubt harbored feelings of guilt at the treatment of the Rani, including the fact that she was killed in action by British troops. These British sentiments are apparent in official accounts of her death, as we shall see. It seems reasonable to conjecture, too, that the attribution of rebellious sentiments to Lakshmi before June 1857 may have been a retrospective reading based on actual events occurring later in 1857 or even 1858.

What finally can be concluded about the Rani's actions in June of 1857 when the Rebellion broke out in Jhansi? T. A. Martin, a man who claimed he was at Jhansi at the time, later wrote both Sturt and Damodar Rao denying that Lakshmi was implicated in the massacre or even anxious to rebel. According to Martin she hesitated and debated for some time before taking up arms. His letter to Damodar Rao has been quoted by numerous Indian historians.

Your poor mother was very unjustly and cruelly dealt with, and no one knows her true case as I do. The poor thing took no part whatever in the massacre of the European residents of Jhansi in June 1857. On the contrary she supplied them with food for two days after they had gone into the

fort, got one hundred matchlock men from Kurrura and sent them to assist us. But after being kept a day in the fort they were sent away in the evening. She then advised Major [sic] Skene and Captain Gordon to fly at once to Duttia and place themselves under the Raja's protection.

Erskine, in Jabalpur, gave credence to the Rani's account of events in early June, as we have seen. Hamilton, the official at Indore who had twice met with the Rani, similarly wrote in support of her innocence. "Not a paper incriminating the Rani did I find nor did there appear any evidence that she desired or was privy to the murder of any Europeans . . . The English were induced to leave the Fort by the persuasion of the Daroga of the Jail . . . and a Ressaldar of the Irregulars. The Rani was not present or any man on her part." Erskine, at a later writing, apparently revised his initial reaction to the Rani's account, for he alleges later that the English on leaving the fort "were most basely and treacherously murdered by order of the Rani." Still another official, Deputy Collector Thornton at Mhow, depicts an even more active role for the Rani. "It is the 'General Impression,' that the mutineers were about to leave Jhansi and were persuaded by the Rani to attack the fort, for which she furnished armed men."

There remains the puzzling question of who offered the besieged English safe conduct out of the fort. Later English writers are certain that the Rani was responsible for the massacre, "predicated on her hatred of the English race." This conclusion is shared also by Forrest and Malleson. One contemporary official at Jaloun reported that the tehsildar suggested to the Rani that the massacre of all Europeans was the means to regain her state, and that she therefore induced the troops to carry out the deed. Another Englishman at Agra cited as evidence of the Rani's evil influence the difference between the behaviour of the insurgents at Jhansi and those at Nowgong, who did not harm their officers.

he eyewitness testimony by the fort survivor, Mrs. Mutlow, claims the Rani was the one who offered the English safe conduct. It is interesting that Pinkney's narrative

does not support this claim, although he does state that the envoys Scott and the two Purcells were sent on her orders to the lines of the insurgents where they were killed. The safe conduct promise, however, Pinkney attributes to a written communication from the rissaldar of the Fourteenth Irregular Cavalry. Pinkney also alleges that it was on order from the rissaldar that the English were killed, and that the jail daroga began the grisly work.

One local official, Thornton again, alleges that not only did the Rani sanction the killing of the English, but she paid the insurgents thirty-five thousand rupees plus two elephants and five horses to carry it out. If it were true that the Rani authorized the killings, one early historian saw no need for further communication with her or for any other action except to hang her.

In several English accounts, both contemporary and later, actions of the Rani's servants, such as the murder of the envoys, are taken as synonymous with her orders. However, in the confusion and crisis of events of 7 and 8 June it is entirely possible that those in her service were using her name without her sanction or even knowledge to achieve their own ends. Moreover, had Lakshmi been in complete control at Jhansi, it would not have been necessary or possible for the insurgents to bring in another claimant to the Jhansi throne to challenge her authority.

Numerous letters allegedly written by the Rani have come to light in connection with the 1857 centenary of the Rebellion to provide "evidence" that the Rani worked to organize revolt even before the outbreak at Meerut. One such letter, written in bad Hindi, refers to the greased cartridges before the date of their introduction into India. The letter is, in the opinion of historian Surendranath Sen, an obvious fabrication by those anxious to depict the Rani as organizer of the revolt and therefore heroine of the first war of independence. The nationalist view of the Rani as organizer and leader of the Rebellion ironically coincides with the opinion of contemporary Englishmen who judged her guilty. This guilt, however spurious it may be, made her at once a martyred

heroine in India and a treacherous "Jezebel" in England.

This concern to portray the Rani as heroine of the first phase of the independence struggle motivates historians such as V. D. Savarkar to depict her as organizer of the uprising at Jhansi. If, on the other hand, the Rani is cleared of all complicity in the uprising and massacre, does she still remain a heroine and martyr to the cause of independence? Manmohan Kaur, addressing this intriguing question, asserts that the Rani was neither coerced into helping the rebels nor was she faithful to the English. Otherwise, she argues, the Rani would have taken refuge with the English as did Scindia. There is, nonetheless, considerable evidence that she was coerced by the insurgents. It might further be argued that the degree of her reluctance to fight the British is not really an issue in the final assessment of her heroism, since in the end she did take up arms and die valiantly on the battlefield at Gwalior.

Yet another aspect of the question of her complicity relates to the role of her father, Moropant, and her relationship to his "plans." One British document has it that "the Rani's father Moropant was one of the chief instigators of the rebellion in that part of the country." In this view, he could not possibly have kept Lakshmi in the dark about the impending revolt. He must have sought her advice and assistance.

The Tambe family of Nagpur, descendants of Moropant, throws more light on the relationship between Moropant and his daughter. G. R. Tambe was the son of the Rani's half brother, Chintaman Rao, Moropant's son by the second wife he married in Jhansi. G. R. Tambe in his unpublished manuscript asserts that Moropant specifically moulded Lakshmi's character to groom her for her future role. The extraordinary training Moropant's young daughter received was the result of an astrological prediction given when Manu was in her infancy. Manu, according to the astrologer, was destined for an outstanding career; she would become a ruler and have an army of her own. According to G. R. Tambe's son, E. G. Tambe, Moropant's influence on Lakshmi was critical from the time of her childhood through the period when she

was Rani and lasted until after the siege of Jhansi when he was killed. Though it is quite likely that Moropant was unhappy with British rule and may even had urged his daughter to fight, his access to the plans and actions of the Sepoys remains a debatable point. The account of Skene's servant of the events in Jhansi alleges that it was the Rani's father who ordered the servant taken to the rissaldar to be "murdered or to be blown from a gun" because he had supplied Gordon and Skene with food. The servant nevertheless managed to survive to give his testimony, while Moropant was captured and hanged after the British retook Jhansi.

Sir John Kaye, leading historian of the Rebellion, concludes: "Whether the Rani instigated this atrocity, or to what extent she was implicated in it, can never be clearly known. I have been informed, on good authority, that none of the Rani's servants were present on the occasion of the massacre. It seems to have been mainly the work of our own old followers". Senior Indian historian R. C. Majumdar takes Kaye's conclusion even further. He charges that the failure of Kaye and Pinkney to take note of Erskine's reply and action regarding the Rani's resumption of administration in Jhansi is part of a "conspiracy of silence," a governmental failure to clear the Rani of charges in connection with the uprising. Majumdar also finds it strange that Pinkney made no mention of the Rani's assurances of loyalty in her letters to Erskine. Erskine's judgement as the highest British official in the region is convincing evidence, in Majumdar's mind, that the Rani was not implicated.

Yet Erskine's judgement at the time was not accepted by his English superiors, who were convinced that the responsibility and culpability for the events at Jhansi were the Rani's. Following Erskine's reply to her correspondence of 12 and 14 June, all her subsequent communications to British officials went unanswered. The British failed also to take a stand during the September-October invasion of Jhansi by forces from Orchha. As late as January and February of 1858,

Lakshmi was still addressing letters to Erskine, Hamilton, and others. No response came.

Charles Canning, Dalhousie's successor as governor-general, in February wrote Hamilton from Fort William with instruction on the treatment to be accorded the Rani in the event she should fall into British hands.

> She must be tried, not by a Court-Martial, but by a Commissioner appointed for the purpose ... If for any reason it would not be possible to deal with her at once and if there should be any difficulty in keeping her in custody in or near Jhansi, she may be sent here. But it is desirable that the preliminary inquiry into her conduct which will decide whether there be grounds for a trial should be completed before she arrives here. She must not come here with any doubt as to whether she deserves to be tried or not.

Thus it was that the Rani came to be viewed by the English as a rebel. She must have guessed from their failure to reply to her letters after 14 June that her communications were falling on deaf ears. Even as Gen. Sir Hugh Rose's Field Force was advancing on Jhansi in March of 1858, Lakshmi was still desperately sending off letters to Jabalpur, Jaloun, and Agra. They met silence.

8 British Strategy

British Strategy

After his defeat at Kanpur on December 6, 1857 Tatya Tope extricated his force with great skill and ingenuity to Kalpi. He now transferred his activities to Bundelkhand, leaving the Nana, the Begum of Oudh, the Maulvi of Fyzabad, Khan Bahadur Khan and Kunwar Singh to carry on the struggle in the Doab, Rohilkhand, Oudh and Bihar. These and a host of other determined leaders were resolved to carry on the war to the bitter end. Meanwhile the British authorities were laying down the outlines of a far-reaching strategy.

The general plan was that a force known as the Central India Field Force (with the Malva Field Force as nucleus) under the command of Major-General Sir Hugh Rose was to assemble on the Narbada and be directed against Chanderi, Jhansi and Kalpi. On its left was to operate another force, the Rajputana Field Force (under the command of Major-General H. G. Roberts) which was to advance from the Bombay Presidency on Nasirabad, after clearing the nationalist troops from Awah and Kotah. A third force, the Saugor Field Force, consisting of Madras troops, under Brigadier G. C. Whitlock, was to operate on Sir Hugh Rose's right—it was to assemble at Kampti, relieve Saugor and sweep through Bundelkhand. Sir Colin Campbell, the Commander-in-Chief, was to subjugate Oudh and Rohilkhand. First he was to capture Fatehgarh, thus threatening both Oudh and Rohilkhand. Then while keeping up pressure against the nationalist forces in

Rohilkhand he was to concentrate his forces for the final capture of Lucknow.

Tatya Tope's Strategy

The defeat which Tatya Tope suffered at Kanpur on December 6,1857 did not in any war affect the efficiency or the strength of his force. He had succeeded in extricating practically his entire force. He now made Kalpi his headquarters for organising resistance in Central India *i.e.* the tract of the country lying between the Jumna and the Narbada. Tatya Tope had the good fortune to work in cooperation with the Rani of Jhansi for the freedom of the country. The Rani was a capable ruler and an ardent patriot. After seizing Jhansi in June 1857 she had considerably improved the administration. She had also taken steps to improve the efficiency of her army, by raising fresh troops, casting cannon and strengthening the defences of the fort and city of Jhansi. The task facing Tatya Tope and his ally, the Rani of Jhansi, was indeed formidable for at the beginning of 1858 the British forces were advancing into Central India after routing the nationalist troops in Western Malwa. Tatya faced with quiet confidence the threat of the advance of the British columns. He and his ally, the Rani of Jhansi, were ably assisted by two capable nationalist leaders—the Nawab of Banda and the Raja of Banpur. By the strategic deployment of his force Tatya Tope established his claim to be regarded as a great strategist.

Kalpi was the most important nationalist stronghold. As long as Tatya Tope retained Kalpi he could threaten the British base at Kanpur. Next was the strong fortress of Jhansi, garrisoned by 11,000 brave nationalist troops. Tatya Tope defeated the troops of the Raja of Charkhari (who was loyal to the British Government), captured the town of Charkhari and besieged the Raja in the fort. Tatya Tope purposely concentrated his force of 20,000 men, including the redoubtable Gwalior Contingent, at Charkhari to enable him to attack the British force in case it besieged Jhansi. The chief aim of his strategy was to confuse and mislead the enemy so that in case the latter attacked Jhansi, he could march to its

relief and seriously threaten the British force. Tatya Tope hoped that his able lieutenants—the Raja of Banpur and the Nawab of Banda—would delay the advance of the British columns towards Jhansi and Kalpi. The Raja of Banpur was a very determined and courageous leader. He had collected a force of 10,000 men and had established his authority over the greater part of the territories of Saugor.

The British garrison of 360 men, women and children had been besieged, for about seven months but the siege had not been carried on with vigour. The Raja of Banpur had strategically deployed his troops so as to check the advance of the British columns. The forward post was at Rahatgarh, 24 miles from Saugor. The fort of Rahatgarh was garrisoned by Velaitees (Afghans), Mekranis and Bundelas, ably led by the Nawab of Amarpani and the Talukdar of Sallujpur. In order to render timely help to the garrison of Rahatgarh, the Raja of Banpur took up position at the head of a large force in the village of Barodia. His force was commanded by Amant Singh—a capable general. If the British force captured these two forward positions—Rahatgarh and Barodia—and advanced to the relief of Saugor then its advance was to be checked by the nationalist troops in the fort of Garhakota, about 25 miles east of Saugor. The garrison of Garhakota consisted of the sepoys of the 51st and 52nd Bengal Infantry Regiments and local levies. If the British force secured Saugor as well as the fort of Garhakota then the plan of the Raja of Banpur was to prevent it from advancing to Jhansi by defending the three strong passes at Narut, Dhamooney and Madinpur, leading into Bundelkhand. If these passes were turned by the British force then the plan was for the nationalist troops to retire to the fort of Chanderi. In case this fort had already fallen into the British hands the nationalist troops were to fall back on Jhansi. The Nawab of Banda, at the head of a large force of 9,000 men was to check the advance of the British column advancing from Jubbulpore.

Advance of the British Force to Saugor

The Central India Field Force, of which Sir Hugh Rose took command on December 17, 1857, consisted of two

brigades, the First being at Mhow, the Second at Sehore. The First Brigade, under the command of Brigadier C. S. Stuart of the Bombay Army, was composed of a squadron of the 14th Light Dragoons, a troop of the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, two regiments of cavalry, Hyderabad Contingent, two companies of the 86th Regiment, the 25th Regiment Bombay Native Infantry, one infantry regiment of the Hyderabad Contingent, three light field batteries and some sappers. The Second Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Stewart, 14th Light Dragoons, was composed of the headquarters of the 14th Light Dragoons, headquarters of the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, one regiment of cavalry, Hyderabad Contingent, the 3rd Bombay European Regiment, the 24th Bombay Native Infantry, one regiment of infantry, Hyderabad Contingent, a battery of Horse Artillery, one light field-battery, one battery Bhopal artillery, one company Madras Sappers, a detachment of Bombay Sappers and a siege-train.

On January 16, 1858 Sir Hugh Rose started from Sehore for the relief of Saugor. First he had to capture the strong fort of Rahatgarh. Situated on the spur of a long hill the fort commanded the country surrounding it. The east and south faces were almost perpendicular, the rock being scarped and strengthened by the Bina, a deep rapid river running close beneath the walls from east to west. On January 24, Sir Hugh Rose arrived before the place. The nationalist troops had taken up position in the town and on the banks of the river. After a short struggle they retired into the fort. Sir Hugh Rose invested the fort—the Bhopal levies fronting the eastern face, the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry and the Hyderabad Contingent Cavalry facing that northern face and the remainder of the force occupying the plain across which ran the road to Saugor. On January 26 Sir Hugh Rose, at the head of the 3rd Europeans (supported by guns) crossed the Saugor road and entered the jungle. Here he almost fell into a trap laid for him, for the nationalist troops who had been hiding nearby, fired the jungle-grass on all sides. Sir Hugh Rose however extricated his force. He then ordered the Sappers to construct a road for sitting the guns to fire shot and shell into the fort. The British

guns maintained a constant fire of shot and shell on the fort. Just when a large breach was made at 10 P.M. on January 28 the Raja of Banpur advanced at the head of a large force for the relief of the garrison. His troops however retired after a short struggle. The Raja's failure to relieve the garrison disheartened them so that they evacuated the fort during the night and escaped by a precipitous path.

Sir Hugh Rose set out for Barodia on January 31. The troops of the Raja of Banpur had been reinforced by the garrison of Rahatgarh. Large numbers of the Raja's troops lay concealed in the thick jungle covering the ford of the Bina and opened a rapid fusillade on the advance British guard. The shells from the British guns bursting in their midst failed to dislodge them from this vantage ground and it was only when the 3rd Bombay European Regiment advanced to charge with the bayonet that they fell back on a second position, where though their flanks were covered, their centre lay open. A spirited charge upon their weak spot drove them back towards Barodia. When the British pressure proved too strong the Raja's troops made good their escape. They fled to defend the passes which led into Bundelkhand. Sir Hugh Rose in his Despatch paid high tribute to the stubborn resistance offered by the nationalist troops. "The valaitees and Pathans fought with their accustomed courage, several of them, even when dying, springing from the ground and inflicting mortal wounds with their broad swords."

The capture of Rahatgarh, followed by the defeat of the troops of the Raja of Banpur enabled Sir Hugh Rose to advance to the relief of the British garrison of Saugor. This task was accomplished on February 3. On February 9 Sir Hugh Rose marched to capture the fort of Garhakota. After vainly trying to check the British advance by keeping up a running fight the nationalist troops retired into the fort. Discouraged by the steady fire of the British guns and mortars the garrison slipped away under cover of darkness and made good their escape.

The Defence of the Passes

Having failed to prevent the British force from relieving Saugor the Raja of Banpur now resolved to block Sir Hugh

Rose's further advance at the three passes leading into Bundelkhand. As the direct road to Jhansi (125 miles distant to the north) led over the difficult pass at Narut, the Raja of Banpur thought that the British force would cross into Bundelkhand by this pass. He therefore took steps to strengthen its natural defences "by barricading the road with abatis and parapets made of large boulders of rock 15 feet thick; all passages by the sides of the road being made impracticable by the almost precipitous hills covered with jungle which came down to the edge of the road." The Raja of Banpur defended this pass with 10,000 men. Twenty miles from Narut was the Madinpur Pass, the weakest of the three passes, which was held in strength by the nationalist troops led by the Raja of Shahgarh. This force included the sepoys of the 52nd and other Bengal Infantry Regiments and 7,000 picked Bundelas. The difficult pass of Dhamooney was also held by the nationalist troops. The nationalist troops were however mainly concentrated at the two passes of Narut and Madinpur.

In order to deceive the nationalist troops as to his intention, and to prevent the Raja of Banpur from coming from the pass of Narut to the assistance of the Raja of Shahgarh, who defended the Madinpur pass, Sir Hugh Rose made a feint attack against Narut by sending a small force to the fort and town of Malthone, just above the pass of Narut, while with the main force he marched against the pass of Madinpur. The latter was formed by a sudden descent of the road into a deep glen thickly wooded. To the right, further on, the road ran along the side of a lake. The left of the road was lined by rocky and precipitous hills. Hundreds of nationalist troops, who lay concealed in the glen, opened a heavy fire on the British guns when they were moved up incautiously to within fifty or seventy yards of the edge of the glen. Several artillery men were wounded. When the guns were however moved out of the range of their muskets, Sir Hugh Rose ordered the infantry to charge into the glen and clear it of the nationalist troops. Driven from the glen the nationalist troops crossed the road to join their comrades, who were occupying in strength the hills, divided by ravines, on the left of the road.

The British troops stormed the heights and drove them successively from all the hills commanding the pass. Driven from the pass the nationalist troops fell back on the fortified village of Madinpur, to the rear of the end of the lake, where they had a battery of some guns. A few rounds from the British guns caused them to beat a hasty retreat through the jungle. By his fine strategy Sir Hugh Rose had won an important victory. His force had got into the rear of the passes and the line of defences, thus turning the pass of Narut, which was considered to be impregnable by the nationalist troops. The effect of this victory was great. Sir Hugh Rose was able to advance towards Jhansi without opposition. By the first week of March he secured Surahi (the fortified palace of the Raja of Shahgarh) and the fort of Maranra, which commanded the high road between Saugor and Jhansi. On March 10 he captured the palace of the Raja of Banpur and on March 14 he arrived at Talbahat. Here the 2nd Brigade halted to effect a junction with the 1st Brigade.

Defence of Chanderi

After the loss of the passes leading into Bundelkhand the nationalist troops fell back on Chanderi to check the advance of the 1st Brigade, and thus to prevent it from effecting a junction with the 2nd Brigade for the attack on Jhansi. The fort of Chanderi, situated on a high hill, was suitable for offering prolonged resistance. It consisted of a strong rampart of sandstone, flanked by circular towers. Twelve guns were mounted on its walls. It was to capture this strong fort that the 1st Brigade left Mhow on January 10, 1858. Marching along the Agra road the British force reached Guna on January 26. About 70 miles to the east of Guna was the fort and town of Chanderi.

On March 5 the British force encamped near a small village, short of the town. Next day the artillery opened with round shot and shell on the nationalist troops, who had taken up position in a ruined temple and some houses. Driven from this position they retired through the jungle and took shelter behind a strong wall, which extended from one ridge of the hills to another opposite, the valley intervening. The wall was

loopholed, and furnished with bastions, twelve or fourteen feet in height and several in thickness. The British field-pieces failed to make any impression on the masonry but the attack by the infantry was successful, and the nationalist troops retreated to the town and the fort, about half a mile distant.

The British force encamped on one of the hills, which commanded the fort on the west side. For the next few days men were employed in clearing out the surrounding villages, in reconnoitring, and in placing guns in favourable positions. The British field-guns and mortars opened fire on the palace in the fort. But the guns, well served by the nationalist gunners, "replied well, and with good practice; neither could they be silenced." It now became necessary to make a road along the crest of the ridge in order to get the heavy guns in position to breach the fort. It was not an easy task for the men were very much exposed to the fire, there being no other protection than trees. The 24-pounder guns were dragged up by elephants on March 10. Keenly alive to the new danger that threatened them, the garrison made a successful demonstration. On the night of March 10 a party of the nationalist troops sallied out of the fort and recapture the wall and temple, where they had earlier made a bold stand. The 25th Regiment Bombay Native Infantry was sent to deal with this threat. They succeeded in clearing the nationalist troops from this position. Meanwhile the nationalist troops in the fort kept up an incessant fire, both from their cannon and small arms, upon the breaching battery, which was nearest the fort. One of the nationalist troops armed with a European rifle took a heavy toll of the men in the British force. The bullocks bringing up ammunition afforded excellent mark to the sharp-shooters. The garrison had a very large number of guns and wall-pieces, extending completely round the fortifications. The shells from the British guns fell thick and fast into the fort but did not inflict many casualties for the fort was large and the troops had plenty of space and shelter to escape from there. They had also an underground passage down the rock into the town close beneath whereby they got both provisions and water. "The breaching went on but slowly,

for the round tower chosen was solid, and offered good resistance to the shot." On the evening of March 16 a practicable breach was made and the next morning the British troops launched the attack. In spite of a heavy fire the assailants rushed to the breach and climbed up the scaling-ladders into the fort. After a desperate resistance the nationalist troops hurriedly escaped from the fort by the underground passage through the town. On March 19 the 1st Brigade marched towards Jhansi to effect a junction with the 2nd Brigade.

Tatya Tope's Fine Strategy

The Raja of Banpur and his able lieutenants had not been successful in checking the British advance towards Jhansi. But now Sir Hugh Rose had to deal with Tatya Tope and his energetic ally, the Rani of Jhansi. Tatya Tope's brilliant strategy placed the British authorities on the horns of a dilemma—they were perplexed as to whether the first blow should be struck against Tatya Tope or the Rani of Jhansi. Sir Hugh Rose was in favour of besieging the fortress of Jhansi. On hearing of the fall of Chanderi he marched on March 19 to Chanchanpur, at a distance of fourteen miles from Jhansi. Next day he sent an advance guard of cavalry, horse artillery and light field-guns of the 2nd Brigade to reconnoitre and invest Jhansi. He was about to follow with his infantry, when he received two despatches—one from Lord Canning (the Governor-General of India) and the second from the Commander-in-Chief, ordering him to divert his force to Charkhari to deal with Tatya Tope and thus help the loyal Raja of Charkhari.

Sir Hugh Rose was in a fix. He could not disobey the order and at the same time he did not consider it advisable to divert his force to Charkhari. Sir Robert Hamilton, the Governor-General's Agent at Indore, who accompanied the British force, took upon himself the responsibility of ordering the continuance of the movement on Jhansi for he strongly felt that it would be a great political mistake to draw off from Jhansi. Accordingly Sir Hugh Rose moved on to Jhansi on March 21. The city was invested on March 22. Thus Sir

Hugh Rose began the siege of Jhansi, leaving Tatya Tope free to advance from Charkhari to the relief of Jhansi.

The Fort of Jhansi

The Rani had made full preparations for the grim struggle. She had been able to raise a large and formidable force of 10,000 Bundelas and Velaitees (Afghans), and 1,500 sepoys of the Bengal Army, of whom 400 were cavalry. She had also about thirty or forty guns and a large number of skilled gunners (two companies of Golundaz) commanded by a first-rate Artillery-man. The nationalist troops led by the gallant Rani were resolved to hold the fort and the city at all costs. Sheltered behind the fort and the city walls they hoped to check effectively the advance of the British force. The fort stood on an elevated rock, rising out of the plain, and thus commanded the city and the surrounding country. It was built of excellent and most massive masonry. It was difficult to breach, because it was composed of granite and its walls were quite thick—from sixteen to twenty feet. There were extensive and elaborate outworks of the same solid construction. These outworks had front and flanking embrasures for artillery fire and loopholes for musketry. Guns placed on the high towers of the fort commanded the country all around. One of these towers called the 'white turret' was armed with heavy ordnance.

The fort was surrounded by the city of Jhansi on all sides, except the west and part of the south face. The west face was protected by a steep rock. The south face was protected by the fortified city wall (with strong bastions) running south from the centre of the south face and ending in a high mound or mamelon. The latter was a very strong position, being a piece of elevated ground, with an abrupt slope towards the British position and a gradual one inwards towards the fort. The mound was fortified by a strong circular bastion, and was a continuation of the city ramparts, which were very high at this point, and crenellated, as at every other, for musketry. The muzzles of five guns peeped through the embrasures of the mound; they were closed until the guns opened. The embrasures were further strengthened by heavy

piles and logs of wood. At the foot of the bastion in front was a deep ditch of masonry, 12 feet deep and 15 feet broad. Thus the great strength of the fort, natural as well as artificial, and its extent, inspired confidence in the garrison. The city of Jhansi had also strong defences. The city was about 4½ miles in circumference and was surrounded by a fortified and massive wall, from 6 to 12 feet thick, and varying in height from 18 to 30 feet. The wall had numerous flanking bastions armed as batteries with ordnance. The wall was also loopholed for musketry fire.

Thus not only the fort but the city also had strong defences. These defences were still further improved by the setting up of thirteen batteries—including the 'white turret' and the 'tree tower' batteries in the fort and the 'wheel tower,' Saugor-gate' and 'Lachman-gate' batteries in the town. There was a 'garden battery' on a rock to the rear of the west wall of the city. The 'mound' battery was by far the most important for it enfiladed two walls of the city, and commanded the whole of the south quarter of it, including the palace. Outside the walls, the city was girt with wood, except some parts of the east and south fronts: on the former was a picturesque lake and water-palace; to the south were the ruined cantonments and residencies of the English. Two rocky hillocks rose from the plain on the south of the town; that on the east to the south of the lake and opposite the Orchha gate, that on the west 640 yards distant from the fort, the summit of which was on the same level as their highest points. Between these two hillocks lay a line of lesser mamelons and temples with gardens, one of these being the Jokum Bagh.

Attack on Jhansi

Sir Hugh Rose was well aware of the strong defences of the fort and the city of Jhansi. The attack on Jhansi offered indeed serious difficulties. The fort could not be breached except from the south, which was however well protected, flanked as it was by the fortified city wall and the mound. The hillock on the west was excellent for a breaching battery, except that it was too far off (640 yards), and that the fire from it would have been oblique. It was the mound which

really barred the entrance to the city and the fort. It was therefore necessary to capture it. The possession of this important position would pave the way for the capture of the south of the city and of the palace. Therefore Sir Hugh's plan was to surround the city with strong pickets, and to concentrate a heavy fire on the mound and on the south of the city, in order to drive the Rani's troops out of them, then to breach the wall close to the mound, and to dismantle the defences, which protected the mound.

This plan of the operation was systematically carried out. On March 22 the cavalry occupied seven flying camps, forming a ring of mutually supporting outposts. There was one large outpost on the most distant side of the town and there was another opposite the water-palace. All egress or ingress to the besieged was at an end. Preparations now began for the setting up of batteries on the east hillock (designated the Right Attack) and the west hillock (designated the Left Attack). On March 24 the west hillock was occupied by a strong picket of the Hyderabad Contingent with two 5½ inch mortars, which played on the mound and the adjoining buildings. On the east hillock an 8-inch howitzer and two 8-inch mortars were placed in battery, and opened fire on the rear of the mound and the south of the city. This battery was reinforced by two 24-pounder howitzers on March 25. The 2nd Brigade encamped at the rear of the east hillock. On March 25 the 1st Brigade arrived with its siege-train and encamped behind the west hillock, about two miles from the camp of the 2nd Brigade. Four batteries were now constructed on the west hillock; they were armed with three 18-pounder guns, two 10-inch mortars, and two 8-inch mortars.

Heroic Defence of Jhansi

The garrison defended the bastion and the city wall so heroically as to merit high praise. The guns in the city and in the fort were well served and even the non-combatants showed considerable courage and enthusiasm in the defence of this important nationalist stronghold. Sir Hugh Rose was so much impressed by the determined resistance of the garrison that he could not help paying glowing tributes to them in his

Despatch. "The manner in which the Rebels served their guns, repaired their defences, and reopened fire from batteries and guns repeatedly shut up, was remarkable. From some batteries they returned shot for shot." Great enthusiasm prevailed amongst the garrison—even women and children helped in repairing the defences of the walls, and in carrying ammunition to the batteries.

It was on March 28 that the British batteries opened an effective bombardment. The fire of the two 18-pounders was so effective that towards sunset the parapets of the 'white turret', and 'black tower', and the 'tree tower', which faced the Left Attack, were nearly destroyed. The two 10-inch mortars created great havoc in the fort by exploding a powder-magazine. The 'wheel tower' battery and the 'garden battery', however, annoyed the Left Attack a good deal. To silence the former a new battery (No. 5 Left Attack) was established near the Jokum Bagh, where two 5½ inch mortars were already in action. These were replaced by two 8-inch mortars and a 9-pounder, which were further reinforced by a 24-pounder howitzer. The fire from the 9-pounder silenced the 'wheel tower' battery. The two 8-inch mortars and occasionally the two 10-inch mortars of the Left Attack answered the 'garden battery' whose fire could not be silenced. On the 'white turret' the Rani's troops had made an excellent parapet of large sand bags, which they kept always wet, and continued to serve new guns in lieu of disabled guns. By March 30 the situation became critical for the garrison as their best guns had been disabled and their best artillery-men had been killed or wounded. By that time the British artillery had asserted its supremacy. The braching guns, which for two days had failed to create an impression on the hard masonry of the wall close to the mound, succeeded on the third day (March 30) in effecting a breach. The garrison was quite alive to the danger and showed considerable energy in retrenching the breach with a double row of palisades filled with earth. A considerable portion of this stockade was, however, destroyed by the concentrated fire of the British batteries. The fortunes of the garrison were at the lowest ebb for the British force was getting ready for the assault. The

Rani was anxiously scanning the horizon for signs of Taya Tope's approaching army. She passed many anxious hours and at last (March 31) when she had almost despaired of timely help a wild shout of joy went up from the garrison for Tatya Tope's army was advancing to the relief of Jhansi.

To the Rescue

Tatya Tope had captured Charkhari after a siege of eleven days and had secured twenty-four guns and three lakhs of rupees. Then with a force of 20,000 men and 30 guns he hurried to the relief of Jhansi. On March 30 he arrived at Barwa Sagar, about three miles from the Betwa. His plan was to make a surprise attack on the British force while it was engaged in battering the ramparts of the city of Jhansi. The plan miscarried because Sir Hugh Rose got timely information about the arrival of his force as he had established a telegraph upon one of the hills east of Jhansi. The situation facing Sir Hugh Rose was very critical. If the garrison of Jhansi made a sortie at the same time that Tatya Tope's force led the attack the small British force would be annihilated. The only way out of the difficulty was to keep some troops to carry on the siege and with the rest of the force to fall upon Tatya Tope's troops, and defeat them.

Sir Hugh Rose's dispositions were swiftly made. Leaving the battery and some of the troops of the 1st Brigade to carry on the siege of Jhansi, Sir Hugh advanced with the rest of his force and drew it up across the road from the Betwa, half a mile from his camp. His first line consisted of the 2nd Brigade. In the centre were the 3rd Europeans, detachments of the 24th Bombay Native Infantry and the Hyderabad Infantry, supported by three heavy guns; on the right of the line were a troop of the 14th Light Dragoons and one of the Hyderabad Cavalry, supported by four guns Horse Artillery; and on the left flank were two troops of the 14th Light Dragoons, supported by a field battery. The second line consisted of the 1st Brigade, with a weak troop of the 14th Light Dragoons on the right, and the Hyderabad Cavalry on the left flank while in the centre was the 86th Regiment, with detachments of the 25th Bombay Native Infantry, supported by a battery

of 6-pounders and a battery of 9-pounders. Cavalry pickets and lines of vedettes (of the 14th Light Dragoons and the Hyderabad Cavalry) were thrown out well to the front and the flanks. Facing the British force was a large part of Tatya Tope's force, which had crossed the upper ford at Rajpur in the evening on March 30. Tatya Tope's tactics were skilful. While a large part of his force was in position opposite the British force, he sent the rest of his force to cross the lower ford at Kolwan in order to turn the left of the British flank. But Sir Hugh Rose got timely intimation of this move and at midnight he ordered Brigadier Stuart with the 1st Brigade to march at once and check this movement. The departure of the 1st Brigade left Sir Hugh Rose without a second line. He was therefore obliged to withdraw the detachment of the 24th Native Infantry from the first line, and make a second line of them. Meanwhile Tatya Tope had made his dispositions. His force in the immediate front of Sir Hugh Rose was formed in two lines, the second (commanded by himself in person) three miles to the rear.

Throughout the night the 'watch-fires' lit up the countryside, thus indicating to the garrison of Jhansi that Tatya Tope's army had come to their help. Wild enthusiasm prevailed amongst the Rani's troops. Throughout the night they kept up a brisk fire on the British positions. The British guns too sent their shot and shell into the city.

On April 1, 1858 was fought the battle of the Betwa. Day had scarcely dawned when the British vedettes and pickets began to fall back on the British force, and shortly afterwards, coming in grand array of battle was Tatya Tope's army bent on raising the siege of Jhansi. They brought up their long line of artillery, supported by masses of infantry, and six or seven hundred cavalry. Having advanced within 600 yards of the British line, they unlimbered and opened fire, which was very heavy. The British batteries now opened fire, and the infantry on both sides blazed away furiously. The engagement became general, and was kept up with great spirit on both sides. Musketry replied to musketry, and as their superior fire began to tell on the British close ranks around the heavy guns in the

centre, the infantry were ordered to lie down. While keeping up pressure on the centre of the British line, Tatya Tope despatched part of his force to turn the left flank. Sir Hugh Rose realized the gravity of the situation. He decided to prevent Tatya Tope from outflanking his force. This could only be done by seizing the initative of rolling up the enemy flanks, before Tatya Tope could carry out his flanking movement. He therefore ordered the artillery from both flanks of the line to advance, the guns of the Horse Artillery to the right so as to crush Tatya Tope's gunners by an enfilading fire. In this movement a roundshot broke the wheel of a Horse Artillery gun at which Tatya Tope's men wildly cheered. Sir Hugh Rose then ordered the Hyderabad Cavalry to charge the battery, which was working havoc. Thrice did the cavalry charge and thrice were they hurled back by showers of grape and volleys from the Velaitee matchlock-men. Tatya Tope's troops followed them up, and killed and wounded many men and horses, and also wounded their leader severely Sir Hugh Rose now resolved to bring the issue of the battle to a speedy decision by cavalry charges on both the flanks. Placing himself at the head of a troop of Dragoons he dashed into the enemy's left, while two troops of Dragoons charged the enemy's right flank. The troop of Dragoons led by Sir Hugh Rose charged the enemy's left, which was composed of the best nationalist troops, the Velaitees and sepoys, who, throwing themselves back on the right and resting the flanks of their new line four or five deep on the rocky knolls, received the charge with a heavy fire of musketry. The Dragoons broke through the dense line, which flung itself among the rocks, and taking the front line in reverse routed it. The work done by the troop of Dragoons on this occasion "was equal to breaking a square of infantry." The charge "turned the enemy's position and decided in a great measure the fate of the day." The two troops of Dragoons charging into the enemy's right also succeeded in turning the enemy's position. The wild charge of the British cavalry rolled up the flanks and threw the whole of Tatya's first line into confusion, forcing them to fall back on the second line commanded by Tatya Tope in person. When the British cavalry came in hot

pursuit they were checked by Tatya Tope's second line drawn up on some jungly ground.

Meanwhile Brigadier Stuart, with the 1st Brigade had encountered some 2,000 of Tatya Tope's troops entrenched in a village. The British artillery came into action at 600 yards range and bombarded the village; the infantry then advanced in skirmishing order, with their flanks protected by the cavalry. A bayonet charge drove out Tatya Tope's troops from the village but they rallied in another village in the rear. From this village also they were ejected. They then formed themselves in a compact body covered by a strong rear guard and retired toward the Rajpur ford.

Seeing his first line routed and his right flanking column driven back by Stuart, Tatya Tope, who commanded the second line, resolved to discontinue the engagement and to extricate his force. He ordered the artillery to fire on the advancing British troops and thus kept them engaged for some time. In the meantime he fired the jungle behind him and under cover of this ingenious smoke-screen extricated a large part of his force. Tatya Tope lost eighteen guns and about a thousand of his troops but he managed to save a very large part of his army. His mission of relieving Jhansi was, however, a failure. For this failure the Rani's troops were also partly responsible. They knew that Tatya Tope's army had come to their rescue and the din of the battle must have informed them that it was locked in a life and death struggle with the British force. That was the time for them to sally forth and fall on the British force. But they were content to confine their activities to shouting and firing into the British batteries. A contemporary British writer condemned this inactivity severely: "Why the garrison did not, make a sortie, and destroy our batteries, while the Peshwa's army was attempting their rescue from without, it is impossible to imagine. Their overpowering numbers must have been successful, however well our infantry and gunners might have stood to their guns. They may have been deterred by a false attack made by Major Gall and Captain Field, R.A., on a distant part of the city wall." No less severe is their condemnation by Sir John Fortescue, who remarks that the

garrison was overawed by a false attack delivered by Sir Hugh's orders and therefore did not dare to sally out against the besiegers during the day and also failed to attack the British troops at night when the latter must have been utterly exhausted by their exertions. Their guns had been disabled, their best artillery-men had been wounded or killed and the city wall had been breached and therefore there was no prospect of holding out for long in the fort and in the city. The only recourse was to sally out and by a determined attack to crush the small British force, sandwiched as it was between two strong forces. That was the only way of winning a victory and escaping from the net that was fast closing round them. But though brave—for most of them fought valiantly in defence of Jhansi—they lacked the courage to seize the initiative to hurl themselves on the English batteries or Sir Hugh Rose's field force. A double attack—one directed by Tatya Tope and the other by the Rani—would have disconcerted the British force and led to its total defeat. A decisive victory would have enhanced the prestige of the nationalist leaders and rallied many of the waverers to their side. But the golden opportunity was not seized with boldness with the result that defeat stared them in the face.

Tatya Tope's strategy was excellent but the timely information gained by Sir Hugh Rose about his movements enabled the latter to dispose his forces in such a manner as to meet successfully the threatened attack. Tatya Tope followed sound tactics for while a part of his force engaged the British force led by Sir Hugh Rose, the rest of it was despatched to envelop the British left flank. The tactics would have succeeded had Tatya Tope not been called upon to deal with a very able general. Sir Hugh Rose proved too clever for him; he checkmated this move by sending Stuart with the 1st Brigade to carry out a wide flanking march so as to envelop Tatya Tope's force, which was trying to turn the left flank of the main British force. Thus it came about that when Tatya Tope's first line was driven back he realised that the game was up and so he decided to save his force, leaving the garrison of Jhansi to its fate. How well he succeeded in his task of bringing out safely his force from an untenable position is clear from

the fact that in the battle of the Betwa his loss amounted to 18 guns and about a thousand casualties i.e. hardly a fraction of his army which numbered 20,000 men.

A. Saga of Heroism

The defeat of Tatya Tope's army sealed the fate of Jhansi. Early in the morning on April 3 Sir Hugh Rose assaulted Jhansi—two columns of stormers advanced from the west hillock towards the Rocket Tower (the southwestern bastion of the city) and the breach at the mound. Simultaneously two other columns advanced from the area of the east hillock to escalade the wall on the right and on the left of the Orchha gate. The columns for the right attack met determined opposition from the Rani's troops, who were aware of their approach and were manning the ramparts. They opened a murderous fire but the stormers rushed forward across a field and then down a road, which was swept by the well-directed fire from the ramparts. The sappers began to fall thick and fast while the fire from the guns of the fort and the city increased in volume and intensity. The sappers and the party heading the attack took advantage of the shelter of some ruins. Then they rushed forward, reached the walls, and planted the scaling-ladders "amid a hail of bullets, rockets, huge stones, and every possible description of missile." The ladders broke down. The British column was now at the mercy of the garrison but a Lieutenant of Engineers carried a powder bag with the help of a few sappers, and under a hail of bullets fixed it to a postern gate and fired it. Out flew the door in fragments. A rush was made into the cloud of smoke to get through the entrance but disappointment was in store for them for their way was barred by huge blocks of stone and masonry. Nothing remained now but to beat a hasty retreat.

While the Rani's troops were successful in checking the advance of the columns of the right attack they failed to thwart the attempts of the columns of the left attack to capture the mound (mamelon) and the Rocket Tower. The stormers rushed forward and covered the few yards between them and the breach. Then they found a large trench of masonry at its foot. To jump into this trench and plant the ladders, was

but the work of a moment, and up they went against stiffening resistance, gained the mound, and ran down the incline to the street leading to the palace. The street ran close under the fort walls. "The matchlock and musketry fire on the men at this point was perfectly hellish! The bullets fell so thickly in the dusty road, that they resembled the effect of hailstones falling in water when striking it and the men fell thick and fast here. One point of the street ran quite close to the gate way of the fort, and was not passed without severe loss." The British troops also successfully escalded the Rocket Tower and effected a junction with the other column. Meanwhile the two columns of the right attack had renewed their attack and driven the Rani's troops from the ramparts towards the palace. Bitter fighting took place in the streets. They were subjected to a deadly fire from the houses. The contest was furious; every inch of the ground was contested. They forced their way through stiff opposition and advanced towards the palace, where they effected a junction with the two columns of the left attack.

The palace was captured after a fierce struggle. About forty Velaitee Sowars, the body-guard of the Rani, however still held the palace stables. The Sowars defended vigorously the stables, "firing with matchlocks and pistols from the windows and loopholes, and cutting with their tulwars, and from behind the doors. When driven in they retreated behind their houses, still firing or fighting with their swords in both hands till they were shot or bayoneted struggling even when dying on the ground to strike again. A party of them remained in a room off the stables which was on fire till they were half burnt; their clothes in flames, they rushed out hacking at their assailants, and guarding their heads with their shields." All the Sowars were killed though not before they had inflicted some casualties on their assailants. That too was not the end of the struggle. The street fighting, or rather house fighting, went on until nightfall.

Meanwhile four hundred of the Rani's troops had sallied out of the city and were proceeding to Tehri when they were attacked by a British picket and forced to take shelter on an isolated rocky hill to the west of the fort. The British picket

received reinforcements, surrounded the rock and effectively shelled it. "Many preferred lying down on their powder-flasks, and blowing themselves up. Finally the Infantry went up and cleared it, killing the four-hundred who fought to the last."

On the next day (April 4) the rest of the city was occupied after fierce fighting that raged in the streets. During the night, when it was pitch dark, the Rani, along with her step son, three hundred Afghans and twenty-five troops stole away from the fort. After leaving the fort they were headed back by one of the British pickets. To deceive the enemy the Rani and her party separated—she herself with a few sowars taking to the right in the direction of Bhandara, 21 miles from Jhansi. The British cavalry was hot in their pursuit. Lieutenant Dowker pressed on in advance of the cavalry and passing through Bhandara saw the Rani riding on her grey horse accompanied by four attendants. Lieutenant Dowker was fast gaining on the Rani when a shot was fired severely wounding him and obliging him to give up the pursuit.

Early in the morning of April 5 Sir Hugh Rose caused the outskirts of the city to be scoured with cavalry and infantry. Many fierce encounters took place. The Rani's troops, who were chiefly Velaitees (Afghans) sold their lives as dearly as they could, fighting to the last with their usual dexterity and firmness. One typical incident illustrates the heroism of these troops. Forty of them barricaded themselves in a spacious house with vaults and a courtyard. A detachment of the Hyderabad Infantry assaulted the house but suffered heavy casualties for the Afghans were good marksmen and every shot told. They could neither scale the wall nor break open the massive door. Fresh reinforcements, including several pieces of siege artillery were then brought up, but even when the house had been breached and knocked to pieces, the Afghans continued resist in the ruined passages and vaults. They were all killed but not before they had inflicted casualties on the assailants. 5,000 people laid down their lives in the heroic defence of Jhansi.

Loss of Banda

Shortly after the fall of Jhansi the nationalist force suffered another reverse. Leaving a small garrison in Jubbulpore, Brigadier G. C. Whitlock set out on February 17 at the head of 1,900 men of the Saugor Field Force to defeat another powerful nationalist leader—the Nawab of Banda. After a skirmish at Kubrai on April 17, Whitlock found the Nawab of Banda's force in position about eight miles west of Banda. The Nawab's force consisted of seven thousand men, of whom about one-third were regular troops. It was a strong defensive position, which they had selected, for the ground was intersected by ravines and water-courses, which were favourable for defence. On April 19 Whitlock attacked the nationalist force. The battle raged furiously for seven hours but at last the Nawab's troops gave way. The Nawab escaped with a large part of his force to Kalpi.

Heroic Defence of Lucknow

The loss of Jhansi was a severe blow to the nationalist cause. The loss of Lucknow was another serious set-back. After defeating Tatya Tope's forces at the battle of Kanpur on December 6, 1857, Sir Colin Campbell prepared for the winter campaign with the object of securing the command of the Kanpur-Delhi road. His plan was to secure the strong fort of Fatehgarh, a place of great strategic importance, for it was situated at the junction of the Doab, Rohilkhand, and Oudh, and commanded a bridge-of-boats across the Ganges. Three movable columns were to converge on Fatehgarh—Brigadier Seaton was to sweep southwards from Delhi to Mainpuri, where he was to effect a junction with Brigadier Walpole's column advancing from Kanpur *via* Akbarpur and Etawah. The combined columns were to advance on Fatehgarh, near which they were to be joined by Sir Colin's main force, which was to advance by the Grand Trunk Road, clearing the right bank of the Ganges *en route*. Seaton's column left Delhi on December 6 and after overcoming opposition at Gangari (December 15) and Patiali (December 18) effected a junction with Walpole's column on January 3, 1858. Meanwhile Sir Colin's force concentrated at Miran-ki-Sarai (December

30) and on January 2, forced a passage across the bridge over the Kali Nadi in face of heavy opposition. On the next day he occupied Fatehgarh—the nationalist troops and their leader the Nawab of Farrukhabad having escaped into Oudh. On January 6, the two columns led by Seaton and Walpole entered Fatehgarh, raising Sir Colin's force to more than 10,000 men. The concentration of such a large force at Fatehgarh had a secondary strategic purpose: it was intended to mislead the nationalist troops into the belief that the main blow would fall on Rohilkhand whereas it was intended that the main effort should be directed towards the capture of Lucknow. To carry out the feint attack towards Rohilkhand, Sir Colin directed Seaton to hold Fatehgarh and the Doab, and Walpole to make a demonstration against Rohilkhand, while he concentrated the main force in the plain between Unao and Bani in Oudh.

Meanwhile the nationalist troops were mustering for the defence of Lucknow, which they rightly believed would be the main British objective. The nationalist force at Lucknow had increased to 120,000 men, of whom 27,550 were trained sepoys, and 7,100 trained cavalry, while the rest were new levies and armed followers of the Talukdars. There were about 4,000 gunners to operate the guns, which exclusive of those mounted on the walls, amounted to 131. The defences of the city were also considerably strengthened. There were three main lines of defence. The first was along the bank of the canal covering all the bridges. In the rear was the second defence line embracing the Moti Mahal, the Mess House, and the Little Imambara. The third covered the Kaisarbagh. In addition all the main streets were protected by bastions and barricades, and every building of importance was loopholed. The nationalist troops, led by able leaders, such as the Maulvi of Fyzabad, certainly showed considerable skill in organising the defence of Lucknow. Sir Colin paid high tribute to these leaders for their skill in preparing the defences. The buildings "formed a range of massive palaces and walled courts, of vast extent, equalled perhaps, but certainly not surpassed, in any capital in Europe. Every outlet had been covered by a

work, and on every side were prepared barricades and loopholed parapets. The extraordinary industry evinced by the enemy in this respect has been really unexampled."

The nationalist leaders had protected the city on three sides but had neglected the northern side with the result that Sir Colin took advantage of this weakness in their defence. For the attack on Lucknow, Sir Colin had at his disposal more than 30,000 men and 164 guns. On March 2 the advance troops occupied the Dilkusha and the next three days were spent in completing the bridges on the Gumti. Sir Colin's plan was to make a strong attack on the south and to send a force across the Gumti to operate on the east and north. Thus Lucknow was to be captured by a double thrust—the right attack from across the Gumti and the left attack from the south. On March 6 the British force, which was to attack from the right, was across the river and by, the 9th occupied the left bank of the Gumti as far as Badshahbagh, thus taking the nationalist troops completely in reverse. On the same day the left attack developed. For two weeks the battle raged fiercely. The British forces stormed and captured Lucknow on March 23. The loss of Lucknow was a serious set-back to the nationalist cause but as more than 40,000 nationalist troops led by their leaders—the Begum 'the ablest man of all' and the Maulvi of Fyzabad, escaped into Oudh and Rohilkhand the struggle for the independence of the country was continued with unabated vigour.

Attack on Azamgarh

Meanwhile Kunwar Singh had again become active in Bihar. On March 22, he defeated a British force and forced it to fall back on Azamgarh, which he besieged. Another British force advanced from Allahabad for the relief of Azamgarh. On April 6 this force was ambushed by Kunwar Singh's troops at a place about eight miles from Azamgarh. The British troops fought their way out with difficulty and effected a junction with the garrison of Azamgarh. Kunwar Singh, at the head of 13,000 troops, had a good opportunity of seizing Azamgarh. He failed to avail himself of this opportunity for he did not prosecute the siege vigorously. Meanwhile another strong

British force left Lucknow on March 29 for the relief of Azamgarh. As this force approached Azamgarh, Kunwar Singh resolved "not to stake the issue of the campaign on a single battle." He left some seasoned troops to act as a rear-guard while with his main force he pushed on to cross the Ganges and escape to Jagdishpur. The rear-guard offered stout resistance and held up the advance of the British force so that Kunwar Singh's force gained some twelve miles before they were overtaken. Then the nationalist troops gave a splendid example of their discipline and courage. They fought successful rear-guard actions. By a masterly retreat Kunwar Singh led his force safely back to Jagdishpur. After receiving fresh reinforcements he fell upon a large party of British troops, which had been sent against him, and completely defeated them on April 23. The whole of Western Bihar was rallying to his side but his death soon afterwards robbed the nationalist force of a capable leader. The nationalist forces in Bihar however continued the guerilla warfare till the end of the year.

End of Resistance in Rajputana

In Rajputana the nationalist forces were routed and the British authority was restored. In January 1858 reinforcements arrived in Rajputana from Bombay and the nationalist troops were speedily driven from Awah. Further reinforcements arrived in March. In that month Major-General H. G. Roberts arrived at Nasirabad and relieved Brigadier Lawrence in the military command. The force under his command was known as the Rajputana Field Force. The infantry comprised three British regiments and three Bombay native regiments. The cavalry consisted of a British regiment, two regular and two irregular Bombay regiments. The force was supported by artillery, including the siege-train. After laying siege to Kotah for a week (March 24 to March 30) Roberts captured this important nationalist stronghold in Rajputana. That was practically the end of the nationalist resistance in Rajputana.

9 The Last Battle

Gwalior, the Last Battle

On 26 May Tatya Tope left the Gwalior bazaars, where he had been gathering intelligence, and rejoined the Rani and Rao Sahib at Burragaon eight miles from Gwalior. They held council over their desperate plight in a mood of gloom. Three British columns were converging on them and on the fourth side was on the staunchest supporters of the English in India, Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior. Rao Sahib posed the question of where they should go next. The Rani, in one version, proposed advancing to Karhra, the home base of her generals. Tatya Tope suggested that "even Bundelkhand would be better." Rao Sahib, in one version, felt this was bad advice. "There we should find the Bundelas hostile and no supplies," he is quoted as saying. "Our only course is to make for the Deccan, where all will join us. But we must go first to Gwalior, where the army is gained, and take it with us by the Sipree road. When that army shall come over, the Maharaja and the Baiza Baee will join us, and all the Prince of Hindoostan will rise."

Military analysts later judged the insurgent plan to make yet another stand at Gwalior "a stroke of genius." Some English historians credit the Rani with the idea, as they consider her the best strategist among the insurgent leaders. Others suggest it was the inspiration of Tatya Tope, who had already spent time in the Gwalior bazaars to test the mood of the Gwalior troops.

In Rose's camp sunstroke had cut a wide swath. Rose and the other generals were ill and desperately in need of medical

attention and a respite. Now, just as Rose was preparing to depart for Bombay and his army to disperse to Gwalior and Jhansi, he got the sensational intelligence that the rebel force had crossed the Chambal River, regrouped, and were headed for Gwalior. Rose quickly took stock of the unexpected development and wrote Hamilton: "I was afraid the rebels would make a dash for Gwalior; they have numerous friends there with whom they are in understanding and it is everything for them to make Gwalior replenish their coffers with a heavy ransom."

Rose in late May met with Maj. Charters Macpherson, resident at Gwalior and adviser to the young maharaja. Macpherson advised Rose it would be expedient to send a strong force to Gwalior, for otherwise the loyal Maharaja Scindia would have "cause to complain of a breach of faith if a strong force were not sent after the fate of Kalpi." Such a relief force would enable Scindia to carry out his plan to disarm Gwalior. Macpherson added that the size of the relief force could be reduced once the disarmament was accomplished. Apart from Macpherson's proposal, Rose himself was convinced that the critical importance of Gwalior made fast action imperative. Rose set aside considerations of health and ignored his doctor's advice to return to Bombay. He did not even wait for orders from his superiors to proceed to Gwalior.

Gwalior, like Jhansi, had immense strategic importance, situated a thwart the Grand Trunk Road and telegraphic link between Bombay and Agra. Scindia's army was renowned throughout the subcontinent as the best trained in India. It had been drilled by French and English advisers over a period of several decades. Rose knew Tatya Tope had gone to Gwalior to persuade Scindia's troops to join the rebel cause. It would be a combination that could only spell more trouble for the exhausted English officers and their men. Rose wrote Hamilton: "You should inform Scindia without a moment's delay, that Col. Robertson with a British Force of all arms . . . has my orders to push on, and attack the rebels in the rear, whilst he attacks them in front. This will encourage him and his faithful troops, and discourage his unfaithful troops and subjects."

Rose then sent a series of inquiries to Hamilton seeking information about the terrain around Gwalior. The monsoon rains were imminent, the worst time of the year for any military operations, and each day that passed made Rose's outlook dimmer. There was moreover the possibility of a rebel advance toward the Deccan to rally the south around the standard of a revived Maratha Confederacy, another major concern of the British. Rose was unfamiliar with the countryside and fearful of the effects of the rains on the Sindh and Pahuj rivers, surrounding roads, and supply lines. He wrote Hamilton on 6 June that he would take up a position in the cantonments east of Gwalior and make Agra his base, since he feared the rains would swell the Sindh to the point where communications with Jhansi and Kalpi would be cut off. Moreover, "From the nature of the country I fear Major Orr's and Brigadier Smith's forces will not be able to join me at the Cantonments. Could you tell me of any other road for them?" he asked.

Rose peppered Hamilton with more questions. "You say you can furnish supplies from Kanpur, Kalpi and Jhansi, but I suppose you mean only *before* the monsoon, because after they have begun the Scinde and Pahooj will rise so that our communications with those three towns will be completely cut off. Can you supply after the rains? In what way? If you cannot, will you be able to supply us after we have crossed the Scinde and are besieging Gwalior?" Rose decided to send a party to protect the ford or bridge over the Chambal River on the Grand Trunk Road near Dholpur. Part of the force at Kalpi could not leave there until 8 June, when they would be relieved by another unit.

Rose was moreover apprehensive about Hamilton's suggestion to bring Orr's and Smith's forces to the foot of a difficult pass twenty miles from Gwalior. "I hear that from there to Gwalior it is a network of ravines, and besides, they are quite separated from me," he added. Rose pointed out that the Jhansi-Gwalior road crossed the Scinde River twice and questioned whether Smith, if he took that route, could get heavy artillery over the two fords. Orr was supposed to

reach Gwalior the same day as his force, Smith a day later. But, Rose noted, "I hope that Brigadier Smith and Orr may unite, as Orr's force is weak and all native." Rose asked Hamilton to get all the information he could about the best place to attack Gwalior fort and town.

Rose immediately sent out orders to Smith and Orr. He cautioned Smith on 8 June: "Look out for *treachery,* for that is the only thing they can beat us by. Pray have patrols out in every direction night and day." He ordered Orr on 11 June to march from Jhansi and effect a junction twenty miles from Gwalior with Smith's force, both of them to reach Gwalior by the nineteenth. "The rebels may not wait to be attacked by my force at Gwalior but make a dash at you or Brigadier Smith's column," he warned.

Gwalior was known as the bastion of British support in Central India, Maharaja Scindia's loyalty regarded as unshakable. Though the English counted Scindia their "truest ally," they were less certain about his troops. The devotion of the Scindia family to the British was partly due to the fact that the Scindias were Marathas surrounded by subjects who were Bundelas, Rajputs, and Jats. In their support of the British, the Scindias had traditionally found security against the possible rebellion of alien subjects. But Tatya Tope anticipated that the Gwalior troops might be vulnerable to an appeal to join the rebels and regenerate the Maratha Confederacy. The Rani, Rao Sahib, and the nawab of Banda, as they left Kalpi, approved of Tatya Tope's destination. They knew that Gwalior possessed a fort even larger than the fortress at Jhansi; its treasury and arsenal, furthermore, were legendary.

The critical factor in Gwalior, then, was the allegiance of Scindia and his army. Maharaja Jayaji Rao Scindia was a young man under the influence of his diwan, Dinkar Rao Rajwade, who in turn was influenced by the resident, Macpherson. Moreover, the tie between Scindia and the English dated back several generations and could not easily be ruptured. A visit to the Scindia palaces and museum in Gwalior confirms the picture of close, long-standing bonds of friendship, of

elaborate hunts, lavish parties, and maharajas attired in English hunting dress posing for photographs with their English friends and tigers' corpses.

The loyalty of Scindia's troops was less certain, however. This was why Tatya Tope had visited Gwalior on several occasions, one of the earliest being September 1857 on a mission from Nana Sahib to seek the allegiance of the Gwalior Contingent. The young Maharaja Jayaji Rao in June of 1857 had been unable to prevent the spread of the Rebellion to Gwalior. It broke out in the cantonments at Morar on 14 June among a contingent of the Bengal Army stationed there. After killing what officers and their families they could find, the troops remained at Morar and later formed part of the force that, under Tatya Tope, attacked Maj. Gen. Charles Windham at Kanpur.

The Gwalior fort, one of the largest and most imposing in India, is built on a precipitous flat-topped igneous rock rising three hundred feet above the dusty plain. The countryside as one approaches Gwalior is marked by rock outcroppings like the one on which the fort is situated. Some of these outcroppings themselves resemble forts from a distance. The fort is one and three-quarters miles long and varies from six hundred to twenty-eight hundred feet in width. Two entrances lead into the fort, the main entrance on the northeast being protected by five gateways. From the main gate one enters the palace through the elephant gate, a high stone structure with domed turrets on the exterior. Horizontal bands of carved moulding on the palace facade were once inlaid with enamelled tiles. Access to the other gate of the fort is up a long winding road, along which rock faces are carved with enormous Jain images.

The origins of the fort are obscure, but the first inscription is in the sun temple inside the fort and is dated A.D. 525. Under the Gurjar Pratiharas the fort began to take its present form. In 1200 Kutb-ud-din Aibak, the Delhi sultan, conquered the fort, and the fort and palace as they stand today were completed by Man Singh Tomar in the mid-fifteenth century. Ibrahim Lodi capture the fort in 1523, and Babar took it in

1527 or 1528. Under both the Delhi sultans and the Mughal emperors it was used as a prison. The Sikh guru Hargovind Singh was imprisoned here by Emperor Jahangir. The fort was also captured by Sher Shah, the invader who drove the Mughal emperor Humayun from India in the sixteenth century. In 1784 the Maratha warrior Madhav Rao Scindia captured the fort and founded his dynasty in Gwalior.

Neither the maharaja nor his diwan knew of the secret visit of Tatya Tope. Nor were they aware of the malaise among the troops at Gwalior. Moreover, Dinkar Rao had foolishly assured the maharaja that he could disperse the rebels "by a single round from his gun." The maharaja's bodyguard, however, warned him that Dinaker Rao's advice was absurd. Without consulting his complacent diwan, Jayaji Rao on 31 May issued orders for his troops to assemble at down the next morning.

Despite the uncertain allegiance of his army, then, the maharaja marched his seven thousand infantry, fifteen hundred cavalry, and eight guns to a position two miles east of the Morar cantonments, where the rebel forces were positioned. When the insurgent cavalry rode toward Scindia's army they shouted *"Deen!"* ("Religion!"), and Scindia's troops gave an answering yell. This meant that the maharaja's army was not going to resist. There was no fight, except for brief skirmishing by the maharaja's still-loyal personal bodyguard. Scindia's troops joined the insurgents, and they congratulated each other and celebrated by eating watermelons in the bed of the Morar River.

Faced with wholesale disaffection of the army, the young maharaja made for the Phoolbagh sector, where he changed his clothes, remounted, and rode hard for Agra and British protection. The diwan, dismayed at what had transpired, quickly rode after his maharaja with a few cavalry from the bodyguard. On 3 June Jayaji Rao reached Agra and the safety of the British garrison.

The Rani of Jhansi, Rao Sahib, and Tatya Tope entered Gwalior in triumph. Nana Sahib was proclaimed peshwa of

the Maratha Confederacy, and the peshwa's flag was flown from the fort. The Scindia treasurer, Amar Chand Banthia, opened the treasury and told the rebels to take what they wanted. This tactic saved Gwalior from being looted, but Banthia himself was hanged by the British in 1862. Scindia's troops were given five months' pay, and cash was distributed among the insurgent army. Jails were opened and prisoners released, but Scindia's servants were confirmed in their authority and positions. Rao Sahib wrote the dowager mother, Baiza Bai, in Nurwar, where she had fled, and urged her to return. It was not his goal to take Gwalior, he said, but "only to have a meeting and go on." He hoped that the Baiza Bai would return and take charge of affairs and in so doing prevent the departure of the maharaja.

On 3 June Rao Sahib held a grand durbar and feast in the Gwalior fort. A special tent was erected and local notables appeared with flags, festoons, and magnificent clothes. Rao Sahib wore ropes of pearls and diamonds from the Scindia storehouse. Fanfares of trumpets, shouts of joy, and Vedic prayers mingled together in a festive atmosphere. Brahmin priests were summoned to preside over the recitation of mantras.

One person was notably absent from the festivities. The Rani refused to take part. She continued to worry about Rose's army, and after the celebrations had continued for two days she admonished Rao Sahib for his foolishness in celebrating before victory was won. She left the fort in a fury, taking her pistols and sword, and entered the Phoolbagh sector, where she was warmly received. Her excitable temperament and sense of crisis clearly separated her from Rao Sahib and Tatya Tope. No doubt she felt the irony of her situation—a military officer unable to take command of the army because of her sex, yet more capable than those endowed by their sex with the authority of command. She must have felt a sense of desperation now that her beloved fort and city were lost and two of her women companions killed at Kalpi. She was also by now acutely aware of what capture by her opponents would mean. While celebrations continued inside the fort, the Rani

spent her time inspecting troops. "She is continually on horseback, armed with sword and pistol, at the head of 300 Horse," reported one account. She alone of the rebel leaders seems to have had a sense of urgency about the need to cope aggressively with the crisis. Gwalior historian Dvivedi says several of the Rani's generals were still with her at Gwalior, among them Raghunath Singh, Chunni, Jhadu, and Ram Chandra Deshmukh, but these men do not figure in British accounts.

As Rose mapped strategy for his assault on what was yet another rebel stronghold, he contemplated his goal: "the Fort which is the largest and one of the strongest in India, Scindia's Treasury, his jewels, and those of his family of fabulous value; the Arsenal filled with warlike stores of every description, and upwards of 60 pieces of siege and field artillery." Rose was equally aware that its central geographic position gave Gwalior a strategic importance equal to that of Jhansi. It was embarrassing that Gwalior had fallen into rebel hands and at the worst time of year, on the eve of the great rains. Possession of this political and military plum "would give the rebels time to reorganize and march south to raise the Deccan," in favour of the peshwa's government.

Rose decided to attack Gwalior on its weakest side and thereby cut off rebel escape. He hoped investment of the city would be followed by the capture of the fort, as at Jhansi and Kalpi. He had no map of Gwalior, but with careful reconnaissance learned that to attack Gwalior from the Morar cantonment to the east he would have to cross the plain between Morar and Gwalior under fire from the fort as well as from camouflaged batteries in the houses and along the banks of the canal. There was also a dry river bed in front of the Phoolbagh palace close to the Lashkar (new city) and south of the fort. The rebels were in control of hills to the left of the canal, Rose learned from reconnaissance. He decided therefore to build a bridge across the Morar, cross the river under cover of night, and take the road to Gwalior from the south, cutting the two rebel positions off from Gwalior. The best point of attack would then be from the south, the Lashkar direction,

He planned to establish his initial foothold and hospital in the Morar cantonment, on the road to Kalpi. The houses and buildings in the Morar cantonment stood empty after the Rebellion. The rebels also knew of the weak point of Gwalior's defence to the southeast and realized they would have to concentrate a large force there, reinforced with stores against the British advance.

Rose was joined the morning of the sixteenth by Brig. Gen. Robert Napier, his successor, who had reached Bahadurpur five miles east of Morar. Rose wanted to capture Gwalior as soon as possible to minimize problems attendant on the monsoon. The rebels now had plenty of cash and ammunition by virtue of their capture of the fort, treasure, and town of Gwalior. They were no longer a force of stragglers in retreat and disarray. Yet Rose had a good road at his back, the Gwalior-Agra road, and he learned that the Chambal River was passable even during the rains. He determined not to camp but to attack immediately. This would give him the advantage of surprise and might also prevent the burning of the buildings in Morar by the rebels.

Rose ordered all units to move into position on the morning of the seventeenth: Brigadier Smith to invest the east, Major Orr to watch the road to the south of Gwalior, Colonel Riddell to attack from the northwest and west. Napier he left behind in the cantonment to watch for possible insurgent retreat in that direction. On the eighteenth Rose marched from the Morar cantonment toward Kotah-ki-Serai to attack Gwalior from that point, the southeast of the city. All his forces were positioned for attack on the nineteenth.

The Rani Falls in Battle

Brigadier Smith and Major Orr (now Lieutenant Colonel) meanwhile rendezvoused at Antri and marched toward Kotah-ki-Serai, arriving there at seven-thirty the morning of the seventeenth. Smith found rebel cavalry and infantry occupying the hilly ground between Kotah-ki-Serai and Gwalior and rebel batteries placed across the Gwalior road. It was difficult to use his cavalry in the circumstances. Smith decided he had to clear

the road or he would not be able to move on Gwalior according to plan. He therefore ordered a squadron of the Eighth Hussars to charge the rebels blocking his path.

This section of the approach to Gwalior was, in Rose's opinion, the most difficult sector to defend because of its vulnerability to attack. It was also the point from which the rebels anticipated an enemy assault. It is all the more surprising, then, that the sole obstacle in the path of Smith's advancing squadron was the Rani and some of her troops. The responsibility for the assignment to this difficult sector may have been Rao Sahib's. It is more likely, however, that Lakshmi herself deliberately chose this desperate sector for her last stand. However the decision was made, the Rani faced her attackers bravely, in full battle dress. She dashed into the action without hesitation, a few officers of her army still at her side. Indian versions have it that one of her court women, Mundar, followed her into battle.

As the Rani clashed with soldiers of the Eighth Hussars on the road, she was struck and wounded by one of them, "ignorant of her rank and sex." The wounds proved fatal; the Rani's heroic struggle was at an end. Although the exact manner of her death is uncertain, all accounts, including those by English historians, attest to her bravery and daring. This single act of valor would be indelibly imprinted on the hearts and minds of Indians for generations to come.

The battle raged on, but with Lakshmi dead, the spirit went out of the rebel fight. Smith, by his maneuver against the Rani, gained command of the road. Meanwhile, Rose moved on toward the enemy under cover of ravines and broken ground. Rose could see that insurgent guns on the hills were being reinforced. He felt the more guns the enemy placed on hill batteries, the more he could capture next morning in the general attack. Yet Rose was not completely confident. "Our position was not a good one. We had it is true the road through the pass, the hills on the right and the deep canal on the left of it. But the enemy held the hills commanding the advanced part of the road, and the canal. The enemy occupied also in force the slope of a hill, threatening, from the other side of the Canal,

my rear and Camp." Rose recognized that it was imperative to drive the enemy from this position; "I did so," he added in his report. Reaching this height, he could see the entire area spread before him. "The heights descended towards Gwalior in a succession of ranges, one lower than the other, the lowest and last commanding the parade ground, and a great part of the Lashkar, all of which I saw I could take from the lowest range almost undisturbed by the fire of the fort." Rose saw the rebels moving from the hills in a long line "extending from the centre of the Lashkar to the northernmost extremity of the old city, under the Fort."

Rose resorted to his favourite left flanking maneuver. Riddell attacked the west of Gwalior, and Rose ordered Smith to make an oblique movement from the left of his right front across the canal and over the shoulder of the hill against the enemy's left flank. The rebels lit haystacks to halt the British advance and kept up a steady fire from the fort. Yet Rose's strategy succeeded as it had at Koonch and Kalpi; he caught his enemy with their strength concentrated in the opposite sector. Moreover, the speed of Rose's march from Kalpi to Gwalior had surprised his adversaries.

The Rani's warnings against premature celebrating in th Gwalior fort were borne out all too well. Although the rebe swordsmen fought in the trenches and nullahs and made gooc account of themselves in hand-to-hand combat, Rose's relianc on surprise and the left flank-attack were decisive. Rose reported, "The enemy's cavalry and infantry retreated before us through the Town so rapidly that we could not even get sight of them, although we advanced by more streets than one with a view to cut them off." Scindia's agent reported to Rose that the fort was evacuated, but as a unit from Rose's force advanced to the fort, it was fired on. Next morning the fort was captured by a unit of the Twenty-fifth Native Infantry under Lieutenant Rose, a cousin of the general, who was mortally wounded in the capture of the fort.

Rose had ordered all roads from Gwalior closely guarded, but the insurgents fleeing from the city found the northwest road to Dholpur open and escaped in that direction. Napier

pursued them and killed many. Thus ended the last organized resistance of the Rebellion. "The political atmosphere of Gwalior has been completely purified," Rose wrote in his battle report from Gwalior. The insurgent army was no longer an army of combatants but a group of "disheartened fugitives . . . without artillery, warlike stores or reserves."

Most important, noted Rose, the Rani of Jhansi had been killed. "The Rani of Jhansi, the Indian Joan of Arc, was killed in this charge, dressed in a red jacket, red trousers, and white puggery; she wore the celebrated pearl necklace of Scindia which she had taken from his treasury and heavy gold anklets." This jewelry she distributed among her troops as she lay mortally wounded, popular sources assert. Rose noted that "the whole rebel army mourned her." She was, in Rose's famous words, the "best and bravest of the rebel leaders," a phrase that has never been forgotten in India. With the death of this "most dangerous of all rebel leaders" all organized resistance by the insurgents collapsed. In view of Rose's praise of the Rani, a comparison made by Sir John Smyth is revealing. "Sir Hugh and the Rani were two of a kind," writes Smyth. "Both understood what had to be done—and did it. The difference lay in the support they received from their people."

With the death of the Rani in battle her legend was born. It was the praise of her valor that came immediately from the pens of General Rose and other British officers in India that generated the beginnings of the legend. The English forgot the Rani in later years, but Indians did not. They perpetuated her epic in folk arts, poetry, and ballads, where it lives still.

Where was Tatya Tope when the Rani fell in action? The charge of the Eighth Hussars at Kotah-ki-Serai gave Brigadier Smith command of the defile and hills east of the canal, but Tatya Tope had the hills to the west of the defile and canal, and on the ridge had placed a battery of nine-pounders. When Rose ordered his guns up a steep hill, Tatya Tope, emboldened, prepared to attack Rose's troops and drive them out of the defile and hills to the east. Rose's offensive against the ridge and gorge, however, foiled Tatya Tope and drove him south. Tatya Tope was expelled from his positions from

Phoolbagh to the Lashkar, and two days later, on the twenty-first, Napier overtook and defeated him at Jora Alipur.

But Tatya Tope escaped. He continued to lead guerrilla resistance against the English throughout the whole of Bundelkhand for over a year after Gwalior's capture. Without tents or provisions, and minus over twenty guns he lost at Gwalior; Tatya Tope continued to elude a ring of British generals and divisions that pursued him. He became a kind of Robin Hood figure, a legend in his own right. He led an army consisting of valayaties, Bundelas, Bheels, and dacoits. Mounted on camels and ponies they bivouacked in deeply wooded glens at night to cook their food and sleep where they dismounted. They separated into small groups when attacked, which facilitated their escape and enabled them to rendezvous later and fight yet again.

Following the defeat at Gwalior, Tatya Tope fled with Rao Sahib and the nawab of Banda northwest toward Udaipur. In November 1858 the nawab surrendered and Rao Sahib was also captured. Tatya Tope hid in the jungle but was arrested nearly a year later, on 8 April, 1859, betrayed by one of his own comrades whose family had been taken hostage. He was tried by court martial at Sipri, charged with rebellion and waging war against the British. Ten days after his arrest he was hanged publicly. "No sooner were the irons removed from his hands, he ascended the gallows with a firm step and placed his neck in the noose with the greatest *sangfroid*," writes a biographer. According to legend in Sipri and Jhansi, it was not Tatya Tope who was hanged but an impersonator; Tatya Tope lived on in the hills in the garb of a sadhu.

Tatya Tope had been a special target of British military command in India since his campaign at Kanpur against General Windham in November 1857. He represented, too, a vestige of the power of the Maratha Confederacy, having grown up with Nana Sahib, whose chief of staff he was. Moreover, his army at Gwalior was known as the "Peshwa's Army."

The fate of Nana Sahib is less certain. It is commonly believed that he escaped into Nepal, where he died two years

later. Numerous persons appeared from time to time claiming to be Nana Sahib, and the time and manner of his death remained a mystery to the British, perhaps also to Indians. He did not fight at Koonch, Kalpi, or Gwalior, that much is certain. According to one legend, Nana Sahib lived on in a temple near Kanauj or in a jungle in Gujarat.

Index

A

Abdali, Ahmad Shah, 7, 37
Abdul Aziz, 15
Absolute monism, 6
Adoption, 80
Advaita vada, 6
Afghanistan, 72, 87
Afghans, 50-51
Afghan war, 17, 21
Agra, 28, 40-42, 46, 69, 145, 173, 176
Ahmad Hussein, 112
Ahmad Ullahshah, 48-50, 61, 65
Ahoms, 5-6
Ahsan Ali, 106
Ajee gurh, 101
Ajmer, 25
Ajnala, 53
Ajodhya, 42
Akbar, 83
Akbarpur, 167
Alif Khan, 54
Ali garh, 46
Ali Karim, 42
Allahabad, 14, 40-41, 46, 62, 100, 169
Almora, 100, 135, 138
Amant Singh, 148
Amar Chand Banthia, 177
Amarpani, 148
Amar Singh, 4
Ambala, 51
Amir Khan, 103
Amirs of Sind, 17
Amjad Ali, 85
Amjhera, 52
Amritsar, 52
Amroha, 46
Andrews, 102, 107
Angul, 5, 39
Antri, 179
Arabs, 8
Arcot, 16, 58
Armed Gosains, 7
Army expenditure, 72
Asirgarh, 57
Assam, 2, 5-6, 38-39
Risings in, 5-6
Attock, 65
Auckland, 82
Aurangabad, 9, 57
Aurangzeb, 37
Azamgarh, 48, 169-70
Attack on, 169-70
Azimgarh, 41, 50
Azimullah Khan, 47, 49, 61-62

B

Babar, 83, 175
Badayun, 46
Badshah bagh, 169
Bagpat, 45
Bahadurpur, 179
Bahadur Shah, 44-45, 50, 52, 59, 61, 65, 76, 80, 82, 98-99
Bahawalpur, 53
Behraich, 11
Baiza Ball, 171, 177
Bakhat Khan, 45, 65
Bakhshish Ali, 106, 109
Ball, Charles, 75-76, 138
Baluchis, 88
Bamanghat, 3
Banaras, 14, 41-42, 47-48, 50
Banda, 42, 46, 116-17, 136, 147-48
Bani, 168
Bankarganj, 38
Bankidas, 10
Banpur, 4, 55, 113-14, 122, 127, 147-48, 150-52, 154
Baqr-Id, 59
Bara bazar, 3
Bara bhum, 3
Bareilly, 12, 45-46, 62, 64
Baroda, 33, 47
Barodia, 148, 150
Barrackpur, 17, 24, 31
Barwa Sagar, 159
Basti, 11
Battle of Buxar, 7, 84
Battle at Koonch, 113-16
Battle of Plassey, 69
Beawar, 25
Begum of Oudh, 11, 146
Belgaum, 57
Belma, 11
Bengal, 1-2, 7-8, 20, 24, 37-38
Bengal Army, 16-18, 25-26, 75, 97-100, 155, 175
Bengal Cavalry, 17
Bengal Command, 23-24
Bengali Zamindars, 39
bengal Regiment, 17
Bengal Regulations, 2
Bentinck, W., 86, 95, 131
Berar, 88
Berhampur, 24, 98
Betwa, 116, 128, 159-60
Bhandara, 168
Bhander, 132
Bharatpur, 46
Bheel Corps, 56
Bhil risings, 9
Bhils, 9, 183
Bhopal, 55, 149
Bhopal contingent, 56
Bhumij of Manbhum, 2-3
Bihar, 1-2, 8, 10, 24, 41-42, 55, 146
Bijnore, 46
Birbhum, 2, 38
Bird, Robert Mertins, 90
Birjis Qadr, 49, 61, 81
Bisayi, 5
Bishnupur, 2
Bithur, 98, 101
Blackett, 93
Bolanath, 102
Bombay, 57, 90, 92, 119, 172
Bombay army, 25, 149, 153
Bontein, 25
Bright, John, 94
British army victory over sikhs, 18

British assault, 121-27
British conqurred Bengal, 37
British foreign policy, 87
British rule in India, 18
British strategy, 146-70
 Advance of British Force to Sangor, 148-50
 Attack on Azamgarh, 169-70
 Attack on Jhansi, 156-57
 British strategy, 146-147
 Defeat of Tatya Tope, 146
 Defence of Chanderi, 152-54
 Defence of Passes, 150-52
 End of resistance in Rajputana, 170
 Fort of Jhansi, 155-56
 Heroic defence of Jhansi, 157-59
 Heroic defence of Lucknow, 167-69
 Loss of Banda, 167
 Saga of heroism, 164-66
 Tatya Tope's fine strategy, 147-48, 154-55
 To work in cooperation with Rani of Jhansi, 147
 Tatya Tope to the rescue, 159-64
Browne, 109, 134-35
Bulandshahr, 45
Bundel Rajput Chief, 139
Bundelas, 148, 151, 155, 171, 183
Bundelkhand, 31-32, 40, 47, 100, 123, 133-34, 146-48, 150-51, 183
Burgess, 107
Burma, 66, 72
Burmere war, 6, 21
Burragaon, 171
Burton, 54
Burwa Saugor, 109
Buxar, 1, 7

C

Calcutta, 24
Camel Corps., 120
Campbell Colin, 116, 118, 121, 167-69
Canning, Charles, 22, 48, 73-75, 145, 154
Caspian region, 87
Caucasus region, 87
Control India, 25, 44, 55-56, 90, 147
Central India field force, 119, 121-22, 124, 146
Chaibasa, 3
Chait Singh of Banaras, 11
Chakra Bisayi, 5
Chambal river, 172-73
Champaran, 41
Chanchanpur, 154
Chandellas, 116
Chanderi, 100, 122, 135, 146, 148, 152-54
 Defence of, 152-54
 Fall of, 154
Charkhari, 117, 122-23, 128, 136, 147, 154-55, 159
Chhota Nagpur, 2-3, 40, 44, 50-55
Chintaman Rao, 143
Chittagong, 24, 38
Christianity, 22, 96
Christian Mission propaganda, 96
Chunar, 47
Chuar rising, 2-4
Chupra, 41
Chutterpore, 101

Cis Sutlej, 51
Clark, George, 93
Colvin, Auckland, 28, 30-32
Conversion to Christianity, 34, 87, 97
Corniwallis, 20
Cossack, 88
Council tof Calcutta, 1
Council of fort William in Bengal, 7
Court Martial, 145
Court of Directors, 33-34, 86
Cow slaughter, 33, 102
Crawford, 109
Crimea, 72
Cuddapah, 58
Cutch, 8
Cuttack, 5

D

Dacca, 24, 38
Dalhousie, 28-29, 32, 69-70, 73, 82, 86, 88, 148
Dalip Singh, 80, 87
Damanikoh, 4
Damodar Rao, 27, 140
Darul, Islam, 13
Datia, 104, 108
Daulat Rao Hari Pawar of Karad, 57
Daya Ram of Hathras, 12-13
Deccan, 8-9, 16, 56, 173
Delhi, 14, 24, 37, 42, 44-45, 47, 50, 53, 62-64, 66, 98-99, 167
Deoli, 25
Deshmukh, Ram Chandra, 178
Deverany, H.B., 62
Dhamooney, 148, 151
Dhananjoy Bargoharn, 6
Dhananjay Bhary, 5
Dhar, 56
Dharwar, 57
Dhalka, 3
Dholpur, 173, 181
Dilkhsha, 169
Dinajpur, 2, 24, 42
Dinkar Rao Rajwade, 174, 176
Directors of company, 73
Disraeli, 70, 75, 88
Disturbances in Bengal at East India, 1-6
Diwangir for Hindoos, 62
Diwani of Bengal, 83
Doab, 41, 50, 62, 146, 167
Domariaganj, 11
Dora Bisayi, 5
Dost Muhammad, 5
Dowkar, 166
Dubois, Abbe, 95
Dult, Alexander, 60, 82
Dum Dum, 24-25
Dunlop, 101-03, 105
Durand, 55
Dutt, Romesh, 93
Dvivedi, 178

E

East of Abemarle, 94
East India Co., 27, 35-36, 6-9, 73
Nature of Company's rule, 69-73
Edwardes, Michael, 95
Elephinstone, 5
Ellenborough, 70, 75
Elliot, 93
Ellis, 29, 32
England, 15, 74, 87
English soldiers, 115

Erinpura, 25
Erskine, W.C., 28, 32-33, 110-12, 137-38, 141, 144
Etawah, 46

F

Famine, 3
Famine in Bengal, 7
Faridpur, 38
Farquhar, 7
Farrukhabad, 46, 62, 168
Fatehgarh, 46, 136
Fatehpur, 46
Fazal-i-Haq Khairabadi, 61
Ferozepur, 52-53
Field R.A., 162
Finnis, 99
  Shot, 99
Firoz Shah, 64
Forjelt, 57
Forrest, G.W., 75, 138, 141
Fortescue, John, 162
Fort of Jhansi, 155-56
Fort William, 28-29, 33, 36, 111-12, 145
Free Church of Scotland's Foreign Mission Committee, 82
Fyzabad, 43, 49, 168-69

G

Gaekwar of Baroda, 8
Gajadhar Singh, 43
Gall, 162
Ganga, 2, 25
Gangadhar Rao, 34, 47, 131
Ganga Narayan, 3
Ganjam, 40
Garhakota, 122, 148, 150
Garos, 6
Gaya, 41
Ghagra River, 11
Ghazipur, 48
Ghaziuddin Haridar, 85
Giri Sauyasis, 7
Gobindgarh, 52
Golauli, 116, 118-19
Golden Temple at Amritsar, 88
Golundar, 155
Gomdhar Konwar of Ahom Family, 6
Goomsur, 3-9
Gopalpur, 121
Gorakhpur, 10-11, 41, 43-44, 48
Gorakhpur Rising, 10-11
Gordon, 28-30, 32, 34, 101-08, 134, 137, 141
  Death of, 108
Gosain Himmat Giri, 7
Gossais, 8
Greased cartiridge, 25-27
Grievances of the sepoys, 20-27
  Behaviour of commissioned affairs, 22
  Composition of Company's armed forces, 23-25
  Discipline of European Officers, 23
  Dishonesty of European non-commissioned officers, 22
  Encroachments upon religions customs, 20-22
  Enforcement of policy of anglicisation, 20
  Greased cartridge, 25-27
  Influx of British officers, 20
  Offences against dignity and self-respect, 20
  Promotion and pay, 20

Promotion completely shut, 20
Rates of pay were low, 20-21
Unsatisfactory conditions of service, 20
White officers resented, 22
Withdrawal of allowances after conquest, 21
Gujarat 184
Risings in, 8
Gujars, 43
Gulab Singh of Kashmir, 51
Gulam Gaus Khan, 126
Gumti, 169
Guna, 152
Gurdaspur, 52
Gurgaon, 45, 50
Gurkhas, 18
Gursarai, 104, 135
Gwalior, 33, 55, 114, 117, 121, 134, 136, 143, 171-84
Gwalior contingent, 123, 129, 147
Gwalior the last battle, 171-84
Allegiance of Scindia and his army, 174-76
British support to, 174
Gwalior Fort, 175
Lakshmi dead, 180
Layality of Sciendia's troops, 175
March to, 174
Rani falls in battle, 178-84
Rani of Jhansi absent, 177
Rose meet Macpharson at, 172
Rose strategy, 187-79
Strategie-importance of, 172
Tatya Tope rejoined Rani and Rao Sahib, 171, 176

H

Hafiz Rahmat Khan, 62, 64
Hamirpur, 46, 136
Hamilton, Robert, 29-35, 100, 113, 121-23, 138, 141, 145, 154, 172-74
Hannay, 10-11
Hardayal, 54
Hargovind Singh, 176
Harriott, 76
Harvey, 77
Hastings, Warren, 1, 11, 70, 84-85
Hathras, 12, 46
Hazaribagh, 4-5
Hazrat Mahal, 49, 81
Heber, 85
Hewitt, W.H., 98-99
Hill tribes risings, 2
Hindu-Muslim Cooperation, 67
Hindu religion and customs British contempt of, 95-96
Hindustani troops, 52-53
Hissar, 45-50
Historical background, 1-19
Disturbances in Bengal and East India, 1-6
Chuar risings, 2-4
Khond rising, 5
Orissa Zamindars rising, 4-5
Revolt of Mir Qasim, 1-2
Risings of Hill tribes, 2
Santhal risings, 4
Disturbances in Uttar Pradesh, 10-13
Daya Ram of Hathras, 12-13
Risings of Gorakhpur, 10-11

Risings of Rohilla country, 11-12
Risings of Wazir Ali, 11-12
Revolt of Sanyasis, 6-8
Rising in Gujarat and Saurashtra, 8-9
Sepoy Mutinies, 15-19
Unrest in Rajputana, 9-10
Waliullahi movement, 13-14
Holkar, 7, 83
Holmes, T.R., 75
Hood, Robin, 183
Hoshangabad, 55
Hos of Chhota Nagpur, 3
Hos of Singhbhum, 2-3
Ho tribesmen, 3
House of commons, 75, 93
Howard, 95
Howitzer, 130
Hugh, 182
Humayun, 176
Hunter, William, 22
Hyderabad, 37, 58-59
Hyderabad, Cavalry, 128
Hyderabad contingent, 149
Hyderabad Infantry, 166

I

Ibrahim, Lodi, 175
Imadud Din. 42
Iman Bakhsh, 54
Inam Commission, 56-58
Inams, 72
Indian Ocean, 56-58
Indore, 33, 55-56, 138, 154
Indus, 25, 69
Innes, M., 75
Iran, 87
Irrawaddy, 69
Irregular Cavalry, 52
Irregular Infantry of Oudh, 26
Irwin, 86

J

Jabalpur, 25-26, 32, 55, 138, 141, 145, 167
Jagabandhu, 4
Jagannath Dhal, 3
Jagdishpur, 170
Jagirs, 72
Jahangir, 176
Jai Dayal, 54
Jaintia, 38
Jaipur, 7
Jalaun, 28, 117, 134-35, 138, 145
Jalpaiguri, 24
Jammu Hills, 53
Jamuna, 25
Jats, 43
Jaunpur, 48
Jawar Singh, 100
Jayaji Rao Scindra, 174, 176
Jessore, 38
Jesus, 95
Jeuram Dhulia Barua, 6
Jhang, 52
Jhansi, 28-36, 47, 88, 98, 146
Attack on, 156-57
Authority of, 32
Ban on cow slaughtes, 33
Campaign against, 123
Entry of Rose into palace, 131
Escalade Problem, 130-32
Firing, 126
Hamilton visit to, 31
Heroic defence of, 57-59
Invasion of, 144

Lapsed to Raj, 28, 30, 36
Massacre at 135, 137, 140, 144
Rose marched towards, 124-27, 154-55
Rose siege the Fort of, 127
Saga of heroism, 164-66
Sepoy broke jail to release prisoner, 99
Sepoy refused greesed cartridge, 98
Sepoy revolt, 99
Siege operation, 127, 166
Tatya Tope to rescue, 127-30
Thakurs surrounding of, 135
Townsmen and rebels could not escape, 131-32
Uprising at, 99-108, 138
Jhansi and Dalhousie, 28-36
Jhansi and leadership, 97-112
Cause of unrest with circulation of chapattis, 97
Gordon's death, 108
Greaved cartridge, 97
Massacre, 108-12
Princely resentment, 98
Robells left Jhansi, 110
Uprising at Jhansi, 99-108
Jhansi garrison, 114
Jhansi massacre, 55
Jhansi revolt, 135
Jharia, 3
Jhad, 13-14, 18, 50, 59
Jindan Kaur, 72
Jinga, 100
Jodha Ram, 10
Jokhun Bagh, 109, 132, 158
Joshi, P.C., 138
Jullunder, 52
Jumna, 147

K

Kalabagh, 52
Kalee Khan, 112
Kali, 57
Kali Nadi, 138
Kalpi, 42, 99, 113-20, 132-33, 138, 146-48, 172-73, 177-79, 181, 184
Fall of, 116-20
Kalyanpur, 47
Kanauj, 184
Kandarpesvar, Singh, 39
Kangra, 52
Kanpur, 14, 24, 41-42, 46-47, 62, 99, 113-14, 128, 136, 147, 167, 173, 183
Karauli Contingent, 54, 84
Karha, 100-01
Thakurs, attack on, 101
Karnatak, 16, 58, 72, 88
Kaveri, 65
Kayl, John, 30, 75, 77, 90-91, 107, 144
Kesho Row, 135
Khan Bahadur Khan, 43, 46, 59, 62, 64, 146
Khandesh, 9
Kharaswan, 3
Khasi, 2, 38
Khelat-i-Ghilzai, 52
Kherwara, 25
Khaondmals, 5
Khond risings, 5, 39
Khonds, 2, 5
Khuda Baksh, 126
Khurda, 4-5
Kirka, 101, 103, 136
Koh-i-noor, 87

Kolhan, 3
Kolhapur, 57
Koli risings, 9
Kol risings, 4
Kols, 2, 40
Kolwan, 160
Koonch battle, 113-18, 121, 132, 181, 184
Kotah, 54, 117, 146
Kolah-ki-Sarai, 179, 182
Krishnagar, 38
Kulkarni, Shivaram, 57
Kulu Hills, 53
Kunwar Singh, 40-42, 48, 61, 146, 169-70
Kurnool, 58
Kurrura, 141
Kutbud-din Aibak, 175
Kutiya Khonds revolt, 40

L

Lachman Rao, 47
Lahore, 24, 37, 52, 50
Lahore Durbar, 87
Lakhimpur Kheri, 49
Lakshmi Bai, 27, 31-32, 34, 47, 72, 110, 113-14, 142-43, 145
Dead, 180
Lalitpur, 100, 134-36
Lalloo Bakshi, 132
Land revenue system, 91
Land settlement in Punjab, 93
Lashkar, 178, 181, 183
Lawrence, Henry, 21-22, 82, 86-87, 170
Liaqat Ali, 46, 65
Low, Member of Supreme Council, 88
Luchman Rao, 102
Lucknow, 14, 37, 42, 48-49, 62
  Fall of, 50
  Heroic defence of, 167-69
Lutchmon, 125

M

Macauley, 27
Macmunn, G.F., 75
Macpherson, Charters, 172, 174
Madanpur Pass, 122
Madhav Rao Scindia, 176
Madhusudan Saraswati, 7
Madinpur, 148, 151-52
Madras, 37, 58-59, 90, 93-94, 125
Madrass Army, 25
Mahals of Manbhum, 3
Mahalakshmi temple, 34
Maharao Kishan Singh of Kotah, 10, 54
Maharashtra, 37, 56-58
Mahars, 58
Mahoba, 136
Mainpuri, 46
Majumdar, R.C., 144
Malabar, 58
Malcolm, 29, 33
Malda, 38
Malleson, G.B., 75, 141
Malva Field Force, 146
Malwa, 44, 56
Manbhum, 4, 40
Mandasor, 56, 64
Mang, 57
Mangal Singh of Jakhlon, 100
Manmohan Kaur, 143
Maniram Dutta, 38-39
Mansel, 88
Man Singh, 10, 57, 62, 91

Man Singh Tomar, 175
Manu, 143
Maratha confederacy, 173-74, 177, 183
Marathas, 7, 9, 15, 25, 37, 56, 58, 115, 117, 139
Marathas war III, 10
Mardan Singh of Banpur, 100
Marquis of Wellesley, 83
Martial Law, 5, 48
Martin, 60, 94
Marwar, 10
Mathura, 42, 46
Mau, 114, 127
Mau Ranipur, 136
Maxwell, 116, 118-19, 120-21
Mc Carthy, Justin, 76
Mc Egan, 105, 109
Meerut, 14, 24, 40, 43-44, 50-52, 87, 98-99, 142
Mehndi Hasan of Sultanpur, 44
Mekranis, 148
Metcalfe C.G., 43, 70, 75
Mewar, 10
Mhow, 25, 56, 137-38, 141, 149, 152
Mian Mir, 52-53
Midnapur, 2-3
Military Mutiny, 75-76
Mill, Shiart, 27
Miran-ki-sarai, 167
Mirasdars, 92
Mir Muhammad Hasan of Gorakhpur, 44
Mir Quasim, 1, 7, 15
    Revolt of, 1-2
Mofussil, 94
Morar, 175-76, 178-79
Moropant, Rani's father, 132, 143-44
Mughal rule in Delhi, 50
Muhammad, 13
Muhammad Ali Shah, 85
Muhammad Hasan Khan, 43
Muhammadi, 49
Multan, 53-54
Mundar, 180
Mundas of Chhota Nagpur, 2, 4
Munro, 15
Muslim population, 58
Mutiny, 77
Mutiny of vellore, 15
Mutlow, 109, 141
Muzaffarnagar, 14, 46
Nadir Shah, 37

N

Nafod, 25
Nagode, 56
Nagpur, 55, 86, 88, 98
    Annexature of, 88
Naldrug, 88
Name Ramoshi of Kundal, 57
Nana Saheb, 43, 47, 49, 56, 61-62, 65, 66, 72, 80, 98, 113, 146, 175-76, 183-84
Napier, Charles, 18, 88, 96
Napier, Robert, 179
Narbada, 146-47
Nargund, 58
Narhut pass, 122
Naringhpur, 56
Narut, 148, 151
Nasirabad, 146, 170
Nasiruddin, 85
Native cavalry, 98
Native Gentry, 89

Native Infantry, 17, 53, 59
Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda, 62, 147, 167, 174
Nawabganj, 3
Nawab Nazim of Bengal, 1, 83
Nawab of Oudh, 7, 10-11, 89
Nazr, 82-83
Nepal, 49, 66, 85
Nerbudda river, 100
Newalkar, 34, 110
Nonir, 100
Norman empire, 74
Northern India, 40-41
North-Western provinces and Oudh, 89-92
Norton, 93
Nowgong, 55, 101, 103, 136-37
Nurwar, 110, 177

O

Oodgaon, 100
Oorcha, 101
Orai, 135
Orchha, 108, 134, 144, 164
Orissa, 1-2, 39-40
Orissa Zamindars risings, 4-5
Oriya Zamindars, 39
Orr, 119, 173-74, 179
Orr's Hyderabad, 115
Other Battles, 113-45
  Battle at Koonch, 113-16
  British assault, 121-27
  Escalade, 130-32
  Fall of Kalpi, 116-21
  Rani's flight, 132-34
  Rani's role, 137-45
  Revolt spreads, 134-37
  Tatya Tope to the rescue, 127-30
Otway, 94
Oudh, 1, 7, 10, 40-41, 44, 48-49, 61, 64, 75, 80-81, 84-86, 89-90, 98, 146, 168
Oudh artilery, 22
Oudh Regiment, 87
Outram, 8, 82

P

Padshah of Delhi, 42, 62-63
Pahooj, 173
Pahul rivers, 173
Parks, 39
Pala mau, 4, 40
Palmerston, 87-88
Pande, Mangol, 38
Panipat, 7
Panjab, 37-38, 50-54, 87, 90
Parlakimedi, 40
Participation and its impact, 6-9-96
  British contempt of Hindu religion and customs, 95-96
  British Justified annexations, 71
  Character of the upheaval, 74-82
    Concerning artisans, 79
    Concerning marchants, 79
    Concerning Pandits, Maulavis and other learner persons, 79
    Concerning public servants, 79
    Concerning zamindars, 79
    Outbreak of 1857, 74-75, 78
    Traditional elite of, 78
  Christian Mission's

propaganda, 96
Discontent of peasantry, 92-93
Harsh treatment of landed gentry, 89
Indictment of the British, 82-96
Land settlements in Panjab, 93
Lull before the storm, 73-74
Native of East India Company's Rule, 69-74
North-Western Provinces and Oudh, 89-92
Political and economic evil of British rule, 80-82
Tortise for realisation of revenue, 93-95
Patiali, 167
Patna, 41, 62
Peali Barphukan, 6
Peasantry, 92-93
Peshwa, 47, 63, 65, 83, 98, 162, 183
Peshwa Baji Rao II, 62, 66, 72, 80
Peshawar, 22, 50-51
Phillaur, 52
Phoolbagh sector, 176-78, 183
Piali Barua, 39
Pinkney, J.W. 135, 138-42, 144
Pir Ali, 42
Plassey battle, 69
Policy of Lapse, 70-71
Poona, 37, 56
Porahat, 40
Powain, 49
Powys, 107
Pratap Singh, 53, 56
Pratiharas, 175
Prayag, 42
Prem Narain, 134
Prophet, 14
Punjab, 10
Purander Singh Narendra, 6, 38
Purbiya, 58
Purcells, 107, 142
Puri, 5
Purnea, 41

R

Radha Krishna Dandasena, 40
Rai Bareli, 13
Raghunath Singh, 178
Raichur, 88
Raja of Birbhum, 2
Raja of Dhelbhum, 3
Raja of Jaipur, 7
Raja of Kailapal, 3
Raja of Khulda, 4
Raja of Porahat, 3
Rajasthan, 8, 54
Rajpoot Villages, in Bihar, 41
Rajpur, 160, 162
Rajputana, 9-10, 25, 54-55, 170
End of resistance, 170
Unrest in, 9-10
Rajputana Field Force, 146
Rajputs, 43
Ram Gopal, 136
Ramoshi, 57
Rana Beri Madho Singh of Shankarpur, 43
Ranchi, 4, 40
Ranghars, 43, 50
Rangpur, 2
Rani of Jhansi, 28, 100, 107, 113-14, 120-21, 147, 154, 176

As a women of indomitable personality, 139
As heroine of first phase of struggle, 143
As organizer and leader of rebellion, 142
Assessment of motives and action of, 140-41
Collection should cease, 27
Englishman viewed as a rebel, 145
Escaped, 132-33
Escort to a place of safety, 116
Fled, 114
Gordon letter to, 106
Irate on police entering palace, 30-31
Killed, 182
Killing of Englishman, 142
Letter to Erskine, 110-11, 145
Oldest of Maharaja, 29-31
Pension for, 28-30
Preparation for struggle, 155-156
Placing her under jurisdiction of British Court and Police, 3
Rani falls in battle, 179-84
Rani offered sage conduct, 141-42
Rani responsible for massacre, 141
Rani's flight, 132-34
Rani's role in uprising and massacre in Jhansi, 137-45
Refused to accept property, 29-30
Response to lapse of Rani, 36
Revenue collected by, 29
Reward for, 113
She be put under the authority of Hamilton, 32
To lead army, 114
Troops proceed to Tehri, 166
Urge to accept person, 30
Rampur, 127
Ranjit Singh, 50, 72, 80, 87
Raw Sahib, 113-14, 117, 120, 171, 174, 176-77, 180, 183
Rathgarh, 122, 148-50
Rawalpindi, 18
Rebel confederacy, 125
Rebellion, 76-77, 138
Red fort of Delhi, 43, 82-83
Regulation XVI of 1814, 12
Reilly, Crawford, 109
Revolt, 77
Revolt and its progress, 37-68
Acts of daring and defiance, 65
Attrocities committed by army of the Co., 66-67
Cause for, 60
Cause for which they fought regarded unjust, 67-68
Cooperation among leader, 61
Coordination and planning, 61
Defiance of British authority, 37
In Agra, 46
In Assam, 38-39
In Banaras, 47-48
In Bihar, 41-42
In Central India, 55-56
In Chhota Nagpur, 40
In Delhi, 44-45

Indian sepoys rebelled, 38
In Hyderabad and Madras, 58-59
In Jhansi, 47
In Kanpur, 46-47, 62
In Maharashtra, 56-58
In Nothern India, 40-41
In Punjab, 50-54
In Northern India, 40-41
In Rajasthan, 54
In Sind, 54
Madras rebel troops, 63
Open rebellion from Bengal to Punjab, 38
Oudh and siege of Lucknow, 48-50
Outside Delhi, 45-46
Rebellion ran for two years, 63-64
Rebels brave and capable of heroic sacrifices, 63
Recognition of titles S 62-63
Revolt failed, 66-67
Royal House of Delhi gave to this cause, 64
Shattared delusion, 6
Southern India, 56-59
Revolt at Meerut, 100
Revolt of 1857, 14, 19, 37, 60, 74-75, 77, 95
Revolt of Mir Qasim, 1-2
Revolt of San Yasis, 6-8
Revolt spreads, 134
Rewati, 32, 42, 50
Riddell, 181
Risaldar, 52
Risings in Assam, 5-6
Risings in Gujarat at Saurashtea, 8-9
Risings of Hill tribes, 2
Risings of Jats, 37
Roberts, Earl, 30, 75
Roberts H.G.,54, 146, 170
Robertson, T.C., 89, 172
Rohilakhand, 11, 14, 40-41, 43, 46, 49, 59, 62, 64, 146-47, 147-48
Rohini, 41
Rohtak, 45
Roman empire, 74
Rome, 74
Roorke, 45
Rose, Huge, 113-35, 145-46, 148-52, 154-57, 159-61, 163-64, 171-74, 177-82
Rupechand Konar, 6
Russell, 82
Russia, 87
Ryotwari system, 58, 89, 93

S

Saad at Ali Khan, 84-85
Sadasheo Rao Narain, 110
Saharanpur, 14, 46, 90
Sahu, 59
Sambalpur, 39-40, 88
S'amuell's, 41
Sankaracharya, 6-7
Santhal Pargana, 41
Santhal risings, 4
Santhals of Rajmchal, 2
Sanyasis revolt, 6-8
Saraikela, 3
Sardhana, 45
Sassiah, 46
Satara, 56, 88, 98
Satara Ranga Bapuji Gupta, 57
Sati, 80

Saugo, 122, 126, 134, 148-50
Saugor Field force, 146, 167
Saurashtra, 8
Risings in, 8
Savarar 40
Savarkar, V.D., 143
Sayyid Shaikh, 81
Scindhia, 173
Scindhia of Gwalior, 110, 143, 171-72, 174, 177, 182
Scindhis, Muckrances, 8
Scott, 102, 107, 140, 142
Seaton, 167-68
Secretary of State, 76
Seedies, 8
Sehore, 149
Sen, Surindranath, 142
Sepoy in Meerut, 87
Sepay Mutinies, 15-19
Seymour, Danbay, 94
Shahabad, 41-42
Shah Alam, 1
Shahgarh, 62, 114, 122, 127, 134, 151
Shah Jahan, 83
Shahjahanpur, 46
Shahu, 57
Shehzada Pir Muhammad, 54
Shakar, Shah, 55
Shaw, Bernard, 69, 71
Shahzada Firoz, 61
Sher Shah, 176
Shikarpur, 54
Shivaji, 57
Shore, John, 27
Shuja-ud-Daulah of Oudh, 1, 84
Sialkot, 52
Sikandar Begam, 55
Sikh troops, 24
Simla, 51
Sind, 17, 54, 72, 88, 173
Sindhia, 7, 11, 83
Singhhum, 3-4, 40
Sipri, 183
Sirhind, 24
Sirajud Daulah, 37
Sirouj, 64
Sitapur, 46, 49
Sitaram Bawa, 62
Skend Alexander, 28-32, 100, 102-05, 107-09, 137, 141, 144
Smith, Vincent, 76, 173-74, 179-182
Smyth, John, 182
Southern India, 56-59
Sowars, 165
Starley, Earl, 75
Star Fort, 103-05
Stewart, 149
Stokes, 93
Stuart, C.S., 149, 160-162-63
Stuart, Jr., 122, 135-36, 140
Surahi, 152
Surendra Sahi, 40
Surya Mal Mishra, 10
Syed Ahmad Khan, 96
Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli, 13-14, 50
Sylhat, 38

T

Tafazzul Huesain Khan, 46
Taj-ud-din, 52
Talbehat, 122, 135, 152
Talukdar, 90-91
Taluqdars of Oudh, 51
Tambe, E.G., 143

Tanjore, 72, 88
Tarai, 64
Tatya Fadnis of Kolhapur, 57
Tatya Tope, 54, 64, 113-17, 123, 127-30, 135, 146-48, 159-64, 171-72, 174-77, 182-83
  Defeat at Kanpur, 146-47, 167
  Defeat of, 164
  Fine strategy of, 154-55
  Strategy of, 147-48
  To the rescue, 127-30, 159-64
Tehri, 104, 165
Theobald, 94
Theory of Cooperation, 61
Thornton, 137, 141-42
Timur, 83
Tipperah, 38
Tipu Sultan, 15-16
Tank, 13
Torture for realisation of revenue, 93-95
Treaty of Turkmanchai, 87
Trevelyan, Charles, 38, 77, 82
Trichinopoly, 58
Turkish Congress in Bengal, 2
Turnbull, 106
Tweedie, 40, 82

U

Ulema, 91
Unao, 110, 168
Upper provinces, 89
Uprising of Jhansi, 34
Uprising of 1857, 37, 78
Uttar Pradesh, 42-44, 64

V

Varanasi, 30
Vazir Khan, 52
Velaitees (Afghans), 148, 155, 165-66
Vellore, 11, 58
Vichoria, 64
Violant mutineers, 87
Vir Singh, 53

W

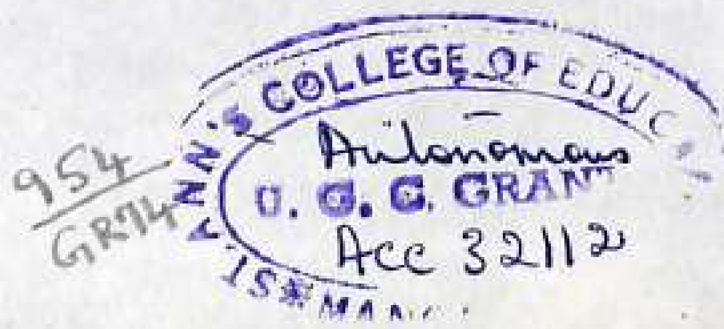
Waghera rising, 89
Wagheras of Okha Mandal, 8
Wajid Ali Shah, 48-49, 62, 86
Waliullah, 13
Waliullahi movement, 13-14
Walpoli, 167-68
Waris Ali, 42
Wazirabad, 18
Wazir Ali, 11
  Rising of, 11
Wellesley 84-86
West Bengal, 2
Western Age, 87
Whitlock, G.C., 124-25, 146, 167
Wilberforce, 96
Windham, Charles, 175, 183
Yamuna, 116-19

Y

Yusuf Ali, 42

Z

Zaman Shah of Kabul, 11
Zamindars, 32-40, 91-92
Zamindars of Bengal, 54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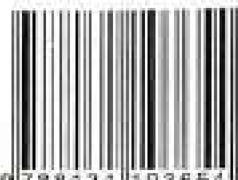

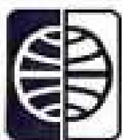

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