CHAPTER IV

MIDAR MOVEMENT AND AGRIAJAL REVOLT

In order to have a better understanding of the reaction the war produced on the Thalaites and its ultimate effect on the Punjab, it is more appropriate to survey briefly the background of the movement.

Before the turn of the 19th century, there began in a big way migration to North America. Emigrants from the old world went there in quest of fair wages and new fortunes. Among the Indians, there were the adventurous and sturdy Punjabis who were chiefly affected by this phenomenon. By the first decade of the 20th century several thousand of them had been working in the lumber mills, forests and farms of the western seaboard of the United States of America and Canada.

Within a short time of their stay in the new surroundings their mental attitude underwent a big transformation. This was because there they came into contact with a free society and mixed with the nationals of independent countries. They soon came to know the value of freedom, and became conscious of their rights and duties. At the same time the hostile attitude of

2. O’wyer, H., India As I Know It, p. 190.
the white workers and the discriminatory Immigration Laws enacted by the United States and Canada shocked them badly and revealed to them the bitter truth that their humiliation was due to their being a subject people. That hurt their pride and awakened their national consciousness. They were also inspired by the contemporary Irish, the Chinese and the Egyptian struggles for independence. By the end of the first decade, they started feeling the necessity of knitting themselves into some organisation which should not only help them assert their rights but also enable them to fight for the liberation of their country.

Towards the end of 1912, Indians living on the Pacific Coast of America assembled at Stockton and set up a main organisation called the 'Hindustani Workers of Pacific Coast' with Sohan Singh Phokna as President and Lala Har Dayal as Secretary. Soon after, they started a weekly entitled the Shadar, after which the organization began to be chiefly known as 'Shadar Party' and established their headquarters at 'Yugantar Ashram, San Francisco'.

The first issue of the Shadar (1 November 1913) published the aims and objects of the party in a rhetorical vein and


5. It has been named also as 'Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast'. See Nathur, L.P., op. cit., p. 77, f.n. 17; Khushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 176 for details.


announced that a mutiny would soon break out in India. "The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink." The paper hammered the same theme in its subsequent issues and preached violence against the British masters of India.

The Ghadarites circulated their paper in many languages all over the globe and sought to turn the entire Indian immigrant community living around the Pacific Coast (particularly in the Pacific and Western Coast of United States and Canada) into ardent revolutionaries. Working on the hypothesis that "enemy's enemy is a friend", they attempted an understanding with Germany and its camp-followers in their hostility against Britain.

While the Ghadarites were working against the British, on the eve of the war, the Dominion Government of Canada tightened its immigration laws with the intention of prohibiting the entry of Indians. This gave further stimulus to the Ghadar movement. To circumvent the Canadian laws and gain popularity in India, Ghadarites encouraged the adventurous journey of the 

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The Komagata Maru incident is intimately connected with the future activities of the Ghadarites and so deserves a probe. Owing to a mounting propaganda from the white workers of the British Columbia that the inflow of cheap Indian labour was detrimental to their socio-economic interests, the Canadian Government passed three Orders-in-Council in pursuance of sections 37 and 38 of the Immigration Act. The first order issued on 7 January 1914 barred the entry of any immigrant into Canada arriving "otherwise than by continuous journey from the country of which he is a native or naturalised citizen and upon a through ticket purchased in that country or prepaid in Canada". The second order of the same date prohibited the landing of any immigrant "of any Asiatic race... unless such immigrant possesses in his own right money to the amount of two hundred dollars". The third order was issued on a later date and it shall be referred to at the proper place.

These laws obviously intended making it impossible for Indians to enter Canada. There was no direct steamer service then between India and Canada, nor was a poor unskilled labourer likely to have a large sum of money in his possession, first for the expenses of a long journey and then to show 200 dollars to satisfy the immigration authorities of Canada to enable him to land at some Canadian port.

12. Chelmsford Papers, Roll 17, No. 296a, Curtis to Chelmsford, dated 2 November 1918.
The Government of India appeared to have been in collusion with the Canadian Government and had already refused to sympathise with the Indians keen on going to Canada. Actually the Canadian Government had promulgated the orders after consultation with Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, through Colonial and India Offices in London. The Ghadarites rightly regarded the orders as infringement of their rights as British subjects. They took them as a challenge and encouraged Indians from the Punjab and the Far East to make a bold bid to defy them. They found a willing instrument in one Baba Gurdit Singh to do so.

Within a month of the issue of the first two Canadian Orders-in-Council, Gurdit Singh, an influential contractor in Singapore, gave out a notice in Punjabi, Urdu and English, in which public were informed that the departure of a ship carrying Indian passengers to Canada would be advertised in the Punjab through newspapers but the date of its first sail would not be published. Instead, it would be "communicated to certain Surdwaras" in the Punjab and "further information could be obtained from the Director of the Dari Guru Nanak Mission Company, Surdna Harbra, Calcutta".


14. Ibid.


16. GO-I-No e-Pol-D-June 1914, Pro. No. 142; The notice was dated Singapore, the 21 February 1914.
Gurjit Singh had planned to charter a ship ready to convey Indians from Calcutta to Canada and then register a Company under the name of "Siri Guru Nanak Steamship Co." to facilitate Indian emigration to Canada. He had actually informed some interested parties in the Punjab to that effect, but when he learnt of the Government's aversion to his project, he prudently confined his efforts only to the Far East. He went over to Hong Kong, chartered a Japanese ship, the *Komeatu Maru*, and sold tickets to willing emigrants. With a view to subvert the venture, the British Government there got the Baba arrested on a false pretext of selling bogus tickets, but the Baba got himself off after satisfying the local court of his bona fides.

On 23 March 1914, the *Komeatu Maru* left Hong Kong for Vancouver and collected more passengers from ports on route: Shanghai, Moji and Yokohama etc. As soon as the Canadian Government got the definite news of the sail of the ship from Hong Kong for Vancouver, it hastily proclaimed the third

18. GOI-Home-Pol-B-June 1914-PrO. No. 142.
21. Ibid.
22. G I-Home-Pol-B-June 1914-PrO. No. 142.
Order-in-Council on 31 March, which excluded till 30 September 1914 "any immigrant of any of the following classes or occupation viz. artisans, labourers, skilled or unskilled". This order was obviously meant to prevent the passengers of the Komagatu Maru from landing on the Canadian coast.

Meanwhile some Japanese gentlemen and notables hosted the Komagatu Maru passengers and their leader to an entertainment in a hotel at Shimonosaki, known for its many historic gatherings in the past. In the speeches made at this meeting, the Japanese expressed the hope that India as a whole would soon wake up and become free. They assured help to the Indians in their struggle and suggested that Japan, India and China should form a sufficiently powerful combination to "own" the countries of Europe.

Baba Surjit Singh informed the Japanese newspapers that the Komagatu Maru would prove a test case which would decide whether it was the Indian or the Canadian government that prevented Indians from entering Canada. In its onward journey, the Baba breathed patriotism among the passengers and the Chader journal made its appearance on board of the ship in bundles.

As the Komagatu Maru moved towards the Pacific ocean, the Canadian press reported its progress as "mounting"

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
Oriental invasion", while the press in Punjab lauded its brave attempt to beat the Canadian immigration laws. The Punjabee in its issue of 21 April 1914 wrote that the intending immigrants would probably not be allowed to land, and that the redress to the maltreatment accorded to Indians in the colonies could only be obtained by the intervention of the Imperial Government, whose duty it was to evolve a definite policy and to call upon Colonial Governments to give effect to it. The Arya Patrika of 2 May stated that the 400 Hindus (Indians) had left for Canada fully knowing that they would not be allowed to land there and explained their even then going there as follows:

"In our humble opinion they have done the only proper thing under the circumstances. The rights of the Indians as British subjects are being most deliberately injured in the British colony... and the Imperial Government is powerless to influence the attitude of Canada in the matter.... In the case of Canada, some Hindus, it appears, have made up their minds to make things come to a head, and it is just possible that the present step may be a prelude to other attempts at wholesale landing in the face of an un-British law in a British Colony."

30. Ibid.
The things did come to a head. When the *Konagatu Mary* reached Vancouver on 23 May 1914 with 373 Punjabi passengers on board, it was called upon to anchor about half a mile off the shore and a patrol was posted there by the Canadian Immigration officials to prevent the passengers landing till an investigation under the Immigration Act was complete. The Board of Inquiry provided for in the Act, began to take evidence after the medical examination had been conducted. Ultimately only twenty were allowed to land on the Canadian shores. As to the rest, the enquiry was ordered under the three Orders-in-Council. The interpretation of the orders caused further avoidable delay. The Board reserved the decisions, but on complaint that this prevented appeal to the courts, the Board announced on 26 June their decision to deport one of the passengers, Munshi Singh, obviously as a test case. The Indians in Vancouver moved a writ for *Habeas Corpus* on the following day in the local court of Justice Murphy to test the authority of the immigration officials to detain the applicant. The writ was rejected. The Indians on the shore at once appealed to the British Columbia Court of Appeal but had to be disappointed on 6 July, when a decision sustaining the officials on each and every point was handed over to them. The argument that the Act was

ultra vires of Canadian Constitution was repudiated by the Court.

The members of the Chadar party in Vancouver tried to arouse public opinion on the shore in favour of stranded passengers with the help of some white socialists. They sent telegrams to the Governor-General of Canada and to the King-Emperor of Britain for justice; and appealed to the Viceroy of India and the Indian leaders in England and in India to intervene in the matter but all in vain. That did not prevent the Immigration authorities ordering the deportation of the passengers of the Komagata Maru, after the decision of the Court of appeal, announced on 6 July. The deportation order led to great excitement among the passengers who now wrested control of the ship from the Captain. At this stage the Canadian Government wisely desisted from using force on the advice of the Viceroy of India and came to an understanding with the passengers that if they agreed to take the ship back, the Canadian Government would provision the ship for the return journey. The manner of how this would be done and the terms on which the Komagata Maru would depart from Canada formed subject matter of much parleying between the committee formed by the passengers.

33. Chelmsford Papers, Roll 17, No. 296 a, Curtis to Chelmsford, dated 2 November 1914.
35. Khuswant Singh and Satindra Singh, op. cit., p.34.
and the Immigration officials. It ultimately led to a deadlock. The Canadian Immigration authorities broke this deadlock by requisitioning a gun boat 'Rainbow' to their aid threatening to use force. The Indians were thus forced to agree to return after a stay of two months in Canadian waters. The Konagatu Maru sailed back into the Pacific Ocean on 23 July 1914, escorted on the first day by the Rainbow.

The Konagatu Maru was on the high seas when the First World War broke out in Europe. In the changed circumstances the British, Indian and Punjab governments felt the necessity of checking and restraining the movements of the disgruntled Konagatu Maru passengers, lest on their returning home they would disturb the peaceful atmosphere in India.

On 6 August 1914, R.A. Kant, the Finance Secretary to the Punjab Government, at the instance of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, addressed a letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, Commerce and Industry, showing anxiety on the imminent return of the Konagatu Maru and its probable effects on the Punjabis. When the Government of India did not show an equal concern on receipt of this letter O'Dwyer asked

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37. Chelmsford Papers, Roll 17, No. 236 a, Curtis to Chinsford, dated 2 November 1916.


Want to write another letter which emphasised the urgency of
the matter. This letter, which was despatched by the Punjab
Government to the Government of India on 26 August said:

"The Lt. Governor has reason to believe that
there may be an influx of other malcontent
Punjabees from America and Eastern Asia, where
they were preparing a campaign even before the
outbreak of the war. This tendency will probably
be strengthened by recent events, as some of
these men think that the war in which the British
Empire is engaged will give them an opportunity
of stirring up trouble in India. O’Dwyer is of
the opinion that it would be most unadvisable at
the present juncture to give free access to a
stream of agitators from abroad the seas. For
these reasons he would urge on the Government of
India the necessity of special legislation enabling
the Government to regulate and restrict the move-
ments of all emigrants returning to India."

The letter further suggested that the Foreigners’
Ordinance be immediately extended to all the returning persons.

41. The Foreigners Ordinance (III of 1914) was published
by the Government of India in the Gazette of India Extra-
ordinary of 20 August 1914. Section 3 of the Ordinance
depowered the Government to prohibit or regulate entry
of foreigners into India. No order made under this section
was liable to be called in question in any court. O’Dwyer
wanted to treat all the Indians returning to India as
foreigners by extending this Ordinance to them.
It also requested that a formal list should be prepared of all the Punjabis returning on any vessel to an Indian port with such details as father's name, residence, caste etc and forwarded to the Punjab Government in advance.

The strong request of the Punjab Government this time forced the Indian Government to take emergency measures which it was deferring in pursuance of the decided policy of not taking any action that might give the impression that the war had made the British in India panickey in any way. Telegrams from His Britannic Majesty's Counsel-General at Kobe on 27 and 30 August that the passengers of the Komagata Maru had been stranded in Japan and requesting for a repatriation to India also contributed to the change in the attitude of the Government of India.

A long discussion followed in the Viceroy's Executive Council in which it was decided that the passengers of the Komagata Maru be repatriated at the Government's cost. But with a view to weeding out seditionist element from amongst the passengers of all ships, including the Komagata Maru, visiting an Ordinance, an Indian port, called Ingress into India Ordinance, was

42. 3 H-Home-Pol—September 1914-Pro. No. 213.
43. 301-Home-Pol-Deposit-August 1914-Pro. No.1.
44. 301-Home-Pol—September 1914-Pro. Nos. 211-224, p.7.
45. Ordinance V of 1914, dated 5 September 1914.
promulgated which empowered the Government:

a) to detain on arrival at ports any suspicious British subjects pending enquiry into their history and antecedents;

b) to escort them if need be to their homes thus ensuring that they did not scatter throughout India;

c) to bind them down for good behaviour if that course was considered necessary by the local Government, with the penalty of imprisonment in default of furnishing security and with no right of appeal to the courts.

This armed the police and local government, with wide powers, as sought for by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.

The Government of India now gave a special consideration to the passengers returning to India on the Komagata Maru. At first it considered the possibility of diverting the course of the Komagata Maru from Singapore to Madras instead to Calcutta so as to avoid the somewhat excitable atmosphere at the latter port and of sending police officers to meet the Komagata Maru passengers at Singapore. The officers in disguise were to get into touch with the passengers en route to facilitate the weeding out of undesirables on landing. However, the scheme


47. G01-Home-Pol-A-September 1914-Pro. Nos. 211-224, p.7: Summary Note by H. Wheeler, Secretary, Home Department, dated 31 August 1914.
was abandoned on second thought. The government changed its mind in order to avoid the passengers getting suspicions of the fate awaiting them in India and endangering the lives of the officers sent to keep watch over them. Therefore, the ship was allowed to continue its journey to Calcutta.

The Konagatu Maru left Singapore on 19 September 1914.

Baba Gurdit Singh left some money and a message with a Port Officer to be telegraphed to the editor of the Bengalee of Calcutta and to Sardar Haroon Singh of Lyallpur (Punjab).

The message read as follows:

"Indian leaders should meet Konagatu Maru arriving at Calcutta on or about 30th. Move Government appoint commission of enquiry to investigate grievances."

The message, however, never reached its destinations. Because of the War, there was strict censorship in India and the Government would not release such a message for the fear that it might arouse violent excitement at Calcutta. Much to his surprise, therefore, Gurdit Singh found Government officials instead of sympathizers greeting the passengers of the Konagatu Maru when it reached Calcutta.

49. He was the leader of the extremist Sikhs who were agitating against the government over Riqabganj Surbana question. He had a support of the Chadarites. See GOI-Home-Pol-B-May 1914-No. 140 for details.
50. GOI-Home-Pol-A-November 1914-Pro. No. 98.
52. Ibid., Pro No. 99.
The ship arrived at Hoogly on 26 September. As had been planned by the Government next day it was visited by specially deputed officers from Bengal and Punjab to make enquiries. They found nothing objectionable on board the ship but the so-called thorough investigation under the cloak of one or the other protest continued for two days. On the morning of 29 September a special train was ready at Budge Budge to take the passengers away to the Punjab under a special escort.

The Government proceeded to thoroughly examine the passengers and despatch them on block by a special train under police guard to precipitate a violent conflict. Till Kowasan Monday's arrival at Budge Budge, all the passengers of the ship had been calm and very anxious to get to their homes but when they saw the special arrangement and police guard at the railway platform, almost all of them began doubting the bona fide of the officers who had been telling them that they would be sent direct to their homes. Barring a few, all refused to enter the train and instead marched on the road to Calcutta. The officers requisitioned more troops and police and the passengers were

53. GOI-Hom-Pol-4-November 1914-Pro. No. 100; The Statesman, 1 October 1914, p.5.
54. GOI-Hom-Pol-4-November 1914-Pro. No. 99.
55. GOI-Hom-Pol-4-November 1914-Pro. No. 103.
56. GOI-Hom-Pol-4-November 1914-Pro. No. 101.
affair could not incite people in the Punjab to the extent expected by the Ghadarites because of the preventive measures taken by the Punjab Government, it did create great excitement among the Punjabis living abroad; and, when the war broke out, the affair encouraged the Ghadarites to a brave resolve more so because the war had created conclusive circumstances for doing that.

The Ghadarites tried to exploit the war situation to their best advantage and started a campaign of inducing the Indians abroad to return to India in large numbers and start a revolution. The leaders of the Ghadar party impressed upon them that:

"the native army in India was ready to revolt and was only seeking for a favourable moment. The air of Afghanistan would help them with arms and ammunition for 10 lakh men, and the Sherwar of Baroda and other Ruling Princes would also be on the side of the rebels."

The issues of the Ghadar, published in August exhorted Indians to seize the opportunity given by the outbreak of war.
in Europe to throw off the British rule: "Soldiers of Mutiny, unsheath your swords and hasten to the battlefields of India. Now is the time to fight. Time once past cannot be recalled".

The Irish nationalists and German-Americans in the United States fully sympathised with the cause, the Indian Chadarites had at heart and opened columns of their papers for the propagation of the Chadarite views. The Gaelic American of 26 September 1914 issued a manifesto of Chadar Party in which the Chadarites had questioned the British assertion that they had not caused the war as also the talk of widespread Indian loyalty to English Crown. It contended that the Indian soldiers belonged to the most backward classes, isolated all their lives in cantonments and received no communications from the outside world, their consent had never been asked, and as for the Princes, British policy compelled them to assemble. The manifesto denied India being loyal to England:

"We emphatically deny that India as a whole is loyal to England. If it is a fact that 70,000 soldiers and several princes having gone to the front to fight for England we earnestly hope that the powerful guns will blow them to pieces and thus partly efface the disgrace which our nation has been stained with by their
action. We have said in our message to the Turkish Ambassador that if Turkey goes to war against England the Hindus and Mussulmans of India will side with Turkey. We reiterate our statement with double assurance. If the Crescent is unfurled in the sacred realm of Islam, Turks will beat in the Far East and the Sons of Hind will fight the enemy of Turkey, India, Egypt, Persia, Germany and Ireland."

Germany and its agents in America too became closely involved in the Chadar movement. They naturally helped in publicising the views of the Chadarites. Their mouthpiece, the Fatherland, from New York published a number of articles in which was asserted that the spirit of revolt against British rule in India was increasing day by day and no one should be surprised if India took advantages of the war in Europe to proclaim her independence and rose in arms to affect a bloody revolution. The paper emphasised that the history of British rule in India had been a history of repeated insults, injuries, and usurpations; and that the Britisheans' objective in India had been to establish "an absolute tyranny for the unbridled exploitation of a rich country inhabited by a peace-loving people". It warned the British statesmen that unless they change their policy and grant India self-government, "the history of the thirteen North American colonies will repeat itself in distant India".


68. P.L.C.D., 25 September 1915, p. 307: Excerpts from the Findings of the Special Tribunal in the Lahore Conspiracy case in which all the GANDHISTS were implicated.

69. GOI-Iome-Pol-B-May 1915-Pro. No. 597.

70. Ibid.
Such like concerted propaganda led to great excitement among the Punjabis living in North America. They contributed thousands of dollars at a very short notice and many of them volunteered to return home to take part in the rebellion. A Portland (Oregon) paper on 7 August reported their enthusiasm as follows:

"Every train and boat for the south carried a large number of Hindus from this city and if the exodus keeps up much longer it will be entirely deserted by the East Indians. The majority of the Hindus employed at the Han and Hills have gone and the balance are preparing to depart in the immediate future. It is alleged that the men are returning to India by way of San Francisco where it is said, a vessel has been chartered to aid in a revolution which is expected to break out in India as a result of England being occupied in the general European war."

W.J. Hopkinson, the Secret Agent of the India Office London stationed at Vancouver (B.C.) with the knowledge and consent of the Government of India and paid out of the Indian revenues for spying on the Indian immigrants on the western coast of the United States and Canada, sent to his masters.

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a similar report. It runs:

"Received information that Yugantar-Ashram arranging return to India of as many Hindus as possible by next boat from San-Francisco. Present crisis is considered favourable opportunity to cause trouble in India.... Spencer in San Francisco wires me to-day as follows:

'Hindus in California arranging return to India by Japanese steamer for great revolution. Bhagwan Singh, Barkatullah inform me all native soldiers will mutiny simultaneously. Gaekwar behind rebellion, also Amir of Afghanistan. Inform proper authorities that very serious consequences will ensue if British troops are taken away from India now. Remit funds [enabling] further investigation'.

Preparations are being made here to send out as many Hindus as possible under similar circumstances."

Soon a miscellaneous lot of Indians earlier gone to the United States of America, Canada and the Far East, were on their way back to India in the hope that they would herald a free India in the changed circumstances created by the war.

73. COL-HOME-Pol-Sept. 1914-Proc. Nos. 211-214, p.12; Copy of the telegram containing this report of W.C. Hopkinson from Governor-General of the Dominion of Canada to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, who forwarded the same to the Secretary of State for India for onward transmission to the Government of India.
Both the old and the young among them left their life of pleasure and plenty and "took ships in a burst of patriotism. On-route, wherever the steamers stopped, at Hong Kong, Singapore, Rangoon, they would go there and stir up the Indian soldiers against the government. Within first six months of the war as many as 3,000 of them came to India to stir up a rebellion.

They slipped through a veil not thrown by the British Government all around the globe and spread themselves over the north-western region of India. Since the bulk of them belonged to the Central Punjab, it was natural they made this area their main operational ground. They sent "always extraordinary" to enlist 'local recruits for secretly propagating their revolutionary plan. Thousands of cyclostyled copies of Aila-i-Jung and other sensational Ghadar literature were distributed. Bomb factories were established at Aitbaran and Jahan (near Ludhiana) under J. Nathura Singh.

The Ghadarites struggled hard to make their mission a success but their hopes were dashed to the ground sooner than expected and their ranks badly thinned by the rigorous implementation of Foreigners Ordinance and the Ingress into India Ordinance, especially designed to stop their rebellion.

73. Param Hanj, Dain, The Story of My Life, p.60.
73. O'Muayr, , , on. cit., p. 100.
77. Thuswant Singh and Satindra Singh, on. cit., p.63.
Chadarites discovered to their chagrin that the conditions in India were far from conducive to revolution. Their desperate attempts to secure arms and munitions and to have a footing among the peasantry had failed as miserably as their attempt to rouse the Sikh masses or cause mutiny among Indian soldiers. Their exhortation to the religious gatherings at Amritsar, Nankana Sahib and Tarn Taran fell on deaf ears. They invited the veteran Rash Bihari Bose to come to the Punjab and on his advice sent emissaries to various cantonments in Upper India to procure military aid for an uprising, fixed for the night of 21 February (later advanced to 10 February) 1915 but that also failed miserably.

By the summer of 1915, prominent Chadarites found themselves behind the bars. Rash Bihari left the Punjab in disgust and the Chadarites, in and out of prisons, looked wistfully for some help from abroad.

They now pinned their hope on Lala Hardayal. Lala Hardayal, founder of the Chadar Party, had been bound down by the United States authorities in the beginning of April 1914.

78. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-January 1915-Pro. No. 43, p.11.
for expounding revolutionary ideas there but he had jumped
the bail and escaped to Europe. There he had soon made contacts
with Madame Cama and Shyamji Krishna Verma at Paris and through
them apprised all the Indian revolutionaries in Europe of the
Ghadar Organization and its plans. Hardayal had approached
the German Foreign Office to get moral and material support for
the Ghadarites. The Foreign Office readily agreed to his pro-
sals and instructed the German Consuls in San Francisco,
Shanghai and Bangkok to help the Indian revolutionaries.

The first attempt to smuggle arms into India from United
States under this plan was made through Horamba Lal Gupta. It
came to naught when the chartered ship, Henry E., carrying five
thousand revolvers on board, was captured by the British Navy.
After the miscarriage of Henry E., Horamba Lal Gupta went to
Japan to try and buy arms there, but the British intelligence
alerted the Japanese Government and Gupta had to spend several
months in hiding.

While Gupta was in Japan, another attempt was made to
send arms to India from the States. In March 1915 the Annie
Larson, loaded with war material put out to sea. A few days
later, a tanker, the Maverick, with five Ghadarites on board

32. GOI-Home-Pol-B-June 1914-Proc. No. 142.
33. GOI-Home-Pol-B-June 1914-Proc. No. 142. Hardayal arrived at
Lausanne ( Switzerland ) on 7 May from U.S.A.
34. Madian, George, Turmoil and Tragedy in India, pp. 114-126;
35. Sedition Committee Report 1912, p. 124;
Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, op. cit., p. 49.
dressed as waiters, left America. The ships were due to meet at sea, where the *Havannah* was to load arms and ammunition from the *Arctic*, submerge them in its oil tanks, and deliver them to the revolutionaries at some remote spot in the Sunderbans in East Bengal. But the rendezvous never took place.

The German Foreign Office now sponsored a few interesting plans in collaboration with Shadarites. One of them was the capture of Andaman Islands; another was to train and equip an army of Shadarites under German army officers to invade India from the sides of Assam-Burma border in the east and the North-Western Frontier in the west. The excellent security arrangements on the borders of India and the spy-ring of British intelligence throughout the world combined with British superiority on the seas, however, thwarted all these joint ventures.

During the next two years, Shadarites had to face a series of trials in India and abroad, which led to a good number of convictions, varying from death sentences to imprisonments, long and short.

The Shadar Movement in the Punjab, thus, achieved nothing, but inspite of heavy odds, and the absence of any help from outside and non-cooperation of their own countrymen in the Punjab,


their tenacity of purpose created tough time for the Government. According to Michael O’Dwyer,

"From October 1914 to September 1915, there was a constant series of explosions. All over the Central Punjab police was murdered, loyal citizens, especially Sikhs known to be assisting the authorities were shot down or killed by bombs; gang robberies... were carried out to raise funds for the cause; several attempts were made to derail trains or blow up bridges; factories for the preparation of bombs were established in various places; bombs and material for bombs were received from the revolutionary depots; catches of revolvers and guns were made in British districts and Native States; an attack was made on the main line close to Amritsar, the guard was murdered and their rifles taken; plans for seizing the arsenal at Ferozepore and the magazines at Lahore and other Cantonments were formed; and persistent attempts were made, not in all cases without success, to tap the Indian troops in at least a dozen stations in the Punjab and the United Provinces."

38. O’Dwyer, M., op.cit., p.197.
Within their limited resources, the Shadarites had done their best to impress on the people of the Punjab that if freedom from alien rule was to be achieved that would come not by a show of loyalty but through a revolution. And while propounding their philosophy, they had given a practical demonstration of the same. Very naturally, their actions had alarmed the Government and it had sought to suppress their activities mercilessly.

The war provided opportunities not only to the political fire-brands, like the Shadarites, but also to the lawless elements in the province to raise their head.

While

In the beginning of 1915, the Punjab Government was engaged in stemming the tide of Ghadar Movement in the Central Punjab by despatching police and military columns on patrol duty to hunt out the Shadarites particularly in Farozepur and Noshiarpur districts, on two sides of river Satlej, and in the Kapurthala State, another storm burst out all too unexpectedly in the south-western Punjab. Trans-Indus tribes made frequent raids in the District of Dera-Ismail Khan, and spread rumours that Turk-German forces were gaining victory after victory over England in the war. Coincidently

89. They were herded up, put into concentration camps, tortured, tried, hanged, sent to life imprisonment etc.
91. Ibid., p.15.
plague also broke out in the south-western districts of the Punjab. Hindu shopkeepers in the towns left their shops and went away to safer places. The Mohammedans taking advantage of the situation indulged in lawlessness and loot.

This Mohammedan rising was made possible only by the conditions created by the war. Credulous and fanatic peasantry residing in the deep countryside of Jhang, Dussafargah and Multan districts got the impression that the Turks and the Germans were advancing on India from north-western side and that the "British power was on the wane". This impression was more than enough to fire their imagination and to drive them into vandalism. They soon fell upon their rich Hindu neighbours, possibly because they had old scores to settle with them.

The cause of this fanatic uprising against Hindus was at first regarded as economic rather than political. It was generally explained by the Government officials that the rising was a consequence of the poor lot of Mohammedan population in that region which was under heavy debt to Hindu money-lenders and suffered from the high prices and contraction of credit facilities due to the war. It was further

argued that owing to the outbreak of plague at that time, the Hindus left their shops in the villages unprotected and fled to far away towns, thus the sight of the unguarded shops tempted the loot. However, this was too superficial an analysis. There was economic suffering as well as the outbreak of plague elsewhere in the Punjab. Scarcity of grain or misconduct with or oppression of Muslims by Hindus were not in anyway convincing reasons. The area was fertile. The zamindars had been reaping bumper crops for many successive seasons and had been making more profits than the shopkeepers in the transactions of grain stocks. A great part of the interior was quite prosperous. Usual transactions between the zamindar and the trader during the quarter preceding the serious disorder had been carried on as usual. No application from any farmer or tenant for remission of land revenue or for loan to Government had been made during the preceding two years.

The fact is that what had happened was the consequence of the situation created by the war which emboldened local Muslims to direct a movement against Hindus. It was supported by some leading local Muslims, who had been on the lookout for right opportunity. They got it when the Punjab

98. Ibid.
Government's prestige in the area was at its lowest ebb on account of exaggerated accounts of Turco-German victories, and when it was preoccupied with the Ghadarites in the Central Punjab.

The Muslim mobs in the countryside rose in a body, looted the shops of the Hindus, seized the grain and money lying there, burnt the account books which recorded their debts, and started a campaign of loot which spread with 'alarming rapidity'.

In the disorder that prevailed over the entire south-west Punjab, a rumour that the British had gone and ceased to function gained a wide currency. To make sure of the news, the leaders of one place sent their emissaries to nearby District headquarters for verification. Ignoring the fact that it was a Sunday and so the flag on Government building had been furled, the emissaries confirmed the genuineness of the news. The gangs of dacoits ran mad with joy. They fell in formations, beat their drums and plundered the Hindu shops in broad day light.

In the Jhang District, disturbance had started in January at Garh Mahamjeh but gained real momentum on 20 February when looting on a larger scale began at Ahmndpur, a village situated in the same police jurisdiction. Large bands

101. Ibid.
102. Gol-Tone-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Pro. No. 21, p. 11.
of Muslims from neighbouring villages, in some cases probably helped by bad characters from the Muzaffargarh and Multan districts, entered the town and pillaged the unguarded shops and houses of the Hindus. They first looted the valuables and then set the houses to fire. Different gangs began to operate in different places and dacoities increased in number.

The examples of the raiders in the Jhang district were immediately followed by their counterparts in the adjoining tracts of the Muzaffargarh and Multan districts, particularly in the former. The first three cases in the Muzaffargarh district were committed by gangs consisting chiefly of men from Jhang, thereafter local bad characters joined them and the lawlessness spread into a vast area. One hundred and twenty-eight cases of arson, loot and dacoity took place in the three districts during three weeks.

Since there was no resistance from the Hindus and the government failed to intervene, the word spread with lightening speed that British had gone. The ring-leaders of the organised criminal bands announced that they had been designated by German Chancellor as the officers responsible for the local administration. They posed as German officers and

103. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Proc. No. 21, pp 11-12.
105. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit- April 1915-Proc. No. 21, p.11.
took over the administration in their own hands. At one place two of the leaders posed themselves as Kaiser and the German Crown Prince.

Hindus suffered a great deal at the hands of Muhammadans. Grain, jewellery and clothes were carried away from their shops and sacrifices committed. Places of Hindu worship were burnt, so also the religious books. Patwaris’ records and babus were piled up and put on fire. The interior of the houses were subjected to extensive digging in search of hidden treasures. Rapes were committed on Hindu women, and there were many cases of insoudiarism. Ornaments from the person of women and children were forcibly snatched away after chopping off their limbs and disfiguring their faces. Marks of red flags were put on the houses of the Muhammadans to distinguish them from those of the Hindus who were made the exclusive target of the religious frenzy. The Deputy Commissioner of Muzaffargarh wrote “None of these cases can be ascribed to scarcity or high prices, although large numbers of the lowest classes were induced to join for the plunder of grain”.

In a few pockets where Hindus were sizeable in number, they offered resistance, but only to be killed by the greater number of Muhammadans in the area as a whole. The Muzaffargarh

106. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Pro. No. 31, p.11.
107. O’Dwyer, M., op. cit., p.211.
108. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Pro. No. 31, p. 11.
110. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Pro. No. 21, p.11.
cases showed greater lawlessness than what happened in Jhang thereby indicating that the movement became more serious as it spread.

Hindus in their utter helplessness cried for help, went to Jhang but the police refused to record their cases and at places even prohibited complainants from coming near them. The petty police officials must have leaped with the mischief-makers and reaped personal benefits. In broad daylight, the free boopers had employed camels, donkeys and other animals to carry away the looted property.

When the news about the serious nature of the disturbance reached the Lieutenant-Governor, he thought of using Cavalry to suppress it. But the officers on the spot advised him that since the movement was not against the Government but mainly directed against the Hindus, it would soon die away. As such, no drastic measures were taken to crush it. The Government machinery started moving, however, when the movement threatened to engulf other parts of the province. Police reinforcements then moved into the affected areas followed by three British companies ("C", "E", "H" of the 8th Devonshire Regiment) which marched through the


112. Ibid.

disturbed tracts to dispel the belief that Britishers had
gone. They were to impress upon the people that the Britishers
were still as powerful as before. This march of the white
soldiers with Union Jack raised high coupled with vigorous
police action in the countryside did produce an effect
and the prestige of 'Angrez Sarkar' was established once
again.

The choice of the white soldiers and the routes they
had to follow in their march were decided after a careful
calculation. One of the companies went to Jhang, another
to Shorkot and still another to Muzzafargarh. The Commanders
of the Companies would make it a point to report to Govern­
ment the impact produced by the march of white soldiers on the
natives and the causes of the revolt in the light of their
observations made at the spot of occurrences. Reports of
two Commanders make an interesting reading. The Commander
of 'II' Company wrote inter alia in his report:

"I was informed that no British troops had ever
visited many of the places on the route and the
Commissioner stated that he thought the people
were much impressed by the company. The company
did not pass through any plague-stricken towns
or villages where dacoities had taken place, the

116. PB. Govt.- Home-Police-1916-Case No. 1-Vol. II-
Dacoities, p. 33.
halts usually being made in the vicinity of such places. Ahmedpur and like towns had been looted...; apart from the looting, the complete abandonment of a town in itself must necessarily mean a heavy loss to the inhabitants."

The Commander of 'C' Company reported that at each place the Deputy Commissioner heard deputations and investigated cases of undertrials. He noted further:

"I read the evidence and so got a fair idea of the trouble. Both the Hindus and Muslim others seem to have firmly believed that the Germans were beating the British.... The Muslims then started looting. Prisoners state they were told to do so but by whom they would not say. Hindus charge big men who, they say, are not caught.

None of the common people seemed too friendly towards us, and the presents we received came from Muslim village headmen who seemed anxious to prove their loyalty thereby and to escape censure for allowing dacoity in their respective districts.

The Hindus openly charged the officials of connivance and instigation even. We got the impression that both the lots were blackguards, and had a sneaking sympathy with the dacoits."


118. Pb. Govt.-Home-Police-1916-Case No.1-Vol. II-Dacoities, p. 41. Kohara Lali and Bahawala Larka were the most prominent instigators of the looting in the Jhang District and were equally among the most active of the plunderers. They were big zamindars and most influential men in the area.

119. Ibid., p.29.
The report evidently suggests that Hindus suffered heavy losses due to troubles started by Muslim rowdy elements under belief that "the Germans were beating the British".

The clever Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab used the disturbance in the south-west Punjab as an additional argument for more powers. He was already pressing hard the Government of India to pass strict laws to deal expeditiously with the Ghadarites. He now pleaded that the lawlessness in the Punjab was on the increase because the Executive had no power to inflict exemplary punishments upon the offenders by prosecuting them summarily. The argument succeeded with the Government of India which hastened to pass on 18 March 1915 the Defence of India Act in Imperial Legislative Council. The Act, though drafted on the pattern of Defence of Realm Act, contained provisions of far more severity than the latter.

With that done, the Punjab Government came with all its might to the riot affected south-western Punjab. Four thousand criminals were taken into custody and the Police started investigations in such a fashion as to impress the people that prompt justice was to be delivered to the poor victims. A special Tribunal was set up under the Defence

120. Hardinge Papers, Vol. 93, No. 131, O'Dwyer to Hardinge, dated 7 March 1915.
121. Ibid.
122. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-April 1915-Pro. No. 39.
of India act to try the large number of cases in which thousands of law-breakers were involved and an apparent attempt was made to haul up the prominent individuals who had engineered the tragic affair. The Government’s power and prestige was thus restored in the region.

For some time, considerable alarm had been felt elsewhere in the province, both among Hindus and Muslims, in consequence of the sudden Muhammadan rising in the south-west Punjab, an area which had remained comparatively quiet ever since the British occupation of the Punjab. It was feared that the movement would soon spread to other districts and therefore particular uneasiness was felt in Lahore, Montgomery, Gujranwala, Lyallpur and Mianwali. This was reflected in the applications for arm licenses for self-defence poured in Deputy Commissioners’ Offices all over the province, but particularly in those of the Lahore and Multan divisions.

The Chadar movement and the Muhammadan uprising in the south-west Punjab, though radically different in their character, were largely the consequences of the belief that the resources of the British Government had been seriously weakened by the war and that it would be unable to enforce its authority.

123. GOI-Non-Pol-Deposit—June 1915—Pro. No. 20.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
Although these movements failed to achieve their respective objects, they did keep the tempo of excitement quite tense during the early period of the war. These made O'Dwyer in the Punjab very much vindictive towards the rising political aspirations of the Punjabis under the influence of the war.

127. It shall be discussed more in latter chapters of this work.