Chapter IV

THE ECHOES OF GHADR IN INDIA

A. Revolution February 1915

After the departure of Har Dayal for Europe in March 1914 the activities of the Ghadr Party were now directed by Ram Chandra Peshawari who organised and kept alive the Ghadr party. The hands of the Ghadr Party were strengthened by the arrival in May 1914 of Maulvi Barkatullah and Bhai Bhagwan Singh from Tokyo. Har Dayal before his departure had already informed the members of the party that Germany was getting ready for war with England and that it was time for the Indians in America to return home for the revolution. Efforts were made by Bhagwan Singh, Barkatullah and Ram Chandra to propagate the ideas of Ghadr amongst the Indians more vigorously. The Indian revolutionaries did not want to miss this opportunity in their aim of creating a revolution in India. At a meeting of the Ghadr party on 15 August 1915, it was decided to devise the plans necessitated by the advent of the war. The meeting decided that the Ghadr party should declare an open warfare against British rule in India and proclaim India a free and sovereign Republic. It was also decided to obtain help from whatsoever quarter it was available for the overthrow of the British in India. The funds were to be collected for the purchase of arms and ammunition and appeals were to be issued to Indians all over the world to proceed to India and start fighting
Emissaries were sent to various places where funds were collected and plans were discussed for the return of the Indians. During their tours, the leaders of the Ghadr party urged their countrymen to return to India to instigate a revolutionary war. This was the time they declared that some sacrifice was needed to free the country from foreign rule. They were further told that Great Britain would be driven into the war and that rebellion would break out in Egypt, Ireland and in other British possessions that England being on war it was an excellent opportunity to expel them from India. Immediately after the war, their activities were intensified and members of the Ghadr party travelled all over the Pacific Coast. As a result of this a number of patriotic Indians proceeded towards the Ashram in San Francisco to seek instructions as to their departure for India and their future plan of work. The names of all those who were ready to proceed were recorded and instructions were issued to them. The urge to fight for their country was intense that thousands of Indians on the Pacific Coast gave up lucrative employments and many abandoned their property and trade to hurry back to India.

The Government of India had been kept aware of the excitement which the war had created among the Indians on the Pacific Coast and in America. The Canadian Government had promptly sent them an intimation that a number of seditious Indians in San Francisco would take the first opportunity of getting back to India. Similar information was received from other sources that Sikhs and other Indians were sailing for India in large numbers not only from the West Coast of Canada and United States but from Japan, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Manila, Honolulu and other places.

On the outbreak of the war some of the leaders of the Ghadr Party left as an advance party to persuade Indians in the Far East to return to India and also to establish small nuclei of revolutionary centres in all the intermediate parts such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Rangoon. They reached India by Tosa Maru on 28 October 1914. The next ship to leave the shores of America, S.S. Korea, with about 70 passengers, proceeded towards Hong Kong on 29 August. Other ships which followed in quick succession were S.S. Siberia and S.S. Mashia Maru and Maru Sang, carrying the members of the Ghadr Party. Besides, the following ships left the shores of America by the end of 1914: in September 1914 the Chingo Maru sailed with 3 Indians, on 3 October 1914 the
Shinvo Maru with 6, on 5 September 1914 the Siberia with 2, on 19 September 1914 the China with 11, on 26 September 1914 the Manchuria with 24, on 29 August 1914 the Korea with 62, on 21 October 1914 the Tenvo Maru with 109 and on 24 October 1914 the Mongolia with 141.

At the time of departure they were divided into different groups under Midham Singh, Kesar Singh, Udham Singh, Jawala Singh and Nawab Khan. Ram Chandra, Barkatullah and Bhagwan Singh told the departing Indians to perform their duty and informed them that arms would be provided to them on their arrival in India. On the failure of this they were to ransack the police stations for rifles.

In India the situation was quite critical. The Government was busy with the problems which came in the wake of the war. They were faced with danger not only from outside but also inside the country. A series of events inside and outside the country just before the war had caused a weakening of the loyalty of the people towards the British Government, especially of the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Tripoli and Balkan Wars of 1911 and 1912 had led to a display of fanaticism on the platform and in the press when the events were represented as wars of the Cross against the Crescent. The Sikhs had been affected in their loyalty by the humiliating treatment meted out to their brethren in Canada and

7. Ismonger and Slattery, op. cit., p. 44.
the return voyage of Komagata Maru finally confirmed them in their belief that the British Government was determined not to help them in any way in Canada. In the words of MacMunn, "The Government was seated as said on a rumbling volcano, uncertain concerning its future activity, how active it might at any moment become, or which crater might burst into eruption." In fact for the Indian revolutionaries the opportunity to stir up a revolt in India was too good to be missed.

In spite of the critical circumstances in which the Government of India was placed, it was not oblivious to the precautions which were to be taken to meet the challenge of the returning Indians. Secret orders had been issued to the officers on the various ports that every person returning from America or Canada, whether labourer, artisan or student was to be regarded with the greatest suspicion and as a potential revolutionary. The authorities had already acquired sufficient powers to deal with the situation by passing the Ingress into India Ordinance on 5 September 1914. With the steady arrival of the Indians on the different ports of India the Punjab Government under the provisions of the above ordinance made arrangements in conjunction with the Government of Bengal to examine the returning emigrants

at Calcutta and endeavoured to intercept those who were known or reasonably suspected to be dangerous. In spite of these precautionary measures many thousands of Indian emigrants escaped the vigilance of the police. In its initial stages the internment order caused the break up of the organisation to some extent by the detention of the leaders of some groups and the rank and file of others. In spite of this dispersal the group leaders kept in touch with one another and attempted as far as they could to work as one body. On their way back to India, the Indian revolutionaries started a vigorous campaign for securing recruits to the Ghadar Party and a large number of volunteers joined their ranks in Hong Kong, Shanghai, the Straits Settlement, Borneo, Japan and the Philippines. In addition to the recruits for their cause the Indian revolutionaries particularly tried to make contact with the Indian troops that happened to be serving abroad. They went to their barracks, harangued the men and gave them Ghadar literature to read. Thus


12. Altogether about 8,000 persons returned to India. O'Dwyer, op.cit., p. 196.

13. A Review of Revolutionary Activity in the Punjab. Home Political B, July 1918, Nos. 292-316. Under the Ingress into India Ordinance 331 persons were interned and 3,576 were restricted to their villages. See Sedition Committee Report, p. 160.


at Hong Kong, they secretly got in touch with the 26th Punjabis and at Singapore with the Malay States Guides. The soldiers listened to the Ghadrites and at Singapore they even revolted against the British Government. Even in India in the beginning when the Indian revolutionaries began to move about in the Punjab and started preaching the doctrine of freedom to be achieved through a general rising, they obtained a certain amount of sympathy and made a number of recruits in Lahore, Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana and Hoshiarpur districts. Their appeal was mainly confined to the peasantry. After having imbibed the knowledge of socialism while in Canada and America, they tried to preach the same to their country. The poor peasants gave them a patient hearing, but they were not inclined to revolt against their landlords. However, a number of them joined them to oust the British from India. During November, December and January 16 the revolutionaries were joined by greater numbers. By the end of 1914 the internal situation was highly critical and Hardinge informed Crewe that they were having a good deal of trouble in the Punjab from the incursion of revolutionary Indians from San Francisco and that they were doing a great deal of harm. However, he assured Crewe that they had got hold of the leaders under the Ingress Ordinance, but still the minor members were forming themselves into bands. The Government of India took

17. Hardinge to Crewe, 10 December 1914, Hardinge Papers.
prompt and drastic action and after having received the reports about the activities of the Ghadrites in the Punjab immediately sent confidential instructions to every police station informing them that these people were a potential source of danger to peace and that it was necessary to keep strict surveillance over those who might halt at any place in their district. The police officers were further instructed to take great care to observe communication of any kind between them and local persons whether suspect or otherwise.

Under these restrictions the Ghadrites desperately tried to pursue their programme. Secret meetings were held at various places, especially at Lahore and Ludhiana. As a result of these meetings, it was decided to loot the treasuries as money was badly needed for the furtherance of the cause of revolution. But after a few attempts the idea of attacking the treasuries was abandoned and the scheme for the seduction of the army was considered more feasible and quite profitable for the main movement. To implement it the Ghadrites started mixing with the army regiments stationed at different places in the Punjab and they nearly succeeded in inducing the men of the 23rd Cavalry near Lahore to join the revolt against the British Government. However, in spite of the best efforts of the Ghadrites not much

19. Ibid.
success was achieved. Owing largely to the internment of capable leaders like Sohan Singh Bhakna, Kesar Singh and Jawala Singh, the movement lacked definite plans. With hardly any coordination between the different groups in the Punjab and in the absence of any leader to guide them some haphazard efforts were made to procure funds and arms by raiding the treasuries at different tehsil headquarters. Several futile attempts were also made to derail trains and blow up bridges; factories for the preparation of bombs were established in various places and persistent attempts were made to tamper with the Indian troops in at least a dozen stations in the Punjab and the United Provinces.

It was only after the arrival of Rash Behari Bose at Amritsar in January 1915 that the movement took a new shape. Soon after their arrival the Ghadrites had contacted the different revolutionary groups in Bengal and full information regarding the return of the Indians from America was given to them. They were told that the Punjabis had come back from America with the express purpose of stirring up trouble in the Punjab and expected that the Bengal revolutionaries should be ready to cooperate at the time of the revolution. But before taking any decision the Bengal revolutionaries sent Sachindra Nath Sanyal to the Punjab in November to find out the potentialities about the Ghadr movement. He went back

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22. _A review of Revolutionary activity in the Punjab._

_Home Political B, July 1918, Nos. 292-316._
and reported favourably to Rash Behari Bose. Soon after Vishnu Ganesh Pingale, an emissary of the Ghadr Party who also met quite a few of the Bengal revolutionaries, arrived in the Punjab with the news that a fraction of Bengal group was ready for cooperation. Pingale, who had been a very important leader of the Ghadr Party, was introduced by Bijay Ray Kabiraj and Kulachand Sinha Ray to the inner circle of the Bengal revolutionaries and was later on an effective link between them and the Ghadr Party.

By January 1915 the two groups of revolutionaries joined hands and made definite plans for a revolution in India. Steps were taken for manufacturing bombs and for the procurement of arms. Bomb factories were established in the Punjab while the bombs of the Bengal pattern were provided by Rash Behari Bose and his assistants. Arms were also imported from Bengal. Efforts were made to produce the revolutionary leaflets. With the help of duplicators copies of Ghadr di Gunj (Echo of Mutiny) and Ghadr Sendesa (Message of Mutiny) were printed in Urdu and Gurumkh. These were widely distributed by the members of the party at practically all the cantonments in northern India. The hardships

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caused by prevalent high prices amongst the people was fully utilised by the Ghadr party to arouse anti-British feelings amongst the common people. They propagated amongst the people that the high prices were due to the fact that the grain was being exported for supplying to the Allied armies in the field and even the Viceroy admitted that that their slogan that in order to feed the Europeans the Indians were being starved caught the imagination of the people especially in the countryside.

Before proceeding with the actual plan for the revolt, Rash Behari Bose also laid emphasis on the cooperation of the soldiers and a vigorous campaign was set on foot to associate them with the work of the national rising. Agents were despatched to different cantonments to ascertain whether they were willing to cooperate. The Ghadrites had already established contacts with the 23rd Cavalry and two of their men had joined that regiment. With no adequate supply of arms and ammunition the Indian revolutionaries considered the seduction of the army as the only way for forging a successful revolution in the country.

Kartar Singh Saraba andBidhan Singh made a verbal alliance with Indian troops at Ferozepore. At the end of January 1915, Hirday Ram was specially deputed to assess the political situation at Jullundur, to get into touch with the Dogra and other sepoys stationed there and win them over to the side of the

26. Viceroy to Secretary of State 24 February 1915, L/P.0/476
27. Randhir Singh, op.cit., p. 15.
revolutionaries. Hira Singh Charar was sent to Jacobabad, Fiera Singh to Kohat and Sent Gulab Singh and Hamas Singh to Bannu on similar missions. Efforts were also made to align with the troops at Meerut, Kanpur, Allahabad, Benaras, Fyzabad and Lucknow. The response from every cantonment appeared to be encouraging. Even the Director of Criminal Intelligence admitted that they found cases of emissaries of the revolutionaries approaching the troops fearlessly, stopping in the lines and distributing seditious literature to all without report or information reaching the British officers. He further reported that the Indian soldiers listened "readily to the seditious emissaries". In fact "in January and February, the emissaries of the Ghadr Party were tempering with the troops from Jhelum on the North to as far down as Benaras". The uprising was to start in the different cantonments in the Punjab to be followed in other provinces. It was the most powerful revolt conceived on such a large scale since the mutiny.

Having thus satisfied himself, Rash Behari Bose fixed 21 February 1915 as the date of the rising. The flame was to be lit in Lahore where the 23rd Cavalry converts and the revolutionaries

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were to massacre the British troops and seize the guns. The rising in Lahore was to be followed at Ferozepore where the depot magazine was to be captured along with the arsenal. Rash Behari did not trust in the feasibility of bringing about the simultaneous rising amongst all the troops stationed at different places but believed that the example of Lahore and Ferozepore might bring the other cantonments into open mutiny. Suspecting the leakage of the plan, however, he decided to anti-date the rising to the night of the 19th and sent emissaries to various selected centres to intimate the change. Two of the emissaries of the Ghadar Party, Balwant Singh and Banta Singh, who were enlisted with the 23rd Cavalry Regiment had given a clear signal for the rising on the 19th, but the information about the change of date was conveyed to the authorities by a spy, Kirpal Singh. The plans of the Indian revolutionaries did not elude the vigilance of the British intelligence and the military authorities after getting the information had taken elaborate precautions on the day of the rising. At 7 o'clock the same evening the whole regiment, except the recruits, was ordered to fall in and kept on duty till midnight. Prior information received regarding Ferozepore also enabled the military authorities to checkmate the movement there.

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31. After the failure of the rising, twelve men of the 23rd Cavalry were hanged and six sentenced to transportation for life. See F.D. Conf. B. Ext. 1917, Nos. 75-76.

32. Statement of Mula Singh, Home Political B May 1916, Nos. 436-39. Harman Singh had suspicion about Kirpal Singh and after he had informed Rash Behari Bose, it was decided to change the date to 19th. Statement of Amar Singh, Home Political A, Sept. 1918, Nos. 55-77.

On 19 February the Police raided the headquarters of the Ghadrites at Lahore and arrested a number of their leaders. The failure of the Lahore rising of 19 February gave a death-blow to the main movement to overthrow the British Government in India. From the time of their return to India the Ghadrites had to work against heavy odds. Before they could really get to work in India they lost many of their leaders and when they finally began the secret propaganda their members kept on giving away their secrets to the police. The collapse of the main conspiracy was chiefly due to the fact that the police was able to introduce into the inner circle of revolutionaries a spy named Kirpal Singh, a cousin of a trooper of the 23rd Cavalry named Balwant Singh. However, various other factors also thwarted the plans of the Ghadrites. The firmness with which the Government dealt with the revolutionaries under the Ingress Ordinance led to the disorganisation of the whole movement. Not only that, in March 1915 the Government passed the Defence of India Act for taking prompt legal action against the Ghadrites and in the worlds of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, were it not for the prompt arrest and internment under the special powers given by the Ingress Ordinance and the Defence of India Act of persons suspected of active participation, Government could not have obtained the knowledge of

34. Nawab Khan was arrested in November 1914 and Mula Singh was arrested about the middle of February 1915 and the latter gave to the authorities much useful information about the Indian revolutionaries and their plans. Note C.R. Cleveland 31 March 1916. Home Political B, May 1916, Nos. 436-439.
the secret activities of the conspirators which enabled it to frustrate their plans. The three requisites for a successful revolution laid down by the Ghadr Party were men, money and arms. The Indian revolutionaries possessed at the outset some fine material so far as men were concerned, but they were rather weak in the other essentials. At the time of their departure from America the Ghadrites were held out hopes of being provided with arms in India but they were disappointed when no arms were made available to them. It appears from the available evidence that with a weak organisation and no capable leader to guide them, the Ghadrites decided to raise the standard of revolt at the behest of Rash Behari Bose. The Ghadrites in India had lost touch with leaders in the United States and other Indian revolutionaries on the Continent who were still busy with the finalisation of the schemes with the German Government. By October 1914 after having formed the Indian National Party in Berlin, they had sent two of their emissaries to inform the Bengal revolutionaries and the Ghadrites about the help in the shape of arms and ammunition which was coming. The revolutionaries in India under the guidance of Rash Behari Bose did not wait for the help from outside and made futile attempts to forge a revolution with the collaboration of the Indian soldiers stationed at different places.

36. That Rash Behari Bose was determined to organise an armed revolution without waiting for the arrival of German help is clearly reflected in his conversation with Madagascar Guha of Anushilan Sramiti. See Uma Mukherjee, Two Great Indian Revolutionaries (Calcutta, 1937), p. 12.
Despite the initial success which the Ghadrites secured amongst the people in the Punjab, they did not get any active support from the majority of the population who were still loyal to the British Government. According to O’Dwyer, "the great mass of the rural population, including the Sikhs remained staunch and loyal and continued to give, often at great risk, the most active assistance to the authorities in rounding up and bringing to justice the revolutionaries. For the Indian revolutionaries to succeed in such circumstances was extremely difficult. The men who came from America were efficient and experienced in public assemblies, speech-making and the production of revolutionary literature, but due to lack of proper organisation and poor leadership and with scarce money and arms the attempt to revolt had scant chance of success. The Director of Criminal Intelligence commented that the attempt to forge a revolution in the Punjab was not the work of illiterate peasants but of persons who were acquainted with all the methods of determined and intelligent conspiracy. The situation was entirely critical in the Punjab and Hardinge considered it fortunate that O’Dwyer succeeded in getting information about the conspiracy. The patriotic Indians had returned to their

37. O’Dwyer, op.cit., p. 133.
38. From Viceroy to Secretary of State, 3 June 1915. Chamberlain Papers.
Motherland swarmed to overthrow the British Government and many pledged themselves not to go to their homes until their object was achieved.

Moreover, it appears that not many revolutionary groups from Bengal cooperated with the Ghadrites as they did later on with the Indian National Party of Berlin. The reason being the secular character of the Ghadr movement, which perhaps could not fit in with the ideology of the revolutionaries from Bengal.

There was a serious discussion between Rash Behari Bose and Pingle on the manner of treating the Muslims after the revolt was successful. The indecision and wavering attitude of the Bengali revolutionaries on this point "naturally militated against really effective action in any direction".

The German Foreign Office after having helped in the formation of the Indian National Party also failed to take notice of this mighty exodus of Indians towards India and could not decide in time to send the desired help. Petrie remarked that the Germans lost the best opportunity they were ever likely to be afforded in failing to finance the early thousands of Ghadr revolutionaries who flowed into India on the outbreak of the war. Physically many of these men were magnificent, many had military training and they got back inside India itself before the British Government had full information as to their true character and

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The Government of India after having arrested a number of revolutionaries proceeded with the task of prosecuting them. Under the Defence of India Act special tribunals were established and they were tried in nine conspiracy cases without an opportunity to defend themselves. This initial failure of the movement came as a great setback for the future plans of the Indian revolutionaries. The first phase of the movement over, the second phase began with the active association of the Indian revolutionaries in the United States and on the Continent with the German Foreign Office.

B. The Singapore Mutiny

In their programme of a revolution in India for the overthrow of the British Government, the leaders of the Ghadr Party gave clear instructions to the returning Indians to infiltrate into the Indian regiments stationed at different places on their way. They considered the rising of the troops as a preliminary step towards a general revolt by the people in India. With this end in view contacts were made with Indian troops stationed at Shanghai, Hong Kong, Penang, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. In India strenuous attempts were made to align with various regiments and a number of army units came under the spell of the Ghadr propaganda.

43. Petrie's note on a Recent Tour in the Far East, 4 Dec. 1916. F.D. Confidential B Ext. Section B, 1917, Nos. 75-78.
44. See Appendices III and IIIA.
The various regiments in India that were mixed up with the Indian revolutionaries were 22nd and 23rd Cavalry, 36th and 47th Sikhs, 26th and 62nd Punjabis and 93rd Infantry. However, in the absence of any well-knit organisation no substantial success was achieved. Outside India the first regiment affected by the Ghadar propaganda was 130th Baluchis who had been transferred to Rangoon in November 1914. There was hardly any restriction on the movements of the regiment after its transfer which gave the opportunity to the Ghadrites to infuse in these men the tenets of ghadar. By January 1915, the regiment had been seduced from its allegiance and was prepared to mutiny. The still-born rising was, however, nipped in the bud by the military authorities who took drastic action against these men, and severely punished 200 of the plotters.

The Ghadrites then tried to influence the men of the Malaya State Guides, then stationed at Singapore. The regiment consisted mostly of Muslims with pro-Turkish feelings which they expressed in a letter to the Turkish Consul, Ahmed Mullah Dad, informing him that the regiment was prepared to mutiny against the British Government and fight for the Turks and requested him that a Turkish warship might be sent to Singapore. The interception of the letter by the British authorities in Burma

45. Sir Michael O'Dwyer's Memorandum, enclosure to the letter from Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 15 September 1916, Chelmsford Papers.
enabled them to send the information of the "intended rising of troops" and thus prevented its occurrence. However, the British authorities could not prevent the rising of another regiment, the 5th Light Infantry, stationed at Singapore. This rising, according to an American correspondent, was second only to that of the sepoy mutiny of 1857. The 5th Light Infantry was sent from Madras in October 1914 to replace the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, which had been ordered to France. From the moment of its arrival indications of unrest and discontent were apparent. The regiment was stationed at Singapore temporarily and orders had been issued for its transfer to Hong Kong.

The unsatisfactory state of discipline prevailing amongst the men of the 5th Light Infantry was fully utilised by the Indian revolutionaries who were then very active in the Far East. The Government of India at the time of the mutiny, however, made desperate efforts to show that it had no connection with the Indian revolutionaries and that it occurred on account of some unpopular regimental promotions and the instigation of the German prisoners of war interned on the island. The *New York Times* correspondent in the Far East, while agreeing that "there had been some slight troubles to be sure, regarding certain promotions,

which had taken place', commented that it was absurd to ascribe the resulting mutiny to this. In his view the fundamental causes "lay deeper and were of a far more complex nature". Later reports proved, however, that the mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry at Singapore was caused by the revolutionary preachings of the "Muhammadan and Hindu conspirators belonging to the American Ghadr Party". The Committee of Inquiry also commented that the town and settlement of Singapore together with the neighbouring state enjoyed a widespread notoriety as being a focus for Indian revolutionaries passing to and from the Far East and America. It was also well-known to harbour many rank Indian revolutionaries amongst its residents. The inspiration also came from the German prisoners of war who were then interned in Singapore. There is, therefore little reason to doubt that without the incitement of the Ghadr Party the mutiny would have been most improbable whatever grievances or indiscipline then might have been in the regiment.

51. New York Times, 22 May 1915. Fan Charne also wrote later on that "it was neither the regimental jealousy nor the German intrigues, but the propaganda of the Hindu revolutionaries and their intrigues which led to the Singapore uprising." U.S. Department of Justice Records, Roll No. 4.

52. The claim of the German officer, a prisoner of war from Emdon Oberleutenant Julius Lauterbach that he was responsible for creating anti-British feelings amongst the Indian soldiers is contradicted by Dickenson who wrote that the German prisoners of war behaved extremely well, which would completely discount the widely held belief of German complicity in the mutiny. See Lowell J. Thomas, Lauterbach of the China Sea (New York, 1930) and Dickenson Account. A.H. Dickenson was an officer cadet of the Strait Settlement Police at the time of the mutiny and submitted his account of the events to the Royal Commonwealth Society, London. The file about the Singapore Mutiny also contains account by other British officers who were present in Singapore on February 1915. Hereafter referred to as Dickenson's Account.
The Ghadr leader who played a prominent role in this event was Mujteba Hussain alias Hul Chund who had been a Zilladar in the Court of Wards at Calcutta. He then appeared to have found his way to Manila where he came in touch with the Ghadr Party and then came to Singapore and helped to promote the mutiny. Others involved in the affair were Hira Singh of Churia and Gian Chand. The arrest of the three Ghadrites in Rangoon who were trying to incite the regiments there to revolt confirmed the authorities in their belief that they were also instrumental in inciting the regiment at Singapore to rebel.

The 5th Light Infantry, though fully under the spell of Ghadr propaganda, did not think of revolting against the authorities until news of its transfer to Hong Kong was received around the first of January. It was there and after the Singapore garrison had been depleted until 200 of the Royal Garrison Artillery and 50 Sappers were the only regular European troops remaining that they decided to revolt.

The date of the mutiny had been fixed for 17 February, one day before the arrival of the Nile which was to take the regiment to Hong Kong. But the Nile arrived at Singapore on the

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53. Sedition Committee Report, p. 170. See also Report in connection with the Mutiny of 5th Light Infantry, which also came to the conclusion that the 5th Light Infantry proved to be a ready and fertile field for the implant of seditious ideas by the emissaries of the Ghadr Party. Ibid.

morning of 15 February, three days ahead of time. This resulted in upsetting the old plans of the mutineers and they were now face to face with the necessity of completing new ones very rapidly. Partially aware of the unrest in the regiment and in order to check it the authorities at Singapore ordered the removal of the ammunition on board the Nile before nightfall. Events at Singapore moved rapidly and the signal for the mutiny was given by the sepoy Ismail Khan who fired the first shot when the men of the regiment were loading ammunition on the trucks at Alexandra Barracks. Almost immediately the mutineers were in possession of the lorry and its contents, its guardians killed. The fight was on.

The situation was, no doubt, critical but with a presence of mind rare at such occasions, Admiral Jarras immediately got in touch with all the men-of-war cruising in the nearby waters. The Russian cruiser Aural located in Penang was ordered to proceed to Singapore as quickly as possible. Similarly the French cruiser Montcalm and a Japanese cruiser were located and requested to come for help.

The mutineers, in the meantime, divided themselves into three groups and started killing their European officers. Their first move was to release the German prisoners of war who were interned in Tanglin barracks and were expected to join the mutineers. The attack on the camp was so sudden by the mutineers

55. Ibid.
that there was a terrible massacre. Captain P.N. Gerrard, the
commandant, and three other officers were killed outright, along-
with seven N.C.Os. and men of the Regular and Johore State
Forces. According to an eye-witness account all the guards
were shot down and the guard room attacked. The commandant of
the camp and the first lieutenant and some of the volunteers
remained while the rest fled in panic. The Malay soldiers
numbering about 50 who were stationed with the volunteers refused
to fight and also ran away. The sound of arms at first indistinct,
gradually became louder in the town and the place assumed the
appearance of a field of battle. The British were thus reminded
of the terrible massacres of their countrymen by Indians in the
past. The approximate number of mutineers who took part in the
mutiny was eight hundred. Neither the Malay police nor the
troops had the requisite fighting efficiency to tackle them.

Only by 19 February, when the authorities got reinforcements
from various quarters, they could with extreme difficulty bring
the situation well in hand, although over 600 men were still
unaccounted for.

"The failure of the plot", writes Arthur Thompson, "was
largely due to two men. The first was the Rajput bugler, who at
the first shot blew the alarm, so that every Rajput took his

56. MacMunn, op. cit., p. 113.
57. Statement of A.O. Handke, a German prisoner of war at
rifle and so prevented the plotters from arming the Germans with their rifles as promised. The second was the retired Sergeant-Major of Marines, who was confidential clerk to the R.I.O. There was no officer - Naval or Military - on duty at the headquarters. When the C.O. telephoned that the regiment was out of hand, Mr. Cross took the message and immediately in the C-in-C's name ordered Captain Harry of H.M.S. Cadmus to land everyman and it was the machine-gun party from that ship which brought things under control.

Working on instinct rather than concrete planning the mutineers implemented at the very outset the first stage of their plan, namely, the release of the German prisoners and the killing of a few Europeans, but in the absence of any organisation and capable leader, not much was achieved. According to Dickenson the main danger to the colony was in fact over before either the civil authorities or the army were able to assess the true situation. But this view is contradicted by the account of a Japanese writer, who holds that by the night of 15th February the situation in Singapore was beyond the control of the British. With a landing party of ninety men from the Cadmus and a few British troops and some unorganised British volunteers, it was difficult for them to capture the mutineers. From his account we

69. The account of Singapore Mutiny by Arthur Thompson, who was Provost Marshal at Singapore during the mutiny, available with the Royal Commonwealth Society Library, London.
60. Dickenson, op.cit.
learn that Sir Arthur Young, the Governor requested the Japanese Consul for help for controlling the situation. Accordingly Lieutenant-Commander Arabi contacted Bokoyo harbour for men of war to come and give assistance which was received on the 17th and 18th when two Japanese ships "Ottawa" and "Tsushima" landed their men at Singapore. By now of the 18th, with the collaboration of the Japanese volunteers, the Japanese landing parties took possession of the Alexandra Barracks. The report from the military headquarters Singapore, however, denied altogether the help given by the Japanese. General Staff reported that the Japanese soldiers went to Alexandra Barracks when it had already been occupied by their men and in reality the Japanese did not do much.

In all 12 British officers from different regiments and 15 civilians were killed and the number of wounded was much larger. The official announcement issued in London on 24 February 1915, however, listed eight officers among the total of twenty-five, who were killed, while the rest were wounded. The majority of the mutineers were tried by court martial set up under martial law. In due course sentences were pronounced on

61. Extracts "From Nanyo" by M. Tsukhia, editor of "Nanyo Oyoburi Nipponjin". Foreign Department Confidential B, Ext. Sec. B, 1918, Nos. 41-60.
62. General Staff to Foreign Department, 23 Dec. 1914. Ibid.
63. Thompson's Account, op.cit.
some two hundred and twelve of them, of whom death sentence was
given to 2 Indian officers, 6 Havildars and 39 sepoys and the
rest were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

The climax of the court martial came with the surprising
announcement that the death sentence would be carried out in
public. Dickenson describes that

long before the appointed hour the amphitheatre
was full of people. At 2.30 P.M. on the first
day a firing party of ten men from the Royal
Artillery marched on the ground, halted and stood
at ease. A few minutes later under an armed escort
of Sikh Police, the first two mutineers to be
sentenced to death were marched out of the main
gate of the prison. Major Dewar was in command.
The condemned men Subedar Dunda Khan and Jamadar
Chisti Khan dressed in plain native clothes in
step with the escort marched erect and steadily to
the execution posts, to which they were tied by
the ankles. Facing the firing party at eight paces
their bearing never faltered. The condemned men
stood rigidly to attention. They were not blind-
folded. Whatever their crimes, their calm and
dignity at the end was impressive.

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65. \textit{Report in connection with the Mutiny of 5th Light Infantry
at Singapore 1915} (Simla 1915). Other sentences given to
the persons were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank and File</th>
<th>Havildar</th>
<th>File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation for life</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; for 20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 15 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 10 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 7 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous imprisonment for 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 5 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 2 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple imprisonment without solitary confinement for 2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Military Department Proceedings, November 1915,
Nos. 1535-94, NAI.

66. Dickenson's Account, \textit{op. cit.}
The remaining offenders were executed in the same way. Thus ended the Singapore mutiny, a sad sequel to a dramatic beginning. It collapsed as hurriedly as it had commenced. In view of the firmness with which the authorities handled the critical situation, it was unlikely that the mutiny would have affected other regiments. "And yet" writes Dickenson, "how different might have been the tale had the mutineers not failed so lamentably in their planning and in their leaderships." The news of the mutiny was completely suppressed in India and even in the Far East. Instead of helping the Ghadrites - which it could if it was known in India - the sudden outbreak of the mutiny at Singapore alarmed the authorities and, now armed with martial law, they were in a position "to establish military censorship on mails passing through", and "to examine or intern suspects who otherwise could not have been touched".

67. Ibid.
68. Thompson's Account, op.cit.