BRITISH POLICY AND DEMOBILISATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR PERIOD
If a satisfactory solution is to be found to the problem of resettling large numbers of men in civil life at the end of a war, the outstanding need is for early planning and preparedness. All through the period under review, plans were too slow in being translated into action.

-Se.No.365, *Demobilisation of the Indian Army*, Monograph in Adjutant General's Branch, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section (Indian & Pakistan), General Editor Bisheshwar Prasad, 1950.

Following the theme discussed in the preceding chapter this chapter analyses the demobilisation of the armies of war raised in India by the British during the Second World War. Hitherto works on Indian nationalism and the Transfer of Power in 1947 have focussed on the post Second World War troubles faced by the British in India. The historiography of the subject also makes it quite clear that the unprecedented discontent which surfaced in the Indian armed forces in 1945-46 constituted an important element of these political troubles.¹ In many ways this discontent was related to the rather unsuccessful demobilisation of the Indian armed forces after the War.

### 6.1. The agenda of demobilisation and resettlement in the 1940s

In the short comparison of resettlement after the two world wars presented in the previous chapter we noticed the inadequacy of the process following the

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Second War. This happened despite the fact that demobilisation appeared on the British policy agenda as early in the War as 1941 when a Demobilisation section comprising one Assistant Adjutant General, one Lieutenant Colonel and two clerks was formed by the General HQ. Skeleton regulations were also drawn up before July 1942 when the section began to be called the Directorate of Demobilisation and Reconstruction. In 1942 though more staff was also added to the Directorate it became clear that forming an organisation to carry out demobilisation soon after the war was much easier than controlling and executing the process itself. In India the practice of voluntary recruitment, the prevalence of surplus manpower and illiteracy of a large number of recruits to be demobilised were identified early as the major problems confronting demobilisation at the end of the Second War. The process of demobilisation had to overcome these hurdles to become successful. The officials were aware that demobilisation after the Great War had led to "great discontent" among the Indian Other Ranks because often they were discharged without their accounts having been settled. The majority of recruits did not know English and this brought home the lesson that after a future war every man would have to pass through a demobilisation centre where his records and accounts would be kept. The military authorities knew that in spite of the drawn up and published regulations in many cases the individual's credit could not be quickly and accurately assessed and this gave rise to discontent. The emphasis was on the efficiency of the demobilisation machinery: "Correct documentation is also the only means by which a soldier can be assured that his
interests are given the attention they require, and without complete confidence in this aspect of his army service a soldier can have little faith in his officers".  

A great degree of co-ordination and co-operation between several departments of the army and the Air and Naval HQs was necessary for successful demobilisation.

The question of resettlement, like that of demobilisation, also could not be answered easily after the Second War. The previous chapter shed light on the discontent in the Indian Army after the Great War as a result of inadequate resettlement. It must however be remembered that the armies of war raised during the Second World War were much larger than those raised during the Great War. Furthermore during the Second War the Indian armed forces changed considerably and the token services RIAF and the RIN became real forces during it. Most recruits during the Great War came from rural Punjab and managed to receive some benefit after it. Of the Great War period the Official view has the following to say: "Lands were offered to men, and the majority of ex-servicemen were thus settled. Elsewhere, too, land awards were made, and many ex-servicemen were absorbed in Government services of all kinds". In the light of the previous chapter we may disagree with this but nonetheless it is true that resettlement posed a far more serious problem in 1945 than in 1918. This was so because of the following reasons. Firstly in 1945 millions had to be demobilised because of a ten fold increase in the Indian armed forces during the Second

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World War. Secondly the number of skilled, urban and trained personnel in the three Indian services grew considerably between 1939 and 1945 and the expectations of these men were quite different from those of the peasants of 1918. This presented a unique problem in colonial India. Thirdly to satisfy the land hunger of the rural component of the services there was hardly any land available in 1945. Thus, "it was considered that post-war development schemes and post-war industrialisation would be the principal channels through which it might be possible to absorb those who did not want to return to their previous occupations". 3

The deliberations of the Reconstruction Committee set up by the GOI in 1942 to win the peace after the war dwelt upon the economic problems of post-war reconstruction and demobilisation. Post-war unemployment had to be contained at all costs and Provincial governments were to play an important role in the reconstruction process by utilising surplus military stores and hardware in the direct interest of ex-servicemen and their proposed co-operatives. A fund for resettling demobilised men was necessary and it was suggested that each serving man pay two rupees a month to raise a huge fund roughly at the rate of two million rupees per month. Men had to be convinced into not demanding rapid demobilisation and "Extravagant hopes" in the emergency commissioned officers (ECOs) had to be curbed by circulating approximate figures of the number of

3 Ibid., Resettlement, Section I.
government appointments likely to be available to such officers after the war.4

During the war a social change had occurred in the armed forces making demobilisation an increasingly difficult task. In 1918, 90% of the troops had been peasants and to satisfy the land hunger among many of them land grants, especially in Punjab, were made. In the 1940s this was impossible because most provinces would not offer land for distribution and also because the number of men demobilised would be very high. Almost 50% of the new men came from urban or semi-urban areas. These "tradesmen", would, "desire to make use of their skill", and, would "crowd to swell the unemployed in the cities". The nightmare could possibly be averted by making the villages attractive to the returning soldier by an official use of, "imagination and financial assistance".5

The extent of change in the armed forces during the Second War was revealed in July 1945 when a simple questionnaire was given to 100,000 servicemen in one thousand units of all arms of the Indian services. The aim of the questionnaire was to get an idea of the kind of employment the average serviceman desired after the war. An analysis of the replies received showed the following:

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4 File No.601/7029/H (HS):Informal meeting of Official Members of the Reconstruction Committee (Labour and Demobilisation) Agenda, 1942; (ii) Revised notes on which to base the Demobilisation Scheme (1 June 1942); Principles governing the agenda. In 1919 the policy of auctioning off stores to profiteering contractors had proved unpopular. Hasty discharge and unremitting retrenchment with attendant discontent, as witnessed between 1919 and 1925, could also cost the government peace after the war.

5 601/7029/H, pp.2-3, deliberations. Vocational training was seen as one of the options facing the armed forces to keep demobbed troops busy.
Furthermore it is extremely important to note that 85% of those of who desired employment expressed a preference for work under Government schemes. A large number of men wished to leave agriculture and take part in industry. Instead of 82% agriculturists and village artisans, as shown in the release roll, there were now only 35% who wanted to return to agriculture but even then those who desired agricultural employment formed more than one third of the total number of men answering the questionnaire. These conclusions of 1945 meant that the GOI would come under the tremendous pressure of resettlement in 1945-46 precisely at a time when the challenge of Partition and the Transfer of Power would grow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who had assured jobs other than agriculture.</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who desired agricultural employment.</td>
<td>35.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who desired employment as teachers.</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who desired industrial employment.</td>
<td>31.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who wanted to become domestic servants.</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiring work as Mechanical Transport drivers.</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiring clerical or other non-technical jobs.</td>
<td>7.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculates desiring non-clerical work.</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Source: Demobilisation of the Indian Army, op.cit.*
The employment of officers would pose a more complex problem because of the perceived scarcity of jobs in military and civil departments after the war. Social protest was anticipated for an implicit trust in the Raj to find jobs for officers, if inculcated also during demobilisation, would lead to, "disappointment and discontent". Since after 1939 recruitment had taken place almost without a plan demobilisation had to be optimistically planned, as formulated by Col. Brayne, for "Winning the Peace". In general the plan noticed the contradiction between the wartime experience of new young men and the "uncompromising medievalism" of their rural homes. In such circumstances for the Raj it was better to spend some money on resettlement to save demobilised men from, "every kind of theorist, agitator, grumbler and grievances hunter" than to hold down, a "disgruntled soldiery by force". The point was not to lose the "wonderful material" incidentally built by the war while officially planning social work or village upliftment with demobilisation. At the same time the military connection and spirit, presumably of overriding obedience to the state, had to be maintained among the ex-soldiers through the medium of politically neutral ex-servicemen's reunions, societies and welfare activities.

In 1942 demobilisation could only have been partially conceived because once again the questions of likely post-war imperial and Indian military

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6 601/7029/H, p.4.

7 601/7029/H: "Winning the Peace" a note by Col. Brayne.
requirements remained unsettled. An estimate of probable post-war Indian needs could not be made and the position of India in future commonwealth arrangements was unknown. Furthermore the proportion of retainable British to Indian troops, a question exercising nationalists and the government together, had to be reassessed in a predictably changing future. War kept London busy, precise directives were not coming forth and even the Cripps mission had said nothing substantial about these matters. In such conditions the Brass could only debate the nagging problems of the thirties such as the number of commissions to be given, the distribution of officers, efficiency of units, recruitment, economies and mechanisation. 8

Demobilisation of a volunteer army as the first step towards the reorganisation of "national life" would pose other problems. While conscripts would be more than willing to go back to their civilian jobs and life in Britain many Indians would like to remain permanently in the services. During the war possibly 33% of the cavalry and infantry units were trained to a trade. Good tradesmen had joined the transport and other technical units in large numbers. Popular expectations of wartime military experience and probable threats to British authority were seen rising:

8 SECRET No.17502/A.G.(Demob), General HQ, AG Branch Simla, 1.6.42 and Appendix A - Reconstruction of the Post-War regular army in India in 601/7029/H - Revised notes on which to base demobilisation scheme.
The younger of these men know little of the land and will, unless inducements are given, tend to crowd to the cities to seek the opportunity to make use of their technical skill. Many will inevitably swell the ranks of the unemployed. Disgruntled they may turn to the only other trade they know, fighting, and become dacoits [emphasis added].

The quality of men demobilised was to prove important for post-war politics. While the VCOs and NCOs would eye promotion most technicians in all the services would clamour for quick demobilisation because opportunities would be fewer in civilian India. It was foreseen that even for those released early scarcity of jobs would be tremendous. In these circumstances it was probable that some men would actually prefer delayed demobilisation with leave to explore possibilities of alternative work before final discharge. In India individual demobilisation due to industrial backwardness, and despite an ambitious sounding military card index proposed for the Labour Department was impossible:

In Great Britain, the Trades Union organisation, the smallness of the country, the comparatively large proportion of the population who were engaged in industrial work pre-war etc. etc. makes it possible to devise an elaborate system of individual demobilisation to attempt to deal with the problem.

Furthermore in India it was feared that peace would actually contract industry and the demand for trained men would fall precisely at the

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9 17502/Appendix E - Reconstruction of Industry for the absorption of labour and Resettlement in Civil Life.

10 17502/Appendix E.
moment when considerable numbers would be released from the services. Massive unemployment thus incurred would fuel political disturbances which an exhausted government could ill afford. As early as 1942 anxiety was manifest within the armed forces as the voiced need for vocational training and the official need for propaganda to ensure tranquility among the men suggested.\(^{11}\)

After the Quit India Movement, Stalingrad and the Normandy landings demobilisation came on the official agenda in India once more. An imperial policy of demobilisation was based on certain principles outlined in the Imperial White Paper on release placed before the Cabinet in September 1944. The Imperial plan assumed that conscription would continue in England to compensate for the men released due to the need of war in Europe. Resettlement in the intervening years between the end of war and final peace would depend upon post-war military requirements and the arrangements for release acceptable to the armed forces.\(^{12}\) Influenced by the Paper which was accepted by the Cabinet the War Committee of the C-in-C in India began taking up demobilisation seriously in its periodic deliberations. Demobilisation in India would depend

\(^{11}\) 17502/Appendix E. In several instances discontent among Indian troops could only be overcome because Indian officers' were present on the spot; Cohen (1971:117), Evans (1960:169-71) and Chaudhuri (1978:100-120).

\(^{12}\) File No.601/10609/H (TOP SECRET), Demobilisation when Germany out, 1944 (HS) containing correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Governor General on the subject, an important letter dated 29/2/44 on demobilisation by the Auditor General to the Governor General and the Draft government white paper vide Telegram No.20756 (Secret) from the Secretary of State to the Governor General.
upon the assessed responsibility of the Indian armed forces after the war, a post-war defence budget and the rapidly rising need to resettle demobilised men. Infrastructural factors further conditioning, and most probably slowing down, Indian demobilisation would be shipping and the capacity of ports, rail and road transport to handle the large scale discharge of men, the ability of a colonial bureaucracy and military red tape to process paperwork related to release and the capacity of the medical services to complete examinations etc. on time.  

The GOI as usual was dragging its feet over the matter. It had set up a Reorganisation Committee to draft a plan for the post-war reorganisation of the Indian economy. Till October 1944 neither had the committee met nor had preliminary plan emerged making it impossible for the military leaders to, "plan too perfectly". Though the General Staff had estimated the strength of a post-war interim force keeping in mind the "futuristic" lines apparent in 1944-45 the Financial Advisor, "wished to reconcile the expenditure required for those forces with the financial resources likely to be available".  

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13 File No.601/10605/H, Demobilisation and Resettlement Planning, Vol.I, 1944-45 (HS): In early 1945 it was decided that 63 infantry battalions and 23 garrison companies would be required for internal security in India after the war. 50 battalions forming a permanent garrison for the NWFP were needed besides 3 divisions for Burma, 1 for Malaya and Siam each and 2 for the Middle East. Per division (about 40,000 men) the British element would be represented by two artillery regiments and three infantry battalions.

14 601/10605/H: Minutes of a meeting held on 23.10.44 to consider demob. and post-war reorganisation planning chaired by Lt. Gen. Lindsell (PAO) in the C-in-C's Secretariat (India) SECRET.
In September 1944 the Military Finance Department had surveyed the overall military expenditure likely to be incurred in India in the immediate post-war years. This general survey produced by the co-ordination of several branches of the Defence HQ calculated needs based on the assumed availability of normal reserves and budgetary allocations for three years after the war. Demobilisation involving heavy retrenchment on the lines of the 1920s would take eighteen months and the 1944 levels of pay and allowances, with British control intact, would continue after the war. Predictable post-war inflation, expansion in key areas and technological development was ignored by the survey and nothing crucial emerged even when an extraordinary meeting of the C-in-C’s Secretariat took up these issues in November 1944.15

In December 1944 specific questions pertinent to the future of the new services remained unsettled and Auchinleck could only ask the Military Finance Department to prepare a new budget forecast for the services’ consideration.16 His terms of reference were based on the long-standing official assumption that political and constitutional changes in India would not affect the services and in

15 601/10605/H; SECRET PAPER, Military Finance Department, Sub: Reduction of Defence Expenditure during post-war years, No.11401-C, D/12/9/44 with appendices; Reflections on the paper from [Secret, C-in-c’s (India) Secretariat] Inter-Service meeting, Minutes of an extraordinary meeting held on 6 Nov. 1944 to consider paper No.11401-C; Ref. Minutes of 203rd meeting of C-in-C’s War Committee 7.11.44, Minutes of a meeting held on 13.11.44 to consider demob. in C-in-C’s secretariat. A Demob. Planning Staff in principle was set up as a result of these meetings. In the absence of a clear cut government policy on India’s post-war military standing the General Staff could only plan for an interim step keeping in mind the “fluid” situation like to emerge after the war.

16 601/10605/H, Minutes of the 217th meeting of the War Committee dated 14.12.44.
future India would once again manage the minor danger threatening the Empire.\textsuperscript{17} This indicated that demobilisation would be chalked out within the policy framework of the thirties. Though political factors specific to India were recognised and no "retrogression" from the levels of trade, port development, naval defence and industry attained during the war was advisable after it. Solutions in India could at best be general:

Modern war is synonymous with total war. Every country which is to survive in the future must have the ability to expand its forces rapidly as soon as war threatens and must be able to direct its industries quickly into war channels. It will be the responsibility of the armed forces to ensure that their own expansion can be rapidly implemented.\textsuperscript{18}

In April 1945 the services submitted their financial estimates for the upper and lower requirements for the immediate post-war years in keeping with the "minor danger" and the War Committee asked the old question whether Britain would be willing to share defence spending with India if the latter gained "an autonomous constitution" after the war. Naval estimates came in for more criticism because of the overwhelming need to assess the "financial lower limits" before an attempted post-war reorganisation could even be contemplated. The

\textsuperscript{17} 601/10605/H, File No.2, Chiefs of Staff (44) 636 & COS (44) 642, Report on the size and composition of the Post War Forces in India and Auchinleck's directive in Appendix A (TOP SECRET).

\textsuperscript{18} 601/10605/H File No.2, Chiefs of Staff's Report on the size and composition of post-war forces. The Staff alerted the government by stating its fears openly: "At the end of the war, therefore, there is likely to be a period of internal unrest coinciding with a weakening of the civil administration and decreased effectiveness of both British and Indian troops".
Financial Advisor dealt another blow by reporting that the price index in the immediate post-war years was likely to be higher than pre-war by 50 to a 100% leaving only 70 to 75 crore rupees for the armed forces.\(^{19}\) This financial forecast made Auchinleck realise that despite plans the services would have to be slashed to the minimum soon. From the "minor danger" the emphasis retreated to "the smallest number of purely local defence forces" necessary for India. In his directive to the Chiefs of Staff in May 1945 the C-in-C demanded recommendations detailing the "lowest limits" permissible in the event of the GOI not even being able to maintain the "lower limits".\(^{20}\)

In July 1945 the services prepared fresh estimates on the "lowest limit" principle which were accepted by the government and in August demobilisation, envisaged over two years, began in stages. Throughout 1945 estimates kept changing because of government views and the economic climate. On their own while the services, especially the new ones with mass discontent threatening them, may have tried to salvage the maximum from retrenchment the government relentlessly drove down the estimates. The result of effecting such stringent economies during demobilisation belied several promises made to the recruits earlier during the war. Furthermore demobilisation as it was practiced in 1945,

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\(^{20}\) 601/10605/H, Vol.II, TOP SECRET Draft directive to the Chiefs of Staff Committee by the C-in-C after 289th meeting, 20 April 1945; Minutes of 299th meeting of War Committee, 4 May 1945; Secret directive of C-in-C to Chiefs to Staff, 8 May 1945.
as the naval case explains, paved the way for disaffection and popular protest prevalent in the post-war Indian armed forces. The RIN example is also sociologically important because the service equalled an Indian division and comprised a cross-section of the Indian population.

6.2. The RIN: A case

The sort of help we needed was just the kind that a military Commander in Chief finds hard to give - to stand up and fight that cold-blooded machine, the military finance department and, in doing so, to give the small Navy more than its fair share of support compared with the Indian army in which he has spent forty years of his life... making every allowance for the malaise and poverty of India, there remains a spill over of problems, fortunately infrequent, where morale, politics, castes, creeds, leadership and climate intermingle - the imponderables, in fact, that can make or mar a service. [The Naval Memoirs of Admiral J.H. Godfrey, Vol VI, 1943-46, India]

The official history of the RIN tells us that in 1945 "within a few months... considerable progress" was made in solving the "outstanding problems" of demobilisation by the post-war Planning Directorate under a Captain in the Naval HQ. Discontent is not only perfunctorily brushed aside but the recruits are blamed for it:

Unfortunately there was a strong tendency, amongst officers and ratings alike, to believe that a man was only to sit back and wait for the Government to find a job. Steps were taken to inculcate into all ranks the correct outlook on resettlement, which was that every man was expected to do everything possible himself to resettle, and that the function of the Government
was to advise and assist.\textsuperscript{21}

Nevertheless disaffection arising due to the failures of demobilisation was real. On 16 November 1945 the Naval HQ received an anonymous letter narrating the problems faced by the ratings in HMIS Kakauri, the RIN release centre. Describing the "most horrifying" conditions prevalent in Kakauri the author made it clear that this experience had "poisoned" the minds of young men. Accounts of the men had not been settled as late as November 1945 and several ratings were in fact reorganised into a General Pool which was used for carrying out manual and menial work. This was obviously disliked by the men who expected something much better after the Second World War. Official hamhandedness and tactlessness was also evident elsewhere. Often when ratings refused to sign the pay receipts without being paid they were threatened with punishment. Many of them had served till 1945 without having been punished even once and did not relish attaching punishment to their leaving certificates just before discharge when a clean chit would have helped their civilian career.\textsuperscript{22} On the spot such men obeyed but later made their "suffering" known to the RIN Mutiny Commission.


of Enquiry.²³

Contrary to official claims made after the Second War demobilisation in the RIN was totally "unplanned" and "clueless". The insensitivity of the Military authorities was demonstrated yet once again when soon after the victory day the Hostilities Only (HO) men were brutally thrown out without gratuities or even railway fares. To make matters worse they were actually asked to refund the cost of kit which in most cases had never been issued. Overcrowding of establishments, with drastic consequences, was common. Castle Barracks designed for 500 men packed more than a 1000 in 1945. Fort Barracks meant for 600 had 1400 cramped in it. Smaller ships and establishments unsuited to tropical climate carried twice the number of ratings normally allowed on board.²⁴ The authorities never realised that there was no point in overcrowding the release centres when the administrative machinery necessary for satisfactory demobilisation had not evolved till 1945. As an upshot popular grievances in the RIN were grounded in reality and Col. Haq Nawaz criticised the RIN establishments for their bad quarters, food and, what seems to us as unnecessary, hard manual labour in the Morale Reports. In several instances the ratings were also retained for weeks against the officially allowed twelve days. Even Admiral Godfrey, who was in no way a sympathiser of the rebels of 1946, admitted that

²³ CER, pp.394-7.

²⁴ CER, p.400; Lt. Commander Mukerjee's evidence. The ratings had advertised their discontent openly in a poster at Kakauri calling it "the most glorious hell in Bombay".
demobilisation caused confusion, controversy and dissatisfaction in the service. In fact complacent officers responsible for smooth demobilisation had done little for the men and the mutiny completely surprised them.\(^{25}\)

In his memoirs Godfrey described demobilising the RIN a "thankless and never ending task". Demobilisation in 1945-46 proved very problematic with Bombay converted into a centre "clogged" with eager men awaiting discharge. The British on their part wanted to go home and the Indians wanted them to "get out". On the whole demobilisation was too slow and ships could not be paid off and crews dispersed fast enough. In the winter of 1945-46 Bombay appeared to Godfrey full of ratings about to be paid off, "but nothing to do but think up grievances". Beside this Godfrey wrote of the "quite legitimate grievances" regarding pay, allowances, travelling, colour bar, promotion, pay disparities between services which existed in the Navy.\(^{26}\)

Discharged ratings wrote to their friends in the service telling them what naval experience fetched them in the civilian market. Captain Learmont, C.O. Kakauri, referred to two cases typical of the service. A man with an excellent

\(^{25}\) CER, pp.401-2; Commodore Jefford's and Admiral Godfrey's views. Also Report of the Board of Enquiry into the causes of the Mutiny in HMIS Talwar, NL 9930, RIN Mutiny Papers, NAI; Flag Officer Bombay Rear Admiral Rattray's evidence. Rattray however felt that the majority of the ratings were unsuitable for naval service and would have been discontented despite each officer being "an angel".

record as Stoker II class had joined in 1943 but failed to receive the class I certificate because of his Divisional Officer's fault. Consequently he was discharged, discontented, as a Stoker II class. Then there were men who had served continuously for two or three years deferring their leave which was later denied to them. Lt. McRae, closely associated with the RIN Benevolent Association, mentioned invalidated men staying up to ten months without receiving their disability pension. The case of Lal Din an injured seaman of Jammu from HMIS Rajputana is worth mentioning here. He arrived in Delhi on discharge after spending eighteen months in hospital without a penny of his back pay, with no service documents and no pension, in a singlet and pants in December 1945. The files of the Benevolent Association contained an astonishing number of such "pathetic cases". Hundreds of ratings were discharged with nothing but a "dirty slip of paper" as their service record and this the civilian employers flatly refused to believe. Indeed the streets of Bombay were teeming with such men expecting proper service documents in the winter of 1945-46. 27

From 1 February 1946 the system of accelerated discharge was adopted and men were discharged irrespective of their complaints and often without their "nullies" i.e. release certificates. In fact Lt. Ghatak was not surprised at all that the mutiny occurred because much before February 1946 "unredressed" grievances

27 CER, pp.402-4; Learmont and McRae's view. In fact Commander S.G. Karmakar in his Departmental Report on the Enquiry into the causes leading to the Mutiny in Talwar (Exhibit B1), NL 9930, stated that despite the acute scarcity of jobs outside the service ratings were un-willing to defer their release.
had already led to "unrest" amongst the men. Records were improper, it was impossible to know how many ratings had drawn kits and cases were kept pending for months. According to Lt. Kohli all this and the dearth of jobs outside the navy left most men and officers "sadly disillusioned" and with "malice and bitterness towards the service". And as Godfrey later observed rather thoughtfully the Navy was reflecting the general mood of the years in which the, "symptoms of discontent and mass insubordination were apparent" and it need little of "touch things off".28

It is important, and only fair, to look at the evidence presented before the Commission of Enquiry both for and against the ratings' opinion. Even an unsympathetic officer like Rear Admiral Rattray, according to whom a "pernicious" atmosphere had been created and "fomented by extremists" in the RIN, believed that "material problems" of food, housing, allowances and officers' behaviour towards the men persisted in the service. In the statements of some officers who, despite facts, could not hide their antipathy towards the mutineers, we perceive that ratings of all categories justifiably felt that their service was not assisting them in finding jobs. Men openly criticised the lack of vocational

28 CER, p.407; Lt. Ghatak's view; p.410, memoranda by A.G. Sigamany, A.J. Nayagam and T.A. Nathan. According to Sigamany demobilisation was designed specifically to leave the "aye aye sir" variety in the navy. Lt. S.N. Kohli's view in the Report on the causes of the mutiny, Exhibit B-4, NL 9930. By the winter of 1945-46 morale of the officers had really sunk low. Karmakar, CO, Talwar from 23/2/46 onwards, in his personal report on the mutiny (Exhibit 2), NL 9930, clarified that the CPO and the POs, most of whom were young, had openly joined the rebels. During the mutiny as the men called Karmakar a bastard, for he had grey eyes, and a traitor most officers either looked on or even laughed; Godfrey's observation comes from his Naval Memoirs, op.cit.
training in the RIN. No doubt, and as one report noted, problems of
demobilisation had made many, if not all, ratings thoroughly "Bolshi".29

According to Admiral Godfrey the end of war caught the naval authorities
unaware and since the future of the service was not known haphazard
demobilisation followed. At first it was decided that for operational purposes the
"Upper Limit War Establishment" of that RIN was to be a cadre of 18000 men on
1 May 1946. This meant that out of 27,651 ratings 9,651 were to be demobilised
by then. This was not an imposing task considering the fact that the number
included 4,084 HO ratings whose release was a simple matter. In addition 1,725
men had to be transferred back to the army from where they had initially come.
The short service (SS) ratings numbered 19,587 in all and the continuous
servicemen were only 2,255 in number therefore according to initial plans in effect
only 4,000 SS, 4,000 HO and 1,725 army men had to be released in about seven
month. After November 1945 a decision was taken to lower the operational
strength to 11,000 men. It was also decided to speed up release to a rate of 2,000
men from 1,000 per month. According to Godfrey the RIN thus started
demobilisation earlier than the army at a greater speed. The Commission however
was not very impressed with Godfrey's explanation.30

The case of the SS ratings was very peculiar. Out of 19,000 SS ratings,

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29 NL 9930 and Report of the Board of Enquiry into the mutiny in the Castle Barracks, NL 9939,
RIN Mutiny Papers, NAI, p.4.

30 CER, pp.413-15.
2,000 applied for deferred release and 800 for continuous service. The rest were willing to leave. In all out of 19,000 men 9,000 had to be retained and 10,000 released. The authorities wanted to retain the best men and send away those considered unsuitable but in practice things were complex. In the event the best wanted to leave soon to avail of rapidly diminishing opportunities outside whereas the average wanted to stay on. Resentment arose in both groups due to the delayed release of the former and the speeded up discharge of the latter. Besides these groups were men who were discontented enough to leave in any case. In these circumstances senior and often more competent men became disaffected and influenced the junior rates. Several men had claimed discharge on compassionate grounds and their cases were sent to the Naval HQ where usual delays occurred. It was widely known that not all these cases were made up by desperate men.31

Even compared to the post 1918 scenario resettlement schemes were conspicuous by their absence. According to Godfrey, also a member of the War Committee, resettlement propaganda was "over done" and "failed to deliver the goods". In fact the matter was considered serious enough by the men and one rating actually approached the Labour Government in England with a representation. Resettlement was the joint responsibility of the Inter-Service Resettlement Directorate, the Labour Department and the Provincial Governments and schemes for all services looked very good on paper and "excited high hopes". According

31 CER, p.416.
to Lt. M.R.A. Rao who had seen resettlement efforts in Britain such affairs in India were a "farce". 32

CONCLUSION

All accounts make it clear that after the Second World War war rising unemployment was a serious problem faced by the GOI at a time when the widely publicised government policy of resettlement remained largely ineffective. It is also worth remembering that the Finance Department had sanctioned expenditure on temporary jobs in government departments till 28 Feb. 1946. But so hardpressed was the GOI for money that in May 1945, even before the war against Japan ended, it began to review the temporary jobs and the expenditure occasioned by the war ostensibly to effect savings for post-war development. Even the Central contributions to Provincial governments were to cease from 31 October 1945 onwards. All round reductions were already being made in the Provinces and official trends, like the orthodoxies of the 1920s, were indicating that a massive post-war retrenchment was about to follow the Second World War. 33 These were definitely not the conditions in which the returning volunteers of the Second World War could be satisfied.


33 File No.14/10/45 - Political (I) Government of India, Home Department Political (I) Branch, Sub: Reduction on termination of hostilities of temporary posts and expenditure occasioned by war conditions, previous references from 1938 onwards to 1944, later references till Jan. 1946 (NAI).
The economic conditions and the labour scenario which informed the
demobilisation of the Indian armed forces also did not promise expansion. 
During 1944 due to shortages of coal, oil and iron work was repeatedly
interrupted in several industries. At the same time working class militancy 
fuelled by soaring inflation and economic issues such as dearness allowances, 
profit bonus, cheap rations and wage increases was rising. Some industries 
suffered due to shortages of knitting needles, charcoal, hard coke, carbide and 
oxygen. Throughout 1945 as "normal" trends reasserted themselves and War time
demand contracted orders declined and working class protest against 
retrenchment rose. Due to shortages temporary closures continued in several 
establishments and as the year progressed the strikes tended to become more 
political. Workers, like demobbed soldiers and sailors, were identifying with 
broader nationalist issues and more strikes in sympathy with others were 
reported.\footnote{This was the context in which first the strikes of the RAF and RIAF 
and then the uprisings related to the INA and the RIN occurred.}

The failures of demobilisation which spanned the disturbed Transfer of 
Power and the Partition of India have been indicated in mild terms by the Official 
history of the expansion and contraction of the Indian armed forces during the
Second World War: "In India, with the political situation in a flux, and international alignments quite indefinite, it was difficult to determine the character or composition of the post-war forces. Hence, demobilisation tended to appear haphazard and was productive of some inconveniences".\textsuperscript{35} These "inconveniences" were most evident in services like the RIN which contained a very high proportion of educated aspiring Indians. It is also important to study the case of the RIN and the RIAF because they also involved a cross section of the Indian population in 1945-46.