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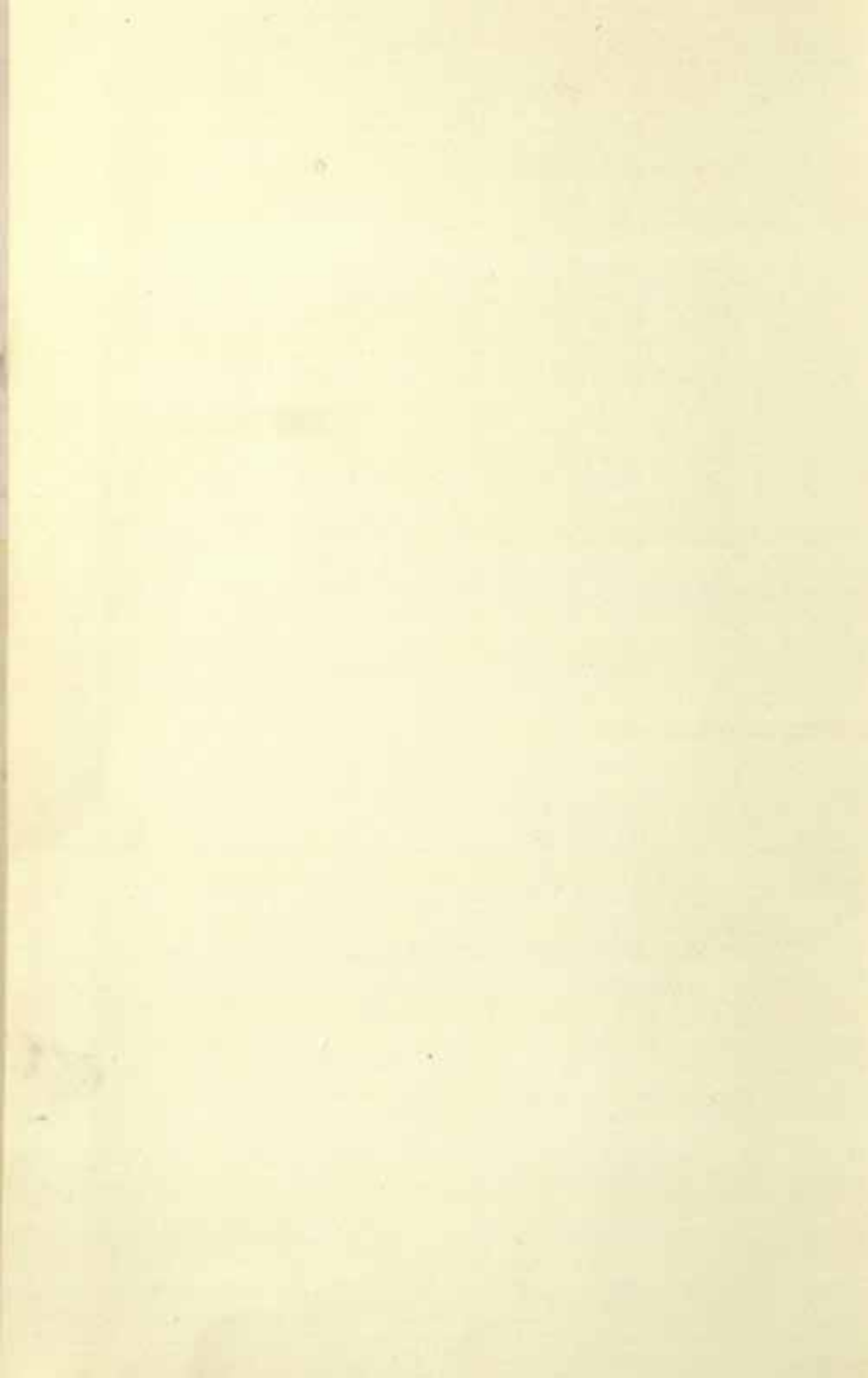
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NANA SAHIB AND  
THE RISING AT CAWNPORE



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# NANA SAHIB AND THE RISING AT CAWNPORE

BY

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TO  
PROFESSOR SOMNATH MAITRA



## PREFACE

MORE than twenty years ago the Oxford University Press published my study of *Baji Rao II and the East India Company*. This was followed by a slender volume on Baji Rao's life in exile. The present work, which relates to his adopted son, Nana Sahib and the part he played in the Revolt of 1857, brings the trilogy to an end.

The collection of material available in India was completed and the book planned early in 1957 when I received an offer of a Research Fellowship from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. This enabled me to examine official records and private papers not to be found in this country and fill up gaps in information.

An early draft of the book was read by Professor N. K. Sinha and Dr. A. C. Banerjee of the University of Calcutta and Dr. S. Gopal of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and a later version by Professor C. H. Philips of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Professor Milton Singer and Professor Stephen Hay of the University of Chicago and Dr. Margaret Fisher and Dr. L. Rose of the University of California, Berkeley. To them my thanks are due. I am particularly obliged to Professor B. M. Chaudhuri of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal, for his valuable criticisms and for helping me in preparing the press copy. Mr. Sobhan Basu has read the proofs with me and prepared the Index.

I am grateful for the facilities I received from the National Archives of India, New Delhi and from the librarian and staff of the National Library and of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, the India Office Library and the British Museum, London and the Royal Library, Windsor.

The drawings from General Neill's sketch-book and other pictures of Cawnpore are published by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum and the pictures of Nana Sahib

as a young man and of the prisoner believed to be Nana Sahib are reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

In spelling of proper names the current practice has been generally followed. A few exceptions, however, are to be noticed. The form 'Ganges' has not been changed to 'Ganga', and old spellings of 'Nana Sahib' and 'Cawnpore' have been retained.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor A. L. Basham of the School of Oriental and African Studies, for much kindness and help.

P.C.G.

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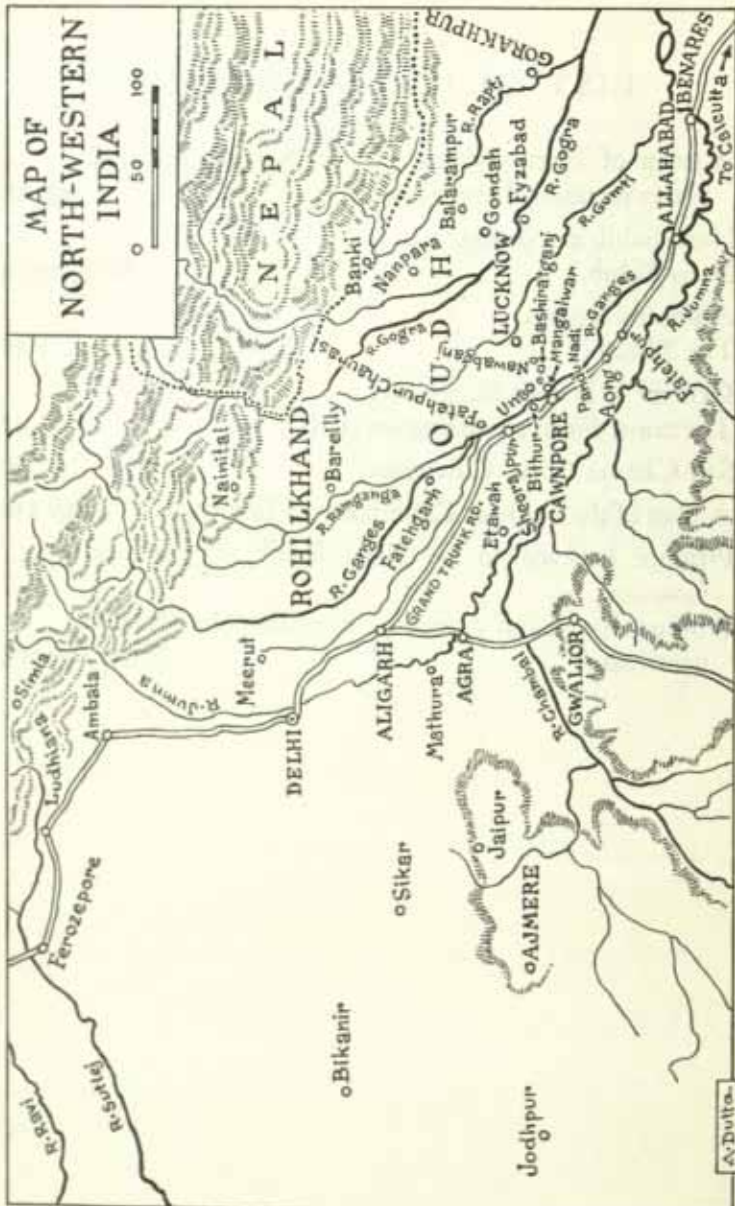


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# MAP OF NORTH-WESTERN INDIA

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## I

## NANA SAHIB AT BITHUR

ABOUT five miles north-west of the cantonment in Cawnpore, a narrow road branches off from the main street. It takes you to the village of Bithur. It is a pleasant journey in winter, when the trees on both sides of the road shed their bark and look silvery. The fields are yellow with mustard flowers and there is a sickly fragrance in the air. There is not much habitation till you near the end of your journey. Then you pass a large village and cross the railway track, and you are at Bithur. A row of jerry-built houses to your left covers your view of the magnificent ruins of Azimullah's house and what remains of the Peshwa's palace. On your right are groups of temples, mostly dedicated to Siva, some of them dating from the eighteenth century, and beyond them is the broad shining river. The annual festival in November brings thousands of pilgrims to the village, for Bithur is a sacred place. Hindu tradition links it with Brahma, who celebrated a horse sacrifice here when he finished creating the universe. It is also associated with the poet Valmiki who, it is said, lived here for some time. But its importance lasts only for a few days, and as the fair ends and the visitors return, Bithur once more becomes a half-forgotten desolate village. Except near the *brahmakund* where one comes for the holy dip, there is little sign of activity. In many temples there is no worshipper and no priest, and when evening comes there is hardly any ray of light in any of them.

Bithur has seen better days. Until its destruction by the British troops in 1858 it was a place of some importance. For more than thirty years it was the residence of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao II. After his defeat at the battle of Seoni, Baji Rao surrendered to Sir John Malcolm on 2 June 1818. He resigned his Peshwaship and was promised a pension of not less than eight lakhs of rupees annually and a home in 'Benares or any other sacred place in



Hindustan'. On 12 June Baji Rao, accompanied by about 1,200 men, crossed the Narmada. He was first taken to Mathura and then to Bithur, which was fixed as his permanent home.

A plot of land was granted as *jagir* to Baji Rao for his residence, and an office for the Commission was set up, to maintain close relations with the ex-Peshwa. By Bengal Regulation I of 1832, the *jagir* was placed outside the jurisdiction of the courts of the East India Company.

Bithur was not the place Baji Rao would have selected for his retirement. He had turned down two proposals made by the English, Monghyr and Gorakhpur. The heat of Monghyr 'would kill him', and Gorakhpur was rejected because 'there was no temple of sanctity' in the neighbourhood. Baji Rao's suggestion that Benares, and failing that Mathura, should be his permanent residence, was not accepted by the Governor-General. Lord Hastings thought it would be of 'great inconvenience and hazard' to allow him 'to settle at Benaras or any other Hindoo city', while Mathura was too near the frontier. Baji Rao feared that Bithur was a very unhealthy place. But Lord Hastings found no reason to change his decision. It had been for four years the home of the Bengal Army and was used as a station of the district of Cawnpore; it was unlikely, therefore, that it would be unhealthy. Indeed the climate of Bithur evidently suited the ex-Peshwa. At the time of his surrender John Malcolm considered that Baji Rao would not live long, owing to his 'feeble constitution' and 'debauched habits'. James Manson, who was the Commissioner with the ex-Peshwa in 1831, also thought that he would not survive long, and while recommending the gift of a *jagir* tenable during his life, hoped that the 'total extent of the sacrifice' would not be much. In 1840 the Government of the North-Western Provinces considered that his end was near, and prepared a set of rules for the guidance of the Commissioner in the event of his death. Baji Rao belied all such expectations and lived for another eleven years. He died in January 1851, at the age of seventy-seven.

Baji Rao at Bithur was never a cause of serious anxiety to the East India Company. He did not try to cling to the shadow of his former power and soon accepted the changed circumstances. The

thought that oppressed him most in the early years of his retirement was the lack of a son and heir. One of his sons died within a few days of his birth and another survived only a few months. In 1827 Baji Rao adopted two sons. One was Dhondo Pant, better known as Nana Sahib, and the other Sadashiv Rao, alias Dada Sahib. Both were sons of Madhav Rao Narayan Bhat, of Bengaon near Matheran. A few years later, Baji Rao adopted another son named Gangadhar Rao, alias Bala Sahib. Baji Rao was survived by Nana Sahib, Bala Sahib and two daughters, Yoga Bai and Kusuma Bai. Sadhasiv Rao predeceased him.<sup>1</sup>

When the terms of the surrender of the ex-Peshwa were settled in 1818, it was understood that the annual pension of eight lakhs of rupees granted to him by the East India Company would terminate with his death, and would not continue to his successors. Lord Hastings considered that it was too large an amount. He suspected that Malcolm had been influenced by the picture of fallen greatness and had granted terms 'more favourable than he contemplated'. Some of Malcolm's colleagues, however, were of a different opinion. Elphinstone considered the sum of eight lakhs just adequate, 'a very reasonable provision'. Thomas Munro's view was that eight lakhs of rupees 'was not too much for the fallen head of the Marhatta empire', if he had arrested the Peshwa he would have offered him ten in place of eight lakhs. Neither Elphinstone nor Munro expected that the ex-Peshwa was to have such a long life, and Malcolm seems to have taken comfort in the thought that it was a personal allowance and would soon terminate at his death.<sup>2</sup>

Baji Rao was naturally anxious to have some provision for his family. In 1837 the Commissioner at Bithur informed the Governor-General that Baji Rao desired that his pension, or at least a portion of it, should be continued to his family after his death. The Governor-General advised the Commissioner to

<sup>1</sup> Gupta, *The Last Peshwa and the English Commissioners*, pp. 2-5, 91.

<sup>2</sup> For. Sec. Cons. 12 June 1818 (20A) (22); 24 July 1818 (24); 7 Aug. 1818 (18); *Papers on Pindary and Mahratta Wars*, p. 457; Malcolm, *Political History of India*, i. 527; Gleig, *Sir Thomas Munro*, iii. 261.



explain to Baji Rao that the pension was 'purely personal to himself' and would not descend either in part or in full to his adopted sons. In 1840 the Government of the North-Western Provinces instructed the Commissioner that on the ex-Peshwa's death 'an adopted son or other claimants' to his property should be informed that their claim was 'restricted to the private property of the Peshwa'; they had no right to 'any consideration of the Government on the ground of their connection with him'. The question was also referred to the Directors of the East India Company, who agreed with the Government of India that it was 'unnecessary at present to take into consideration the claim which the ex-Peshwa urges on behalf of his adopted son'.<sup>1</sup> The Directors believed that Baji Rao's pension had 'afforded him the means of accumulating an ample patrimony for his heir'.<sup>2</sup> The question was, however, never allowed to rest. Three years later, in 1847, the Commissioner informed the Governor-General that he had been 'frequently much pressed on the subject of a future pension' for Baji Rao's family, and that for some time Baji Rao had contemplated sending an agent to England to urge his case before the Directors. The plan was ultimately abandoned. The Commissioner wrote that the ex-Peshwa's hopes rested on the 'favourable impression' which might be made on the mind of the Governor-General, and through his intervention he expected to have 'a favourable reconsideration' of his wishes.<sup>3</sup>

This was probably the last occasion in Baji Rao's lifetime when the question of the continuation of the ex-Peshwa's pension was brought by the Commissioner before the Governor-General. The ex-Peshwa had not the satisfaction of securing an allowance for his adopted son Nana Sahib. But in his will, made in 1841, he made him the sole successor to his property. After his death 'Dhondoo Pant Nana, eldest son, Mookh Purdhan' would be the 'master and heir to the *guddee* of the Peshwa' and would be the 'sole possessor of his wealth and property' and exercise 'sole control over them'. No separate provision was made for Baji Rao's widows and the younger son, Gangadhar Rao Bala Sahib. It was,

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 6 Nov. 1847 (207); Gupta, op. cit. pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



a. Nana Sahib as a young man. Royal Library, Windsor.



b. Nana Sahib, from Shepherd's *Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Caunpore*.





however, stated that 'Dhondoo Pant and his children and heirs' were to 'give due and brotherly support according to custom to his younger brother, Gangadhar Rao Bala Sahib, his nephew Pandurang Rao Sadashiv, and to their children and heirs'. 'In the event of having hereafter a son of my own body,' Baji Rao added, he was to be 'a Mookh Purdhan and heir to the *guddee* of the Paishwa' and the sole master of all his property. The will was duly attested by Baji Rao's *dewan*, Ramchandra Pant Subedar, Ramchandra's son Nana Narayan Rao, and the Commissioner, James Manson. The use of the term *Mookh Pradban*, was no doubt a natural inclination to cling to the old family title, that at the time had lost all significance. It also probably indicates that Baji Rao still hoped that an allowance for the Peshwa's family might be considered by the Government.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib, who thus became the heir to Baji Rao's property, was a young man in his thirties at the time of his father's death. Though he was one of the principal leaders of the outbreak of 1857, not much is known about his early life, and from stray bits of information one comes across, his figure does not emerge very clearly. Baji Rao had a personal charm of his own and was a popular figure in his retirement. This was largely due to his charities, the memory of which the present generation at Bithur still cherishes, and to the romantic interest that attaches itself to fallen greatness. Many never ceased to regard him as the Peshwa. According to a newspaper report, during his last illness 'his residence and the roads about it were literally filled by people anxiously enquiring after the state of his health'.<sup>2</sup> Nana Sahib never enjoyed such popularity. But he apparently made a favourable impression on some. Morland, who was the Commissioner for a short period after Baji Rao's death, described him as a 'quiet unostentatious young man and not at all addicted to any extravagant habits'.<sup>3</sup> Others, however, did not always share Morland's opinion of Nana Sahib. John Lang, who came to India one year before the outbreak and enjoyed Nana's hospitality at

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 26 Feb. 1858 (165-70); Gupta, op. cit. pp. 99-100, 194-7.

<sup>2</sup> The *Englishman and Military Chronicle*, 11 Feb. 1851.

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 3 Oct. 1851 (9) enclosure.

Bithur, considered him 'not a man of ability nor a fool'.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Maude, who accompanied General Havelock on his march to Cawnpore in July 1857, never met Nana Sahib, but was told by Dr. Tresidder, who had attended Nana in his professional capacity, that he was 'an excessively uninteresting person', and Maude's account makes him singularly so: 'between thirty and forty years of age, of middle height, stolid features and increasing stoutness, he might well have passed for the ordinary shopkeeper of the bazaar, had it not been for the Marhatta contour of the turban.' Maude thought that he 'did not speak English, and his habits of self-indulgence had no tinge of poetry about them. He was particular about his *ghee*, loved the eyes of the dancing girls rubbed round with lamp black, and their lips rosy with the juice of betel-nut; whilst his ear for music was satisfied with the rude viol and tomtom (or small hand drum) that accompanied their slowly-revolving petticoats. But of any of the refinements of sensual enjoyment he was wholly ignorant'.<sup>2</sup>

Baji Rao was an educated person, well versed in Sanskrit and well-known as a patron of Marathi poetry of a frivolous nature. It is a pity one knows so little about Nana Sahib's education. Martin thought that the British Government never made any effort 'to influence Baji Rao in the education of his adopted son'.<sup>3</sup> Mead's statement that Nana Sahib 'received English education' does not seem to be quite accurate.<sup>4</sup> Martin believed that Nana knew very little English.<sup>5</sup> Lang, however, found him holding in his hand three English newspapers, the *Delhi Gazette*, the *Mofussilite* and the *Englishman*.<sup>6</sup> But his knowledge of English, if any, was apparently limited, for he had in his employ a Eurasian named Todd, who, as he told Lang, explained to him the contents of the journals.

Nana Sahib is sometimes reported to have been fond of European society. But it is not fair to imagine, as some writers seem to do, that his professed friendship with the English was part of a

<sup>1</sup> Lang, *Wanderings in India*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Maude and Sherer, *Memoirs of the Mutiny*, i. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, *The Indian Empire*, ii. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Mead, *The Sepoy Revolt*, p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, *op. cit.* p. 249.

<sup>6</sup> Lang, *op. cit.* p. 113.



design. His object perhaps was to impress favourably the European society at Cawnpore and the foreign visitors at Bithur, in the hope that ultimately the Government might be induced to reconsider the question of granting a portion of his father's pension to him. Mead's statement that he was 'a frequent visitor at the tables of Europeans of rank' is no doubt an exaggeration.<sup>1</sup> Kaye pointed out that some authors confused Nana Narayan Rao, son of Ramchandra Pant, Baji Rao's *dewan*, with Nana Sahib.<sup>2</sup> It is not unlikely that Mead has made the same mistake.

There is a completely opposite view, according to which Nana never came to Cawnpore, as he feared that the Company's Government would not show him proper courtesy. Martin, however, quotes an account published in the *Illustrated Times*, the writer of which knew Nana Sahib intimately and always regarded him as 'one of the best and the most hospitable natives in the Upper Provinces'.<sup>3</sup> Nana maintained at Bithur a suite of rooms for the use of Europeans and also offered carriages and horses for their use. He occasionally gave parties to the European residents at Cawnpore and distributed prizes after dances and sports, but he hardly mixed with his guests. Martin says 'he gave sumptuous entertainments, made hunting parties for strangers of distinction, and was always ready to lend his elephants and . . . his equipages also for the use of the neighbouring sahibs and memsahibs'.<sup>4</sup>

Court, who was the Magistrate of Cawnpore before the Mutiny, wrote to *The Times* that it was a common error to think that 'the Nana was in frequent association with English residents. . . . Disgusted at his deprivation by the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, of his salute as heir of the Peshwa, or of any salute, he shut himself up in his palace at Bithoor, and the only Europeans he ever saw were the magistrate of the district or the Commissioner of the Division or other official who was under an obligation, since the abolition of the Resident's office, to visit him periodically. The Nana would not move to pay his respects to the Vice-

<sup>1</sup> Mead, *op. cit.* p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *History of the Indian Mutiny* (1889), i. 423.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, *op. cit.* p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

roy [Governor-General] even, because deprived of his salute'. Nana Sahib, however, occasionally entertained Europeans. Court mentioned that on the occasion of the annual religious fair at Bithur he 'provided entertainment for the European visitors in the house which in former times was "The Residency"'. But the Nana never appeared as the host.<sup>1</sup> Baba Bhat or Bala Rao represented him.<sup>1</sup>

Another letter in *The Times* mentioned the holding of 'a large party at Bithur in the winter of 1851-55 to the European residents at and near Cawnpore'. The party lasted the whole day and till late at night; Nana Sahib appeared for about half an hour. The guests were entertained to 'breakfast, lunch, archery, dinner and a ball in the evening'.<sup>2</sup>

The only European habit that Nana Sahib seems to have acquired was playing billiards. Lang played with him during his stay at Bithur. 'I am not a bad billiard player', Lang writes, 'but it was quite evident to me that he suffered me to beat him as easily as I did, simply out of what he considered to be politeness.' Lang also gives an interesting account of a dinner as his guest at Bithur. 'I sat down to a table twenty feet long . . . which was covered with a damask tablecloth of European manufacture, but instead of a dinner napkin there was a bedroom towel. The soup . . . was served up in a trifle dish which had formed a part of a dessert service belonging to the 9th Lancers—at all events the arms of that regiment were upon it; but the plate in to which I ladled it with a broken tea cup, was of the old willow pattern. The *pilao* which followed the soup was served upon a huge plated dish, but the plate from which I ate it was of the very commonest description. The knife was a bone-handled affair; the spoon and the fork were of silver and of Calcutta make. The plated side dishes containing vegetables were odd ones, one was round and the other was oval. The pudding was brought in upon a soup plate of blue and gold pattern and the cheese was placed before me on a glass dish belonging to a dessert service. The cool claret I drank out of a richly cut champagne glass and the beer out of an American tumbler, of the very worst quality.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1874.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Lang, *op. cit.* pp. 107, 114.



Nana Sahib's hospitality was not faultless, but following the common practice of Indian aristocracy, he kept an open house for Europeans. It is not surprising therefore that he was treated with considerable respect by the British officials at Cawnpore, to whom he was known by his courtesy title of Maharaja of Bithur.

After the ex-Peshwa's death in 1851, Nana Sahib's chief concern was making out a case for a suitable allowance for himself; he had also other causes for worry. As soon as Baji Rao's will was published it was challenged by a lady calling herself Yasoda Bai, widow of Peshwa Savai Madhav Rao. After Savai Madhav Rao's death in 1796, his widow, Yasoda Bai, who was then a child, was made to adopt Baji Rao's younger brother, Chimnaji Appa. Chimnaji became the Peshwa. But he was removed from office after a few weeks. The adoption was declared invalid and Yasoda Bai was taken to Raigarh, where she was reported to have died in 1810. Six years later, however, a lady calling herself Yasoda Bai claimed that the story of the death was false, and as Savai Madhav Rao's widow, demanded her husband's property. It caused a good deal of embarrassment, but after some enquiry she was declared to be an impostor. Similar claims were made by her about 1826 and in 1829. Both attempts were unsuccessful, and in 1834, when she again pressed her claims, the Commissioner at Bithur suggested to the Government of India that she should be prosecuted for false impersonation and attempts to benefit herself by fraudulent means. The Government was not prepared to take such measures, and in 1849 a similar claim was preferred by the same lady.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after Baji Rao's death it was found that she had a more ambitious scheme. She had then made her home in Calcutta and resided at Chitpur, in the northern part of the city. She contended that the will by which Nana Sahib had become the sole heir of the ex-Peshwa's property was a forgery, and produced a document which she called the last will and testament of Baji Rao. It made her the sole heir of Baji Rao's property and left out Nana Sahib altogether. Her story was that she was the real Yasoda Bai and had escaped from her prison. It was commonly believed that she had

<sup>1</sup> Gupta, *op. cit.* pp. 50-52; For. Pol. Cons. 29 Dec. 1849 (373) enclosures.

died at Raigarh, but in 1828 a *panchayat* of three hundred Brahmins assembled at Benares and declared her to be the real Yasoda Bai. Baji Rao also, 'repenting his cruel conduct towards her,' acknowledged her as Savai Madhav Rao's widow and 'became friendly to her and corresponded with her up to the time of his death', and informed her that should she survive him, he would 'make her *malick* [owner] of all his property'. On 13 June 1851, a fortnight before his death, he is said to have dictated his last will, which was taken down by a clerk named Ramchandra Narayan, and Baji Rao duly signed it and affixed his seal to it. It was handed over to the clerk with instructions to deliver it immediately after his death.

It was also stated in this document that Baji Rao had previously sent an agent to Yasoda Bai entreating her to see him at Bithur, but that she was then unable to come. The ex-Peshwa feared that his 'servants, connections and brethren of the same caste or sect' would waste and appropriate his property, and he repented that in the past he had appropriated to himself estates belonging to Yasoda Bai. This was a 'very wicked proceeding' and the dying Peshwa wanted to atone for it. 'It is my will,' Baji Rao stated, 'that after me you may possess my entire estate and substance. . . . You are the *malick* or mistress of my wealth . . . all the property and effects I possess at the present time or whatever may hereafter accrue to my estate within the jurisdiction of the Governor-General-in-Council and the Court of Directors and Her Majesty's Supreme Court and Her Majesty the Queen of England, that you do possess and take to yourself. My two wives and two daughters are very young and you will support and protect them, but they have no claim of ownership.'<sup>1</sup> By signing away the whole of his property to Yasoda Bai he hoped to obtain forgiveness for past wrongs.

This document, if genuine, would have been the last will and testament of the ex-Peshwa. As it was drawn up only fifteen days before his death, it would have automatically cancelled his earlier will made in 1841. But Archibald Grant, solicitor to the East India Company, thought this will was 'a very suspicious document' and the Government of India considered that the person

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 21 Aug. 1857 (163).



calling herself Yasoda Bai was 'an impostor and the alleged will therefore a forgery'. The fact that no provision was made for the ex-Peshwa's widows and daughters in the will, their maintenance being left solely to the mercy of Yasoda Bai, and that the adopted sons, Nana Sahib and Bala Sahib, were not even mentioned, all these add to one's suspicion. This is further increased by Yasoda Bai's accusation that Nana was not really the adopted son of the ex-Peshwa.

The lady calling herself Yasoda Bai applied to the Supreme Court for probate of Baji Rao's will. Baji Rao's next of kin and Grant, solicitor to the East India Company, were served with special citations to appear in the Supreme Court within four days and 'to accept or refuse probate of the will of Baji Rao' or show cause why probate of the will should not be granted to Yasoda Bai, 'the executrix named in the will of the deceased.' Grant thought that the next of kin, the widows and the daughters of the ex-Peshwa residing at Bithur, could not 'possibly be served with the citations, much less appear within the time limit to show cause'. He suspected that Yasoda Bai's real intention was to secure the Company's papers left by the ex-Peshwa. She would 'then be in a position to prosecute her appeal in the equity suit instituted by her as the administratrix' of the estate of Chimnaji Appa.<sup>1</sup> Without the funds, her appeal would 'not be vigorously, if at all prosecuted'. Grant felt that it would be extremely difficult for her to prove that she was Savai Madhav Rao's widow. The two persons on whose affidavits her identity was sought to be established were Rawaji of Gwalior, an employee of Sindhia, and Ramchandra Rao Baba of Calcutta, a relation of Yasoda Bai. Much would depend on how they fared at the cross examination in court. At the same time it was extremely difficult to prove the death of the real Yasoda Bai. Baji Rao and Chimnaji Appa, whom Yasoda Bai had adopted, considered the plaintiff to be an impostor. But it was unfortunate that no attempt had been made 'to confront her with them and set the important question of identity at rest'. Much of the evidence in support of the death of the real Yasoda Bai was 'hearsay and therefore inadmissible' as evidence in

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 18 June 1851 (28) (29).



a court of law. Grant thought that the evidence of those who called themselves 'eye-witnesses of her death and ceremonies consequent thereof' was 'shaky'. Their statements were 'possibly and even probably true', but a 'cross-examination might expose them to severe criticism.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary to trace the various phases of the contest. It dragged on till after the Mutiny. The plaintiff was prevented from obtaining probate by a caveat entered by the East India Company's solicitor. Though this was ostensible on behalf of Nana Sahib, she complained that it was 'in reality on behalf of and under the directions and instructions' of the East India Company. She did not proceed with the proving of the will, 'by reason of her having no funds' for meeting the legal expenses.

The occupation of Cawnpore by the British troops and Nana's flight from Bithur once more gave Yasoda Bai a suitable opportunity. In August 1857 she filed a bill of complaint in the Supreme Court, Calcutta, charging, among other things, that the certificate issued by the Court of Cawnpore granting the possession of Baji Rao's property to Nana Sahib was irregular and collusive. The object of the East India Company was to prevent the rendering of any account of the property, which it had held before it was made over to Nana Sahib. It was also charged that Dhondoo Pant Nana 'never had been adopted as the son of Bajee Rao Raghoonath', and that the East India Company were well aware of it. The plaintiff therefore prayed that the will of Baji Rao as produced by her be established and she be declared the universal legatee and executrix of the whole estate. She prayed that account might be taken 'of money, securities, jewels, gold, silver, Company papers and other valuables belonging to Baji Rao, which were in the East India Company's possession at the time of his death or afterwards', and that they might pay to the plaintiff what was found due on such account. Finally, an 'injunction might be granted restraining the East India Company from parting with any of the property of the testator that might then be in their hands.'<sup>2</sup>

It would have been interesting to know the grounds for doubt-

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 3 July 1851 (2).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 21 Aug. 1857 (163).

ing Baji Rao's adoption of Nana Sahib. It was done with the fullest knowledge of the Commissioner at Bithur, the Governor-General was immediately informed of it, and the ceremony was witnessed by thousands of spectators.

T. H. Courie, standing counsel of the East India Company, advised that a demurrer to the bill should be filed by the Company and considered that it was a case in which the Statute of Limitations 'would afford not only a legal, but a substantial defence'. Peacock, on the other hand, was of opinion that 'it would be very unwise to demur to a bill charging collusion'. The Governor-General was of the same opinion. He thought 'it would be inexpedient to demur' and that 'no demurrer to the bill should be filed on the part of the Government'.<sup>1</sup>

There is little doubt that the litigation and the bill of complaint against Nana Sahib and the East India Company were the results of conspiracy, and that the plaintiff was an impostor. It would be useless to follow the story of Yasoda Bai's litigation. She never had any success, and the reorganization following the Mutiny evidently put an end to her ambition.

This lady was in no way connected with the Peshwa family. But Nana Sahib's relations with Baji Rao's widows were also unfortunate. The ex-Peshwa was survived by two of his wives, Maina Bai and Sai Bai, whom he had married at Bithur. He had made no special provision for them in his will. Nana Sahib was expected to look after all members of the family. But this arrangement did not work well. Almost immediately after Baji Rao's death his widows began to resent Nana Sahib's authority and complained of ill-treatment and restraints put on them. Things were further worsened by interference from one of Baji Rao's fathers-in-law and other interested persons. In less than six months from Baji Rao's death the Government of the North-Western Provinces began to receive petitions from the widows, to 'save' them from the control of Nana. On 12 May Balwant Rao, who called himself the *mukhtiyar* or legal agent of the 'Ranees of the late Maharaja', petitioned to the Lieutenant-Governor that Nana Sahib had 'imprisoned the Ranees and their daughters after

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 21 Aug. 1857 (166).



depriving them of their jewels' and prayed for his interference.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by an application from one F. N. Smith, soliciting permission to act as agent for the widows. The Government directed Morland to report upon the circumstances. In June, the affairs at Bithur took a more serious turn. The magistrate learnt that the widows had been encouraged by their advisers to organize a party of their own in resisting Nana Sahib's authority. Morland had an interview with the senior widow, who told him that she was 'entitled to assume all authority and have the disposal of all property, as the legal heir'. She complained that Nana Sahib had 'usurped and deprived her of that authority and all power in the palace'. Morland advised her to recognize Nana Sahib's authority and regard him as the head of the family, and not to listen to people who were trying to set her against her adopted son. His advice produced very little effect on her mind. She was very much under the influence of her father, who was present during the interview and dictated her answers. Morland remonstrated with him and told him that he was behaving very foolishly.<sup>2</sup> A few days later several persons, among whom were, as Morland thought, Maina Bai's father and her agent Balwant Rao, came to his residence and complained that they had been turned out of the palace and that Nana Sahib would not allow them to see the widows. Morland advised them to bring their complaint to him in the Court. The party, however, did not turn up. But three days later Smith introduced himself to Morland as attorney for the widows and complained that the ladies were 'placed in confinement in the palace and subject to very harsh treatment'. He therefore prayed for an order for securing a personal interview with them. Morland thought that the situation did not call for any intervention and that he would not be justified in giving Smith any order of admittance to the palace. He also refused to accept a statement from Smith, on the ground that the style was informal and that he was not satisfied about his qualifications to act as legal agent for the widows.<sup>3</sup>

Smith made another attempt to obtain recognition as a legally

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 28 May 1851 (46); 29 May 1851 (56).

<sup>2</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 30 June 1851 (49).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

constituted attorney. But Morland informed him that without instruction from the Government he could not let him act. Smith was, however, assured that Nana would allow the parties to stay in the palace, provided they did not oppose or deny his authority. Morland also paid two visits to the senior widow, and learnt that her grievances were that Nana had 'usurped supreme authority', that she was 'deprived of the society of her relatives', and that the personal ornaments of the widows were taken away. Morland's view was that 'nothing more has been done than is always required under similar circumstances'. Widows did not wear ornaments, and Morland thought that some valuable pieces of jewellery were 'probably taken possession of by the treasurer and locked up'. He had heard that Maina Bai's father had sold or pawned some of her personal ornaments 'to enable him to advance the somewhat exorbitant fee demanded by Mr. Smith'. Morland believed that the widows were treated with due respect and that the ejection of their relatives was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of authority in the palace.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of the North-Western Provinces approved of Morland's proceedings, but advised him to check any unduly rash measure that Nana might adopt towards the widows or their relatives.<sup>2</sup>

Morland was generally inclined to trust Nana Sahib and put little reliance on the statements of the other party. Another officer, H. H. Greathead, who officiated as Commissioner for a short period in 1852, also found it difficult to believe the stories told by the Ranis and their agents. The two widows, Maina Bai and Sai Bai, made a joint complaint to him on 28 April 1852, that they had been 'placed in confinement' and subjected to 'sufferings and hardships', and that protests to Morland had been in vain. Morland had told them that they must yield to the 'unwarranted and unauthorised wishes of Dhondo Pant Nana, an adopted servant'. 'Our abode of confinement,' the Ranis wrote, 'is a two storied house and the apartment is so much confined that the circulation of air is prevented and the influence of the sun so insufferable as likely to hasten us to our graves, should we remain

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 30 June 1851 (49).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



in it much longer.' 'From affluence' they had been 'reduced to misery, and [were] almost destitute of necessities'. They appealed to the Company's government 'to check the triumphs of daring wickedness over helpless innocence'.<sup>1</sup> As Greathead did not reply to the petition, the Ranis again wrote to him on 3 May, drawing his attention to their hardships and praying for the restoration of their liberty.<sup>2</sup> They failed, however, to convince Greathead. He wrote to the Government of the North-Western Provinces that the complaints of imprisonment and privations were 'only a form of words expressing a protest against domestic authority and rights of property with which Nana Sahib had been invested'. He believed in Nana Sahib's explanation that the ladies were occupying 'the apartments in which the senior of the two dwelt during the Peshwa's lifetime' and that the 'junior moved out of her own accord to the elder widow's room shortly after her husband's death'; her former dwelling place was 'still vacant and at her disposal'. Nana Sahib, Greathead said, was also agreeable to the Lieutenant-Governor's suggestion of settling an allowance on the Ranis, but he also thought 'it would be more creditable to the family and more comfortable to the widows if they did not seek a separate establishment'. In that case they would not be able to enjoy the protection of the guards and the use of equipage which Nana Sahib maintained.<sup>3</sup>

Muir, Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces, wrote to Greathead on 22 May that he considered that the complaints of ill-usage were destitute of foundation and that the Commissioner should induce the ladies to submit to Nana Sahib and live with him on amicable terms.<sup>4</sup> This was, however, beyond the Commissioner's power. On 2 June the Ranis sent another petition to the Lieutenant-Governor praying that orders might be issued 'for their removal to the Luchmee Chowk, their former residence, and that they be allowed to attend to their daily devotions, otherwise that they be set at liberty to seek an asylum for themselves'.<sup>5</sup> They also sent their agent, Balwant Rao, to the

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (25) enclosure.

<sup>2</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (26). <sup>3</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (24).

<sup>4</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (27). <sup>5</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 5 Aug. 1852.

Lieutenant-Governor, with a prayer that the Ranis 'be allowed the same control over affairs as was exercised by the Maharaja'. The Lieutenant-Governor decided that there was nothing which called for interference and the agent was dismissed.

This was followed on 22 August 1853 by an application from Anand Rao Bhonsla of Calcutta, who described himself as the attorney of the Ranis and solicited an order from the magistrate of Bithur for free access to two agents. The matter came before the Government of the North-Western Provinces in February 1854, and the application was returned to the magistrate with instructions to inform the petitioner that no such order was necessary.<sup>1</sup> The relations between the Ranis and Nana Sahib did not improve in the next few years, and with the outbreak at Cawnpore some of the Ranis' advisers came to a violent end.

It was sometimes considered that though the East India Company was not bound by the terms of Baji Rao's surrender, yet it would be fair to grant an allowance to his family. The Cawnpore correspondent of the *Mofussilite* made special pleadings for the granting of an allowance to Nana Sahib. The ex-Peshwa was a 'very liberal and generally respected person. . . . The idea of his being possessed of great wealth seems to be erroneous'. He 'lived up to his income' and his debts would 'swallow up all his property'. A suitable allowance would 'enable the surviving members of the family, at least for one generation to maintain their stations in life . . . the family of one of the first Princes of the land ought not at once be consigned to poverty and oblivion'. 'A show of liberality' would 'captivate the minds of the people,' and their affection was the 'surest foundation for an empire'.<sup>2</sup>

Opinions, however, were not unanimous. The *Delhi Gazette*, on 5 February, expressed a very different view, and came out with an attack on the East India Company's 'system of outdoor relief to princes in distress'. 'From 1817, the date of his [Baji Rao's] dethronement to the present year' he 'continued to receive a yearly pension of nine lakhs from the British government. . . . He has cost the State, which borrows money at five per cent interest,

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 7 Sept. 1853 (6); 16 Feb. 1854.

<sup>2</sup> The *Mofussilite*, 4 Feb. 1851.



much more than three million sterling for his own support alone. . . . 'In no other country would such an allowance have been granted to such a man. When royalty in Europe abdicates or is deposed it lives on alms with James II or Louis 18th. The king's pay is drawn only by the king. Native princes who have sat on usurped thrones shew no favour to the heirs of former occupants. . . . The sum paid to Baji Rao would have constructed a Ganges Canal or made a Railway from Calcutta to Delhi.'

Shortly after Baji Rao's death, Nana Sahib petitioned to the Government for the continuation of his father's pension. The Commissioner forwarded the application and also recommended to the Government that a portion of the pension might be continued to Nana Sahib, subject to a periodical reduction. By this time Dalhousie had resolved 'not to be misled by sentiment', and Nana Sahib was told that it would not be possible for the Government to meet his prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Morland prepared a statement of the property left by Baji Rao, and also of the dependants who would be thrown out of employment at his death. According to this list, Nana Sahib inherited Government promissory notes to the extent of sixteen lakhs of rupees in the 5 per cent. loan, yielding an annual income of eighty thousand rupees. He also possessed jewels to the value of ten lakhs, gold ornaments worth eight lakhs, silver plate and ornaments worth twenty thousand, and gold mohors and coins to the value of three lakhs of rupees. The first three items, Morland considered, could 'scarcely fairly be considered as available assets, as a native of the Nana Sahib's rank would never under the most pinching circumstances convert the family jewels and plate into money'. Of the gold coins, he stated, nearly two-thirds had been expended in the payment of debts, and there was only about one lakh and ten thousand rupees in the treasury for the use of the family. The number of Baji Rao's followers living in his *jagir* was estimated at about 15,000 in 1847. Many of them were of advanced age, without the prospect of obtaining service anywhere. A few only were in the service of Nana Sahib, but many had neither the means nor the inclination to leave Bithur. Morland

<sup>1</sup> Gupta, *op. cit.* p. 195; Lee Warner, *Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, ii. 144.

also represented to the Government the pecuniary difficulties of Nana Sahib. 'Nana Sahib had inherited a large stud of horses, elephants, camels and other animals. He shared the common belief that to sell them would be derogatory to his position. He had given some away, but the maintenance of the rest cost him a good deal of money. At the Commissioner's advice he had cut down his establishments and considerably reduced his household expenses; still his monthly expenditure was very heavy and probably double his income.'

The Commissioner also forwarded to the Government of the North-Western Provinces an application from Nana Sahib, dated 29 July 1851, for reconsideration of the question of an allowance. Nana Sahib stated that there was no instance 'in which the family of any Chief of this country was denied the fulfilment of their expectations'. He cited instances of States like Gwalior, Indore, Bharatpur, Nagpur, Banda, Bhopal and others. The rulers of some of these States were the servants of the Peshwa. Therefore Nana Sahib, 'son and heir of the late Peshwa of the Deccan and Hindoostan,' could claim a greater share of the consideration and favour of the British Government. He had no means of meeting his obligations, and further reduction of his establishment was impossible. He therefore hoped that his case would be favourably considered by the Lieutenant-Governor and the Governor-General.<sup>1</sup>

'The adopted son,' Morland stated, could have 'no real claim whatever on the British Government', but instances were common when the Government had 'usually continued some pecuniary consideration to the next generation of the incumbent to break the fall, and save the family from distress and penury'. He concurred with Colonel Manson and suggested that a portion of the Peshwa's pension might be continued to Nana Sahib, on the express condition that he would support all the retainers of his adoptive father.<sup>2</sup>

In his Minute of 15 September the Governor-General described the Acting Commissioner's suggestions as 'uncalled for and unreasonable', and recorded his objection to the policy of granting an

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 3 Oct. 1851 (8).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



allowance to Nana Sahib. He would 'by no means consent to any portion of the public revenue being conferred upon' the family. 'For thirty years,' the Governor-General wrote, 'the Peishwa received an annual stipend of £80,000 besides the proceeds of his *jageer*.' In that time he received the enormous sum of more than two millions and half sterling. He had no charges to maintain, he has left no sons of his own; and has bequeathed property to the amount of twenty-eight lakhs to his family.

'Those who remain have no claim whatever on the consideration of the British Government. They have no claim on its charity, because the income left to them is amply sufficient for them. If it were not ample, the Peishwa out of his vast revenues ought to have made it so; and the probability is that the property left is in reality much larger than it is avowed to be. Wherefore under any circumstances, the family have no claim upon the Government.'

In October, the Commissioner was informed of the Governor-General's decision, and he was directed to communicate it in a suitable manner to the several members of the ex-Peshwa's family.

There was hardly any likelihood that Lord Dalhousie would be prevailed upon to change his views. Nana Sahib therefore decided to appeal to a higher authority, the Court of Directors. On 29 December 1852 a person calling himself 'Minister of Maharaja Sreemunt Dhoondoo Punt Nana Sahib' wrote to the Government of India asking for permission to present a memorial to the Court of Directors and enclosed a copy of it.<sup>2</sup> The document was prepared with much care and, unlike the earlier appeal to the Governor-General, was not based primarily on grounds of sentiment but on a firmer foundation. Nana Sahib pleaded that a discontinuance of the pension would be improper. When, by the Treaty of June 1817, Baji Rao surrendered his Peshwaship and his territories to the East India Company, he had stipulated suitable support 'for himself and his sons and successors'. It was never his intention that he 'should give up and forsake on behalf of himself and his heirs and descendants all and every claim' for a pension 'to be merely drawn during the term of his own natural life'. Moreover, the pension was bestowed on the ex-Peshwa not

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 3 Oct. 1851 (8).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 28 Jan. 1853 (105).

'as a sort of free gift, but in virtue of a subsequent, formally entered into, and ratified treaty, according to which the British Government were put in possession of a large annual revenue, a small portion only of which was paid to His Highness in the shape of a pension for the support of himself and family'. There was therefore 'a *de facto* presumption, that the payment of one is contingent upon the receipt of the other, and hence, that as long as those receipts' continued, 'the payment of the pension was to follow.' Nana Sahib was 'at a loss to account for the difference between the treatment, by the Company, of the descendants of other princes and that experienced by the family of the Peshwa'. The ruler of Mysore 'was a relentless enemy' of the East India Company, but 'when that chieftain fell sword in hand, the Company, far from abandoning his progeny to their fate, have afforded an asylum and a liberal support to more than one generation of his descendants'. Similarly, the Company 'delivered the dethroned emperor of Delhi from a dungeon, reinvested him with the insignia of sovereignty and assigned to him a munificent revenue' which was continued to his descendants. 'Wherein', Nana Sahib asked, 'is your memorialist's case different?'

In previous communications on the subject between the Government of the North-Western Provinces and the Governor-General, Nana Sahib was described as only an adopted son. Nana Sahib felt that this might have influenced the decision of the Governor-General. He therefore tried to show that the position of an adopted son was in no respect different from that of a natural-born son in India, and cited the practice of Indian law courts and quoted from Sutherland and Sir William Macnaghten, authorities on Hindu law. In the case of Bajji Rao's brother, Amrit Rao, who was an adopted son, a provision was guaranteed to him by the Company, and also to Amrit Rao's adopted son. There were many cases, as in Gwalior, Indore, Dholpur, Nagpur, Bharatpur, Bhojpur, Phaltan and Jamkhandi, where the adopted sons of sovereign princes were regarded as rightful heirs by the Company. The same principle was 'evinced in the daily practice of the Company's courts all over India'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 28 Jan. 1853 (106).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



The contention that the ex-Peshwa had left or should have left a sufficient provision for the maintenance of his family, Nana Sahib considered as immaterial. There was no condition that he 'should be compelled to expend every fraction of an annual allowance . . . Nobody on earth had a right to control the expenditure of that pension and if His Highness the late Bajee Rao had saved every fraction of it, he would have been perfectly justified in doing so.' Did the British Government ever enquire in what manner the pension granted to any of its retired servants was spent, or whether any of them saved a portion, and what portion, of his pension? Another point to be remembered was that the pension of eight lakhs was not exclusively for the support of the ex-Peshwa and his family, but also for the maintenance of a large retinue of followers who accompanied him to Bithur and settled there.

Nana Sahib also argued that the Government of India's action in the past raised a presumption that the ex-Peshwa's pension would be continued to his adopted son. He had informed the Government of his intention to adopt, and in 1844 he had communicated to the Governor-General that he wished that Nana Sahib should succeed him in his emoluments. Ordinarily it would have been unnecessary to write to the Government, for 'full and free exercise of all religious and domestic ceremonies and formalities' had been guaranteed to all Indians. The ex-Peshwa's object was 'to obtain the concurrence of the British Government to a measure which . . . would confer upon the adopted son all those titles, privileges and emoluments' which he had enjoyed. The Government replied that the matter would be considered 'at a proper session'. The Court of Directors also approved of the reply, and the Government's long continued silence led the ex-Peshwa to surmise that the Government had tacitly consented to extend to his successor the privileges 'which the adoption of a son in accordance with the precepts of the *shastras* implied'. He therefore never considered it necessary to make any further references to the British Government.

Finally, Nana Sahib pleaded his 'extreme pecuniary embarrassments' and indicated his willingness to 'come to any equitable settlement . . . regarding his claim,' and the continuance 'of the

territory of Bithur in its present relations'.<sup>1</sup> On 26 January 1853 Nana Sahib's agent was informed that the memorial would be forwarded to the Court of Directors at an early opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the statements in the memorial do not appear to be correct. The ex-Peshwa could not be altogether ignorant of the intention of the Government to stop the pension after his death. In 1838 he had been informed that his stipend was purely personal and the whole or part of it would not descend to his heir. Two years later, he was told again that his adopted son would not inherit the dignity of the Peshwa and was not entitled to any consideration from the Government. The Directors, however, were not always prepared to face the question, and after 1840 considered it unnecessary to examine the ex-Peshwa's claims on behalf of his adopted sons.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that their silence had encouraged Baji Rao and Nana Sahib to hope there was still some likelihood of the question being reconsidered.

Nana Sahib's memorial of December 1852 did not produce any effect on the Court of Directors. It declined to accede to his prayer, and the Governor-General-in-Council informed him that the Court had decided that he had 'no claim whatever' to the pension, and that his application was 'wholly inadmissible'.<sup>4</sup>

This nearly destroyed Nana Sahib's hopes. But he decided to take one more chance. On 12 August 1853 his agent, Jawalaprasad, who was then in Calcutta, requested the Governor-General to forward another memorial to the Court of Directors. In the document addressed to the Court, Nana Sahib stated that he had discovered that 'owing to the miscomprehension' of the writer of the first memorial, 'some facts and arguments connected with his case' had been 'erroneously stated', and that he had 'come to the knowledge of certain correspondence'. This, he believed, would justify him 'in again submitting his case'.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of such assurances, the memorial to the Court of Directors contains little that is new. It was a redraft of the earlier one and contained mostly the same arguments. Nana Sahib stated that the

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 28 Jan. 1853 (106). <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 28 June 1853 (107).

<sup>3</sup> Gupta, *op. cit.* pp. 93-94.

<sup>4</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 1 July 1853 (68).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 14 Oct. 1853 (79) (80).



Court's despatch of 6 November 1844, which said that it was 'unnecessary at present to take into consideration' the claim of the adopted sons, was not properly understood by his father. It was received by him and all his household as an assurance that justice would be done to his family when he was no more. Had the intention of the Government been 'openly avowed' and 'explicitly made known' to the ex-Peshwa, 'he might have taken measures to secure a provision for his family.' The ex-Peshwa's pension was not 'a pension to a servant or a retainer'. It was not 'granted as favour but as a compensation for the territories he had given up'. Nana Sahib also cited the case of the Nawab Nazim of Murshidabad. He received a pension 'merely because his ancestors exercised a delegated power over territories ceded by' the emperor. The pension had been continued for several generations and would continue as long as Mir Jafar had an heir. Finally, he appealed to the generosity of the East India Company and prayed that if the consideration of justice failed to make the due impression, he trusted that the Court would reflect on his distress and direct that if not the whole, at least a considerable portion of the pension, might be assigned to him and his descendants. But if the Court decided to adhere to its former decision, he would prefer an appeal to the Board of Control, and he asked for the necessary permission.<sup>1</sup>

The Directors, however, found no reason to alter their previous decision. Nana Sahib was informed that the question had been finally settled and that in future no further application would be entertained by the Government of India. This was considered the best way of putting an end to useless communications. Nana Sahib, however, was not prepared to regard the episode as closed. As there was no hope of having any redress through the usual channels, he thought of bringing his case to the notice of the Ministry in England and the British public. The practice of sending an agent to London to represent a case was not unknown. The Raja of Satara had done it, and so had the Rani of Jhansi, and also the Emperor of Delhi. He had planned it some time ago, and contemplated sending Subedar Ramchandra Pant's son,

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 14 Oct. 1853 (79)(80).



Narayan Rao, to England. But the idea was then abandoned, and after Ramchandra Pant's death friendly relations between Nana Sahib and Narayan Rao ceased to exist. When Nana Sahib again thought of sending an agent to London, the person he selected was Azimullah, and he hoped that Azimullah would be able to achieve in London what his agent in Calcutta could not.

Azimullah was a prominent figure during the Mutiny at Cawnpore, and it is easy to understand the bitterness many contemporary English writers felt about him. Lang describes him as 'villainous'. He, however, never met him, for when he came to Bithur, Azimullah had left for England, and Lang's estimate was evidently based on the part played by Azimullah during the Mutiny. He was, according to Mowbray Thomson, 'originally a Khitmutghur (waiter at table) in some Anglo-Indian family.' He read in the Government school at Cawnpore and later on became a teacher in the same institution, 'and from the last named position he was selected to become the *vekeel* or prime agent of the Nana.'<sup>1</sup> A little additional information is given by Shepherd. He calls Azimullah a charity boy, his mother earning her livelihood as an ayah or maid servant. The young boy read at the free school and made good. He became a teacher and then a *munshi* to Brigadier Scott. Under Scott's successor, Brigadier Ashburnham, he was accused of bribery and corruption and was dismissed. He then entered Nana Sahib's service.<sup>2</sup> Azimullah was no doubt a man of considerable ability. Mowbray Thomson credits him with a thorough acquaintance with the English and the French language, 'so as to be able to read and converse fluently and write accurately in them both.'<sup>3</sup> Kaye describes him as 'a young and astute Muhommedan, with a good presence, a plausible address and a knowledge of the English language'.<sup>4</sup>

Azimullah arrived in London 'in the season of 1854', and passed himself off as an Indian prince. He was received in high society and 'made himself extremely conspicuous in the parks

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore*, pp.

9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* i. 79.

and Belgravian drawing rooms, and extremely troublesome at the public offices'. He seems to have been very popular with the ladies. Mowbray Thomson writes that along with the work in hand Azimullah was 'prosecuting a suit of his own of a more delicate character; but, happily for our fair countrywoman, who was the object of his attentions, her friends interfered and saved her'.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, in 1857, when the palace at Bithur was occupied by the British troops, General Roberts came across bundles of letters addressed to Azimullah. Roberts wrote to his sister Harriet, 'while searching over the Nana's palaces at Bithur the other day, we found heaps of letters directed to that fiend Azimullah Khan by ladies in England, some from Lady . . . ending "*Your affect. Mother*". Others from a young girl at Brighton named . . . written in the most lovable manner. Such rubbish I never read, partly in French, which the scoundrel seems to have understood; how English ladies can be so infatuated.'<sup>2</sup>

It did not take Azimullah long to realize that his visit would not achieve the desired result. Assisted by an Englishman named Biddle, he tried to press the claims of his master, but discovered that there was hardly any likelihood that the Court of Directors would change its decision. He left England in 1856, during the Crimean War, and while stopping on his way at Constantinople, met Russell, the correspondent of *The Times*. Russell saw him on several occasions and described him as a 'handsome slim young man of dark-olive complexion dressed in an oriental costume . . . and covered with rings and finery'. He spoke French and English and dined at the *table d'hôte*. Azimullah told Russell that while at Malta he heard of the Russian victory and decided to go to Constantinople, and that he was 'anxious about a passage to the Crimea'. He wanted 'to see this famous city and those great Roostums the Russians, who have beaten French and English together'. He boasted of his success in London society, and the freedom with which he mentioned the names of people of rank and the tone of his remarks induced Russell to look upon him with suspicion and alarm. Russell found him something of a

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *Letters written during the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 120-1.



riddle too. When invited to dine with him, Azimullah excused himself on the ground that he was a good Mohammedan. But when Russell came home that night he found him sleeping in his bed and his servant told him that he had enjoyed his stores very freely.<sup>1</sup>

Another Englishman, Captain E. M. Martineau, also remembered Azimullah. He travelled with him from Suez to Aden in October 1856, and 'had been struck by the tone of bitterness' in which he spoke of Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Nagpur. He never mentioned Nana Sahib, and Martineau thought that he had gone to England on behalf of the Ranis of Nagpur. Martineau again met him at the *dak* bungalow at Ambala in January 1857. Azimullah told him that 'he had come round from Bombay to visit the North-West Provinces' and was then proceeding to Bithur.<sup>2</sup>

The report of the failure of the mission reached Bithur before Azimullah returned from England. Lang says that Azimullah had written to Nana Sahib that 'the Company had bribed the Board of Control and the Privy Council'.<sup>3</sup> Nana was never tired of mentioning his grievances to his European guests, and as Martin says: 'Every guest who visited heard the Nana's grievances; and if of any rank, was urged on his or her return to England to make an effort for their redress.'<sup>4</sup> Lang had similar experience, and from the way in which he writes it is clear that he was highly amused. 'I was induced to promise that I would talk to the Governor-General and the council on the subject; and that if I did not succeed . . . I would on my return to England, take the earliest opportunity some day quietly after dinner . . . of representing to Her Majesty the exact state of the case.'<sup>5</sup>

Whether Nana Sahib really expected that something might happen through the intervention of his European friends, is difficult to say. There was hardly anything to hope for after the failure of Azimullah's mission. The Government of the North-Western Provinces was also anxious to put an end to the privileges enjoyed by Baji Rao and his adherents at Bithur. An Act was passed repealing Regulation I of 1832, and the inhabitants at

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *My Diary in India*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 725 (34).

<sup>4</sup> Martin, *op. cit.* p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Lang, *op. cit.* p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Lang, *op. cit.* p. 118.

Bithur were brought under the jurisdiction of the civil and criminal courts at Cawnpore. Shortly after Baji Rao's death the Commissioner, James Manson, left Bithur. Morland, the Magistrate and Collector of Cawnpore, was carrying on the work of the Commissioner till the final adjustment of the ex-Peshwa's affairs. In October 1851 he was ordered to dissolve his establishment at Bithur before the end of the next month. The services of the treasurer and the *munsbi* of the Commissioner's office were dispensed with and the English translator was absorbed into the Magistrate's office at Cawnpore. By the middle of 1852 the Commissioner's house at Bithur was sold and no trace of his office remained. Such articles as were used on ceremonial occasions, a silver-mounted umbrella, *chob*, *pandan*, *attardan* and *golabpash* were sent to the secretariat at Agra. The Commissioner's seal was handed over to the Government of the North-Western Provinces in May and was broken up.<sup>1</sup>

This was the end of the old order. Nana Sahib continued to live at Bithur. He was allowed to retain his father's *jagir* rent free, but it no longer enjoyed immunity from the jurisdiction of the Company's courts. With his ample pension Baji Rao had built a palace and a temple near the *brahmakund* and laid out a beautiful garden. He also maintained a large menagerie. Nana Sahib apparently shared some of his love of animals. When Lang came to Bithur, Nana Sahib showed him 'his elephants, his camels, his horses, his dogs, his pigeons, his falcons, his wild asses, his apes, his aviary full of birds and all the rest of his curiosities. Then he exhibited his guns and pistols by Purdey, Egg and other celebrated makers, his sword and daggers of every country and age'.<sup>2</sup> A British officer who took part in the destruction of the palace by the British troops described it as a 'magnificently furnished English house with all sorts of cows, dogs, horses and sheep in a large English paddock'.<sup>3</sup>

The Government of the North-Western Provinces, however, had no intention that the ex-Peshwa's family 'should be treated

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (24) (27); 30 June 1852 (26); Gupta, op. cit. p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Lang, op. cit. p. 119; Jones, *Recollections of a winter campaign in India*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Groom, *With Havelock from Allahabad to Lucknow*, p. 37.



in all respects as other ordinary persons'. 'It is desirable,' the magistrate of Cawnpore was told, 'that you will still maintain, to a certain extent, that friendly deportment and confidential intercourse which have hitherto been observed towards them by your predecessors and myself.'<sup>1</sup> The Government's treatment of Baji Rao's family was not always very tactful. In May 1851 the Commissioner was taken to task by the Lieutenant-Governor for requesting the divisional commander at Cawnpore to issue the usual annual supply of 1,000 rounds of blank musket cartridges for the use of Subedar Ramchandra Pant. Morland was told that the Lieutenant-Governor had always understood that the supply of cartridges was 'required for the use of the ex-Peshwa, and that now that he is dead, the object of the application is not apparent'. The Commissioner explained that the 'supply in question' had always been allowed 'for the use of the Subedar himself... for firing salutes on the occasion of the anniversary of the Hindoo god Hunooman and not for the special use of the ex-Paishwa', and 'as long as no defined orders were received from the Government relative to the affairs at Bithur', he supposed the Subedar 'was entitled to the indulgence'. The reply did not please the Lieutenant-Governor. He wanted to know what further instructions the Commissioner was expecting in addition to what he had already received; the 'Subedar could only have received the blank cartridges in virtue of his post in the ex-Peshwa's household and that of course no longer exists'.<sup>2</sup>

On 23 November 1852 one Raja Piraji Rao, calling himself 'secretary and agent to the Peshwa', made a request to the Government of the North-Western Provinces for the forwarding of a petition to the Government of India. On being questioned, Nana Sahib stated that the title assigned to him by his agent was with his cognizance and permission. The documents were returned to Nana Sahib and he was informed that no communication bearing 'such an assumption' would be received by the Government.<sup>3</sup>

The Government of India was quite right in objecting to Nana

<sup>1</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 22 May 1852 (27).

<sup>2</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 5 May 1851 (3) (4); 3 June 1857 (4) (5).

<sup>3</sup> N.W.P. Pol. Pro. 15 Dec. 1852 (14) (15) (16).

Sahib's describing himself as the Peshwa. But perhaps it was going too far to object to his use of the courtesy title 'Maharaja'. The use of such a title was not unknown in India, and one feels that the Government might have behaved with more tact and consideration. In 1853 Nana Sahib learnt that the 'Governor-General-in-Council recognized no such person as Maharajah Sreemunt Dhondoo Punt Nana Sahib'. He argued that the title of 'Maharaja' was applicable to him 'by the rules of oriental etiquette' and sanctioned 'by the custom of the country'. Such a title was 'given to descendants and representatives of sovereign princes' after they had 'abdicated the thrones of their fathers'. This was used 'solely as a distinction of rank and descent', without any political pretensions, and if permitted to be used, would be to him 'a source of consolation in his misfortune'.<sup>1</sup>

There was much truth in Nana Sahib's contentions. He was always referred to as Maharaja not only by the Indians but also by the Europeans at Cawnpore. In their private correspondence he was always the 'Maharaja' or the 'Raja of Bithur'. Nana Sahib's agent pleaded in vain that previously in the official correspondence with the Government of India, the title 'Maharaja' had been used and never objected to. The Government evidently thought that the use of this title might lead to complications in future, and Nana Sahib's attempts to secure his father's pension probably increased their fear. Nana Sahib was informed in December 1853 that no more petitions from him on the subject would be entertained by the Government of India.<sup>2</sup>

Nana Sahib must have begun to feel that the old order had changed. There was no hope that his father's pension would be paid to him; though he was popularly known as the Maharaja of Bithur, the Government would not agree to his use of the title. But it apparently made no change in his relations with the English. When the rising of the sepoy army seemed imminent at Cawnpore, the English naturally turned to the Maharaja for help. Little did they foresee the part he was going to play in the outbreak of 1857. Nana Sahib, too, could not possibly have imagined in the beginning what the future held in store for him.

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 16 Dec. 1853 (156).      <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 16 Dec. 1853 (157).



## THE BEGINNING AT CAWNPORE

SIR John Kaye thought that the Mutiny of 1857 was largely due to the worthy motives but erroneous ways of the administrators, the 'over eager pursuit of Humanity and civilisation of the Indian statesmen of the new School'.<sup>1</sup> One wonders whether the social and material changes in the first half of the nineteenth century had much to do with the outbreak of 1857, and whether their effects have not been always somewhat exaggerated.

It is not fair to imagine that India resented the introduction of foreign ideas more than any other country. Education was naturally restricted to a very small minority, but there had been an eagerness to assimilate the new learning. There was nothing very extraordinary about it. In eighteenth-century India, an educated person was expected to have some knowledge of Persian. The Brahmin's love for Persian literature was a subject for comment in contemporary Bengali poetry. In the nineteenth century, as the Company's power extended, Persian was gradually supplanted by English. Schools which imparted English education were established long before 1857, by European missionaries and also by Indians, and these institutions became more popular than what were known as vernacular schools. In missionary schools and colleges the Bible was universally taught. This did not in any way affect the popularity of such institutions. In the school established by Jaynarayan Ghosal at Benares, the Bible was studied.<sup>2</sup> At the request of the Reverend Carshore, missionary at Cawnpore, Baji Rao's *dewan* Ramchandra Pant established a school at Bithur for imparting English education. It is not said whether the Bible was taught there, but it seems very likely. The Reverend Carshore visited Baji Rao's palace in 1834 and preached there.

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* i. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 10.

He thought that the 'Mahrattas of Bajee Rao's camp' were 'well pleased with the Sermon on the Mount', and next year 'two hundred copies were disposed of in the space of half an hour'.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to say whether the enthusiasm of the Marathas was really due to the preaching of the Reverend Carshore, or whether Baji Rao and his followers decided to be prudent and polite to the missionary.

The early universities in India, at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, came as a result of popular demand and were not imposed by the Government. In 1845, when the proposal for a university was first made, the Directors of the East India Company thought that the time was not yet ripe. It was considered necessary to issue a warning to the Indian people not to neglect their own language. The Directors of the East India Company regretted 'the tendency of the people in some parts of India, more especially in the immediate vicinity of the presidency towns', to aim at 'a very moderate proficiency in the English language' and 'to neglect the study of the vernacular languages'.<sup>2</sup>

Early in the century the preaching of the missionaries was more often looked upon with curiosity and amusement than with hostility. It was about the middle of the nineteenth century that the over-zealousness of the missionaries and some preaching officers caused embarrassment to the Government. At Fatehpur, in the North-Western Provinces, prisoners undergoing terms of imprisonment were instructed in Christianity, and *patwaris* who were required to learn the *Nagari* script for their official work were sent to missionary schools, where they received lessons in Christianity as well. When universities were established in India, a few months before the outbreak of 1857, it was laid down that education in Government institutions should be exclusively secular and that no questions requiring an expression of religious belief from the student should be asked. This did not please the missionaries. They complained that 'heavenly wisdom' was being excluded from the schools. Even a man like Alexander Duff did not agree with the Government's view and hoped for the day when 'all

<sup>1</sup> Sherring, *The Indian Church during the great Rebellion*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *The Education Despatch of 1854*.



men in India would be equal under the shadow of the same religious faith'.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1857 a Delhi newspaper wrote, 'the notion that natives of India are inseparably prejudiced against missionary schools seems in the present day little better than a myth. Although the Bible is invariably made a class book, yet not only Hindoos of all castes, but even Mohamadans are to be found among the scholars.'<sup>2</sup> Probably the missionary schools remained popular even two or three months before the Mutiny, but there were factors which disturbed the public mind, and the comments in the newspapers were inadequate to remove the prevailing suspicion.

The abolition of the *sati* rite in 1829 and the passing of the Widow Remarriage Bill in 1856 must have shocked the orthodox school. But the measures were by no means universally unpopular. The Government had the support of a small but powerful section of the people and of some influential leaders of public opinion. In the first case, the Government had taken the precaution of securing the sanction of the priests, and in the second, their cause was taken up by a very distinguished educationist in Bengal. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar did not, however, exercise the influence of his predecessor, Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Nevertheless, no social stigma attached to his name for the support of an unpopular cause. Except for a brief spell, when the agitation was at its height, he never suffered in popularity. The literature, at least in some parts of India, expressed a sense of admiration and wonder at the changes introduced by Science. One wonders if the story of the conflict between western ideas and science and the Indian mind has not been always a little over-emphasized.

Whatever the people felt at the reforming zeal of the East India Company's Government or the disgruntled chiefs thought of Lord Dalhousie's measures, the outbreak of 1857 would not have been possible but for the unrest of the sepoys. From the beginning of 1857 the sepoy army in northern India began to show signs of alarm and disaffection. It was about the same time that *chapatis* and lotuses were said to have been distributed over a large area in

<sup>1</sup> *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, pp. 64, 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 12 March 1857.

northern India. An account published shortly after the outbreak blamed the Government for its failure to understand the significance of the 'mysterious cakes and lotus flowers'. According to the writer, the *chaukidar* or village policeman at Cawnpore 'ran up to another at Fatehgarh and gave him two *chapatis*' and directed him to make ten more and give two to each of the five *chaukidars* with the same instructions. The result was that 'in a few hours the whole country was labouring under commotion with chowkeydars running about with these cakes. The waves swept province after province with a speed at which official orders never fly'.<sup>1</sup> There is also a similar account of the circulation of a lotus flower among the regiments of the Bengal Army. 'A man appeared with a lotus flower and handed it to the chief of the Regiment. He handed it on to another . . . and when it came to the last soldier of a regiment he suddenly disappeared and took it on to the next station. There was not, it appears, a single regiment, not a detachment, not a station in Bengal through which the lotus flower was not thus circulated' and all this took place just after the annexation of Oudh.<sup>2</sup>

This popular account of the distribution of the *chapatis* and the lotuses should be a little modified. It was not as thorough and quick as one might infer from the description. The lotus is a rather delicate flower — it would be difficult to pass it from one person to another and from one regiment to the next. It did not grow everywhere the Bengal Army was stationed. It is a seasonal flower and blossoms mostly in autumn, and certainly not in February, when Oudh was annexed. No army officer seems to have come across an instance of actual circulation of a lotus, and it does not appear ever to have been mentioned in official records.

The source to which the author of this work is indebted appears to be a report in a newspaper published from Serampore near Calcutta. This is probably one of the earliest accounts of the distribution of the *chapatis*. The *Friend of India* wrote on 5 March 1857: 'One morning towards the end of the last month the officials of Futtehghurh were in commotion. From *thannab* after *thannab* there arrived little chupatties about two inches in diameter. They

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of the Indian Revolt*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



were accompanied by all kinds of reports by puzzled thanadars. . . . It appeared that a few evenings previous a chowkeydar in Cawnpore ordered a chowkeydar in Futtehghurh to make and bake twelve chupatties. . . . Two he was to retain. Two more were to be given to each of the five nearest chowkeydars. The order was obeyed and all night long there was running and baking of chupatties. . . . The five obeyed orders also and distributed their message to twenty-five, and so the affair went on, in geometrical ratio, the cakes sweeping over the district at a speed which no Indian post yet travels.'

The phenomenon was observed by some officers in the districts. In January 1857 Captain Keating noticed at Nimar in Central Provinces 'a general distribution of small cakes which were passed on from village to village'. These were distributed at Mandleshwar near Indore on 12 January and reached Bajenagar after three weeks.<sup>1</sup> Major Erskine, Commissioner of Saugor and Narmada territories, reported to the Government 'small wheaten cakes' passing 'in a most mysterious manner' from one village to another.<sup>2</sup> Thornhill, the Collector of Mathura, found about the end of January four small *chapatis* on his table, 'dirty little cakes of the coarsest flour, about the size and thickness of a biscuit.'<sup>3</sup> Captain Lloyd reported that *chapatis* were being distributed in Nimuch from February or early in March. He believed they might have come from the south and the east.<sup>4</sup>

There was, however, no unanimity as to where this practice originated. Edwards, Judge of Benares, believed that Barrackpore was the starting point and that the *chapatis* had entered his station from the neighbouring district of Shahjahanpur. Theophilus Metcalfe of Delhi thought that they originated at Lucknow and 'spread through only five villages of Delhi territory'.<sup>5</sup> Chuni, a news writer in Delhi, stated that these had come to the city from Karnal and Panipat.<sup>6</sup>

As to the purpose of the circulation of lotus and *chapati*, nothing

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleison, op. cit. i. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Thornhill, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 25 April 1857.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, *Personal Adventures during the Indian Rebellion*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1858, pp. 81, 85.



definite was known, but various suggestions were offered. A contemporary writer considered that as the lotus is always associated with the Buddhist religion, it was a call to the Buddhists to rise against British rule.<sup>1</sup> Chick believed that there must be some innocent explanation for the *chapatis*. He suggested that enquiries made at the time pointed to 'some superstition connected with the previous sickly season as the most probable origin of the strange procedure'.<sup>2</sup> The *Friend of India* did not know whether to take the story of the circulation of the *chapatis* seriously. It wondered whether all the *chaukidars* were 'about to strike for wages', or whether anybody was 'trying a new scheme for a parcel *dawk*'. Is it a treason or a jest? Is the *chaupatty* a fiery cross or only an indigestible edible, a cause of revolt or only of the colic?<sup>3</sup>

During Bahadur Shah's trial in Delhi, questions were put to several witnesses about the significance of the *chapatis*. One witness, a news writer, stated that some newspapers in Indian languages took it as a forecast of some coming disturbance and an invitation 'to unite for some secret object'.<sup>4</sup> Another witness, named Jitmal, who belonged to the same profession, thought there might be other different explanations. It could be a propitiatory observance for averting some calamity. Some, however, believed that the *chapatis* were being circulated by the Government and signified that everybody should be compelled to 'use the same food as the Christians and thus deprived of their religion'. Others took it as a warning that the Government was 'determined to force Christianity on the people by interfering with their food'.<sup>5</sup>

Before the Vellore Mutiny in 1806, there was a distribution of *chapatis*. At times of pestilence also a similar practice was not unknown. Captain Lloyd mentioned in a Delhi newspaper that it might have originated from 'a superstitious idea of allaying or preventing the ravages of diseases such as cholera, by a general distribution of cakes'. He also mentioned that *chapatis* were sent about to feed the village dogs during a cholera epidemic in his

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of the Indian Revolt*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Chick, *Annals of the Indian Rebellion*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> The *Friend of India*, 5 March 1857.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1858, p. 85.

district in 1854.<sup>1</sup> A similar practice was also observed in earlier times. The *Delhi Gazette* published a letter from one of its readers drawing attention to a paragraph in Malcolm's *Memoirs of India* about the circulation of coconuts in 1818. 'The war with the Pandarries was over (1818) and the country was in a state of tolerable tranquillity, when a sudden agitation is produced among the peaceable inhabitants; a number of coconuts are passed from village to village, with a direction to speed them to a specific destination (usually to the chief local authority). . . . The Patel of every village where the coconuts came carried them himself with breathless haste to another, to avert the curse which was denounced on all who impeded or stopped them for a moment.' Malcolm commented, 'a circumstance which for upwards of a month produced a very serious sensation over all central India remains to this moment a complete mystery.'<sup>2</sup>

The historians of the Mutiny of 1857 had no better luck. Kaye was not sure what the distribution of the *chapatis* signified. But he observed that wherever they travelled they gave rise to 'new excitements' and raised 'vague expectations'.<sup>3</sup> Theophilus Metcalfe, however, thought it would be clearly an error to think it was a superstitious attempt to check some prevailing sickness in the neighbourhood, for the *chapatis* were confined only to Government villages. Even those who circulated them believed that it was being done by order of the Government.<sup>4</sup> Munshi Mohonlal believed that there was some connection between the *chapati* and the outbreak. Asked in November 1857 whether he understood the significance of the distribution of the *chapati*, Mohonlal replied that its principal object was to find how quickly one 'could promulgate sedition throughout the country'.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of 1857 it was generally accepted that the *chapati* was connected with the outbreak, and Mohonlal repeated what was then a popular belief. The practice, however, was observed to continue even after the Mutiny was suppressed. A newspaper reported in June 1862, that the custom of sending *chapatis* or cakes

<sup>1</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 24 March 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and Malleison, *op. cit.* i. 421.

<sup>4</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1858, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 725, pp. 389-422.



from village to village which preceded the Mutiny had been revived in some districts again. The same newspaper published in September the news that dolls and children's clothes were being circulated in south India.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to prove that the *chapatis* had any connection with the Mutiny. But it is probably safe to say that the Mutiny would not have taken place but for the greased cartridge. There were some senior officers in the army who thought that the Bengal Army was coaxed and flattered, and that there was a lamentable lack of discipline in the army. 'The ordinary state of the Bengal Army' Jacob wrote, was such 'as must appear to an officer of the Royal or of the Bombay Army to be a state of mutiny'. In Bombay the practice of the European officers was 'to make the Hindoos soldiers, — instead of as in Bengal, the sepoy making the European officers half Hindoos'. Jacob had a poor opinion of the European officers in Bengal and he lamented their 'degrading of the European character by the adoption of native habits'. He wrote in 1850, 'there is more danger to our Indian Empire from the state of the Bengal Army, from the feeling there exists between the Native and the European . . . than all other causes combined.'<sup>2</sup> General Jacob lived to see the outbreak seven years later, but he had never imagined that a large scale mutiny of the sepoy army would ever take place. Three years before the Mutiny he wrote, 'I deny the possibility of the Sepoys mutinying while their English officers are alive and do their duty.'<sup>3</sup>

It is unfortunate that English officers did not always realize that the sepoy might have reasons to feel aggrieved. In March 1857 the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army referred to 'a widespread feeling of sullen disaffection' among the sepoy. 'The loyalty and fidelity of the Native troops have been often severely tried. . . . But human endurance has a limit and I emphatically warn the Government that the limit has been reached in the army.'<sup>4</sup> Much of what the Commander-in-Chief said about the Madras

<sup>1</sup> *The Friend of India*, 19 June, 18 Sept. 1862.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob, *The Native Army of India*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>3</sup> Pelly, *The Views and Opinions of John Jacob*, p. 220.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 724A, No. 58.



Army would apply to the Bengal Army also. Constant and unceasing duty, lack of old European officers in whom the sepoys had confidence, and the presence of young and inexperienced ones who were strangers to the country, were some of the ills from which every army suffered. While discussing the causes of the Mutiny, Munshi Mohonlal stated in November 1857 that the chief reason why the Government was unpopular with the 'respectable and influential people' was 'the distant contemptible [contemptuous] manner' with which they were 'treated by the generality of English gentlemen'.<sup>1</sup> Almost the same thing was said of the young officers of the Bengal Army by Subedar Sitaram: 'I always was good friends with the English soldiery, and they formerly used to treat the sepoys with great kindness . . . these soldiers are a different caste now — neither so fine nor so tall as they were; they seldom can speak one word of our language, except abuse. . . . The 17th Foot called us *babies*; the 16th Lancers never walked near our *chulas*, nor spat on our food.'<sup>2</sup>

It was not only the young officers who knew very little and cared less for the susceptibilities of the sepoys. Some senior officers also knew no better. It was believed to be possible to carry on one's duty efficiently and long without knowing any Indian language. General Jacob took pride in the fact that though he was 'tolerably acquainted with the natives of India', with whom he had spent the best part of his life, he had not passed in any language and could not read 'even the *Bagh-o-Babar*'.<sup>3</sup>

Jacob, however, believed that it would be injudicious for the Government to identify itself with the preaching of the missionaries. A State Religion in India was absolutely incompatible with the security of the British empire. The 'interference of Government or members of Government in their official capacities . . . to countenance or sanction the endeavours of missionaries, or any other minister of religion' was 'fraught with evil'.<sup>4</sup> Colonel S. G. Wheeler of the 34th Native Infantry, one of the regiments which revolted early in the Mutiny, regarding himself as the 'happy

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 725, pp. 387-422.

<sup>2</sup> Notgate, *From Sepoy to Subadar*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob, *op. cit.* p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Pelly, *op. cit.* pp. 8-9.

instrument of converting his neighbour to God'. He considered it his primary duty to distribute Christian tracts as the army marched, and took pride in the fact that he had sown the seeds of Christianity in some parts of the country years before any missionary was likely to set his foot there.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, about three weeks before the outbreak at Meerut a correspondent wrote in the *Delhi Gazette*, 'the duties of an Asiatic officer and Missionary are incompatible . . .' and the officer who proposed to unite the two, should 'take the honest course, resign his commission and devote himself to the labours of a Missionary life'. Another correspondent suggested that as officers 'on entering the service take an oath not to interfere with the religion of the natives, the officer who acted in the above manner should have been tried for acting at variance with his oath'.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Wheler's preaching by itself would not have led to any disturbances. He was not quite popular with his men. But the sepoy had his sense of humour. To his men he was probably one of those cranky individuals whom it was one's fate to come across occasionally in service. There were, however, other disturbing factors.

The sepoy had always resented what appeared to him attacks on his religious beliefs. The leather cockade, the interference with his caste mark, the order to trim his beard and moustaches, and the order to cross the sea caused him discontent and anger. His temper was not to be restored by the conduct of the preaching colonel and half-missionary official. He felt that the subaltern newly arrived from Europe was a more precious object to the Government than the veteran sepoy who had spent all his life in the Company's service. The fate of the Nawab of Oudh created a belief that one could not trust the Company to keep faith with its friends. When the story of the greased cartridges began to spread, all these pieced together into a definite pattern. To his horror the sepoy found that his religion was in danger.

'Revolutions', said Disraeli in Parliament, 'are not made with grease.' It was, however, the immediate cause of the outbreak of 1857. The story of introducing greased cartridges may be traced

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleison, op. cit. i. 352-3.    <sup>2</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 18 April, 5 May, 1857.



back to 1853, when the Board of Ordnance decided to test the greased cartridge for the use of the new rifles. The Secretary of the Military Board was directed to cause cartridges of the requisite description to be prepared for trial. A supply of thirty-six casks of greased cartridges arrived from England in 1854. The result of the experiment was evidently satisfactory, and in 1856 it was decided to introduce Enfield rifles and greased cartridges in India for use by the sepoy. Training centres were set up at Dum Dum near Calcutta and Sialkot and Ambala in the Punjab. In the same year, ready-made greased cartridges were sent from England for the use of Her Majesty's 60th Regiment, which was then the only corps armed with Enfield rifles. Cartridges also were being manufactured at Fort William for the training school at Dum Dum. It was in January of the following year that the authorities learnt that there had been some excitement at Dum Dum. The sepoy suspected that the cartridges were greased with obnoxious tallow, made of cow's and pig's fat. They were, however, assured by one of their officers, Lieutenant Wright, that the grease used was innocent and 'composed of mutton fat and wax'. A Government order was issued at the same time permitting the sepoy to prepare and procure their own lubricants.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Wright no doubt believed what he said to his men. But the Government was not so certain. Colonel Abbot, the Inspector-General of Ordnance and Magazine, wrote to the Government of India on 29 January 1857 that the grease was composed of tallow and bees-wax and that 'no extraordinary precaution appears to have been taken to insure the absence of any objectionable fat'.<sup>2</sup> In 1853, when the greased cartridges were first tested, Colonel Tucker, Adjutant-General of the Bengal Army, had drawn the attention of the Military Board to the danger of issuing them to the sepoy. He communicated to the Board the Commander-in-Chief's opinion that in greasing the cartridges nothing should be used that could possibly offend the religious belief of the sepoy, 'unless it is known that the grease employed in the cartridges is not of a nature to offend or interfere with the prejudices of caste it will be expedient

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from State Papers preserved in the Military Department, 1857-58*, i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers, 1857-58* (Papers relating to Mutinies in the East India).



not to issue them for test to the native corps, but to European soldiers only.<sup>1</sup> After the outbreak of the Mutiny, Tucker (now a Major-General) wrote to *The Times* that if his recommendations 'had not been culpably disregarded, the existing disaffection among the native troops would never have arisen'. Tucker's letter does not appear to have reached the Military Board and a search for it in the files after the publication of his letter in *The Times* yielded no result.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the officers, however, did not understand why the sepoys abhorred the use of grease. Captain Lewis Pelly wrote in a newspaper that he found that his Hindu and Mohammedan sepoys stationed at Bushire protested against the conduct of their comrades in India and were eager to use the new cartridge. Hyder Khan, a Mohammedan, 'began to tear it open with his teeth' and Alpat Rai, a Hindu, 'was peeling off bits of grease with his thumb,' and the Brahmin asked 'if he might have a sample'. Captain Pelly did not quite realize that the sepoys outside India who had little objection to using the new cartridge might prove difficult in their own country. Captain Pelly said that he had mentioned the incident to General Jacob, 'who laughed and said, "Bite cartridges! They would bite the Devil, those fellows. Lord, man, they have been here, lots of them, laughing like fun, and biting no end of cartridges. . . ."'

It is unfortunate that Captain Pelly's description of General Jacob makes him look like the caricature of an old Anglo-Indian Colonel. But he was not alone. There were others who failed to recognize fully the effects of the greased cartridge. *The Times* doubted whether the cartridge 'would in itself lead to disaffection extending over several months and shared in more or less by an entire army'.<sup>4</sup> The Government of India informed the Court of Directors that as soon as the attitude of the sepoys had become known they speedily took all possible measures, and Tucker's statement in the Press was 'erroneous'. It was 'at once ordered . . . that no greased cartridges should be issued to native troops'. A

Letters from India and Bengal, Aug. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 24 June 1857.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 8 June 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 19 June 1857.

supply of them might have reached Dum Dum, but the sepoy had no occasion to use it, 'for the preliminary drill without ammunition occupied a considerable period of time.'<sup>1</sup> The military authorities, however, did not move so promptly as this letter suggests. They took a long time in making the Government order generally known to the sepoy, and as regards the issue of cartridges, the evidence is not very clear as to whether they were distributed to the sepoy or not. But before any effective measure was taken for removing the suspicion of the sepoy it was widely believed that the Government intended a wholesale conversion of the people of India to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Men of the 34th Native Infantry, Colonel S. G. Wheeler's regiment, were almost convinced that 'they would sooner or later be converted to Christianity'. This belief soon spread to other regiments. Lord Granville said in Parliament in June 1857 that it was believed that 'the Governor-General had left the country under a pledge to Lord Palmerston that he would do his best to convert the whole of the native population of India'. It might be possible to be amused or to express surprise at the credulity of the sepoy, but that did not remove the danger. A newspaper in Calcutta published an excerpt from a letter from the North-Western Provinces: 'all classes of Native imagine that they are to be converted by force.'<sup>3</sup>

Early in 1857, as the stories of the greased cartridge spread among the sepoy, reports of incendiarism in different parts of Bengal began to reach the Government. A letter from Calcutta published in a Delhi newspaper mentioned 'queer reports about the burning down of the bungalows of the officers of the 2nd Grenadiers at Raneegunge and attempts on the line of that corps. The Electric Telegraph at Barrackpore has been burned; and the Quartermaster-Sergeant's bungalow ran risk of destruction. All these things taken in connection have caused so much alarm here . . .'.<sup>4</sup> Stray cases of fire in the officers' bungalows were not unknown before 1857. The writer of the letter commented: 'I do not think myself there is much cause for fear, though it looks a

<sup>1</sup> Letter from India and Bengal, Aug. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 10 June 1857.

<sup>4</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 5 Feb. 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *The Englishman*, 1 May 1857.



little suspicious.' The practice soon spread in upper India and a newspaper in Delhi reported a fire in the bungalow occupied by the Sergeant-Major of the 53rd Native Infantry, 'in which all that was not brick or mortar was consumed.'<sup>1</sup> Lord Ellenborough reported in Parliament that between 16 and 25 April there were seven incendiary fires.<sup>2</sup> On 7 May the *Delhi Gazette* observed that the 'epidemic chuppaties' were 'replaced by epidemic incendiarism', and wondered if the latter was not the fully developed consequence of the former.

Meanwhile, disturbing news was being received from several stations in Bengal. On 26 February the men of the 19th Native Infantry stationed at Berhampore, near Murshidabad in Bengal, refused to accept percussion caps. They were marched off to Barrackpore near Calcutta, where they were disarmed and disbanded. A more serious occurrence had taken place at Barrackpore on 29 March, when Mangal Pande, a young sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry, had attacked his officers on the parade ground. It was fondly hoped that the disaffection was confined only to a few regiments and would not affect the whole army. Captain Martineau, who was then stationed at the musketry training school at Ambala, wrote to one of his colleagues on 5 May: 'I am afraid to say I can detect the near approach of the storm . . . but can't say how, when or where it will break forth . . . here are all the elements of combustion at hand, 100,000 men, sullen, distrustful, fierce with all their deepest and inmost sympathies as well as worst passions roused and we thinking to cajole them into good humour by patting them on the back and saying, what a fool you are for making such a fuss about nothing. They no longer believe us, they have passed out of restraint and will be off at a gallop before long.'<sup>3</sup>

What Martineau feared took place five days later. A body of ninety men at Meerut had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for refusing to accept the cartridges. On 9 May they were stripped of their uniforms and put in irons. Next day the sepoys at Meerut mutinied and marched to Delhi forty miles away. Delhi

<sup>1</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 22 March 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 725, pp. 1051-4.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 10 June 1857.



was occupied on 11 May and the sepoys proclaimed the Emperor Bahadur Shah as their leader. Within about a fortnight disturbances spread to the principal cities in the North-Western Provinces.

The city of Cawnpore, two hundred and sixty-six miles east of Delhi, was an important military station and one of the richest emporiums in India. The city, however, has no ancient past. Its early history does not go beyond Warren Hastings' administration. In 1773 Warren Hastings signed a treaty with Shuja-ud-daulah, Nawab Wazir of Oudh, by which the Nawab agreed to maintain a brigade of the East India Company's army. At first the brigade was stationed at Bilgram, but it was found more convenient to transfer it to Cawnpore. A number of villages were handed over to the Company by the next Nawab, Asaf-ud-daulah, and Cawnpore grew in importance. When the East India Company's chaplain, the Reverend Henry Martyn, came here in 1809, he complained that there was no church, 'not so much as the fly of a tent,' and commented on the 'impious neglect of Government to build a house for God', and 'the godlessness of the army officers'.<sup>1</sup> This defect was soon removed, for the Reverend Martyn's diary of 30 September reads, 'at nine the new church was opened'.<sup>2</sup> This appears to have been an improvised measure. When, in 1824, Bishop Heber found that divine service was 'performed alternative mornings and evenings in a thatched bungalow and in a riding house', he wrote that the Government had 'sanctioned the building of two churches, but on a scale . . . of so rigid inspection and economy' that nobody was prepared to 'undertake the contract'. Bishop Heber was impressed with the extent of the city, its colourful population and its 'many handsome mosques', and considered Cawnpore a more suitable place for permanent residence than Benares or Calcutta.<sup>3</sup> The war with the Sikhs and the extension of the Company's frontier to the west deprived Cawnpore of its former strategic value, but it was still an important station. It guarded the road to Lucknow, and this fact, particularly after the annexation of Oudh, added some

<sup>1</sup> Martyn, *Journal and Letters*, ii. 240, 248.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 318.

<sup>3</sup> Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*, i. 366-7, ii. 365.

importance to the place. Readers of Trevelyan's story of Cawnpore during the Mutiny are familiar with the pattern of Anglo-Indian life in that station, largely true also of other stations in northern India; the churches, the theatre, the assembly rooms, the race course, large white-washed bungalows in spacious enclosures, occasional whist-parties or balls, western delicacies and luxuries — in fact everything that would help to make life comfortable in the tropics for a young subaltern or an aged colonel. As you entered the city from the north-west, you came to Nawabganj with its public offices and residences of officials, the treasury and the jail, and a little further to the south the mission premises. The magazine and the European hospital were on the bank of the river. Further east were the assembly rooms and Christ Church. To the west of the Ganges canal was the main city, with its narrow winding streets and long rows of bazaars, overcrowded and colourful as any other large town in north India. On the other side of the canal you came to the area known as Generalganj, and further east, to the library and the chapel. The sepoy lines were also on this side. The lines of the 1st Native Infantry were near Generalganj; about a mile to the south were the stables and the cavalry lines, and to the east were the lines of the 53rd and 56th Native Infantry.

The European and Eurasian populations were employed as administrative officers or were in the army, in the work of the Ganges canal or on the railway. Some were missionaries and merchants. In the early days of the Company the British soldiers found it an expensive place to live in and were granted an extra allowance over their pay. Things had improved since then. Bishop Heber found goods slightly dearer at Cawnpore than in Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Mutiny the most prosperous business house in Cawnpore was that of Greenway Brothers. North Indian newspapers regularly carried its advertisements, the firm announcing its receipt of periodical supplies of stores from Europe — John Exshaws and Castillon Brandies, teas of 'superior quality and flavour', stationery of the newest kinds, candied fruits, china-ginger and French perfumes. The firm also acted as agents of the

<sup>1</sup> Heber, *op. cit.* ii. 366.



a. Assembly Rooms. General Neill's sketch-book, British Museum.



b. The Theatre. General Neill's sketch-book, British Museum.





bank at Cawnpore and executed the sale of bills in London and Scotland. There were also a number of well-to-do Indian merchants. Gangaprasad Mahajan, 'tent Manufacturer, half-mounting Contractor . . . established in 1810' advertised that he had 'set up an establishment of tailors for gentlemen's dresses, caps, etc.' and would like his patrons to call at the firm at Surseah Ghat.<sup>1</sup> It is clear from advertisements in the newspapers that Gangaprasad Mahajan had to compete with other establishments.

When the trouble with the greased cartridges started early in 1857 it was not anticipated that the disaffection of the sepoys would attain such magnitude. Cawnpore had an evil reputation as being the home of a large number of rowdies. Before the Mutiny actually began, the military authorities in Cawnpore were more in fear of the unruly element in the city than of the rising of the sepoys. In the second week of April a newspaper in Delhi thought that it was only 'an occasional derangement of one or two regiments out of two hundred', and there was no reason to apprehend any serious danger.<sup>2</sup> The Reverend W. Willis, who left Cawnpore less than four weeks before the outbreak at Meerut wrote, 'as yet there was nothing heard but the distant rumbling of the storm.'<sup>3</sup>

Cawnpore had the same difficulty as many other military stations in India, the lack of sufficient numbers of white troops. Formerly 'there used to be a troop of Horse Artillery, a regiment of British Dragoons, a corps of Queen's Foot, two companies of Artillery, a corps of *Golandaz*, a regiment of Native Cavalry and three regiments of Native Infantry', but about 1854 the number was reduced. Captain Humbley mentioned only two companies of Artillery, a corps of Native Cavalry, a European regiment of Infantry and three corps of Native Infantry. In 1857 the number of Indian troops had considerably increased. There were three regiments of sepoys, the 1st, the 53rd and the 56th, and also the 2nd Cavalry regiment, in all about 3,000 men. The number of white troops was small, 'some sixty European Artillerymen and . . . sixty men of Her Majesty's 84th Regiment and a few Madras Fusiliers' sent from Benares. Shepherd mentioned 'one company

<sup>1</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 7 March 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 9 April 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Sherring, *op. cit.* p. 176.

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of European Artillery, sixty in number . . . and a few of the convalescent and disabled men belonging to the 32nd regiment'. The number given by Mowbray Thomson is slightly larger. In addition to the officers of the sepoy regiments, he mentioned '60 men of the 84th Regiment, 74 men of the 32nd Regiment, who were invalided, 15 men of the Madras Fusiliers and 59 men of the Company's Artillery, about 300 combatants in all'.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Hugh Massey Wheeler was one of the most senior and most distinguished officers of the East India Company. His father, Captain Hugh Wheeler, had also served in India. In his younger days, General Wheeler had taken part in Lord Lake's campaign against Sindhia. He commanded a regiment in the Afghan war and was mentioned in despatches for gallantry. In the first Sikh war he commanded a Brigade and took a prominent part in the battles of Mudki and Alwal. He also rendered valuable services in the second Sikh war, for which he was highly praised by Lord Gough, his commanding officer, specially mentioned in Parliament and thanked by the Directors of the East India Company.<sup>2</sup>

General Wheeler was appointed to the command of the Cawnpore division about a year before the outbreak. He was then nearly seventy years old and had served for more than fifty years in the army. He had married an Indian and made India his home. He did forty-one years regimental duty. With the exception of 'two years in Europe, when unemployed', he had 'but three months general leave and was never absent on medical certificate'. He was extremely popular among the sepoys, but as it has been said, perhaps 'he had known them a little too long'.<sup>3</sup>

The rising at Meerut and Delhi could not but produce a great deal of anxiety at Cawnpore. As early as April it was considered necessary to take some precautions. Mrs. E. E. Larkins, wife of an artillery officer at Cawnpore, wrote in a private letter: 'on the 22nd

<sup>1</sup> Humbley, *Journal of a Cavalry Officer*, p. 295; Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 23; Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 218; Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 814; Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 219; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1857, pp. 460-1. Wheeler was born in 1789 and entered the military service of the East India Company in 1803.





a. General Wheeler's Bungalow. General Neill's sketch-book, British Museum.



b. The same. From a painting on cloth, British Museum.



of last month George asked General Wheeler to allow him to make arrangements quickly . . . and he placed a guard of *golandaz* over his loaded guns to show confidence'. Mrs. Larkins did not put any date in her letter, but she appears to have written it about the third week of May, for she mentioned, 'sepoys to a man have been ready to rise for the last three weeks at the slightest provocation, real or imaginary.' Mrs. Larkins was pleased that General Wheeler felt 'indebted to George', presumably her husband, 'for all the precautionary means taken,' and gave him 'a handsome letter of praise'. But apparently they were not approved by the Commander-in-Chief. Mrs. Larkins wrote with obvious annoyance, 'all he got for this was that General Wheeler was an "alarmist", at which he was most wroth and wrote back his mind to His Excellency.' The turn of events showed that the authorities were undoubtedly mistaken, and Mrs. Larkins asked with some satisfaction, 'Who has shown wisdom and who not?'

It was believed that General Wheeler's long experience and popularity would stand him in good stead and he would be able to avert any rising at Cawnpore. This optimism was shared by some senior officers. As late as the end of May, Colonel Ewart of the 1st Native Infantry believed that the sepoys of his regiment would not 'venture to attack the intrenched position'.<sup>2</sup> The anxiety increased after the news from Meerut and Delhi was received at Cawnpore. Mrs. Hillersdon, wife of Charles Hillersdon, Magistrate and Collector of Cawnpore, wrote in a letter on 15 May, 'Cawnpore quiet and the regiments here are staunch, but there is no saying that they will remain long so.' Next day she thought 'there does not seem to be any immediate danger here', but on the 18th again, she felt there was reason for anxiety, 'all sorts of dreadful rumours going about, but I hope they are false.' The panic apparently did not last very long. General Wheeler wrote next day to the Governor-General, Lord Canning: 'All quiet here. The excitement somewhat less. . . .'<sup>3</sup> On the same day, the Government of India sent a telegram to Cawnpore advising Wheeler to arrange 'for the accommodation of a European

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 814.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.



force' and 'let it be known that he was doing so'.<sup>1</sup> The Government of India, however, did not have enough British troops to send them to the disturbed areas and the promised help never came. The disturbances in the North-Western Provinces spread quickly and the situation at Cawnpore underwent a rapid deterioration. On 20 May General Wheeler reported to the Government of India: 'All well here and excitement less . . . very few days will see the end of it.'<sup>2</sup> But in the evening of the same day there was 'a good deal of excitement and alarm'. It was rumoured that horses and arms belonging to the 2nd Cavalry would be taken away and distributed to the Europeans. The Cavalry sent agents to the Infantry barracks asking the sepoy whether they would act with them in the event of an outrage. There was an accidental fire in the camp of the 1st Native Infantry at night and it was feared at first that it was a signal for revolt. News came that Etwa and Aligarh had been plundered and the sepoy were 'en route for Cawnpore'. It was probably this that Wheeler had in mind when he wrote to the Governor-General on the 21st, 'reports just received that a crisis is approaching here.'<sup>3</sup>

Wheeler's responsibility was to protect not only the families of the British troops at Cawnpore, but also the large colony of Europeans, Eurasians and Indian Christians. From the account of Shepherd, a clerk in the commissariat department, some junior Government servants and merchants had 'provided themselves with boats and other means of escape from Cawnpore', but a general plan for the whole community could not be agreed upon, and it was decided to send a deputation to Wheeler. The representatives were told that there was 'no immediate cause for apprehension', but in case of danger the 'ladies and children of officers and Christian military followers' would be sheltered in the barracks. The civilian population, Europeans and Eurasians, were advised to arm themselves.<sup>4</sup>

This arrangement was not considered satisfactory by many. It was feared that in time of confusion it would be difficult to reach

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, pp. 308-9.

<sup>4</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 4, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the barracks; there was probably a suspicion also that the authorities were not much interested in the fate of merchants and Eurasians. Shepherd decided to rely to a large extent on his own resources. He had employed extra watchmen and fondly hoped that in case of disturbances they would be able to save his property. He also made an arrangement with one of Wheeler's informers named Badrinath, who was to give him 'timely notice' of the danger 'by sending a piece of stick a span long'. Shepherd had planned to hide his family in the city, 'as in the event of an attack from the native troops all others save those in the intrenchment would be overlooked'. He engaged two houses in different localities in the name of his friends and had Indian dresses made for the ladies. A dark skin, he discovered, was not always a disadvantage. But 'all the labour was in vain, for an opportunity to use the clothes never occurred'.<sup>1</sup> Events moved in a way Shepherd had not foreseen.

On 21 May, on arriving at his office, Shepherd was told that his officer, Captain Williamson, had left for the barracks with his wife and children; the clerks were all 'in a state of panic and ready to run back to their homes'. A letter had been brought to Mrs. Williamson and 'immediately on looking into it she gave a scream and hastily rising handed it [to her husband]' and left the bungalow on foot with her ayah and her child. Captain Williamson followed her, leaving instructions that the carriage was to be sent after them as soon as possible. Shepherd also learnt that Hay, who was the leader of the Eurasian community at Cawnpore, was proceeding to the barracks and had advised him to do the same. The man who brought this message told Shepherd that 'he met a great many conveyances with ladies and children going at full speed in the direction of the barracks'. Shepherd followed the example of others. The barracks were 'crowded to excess'. But he found room for his family in the verandah.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing occurred. The rumours which caused the panic were that the sepoy in charge of the treasury had shown signs of insubordination and that a large party of Gujars were approaching

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.





from Delhi.<sup>1</sup> It was found that the report of the Gujars was baseless, and things took a definite turn for the better in the evening. Wheeler wrote to the Governor-General next day, 'up to that time it appeared that an outbreak was most imminent. I placed the guns in position and made every preparation to meet it. The danger gave away before a quiet address to the men by their commandants through some native officers.'<sup>2</sup>

The incidents of 21 May made it clear that there was room for improvement in the plan for withdrawal to the entrenchment in an emergency. If there was any general instruction, it had not reached Shepherd. The letters of Mrs. Hillersdon, Mrs. Ewart and Mrs. Larkins, wives of principal officers at Cawnpore, give pictures of confusion and disorder in the next few days. Mrs. Hillersdon wrote on 23 May: 'On the morning of the 21st everybody was so alarmed that the commandants of regiments went to the General and advised him to move the guns and have them in readiness in case of an attack. He would neither hear of it first I believe, but C— went to him and he gave the order. This was about 7 p.m.' But three hours later, when Mrs. Hillersdon arrived in the barracks, she found to her astonishment that no guns had arrived. Mrs. Hillersdon again 'went off to the General's and told him of it, when he wrote another order about them and they were moved immediately and were in position about half-past 11 p.m. It might have been of the most serious consequences'.<sup>3</sup> Captain Fletcher Hayes, who came with the Oudh troops to Cawnpore on the night of the 21st, had some unflattering things to say about what he saw the next morning. In a private letter to Edmonstone, Secretary of the Government of India, he wrote: 'Since I have

<sup>1</sup> Gujar was described by Wilson in his *Glossary*, p. 293 as the 'name of a numerous class in the north-west provinces, chiefly engaged in agriculture, though formerly notorious for their martial and predatory character. They profess to descend from Rajput fathers by women of inferior castes'. Wilson published his work shortly before the Mutiny; the outbreak, however, showed that the Gujars had not forgotten their old habits. Rice Holmes speaks of their activities in North-Western Provinces at the time of the Mutiny: 'Swarms of Gujars, starting up on every side, and girding on their swords and bucklers, and shouldering their matchlocks, robbed the mail carts, plundered peaceful villages and murdered the villagers.' *History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.



been in India I have never witnessed so frightful a scene of confusion, fright and bad arrangement as the European barracks presented. Four guns were in position loaded, with European artillerymen in night caps . . . hanging to the guns in groups looking like melodramatic buccaneers. People of all kinds, of every colour, sect and profession, were crowding into the barracks. Whilst I was there, buggies, palki-gharees, vehicles of all sorts, drove up and discharged cargoes of writers, tradesmen and a miscellaneous mob of every complexion, from white to tawny — all in terror of the imaginary foe; ladies sitting down at the rough mess tables in the barracks, women suckling infants, ayahs and children in all directions and — officers too . . . I saw quite enough to convince me that if any insurrection took or takes place, we still have no one to thank but ourselves, because we have now shown to the Natives how very easily we can become frightened and when frightened utterly helpless.<sup>1</sup>

On 22 May Wheeler expressed a hope in his letter to the Governor-General that once the European troops from Calcutta arrived 'all would be beyond danger'. He had written to Sir Henry Lawrence for help and he now felt a little strengthened by the arrival of 55 Europeans of Her Majesty's 32nd Regiment and about 240 troops of the Oudh Irregular Cavalry.<sup>2</sup> On the 22nd, two guns and 300 men were brought by Nana Sahib from Bithur, and Wheeler imagined he would be able to rely on them. 'Their being Mahrattas they are not likely to coalesce with others.' The Governor-General was told: 'At present things appear quiet but it is impossible to say what a moment may bring forth.'<sup>3</sup> Haye's description, however, does not give a picture of tranquillity. 'During the day the shops in all the bazaars were shut four or five times and all day the General was worried to death by people running up to report improbable stories, which in ten minutes were contradicted by others still more monstrous.'<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Ewart never expected to see her husband again after he had gone to his post. Some of his men were overheard 'wildly talking about

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* i. 227-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* i. 228.

mutiny and murder; the day was 'full of agony and dread and the night was more than poor human nature unassisted could endure'.<sup>1</sup> On the 23rd, according to Hayes, 'the same thing went on.' Mrs. Ewart, however, found it an immense change. She had been able to spend some time at home. 'After that miserable night the Saturday following seemed like heaven for we went to our house and spent the day quietly there — at least with such quietness as was possible without the most terrible rumours coming in throughout the day and reviving all our saddest apprehensions.'<sup>2</sup>

The Mohammedan festival of Id fell on 24 May, and for a time it was feared that the crisis would come that day. But it passed off quietly, and Wheeler telegraphed to Calcutta in the evening, 'All is quiet here, but it is impossible to say how long it will continue to be so.' On the same day a young officer wrote to his mother in England: 'Although there is a dead calm here yet things do not look so well . . . there are rumours flying about, one regiment accusing another of being on the point of rising.'<sup>3</sup> On 25 May in the evening, Wheeler telegraphed again, 'Passed anxious night and day in consequence of a report on very good authority that there would be an outbreak during one or the other; all possible preparations made to meet it; but I rejoice to say that none occurred.'<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Ewart also felt somewhat reassured because 'all the Mussalmans of the 1st Regiment coming in a body according to custom to salaam to Colonel E— after the prayers, and they expressed their intentions of fidelity etc'. But she did not feel very happy, for as she thought, 'all of which are very well but not to be depended upon now a days.' In the evening again, she returned to the 'melancholy nightquarters. . . . Oh, such a scene. Men, officers, women and children, beds and chairs all mingled together inside and outside the barracks, some talking or even laughing, some very frightened, some diffident, others despairing. Three guns in front of our position and three behind, and a trench in course of formation all around'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, p. 317.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 5 Sept., 7 Oct. 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 5 Sept. 1857.



The *Mofussilite*, a newspaper of Agra, published a letter dated the 25th from a resident at Cawnpore. It was written on an almost cheerful note: 'I have much pleasure in informing you that up to this hour the most perfect tranquillity has prevailed in this station, our farseeing energetic General, that old and tried soldier Sir H. M. Wheeler, has made most excellent arrangements for the preservation of peace at Cawnpore. . . . The troops here are in a somewhat excited state, but from the tact with which Sir Wheeler has managed them this feverish state is abating.'<sup>1</sup> But Mrs. Hillersdon's letter of the same day to her people in England was written in a different tone, and for the first time she seems to be in despair. 'We fully expect every minute to be obliged to run to the barracks which are close to Ewart's house, where we are during the day. . . . Oh, how I wish we were with you yesterday out of this horrid country. May God spare us and may we see each other again — I send you some of the dear children's hair. We must trust to our Father who governs all. Tell dearest — to keep the two little books Bishop Wilson gave me for my sake, and never to forget that in the midst of life we are in death.'<sup>2</sup>

Wheeler's selection of the site for the entrenchment was not considered satisfactory by many. Hay, a well-known Eurasian resident of Cawnpore, saw the General and suggested that a far better place for safety was the magazine and begged that it 'should be secured'.<sup>3</sup> Wheeler's entrenchment did not seem to be a strong place for defence. There were within the site two barracks with walls of brick, each intended to house 100 persons. One had a thatched roof and the roof of the other was built of masonry. There were outhouses and verandahs on both sides. The barracks were situated on a large plain; on the left and towards the front there were some unfinished barracks in various stages of construction; on the right 'there was the road, and beyond it another level plain of smaller extent terminating in a row of houses and then the river'. General Wheeler, when he decided to use the place as an entrenchment, ordered a trench to be dug around it, and with the earth thrown outside a parapet was built. The work was begun

<sup>1</sup> The *Mofussilite*, 29 May 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 12.



about the 20th, but to the anxious population it did not proceed quickly enough. Shepherd often went to see the progress of the work, but found it very slow. The summer had made the soil hard as rock and it was difficult to find labourers. It was a miserable affair. The parapet was only four feet high and was not even bullet proof at the top. Some sandbags had been arranged to shelter the sentries from the enemy's fire, but the guns were quite unprotected. An attempt was made to cover the thatched roof with tiles to prevent it from catching fire. But the work was not quite finished when the Mutiny broke out.<sup>1</sup>

A traveller visiting the place shortly after the Mutiny described it as an 'ill-chosen site, far away from the magazine and the river. The position was not more ill-chosen than ill-fortified and not more ill-fortified than ill-provisioned'.<sup>2</sup> It is not, however, fair to rely on the opinion of a lay observer. But Colonel Neill also had a similar opinion. He thought that to select a position which was indefensible and far from the river was a mistake. Wheeler should have gone to the magazine — 'a walled defence, walled enclosure, proof against musketry, covering an area of three acres, ample room for all the garrison, close to the bank of the river . . . neither the Nana nor the natives could have come near them. They could have moved out and attacked them with the guns and would have not only saved themselves but the city, to say nothing of a large arsenal and many thousand stands of arms, artillery, tents, harness etc.'<sup>3</sup>

Wheeler, it has been argued, had good reasons for not moving to the magazine. According to Kaye, there were several considerations which had influenced his decision. The occupation of the magazine would have involved first the removal of the sepoy guards placed there, resulting in the 'signal for an immediate rising'. With the small European force at his command it would have been 'unwise to provoke a collision'. Wheeler believed that if there was an outbreak the sepoys would march to Delhi and he would have nothing more serious to face than the disturbances

<sup>1</sup> *Red Pamphlet*, p. 125; Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 12, 27; Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Chunder, *Travels of a Hindoo*, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* i. 147.

created by the rowdy elements in the city. After the sepoy had left he would be able 'to march to Allahabad taking all the Christian people with him'.<sup>1</sup> The author of the *Red Pamphlet* also had similar views. 'The magazine was seven miles distant from the new native lines, and on the Delhi Road. . . . Unless Sir Hugh had chosen to abandon the station before any signs of the Mutiny were apparent, he, the officers and the ladies would have found it impossible to get there.' The Government of India had proclaimed their confidence in the sepoy, and had he exhibited his distrust by taking away the magazine from them, 'he would have been made the scapegoat for all that has since followed.' Had he waited till an overt act of mutiny and then 'endeavoured to reach the magazine with the ladies and children, not one-third the number would have arrived there'. The author of the pamphlet also opposed the view that Wheeler should have 'entrenched himself on the river, still not abandoning his position in the native lines'. There were no barracks near the river and there would not have been any shelter there in the summer months for women and children. Wheeler was only thinking of a 'temporary refuge for the European residents' and 'he was justified, both by his minute knowledge of the sepoy and by events which had occurred elsewhere in making that selection'.<sup>2</sup>

The result of so much over-caution, as Kaye called it, was disastrous.<sup>3</sup> It is unfortunate that a General with a brilliant career such as Wheeler's should be remembered mainly for the blunder he committed towards the end of his life. But the truth is that he had taken too many things for granted. For the success of Wheeler's plan it was essential that the sepoy should march to Delhi immediately after the outbreak, and secondly, that Nana Sahib should stand by the English. Both of these were possible, but by no means certain. The military commander who imagines that the enemy will move in a way to suit his own convenience, and hopes for the best, often ends in disaster. It would have been awkward for Wheeler to try to withdraw to the magazine early in the month. It would have caused some suspicion; but his

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleon, op. cit. i. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Red Pamphlet*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and Malleon, op. cit. ii, 223.



withdrawal to the entrenchment produced a similar result. The order that the sepoy were to go to the entrenchment to receive their pay in undress and without arms added to their fear. Shepherd heard one saying, 'If there was no treachery meditated by the officers, why are they entrenching themselves?'<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to agree with the author of the *Red Pamphlet* that Wheeler was powerless to take a more active measure because of the weak policy of the Government towards the sepoy, and that he 'was bound to strengthen and justify the confidence they felt'. The pamphlet also stated that Wheeler knew that the army was lost. 'That experienced officer felt that the army was gone; that incapable of acting in concert, every regiment would take its own time and opportunity; but that all would go he felt morally certain.'<sup>2</sup> This is not, however, supported by Wheeler's conduct. Even to the last he shared with some of his colleagues the view that there would not be a general rising. The suggestion that he had no intention of holding Cawnpore and that he had intended retreating to Allahabad after the sepoy left for Delhi is also not borne out by facts. Wheeler had always been keen on maintaining his position at Cawnpore. On 31 May, five days before the outbreak in the city, he wrote to the Governor-General: 'I would recommend Europeans to be sent up to this place as rapidly as possible; . . . this place is the trunk and the surrounding stations are the limbs; and if Cawnpore remains right the other places will do so also.'<sup>3</sup>

Wheeler's critics who commented on the lack of organization and planning had a strong case. As soon as the outbreak took place and the Christian population was shut up in the entrenchment, it was found that little thought had been given to the supply of water and provisions. The well, the only source of supply for water, was in an open space, and so an easy target for the enemy. It was believed that provisions for a month had been stored.<sup>4</sup> Mowbray Thomson, however, stated that 'the General gave orders to lay in supplies for twenty-five days'.<sup>5</sup> But almost from

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Red Pamphlet*, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, p. 350.

<sup>5</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 31.



the beginning the besieged population suffered from a scarcity of food. According to Kaye, the failure in the supply was the fault of contractors. 'The native contractors failed as they often do fail at such times and the stores which they sent in fell short of the figures in the paper indents.'<sup>1</sup> Even if the contractors were at fault it is a sorry picture of the lack of supervision. Martin put down everything to the result of 'carelessness and knavery'.<sup>2</sup> Mowbray Thomson stated that 'Dhall, ghee, salt, rice, tea, sugar, rum, malt liquor and hermetically sealed provisions were ordered', but peas and flour formed the bulk of the food that reached the entrenchment. He found a possible reason for the short supply other than 'the defection of native agents'. Wheeler 'had only arranged for the support of the military at the station' and that was why the 'stock was ridiculously insufficient'. The regimental messes, however, sent in their quota of beer and wine and delicacies. In the first few days of the siege one could have access to a bottle of champagne, tinned herrings or a pot of marmalade. The mess committees shared Wheeler's optimism. The troubles at Cawnpore would last for a brief spell only and the delicacies they supplied were to make life agreeable during this difficult period.<sup>3</sup>

The month of May came to a close. The sepoy did not rise, but the nervous tension was almost unbearable. One of the ladies, 'poor Mrs. Wiggs', lost her reason 'from terror and excitement'.<sup>4</sup> On 31 May a young officer wrote to his mother, 'here we are just as we were a week ago, people all in the barracks, all night and nearly all day . . . except perhaps in the Blackhole time, there is no doubt that our power has never been in such danger . . . always hitherto we have been fighting against open enemies; now we cannot tell who are friends, who enemies. . . .'<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Hillersdon's letter written on the same day is more cheerful: 'with God's blessing, one might say, the storm has now blown over and things are mending.'<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Ewart, however, did not think so. She wrote the next day, 'the Commander-in-Chief has disappointed all expectation; his delays may lose India. . . . May we be preserved

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleon, op. cit. ii. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, op. cit. p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 5 Sept. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, op. cit. ii. 252.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.

from the evils that the incapacity of our leaders naturally entails.<sup>1</sup>

Wheeler, however, believed that the worst was over. He wrote to the Governor-General on 1 June that 'in a few — a very few days' Cawnpore would be safe, and he might even be able to help Lucknow.<sup>2</sup> But though the fear had abated there was much excitement and distrust. The situation rapidly worsened when a cashiered officer named Cox fired upon a patrol of the 2nd Cavalry. He was tried, but acquitted on the ground that he was drunk and not culpable for his action. The decision caused a good deal of resentment. 'If we natives had fired upon a European,' a sepoy told Shepherd, 'we should have been hanged.'<sup>3</sup>

On 3 June Wheeler reported to the Governor-General, 'all well at Cawnpore,' but added that the city was 'in excitement'. He also wrote to the Adjutant-General of the Army that nothing but rapid action would save Cawnpore. On the same day it was found that telegraphic communication between Cawnpore and Agra was obstructed. Wheeler, however, decided to send help to Henry Lawrence at Lucknow, who had 'expressed some uneasiness'. From his small force he sent him two officers and fifty men. 'This', Wheeler wrote, 'leaves me weak, but I trust to holding my own until more Europeans arrive.'<sup>4</sup>

On the same day the funds in the commissariat office were transferred to the entrenchment. The chest, containing about Rs. 3,400 and 'a much larger amount in Government promissory notes', was brought in safely, together with the office records. But Hillersdon's attempt to move the treasure from Nawabganj a few days before was not a success. It was possible to remove only one lakh of rupees.<sup>5</sup>

The men of the 2nd Cavalry, it was believed, were prepared for mutiny on 3 June, but their officer, Subedar Major Bhowani Singh, is said to have prevented it. But Wheeler's letters on the same day do not contain any reference to this. On that day he sent a portion of his troops to the help of Lawrence at Lucknow. On 4 June the Cavalry sent their families away to the city. It was

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 15; *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* i. 229.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 113-14.



rumoured that the Cavalry barracks had been mined by the officers. Late at night on the 5th, Shepherd and others in the entrenchment heard 'a suppressed noise' from the lines, 'as of a large body of troops making preparations for a march.' The sepoys seized elephants from the commissariat cattle-yard and a party proceeded, under Tekka Singh, to Nawabganj to plunder the treasury. Subedar Major Bhowani Singh tried to save the treasure chest, till he was wounded and overpowered. Another party approached the 1st Native Infantry and encouraged the men to join the Cavalry. The sepoys allowed themselves to be persuaded, but they did no harm to their officers. Mowbray Thomson said, 'the 1st Native Infantry also bolted, leaving their officers untouched upon the parade ground.' According to Shepherd, 'when they agreed to go away with the mutineers they first begged of their officers to leave them and ultimately forced them to go away into the entrenchment without hurting them.'<sup>1</sup>

The 53rd and the 56th Native Infantry remained faithful during the night. But in the morning both the regiments showed signs of joining the mutineers, and the non-commissioned officers reported to Wheeler that 'they had been tampered with by the Cavalry and appeared determined to go away'. Shepherd could see them drawn up on the parade ground, but a shot or two from the guns in the entrenchment immediately dispersed them.<sup>2</sup> It was generally believed that the 53rd had no intention of joining the mutineers. Whether the 56th had planned to rise is not very clear from the evidence collected by Colonel Williams. As the guns opened on them they 'fled in disorder' and did not appear 'to have dreamt of resistance'. Some of the sepoys met a sergeant of the commissariat and a clerk and advised them to run away and save their lives.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the first reaction of the men of the 53rd was one of alarm. Many 'concealed themselves in the ravines' and 'readily joined on the sounding of an assembly by an officer of the 53rd.' Lieutenant Delafosse also thought that the men of the 53rd were driven into mutiny, '... as there was none to look after

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 23-24; Martin, *op. cit.* ii. 252; Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 39; Williams, *Miscellaneous Military Records*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 4.



them, they also went off without anyone missing them . . . taking with them the regimental treasures and colours and as much ammunition as they could carry.<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan considered that Wheeler's firing on the lines was 'prompt with an ill-timed energy, and wary with a misplaced distrust'.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Williams found this corps 'to have been least tainted'. 'We may charitably suppose,' he wrote, 'that many even of those who deserted and joined their mutineer comrades did so for fear of being implicated in the consequences of the revolt.'<sup>3</sup> Mowbray Thomson was at an utter loss to account for the firing and believed it to be an error of the General. The men were cooking, 'no signs of mutiny had appeared amidst their ranks, they had refused all the solicitations of the deserters to accompany them, and seemed quite steadfast, when Ashe's battery opened fire upon them,' and they were 'literally driven from us by nine-pounders'.<sup>4</sup> Jemadar Salamat Ali of the 53rd Native Infantry made a statement from which it is apparent that the firing was the result of panic and misunderstanding. 'The 53rd and 56th Regiments were with their officers under arms all night but received no orders to proceed and act against the mutineers. We were allowed to go to the lines next morning at 9 a.m. The native officers of the 53rd N.I. were sent for by the General . . . an officer of the 56th drove with his family in a carriage and reported that the 53rd and 56th also had broken into mutiny and were plundering the Regimental treasure chests. . . . The Brigadier then ordered the guns to be opened upon the crowd of men in the lines. . . .'<sup>5</sup> Even when the majority in the 53rd Regiment joined the mutineers, some of them were still fighting for the Government. A group of sepoy posted at the treasury defended it for four hours. One could 'hear their musketry in the distance', but it was not possible to send them any help. Some of the sepoy joined the English and were allowed to occupy the military hospital near the entrenchment where they remained till they were compelled to leave when it was destroyed by fire in the second week of the siege. 'They deserve', Mowbray Thomson

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 725 (8).

said, 'as much gratitude as the revoltors have obtained execration.'<sup>1</sup>

From the part subsequently played by Nana Sahib in the Mutiny, some of his earlier actions have acquired a sinister meaning. Russell wrote that shortly before the Mutiny Nana Sahib and Azimullah went to Lucknow, where they remained for some time and were reported 'to have exhibited considerable insolence and hauteur towards the Europeans they met'. Then they 'joined in a holy excursion, visited the military stations all along the main trunk road, and went as far as Umballah', intending to go to Simla to tamper with the Gurkha Regiments stationed there. Kaye gave a similar account. Early in 1857, after visiting Kalpi, Nana went to Delhi, and shortly after proceeded to Lucknow. 'For months, for years indeed,' Nana Sahib and Azimullah 'had been quickly spreading their network of intrigue all over the country'.<sup>2</sup> Rice Holmes also spoke of Nana Sahib's journey to Kalpi, Delhi and Lucknow and his 'unwonted activities' — 'none can tell what foul treason he was hatching'.<sup>3</sup> Rice Holmes, however, depended mainly on Kaye for his information. Kaye's account again was largely derived from the evidence of one Sitaram Bawa, who was arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the Mutiny and made a statement before H. B. Devereux, Judicial Commissioner of Mysore, and Captain Pearse. According to Sitaram, a general plan of rising originated several years before the Mutiny. 'Bajee Rao's son and other great princes had all joined together, and as soon as they advanced all would join, the old dynasties would be restored and all would be placed on the throne.' About three years before the Mutiny, Nana Sahib's *guru*, Dassa Bawa, predicted that 'he would become as powerful as the Peshwa had once been' and received from Nana a 'sunnud granting a five-lakh *jagir* and five *nachatras*'; the *sanad* was to take effect when he came into power. It was revealed to Nana Sahib in a dream that he would be victorious, and he 'presented Dassa Bawa with twenty-five thousand rupees worth of jewels', a portion of the promised reward. Nana Sahib did not leave out any place where there was a native prince. He wrote to all. But it was only

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Russell, *op. cit.* p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Holmes, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 92.



after the annexation of Oudh that he began to receive replies to his communications. He also corresponded with the Emperor of Delhi, Gulab Singh of Jammu and the Government of Russia. The Russians were believed to have replied that no help could be given to him until he occupied Delhi, and 'if he could succeed in that, then assistance would be given him to drive the English from Calcutta'. Sitaram thought that the story of Nana Sahib communicating with the chiefs was well-known, 'every Brahmin is well acquainted with all this,' and 'every Baboo in Calcutta knew of it'.<sup>1</sup>

This very interesting account does not appear to be reliable. A good deal of it is obviously false. There is hardly anything in the official records or in the documents captured at Bithur which goes to prove that Nana Sahib made an extensive tour of northern India, spreading disaffection among the sepoys and corresponding with the Indian Princes with the same object. It would be unsafe to come to a conclusion from the uncorroborated and unsatisfactory testimony of one person. There was, however, a belief in certain quarters that the Russians were behind the mutineers. Some such correspondence was published in newspapers. While Mowbray Thomson was at Murar Mau after his escape from Cawnpore, he was told by sepoys that Nana Sahib had 'sent a *sowar* on a camel to Russia for assistance'.<sup>2</sup>

It is only about Nana Sahib's trip to Lucknow that we have any details. He apparently caused some annoyance to Gubbins when he visited Lucknow in April, on what Gubbins thought to be a pretence of seeing the sight. He was accompanied by his younger brother, Azimullah, and a 'numerous retinue'. Gubbins considered his manner 'arrogant and presuming', for when he called on Gubbins he brought six or seven followers with him and demanded chairs for all of them. Nana Sahib suddenly left Lucknow, on the plea that his presence was urgently required at Cawnpore. When affairs at Cawnpore took a turn for the worse, Gubbins thought that Nana Sahib's 'sudden departure to Cawn-

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726. p. 1157; Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, pp. 186-9.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 192.



pore was exceedingly suspicious'. He conveyed his feelings to Henry Lawrence, who sent a note to Wheeler warning him of Nana Sahib.<sup>1</sup> Wheeler evidently chose to disregard the warning.

Kavanagh saw Nana Sahib in Lucknow. On one occasion, while he was walking home, Nana and his cavalcade nearly rode over him. Kavanagh did not share the view of Kaye and Gubbins that 'he was then engaged in fomenting the spirit of discontent among the troops', but believed that 'it was only the subsequent events which gave their vulgarity the appearance of design'. He did not notice any change in Nana Sahib's attitude towards the Europeans, 'to whom he was as courteous as an ill-bred man could be.'<sup>2</sup> Henry Metcalfe, of Her Majesty's 32nd Regiment, also saw him attending the races at Lucknow — 'that fiend Nana was at the races and sipping coffee etc. with our officers, and all the time was planning the Mutiny.'<sup>3</sup> Private Metcalfe had seen Nana Sahib when he was posted at Cawnpore a few months earlier. But one does not know what to make of Metcalfe's story. Nana Sahib did not usually accept any invitation from the Europeans at Cawnpore, and it seems incredible that the ex-Peshwa's adopted son, an orthodox Brahmin, should be sharing refreshments with the Christians.

It has been remarked that 'very likely' Nana Sahib's tour of northern India 'was limited to Lucknow alone'.<sup>4</sup> But there is some reason to believe that he had visited at least one more city in northern India, Meerut. In 1863 a man was arrested as Nana at Ajmere. Sergeant Wilkins testified that he considered him to be the real Nana. He had seen him frequently at Meerut when Nana Sahib visited that place before the Mutiny.<sup>5</sup>

Like the story of Nana Sahib's extensive tour of northern India, the account of his offer of help to the authorities at Cawnpore is open to question. Nana Sahib, it is said, 'put himself in frequent communication' with Hillersdon and insinuated himself into his confidence. According to the author of the *Red*

<sup>1</sup> Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutineers in Oudh*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Kavanagh, *How I won the Victoria Cross*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Tucker, *Chronicles of Private Henry Metcalfe*, pp. 19, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Sen, *op. cit.* p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 5 Aug. 1863.

*Pamphlet*, Nana Sahib met Hillersdon and 'advised him to send his wife and other ladies to Bithur, assuring him that they would be quite safe there, as he would protect them against any number of sepoy's'. Hillersdon agreed to do so 'on the first symptoms of insurrection'. He also agreed on a secret plan with Nana, that the latter should organize a body of 1,500 fighting men who should be ready to attack the sepoy's if they showed any disposition to rise. . . .<sup>1</sup> Forrest relied on Shepherd's account and the *Red Pamphlet*, and used similar language when he said that 'Nana met Mr. Hillersdon and suggested that his wife and other ladies should be sent to Bithur for safety where he would protect them against any number of sepoy's. He also undertook to protect the treasury in conjunction with our own sepoy-General. His services were accepted'.<sup>2</sup>

It is more likely that Nana did not volunteer to help, but that help was sought by Wheeler and Hillersdon. It was in the middle of May that Mrs. Hillersdon wrote with some enthusiasm, '... dearest C—has made all the necessary arrangements for me and the children to go to Bitoor.' She referred to the plan for enlisting men with Nana Sahib's help; 'with the aid of the Rajah to whose house we are going, we will collect and head a force of 1,500 fighting men and bring them to Cawnpore to take the insurgents by surprise. This is a plan of their own and quite a secret, for the object of it is to come on the mutineers unawares.'<sup>3</sup> The trust which Wheeler and Hillersdon placed on Nana Sahib was not shaken by Lawrence's warning. Mowbray Thomson stated that Hillersdon was 'concerned for the safety of the large amount of treasure under his charge', and 'after consultation with Sir Hugh Wheeler sent over to Bithoor requesting the presence and aid of Nana Sahib'.<sup>4</sup> Delafosse also believed that assistance was asked from the Raja of Bithur.<sup>5</sup> The *Englishman* of Calcutta published an account of the outbreak at Cawnpore from a person 'just come down from that place who was present throughout the affair'. According to this version, 'seeing the disaffected spirit of

<sup>1</sup> *Red Pamphlet*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 409.

<sup>5</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 32.



the troops,' Wheeler 'applied to Nana Sahib of Bithoor for a guard for the protection of the Treasury . . . no one doubted that as he had the power so also he had the will to be of substantial use in the hour of our trouble'.<sup>1</sup>

One day before the sepoy rose in rebellion at Cawnpore, Wheeler had written a letter to his friend Henry Lawrence in Lucknow. The 2nd Cavalry was then 'in an almost acknowledged state of mutiny and ready to start at any moment for Delhi', and the 1st Native Infantry spoke of 'going off this night or the next, doing all the mischief in their power first'. Wheeler evidently believed that his confinement within the entrenchment would not be very long, and a considerable portion of his letter was devoted to what he believed to be a grave injustice done to him by the authorities. The death of General Anson, the Commander-in-Chief, had taken place a few weeks ago, and Wheeler learnt that he was going to be succeeded by Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant — 'long, very long my junior.' 'I cannot serve under him, and it is poor return for above fifty-two years of zealous and I may proudly add successful service to be thus superseded . . . I write with a crushed spirit, for I had no right to expect this treatment . . . I have had nothing from Government, that it could withhold from me, and the whole has been crowned by this act, placing me under the orders of a Regimental Lieutenant-Colonel, my junior by more than fifteen years and my junior as a general officer.'<sup>2</sup>

Wheeler felt aggrieved and 'crushed' because he 'had no friends', while Grant's 'connection with Lord Gough', whose daughter he had married, had 'carried him over me on every occasion'. After the Mutiny was over and peace was restored, he would take the course which he felt due to his 'professional character and soldierly feelings'. Wheeler could not foresee that in a few days time he would have far graver things to worry about than his supercession by a junior colleague.

<sup>1</sup> *The Englishman*, 28 July 1857, reprinted in *The Times*, 17 Sept. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> The original letter is in the British Museum. There is a typed copy in the India Office Library. Home Miscellaneous Series, 814, pp. 328-34.



## THE 'FORT OF DESPAIR'

THE 2nd Cavalry and the sepoy of the 1st Native Infantry and the 53rd and 56th acted in a manner Wheeler had anticipated. They broke open the jail and released the prisoners, set fire to the Government offices, and took possession of the magazine. Wheeler's plan to blow up the magazine had failed. When the Assistant Commissioner, Riley, was ordered to do so, he found that he had waited too long and was prevented by the sepoy from carrying out his task.<sup>1</sup> Neill was inclined to think that the authorities at Cawnpore did not realize the importance of this work, for they were ignorant of the contents of the magazine and unaware of the number of guns stored there. A few days before the outbreak, a committee of officers had been sent to examine and report on its contents. Neill made no secret of his contempt for them when he wrote, 'they came down in the usual easy-going style, only thought of tents and other trifles — happened not to be shown the gun sheds, and did not enter the magazine; in fact forgot all about it.'<sup>2</sup> It is not always easy to agree with Neill's observations. Kaye considered him wrong on two grounds, that Wheeler was anxious to destroy the magazine before the commencement of the Mutiny, and secondly, that it was 'hardly credible that the contents of the magazine were unknown to the Artillery Officers at Cawnpore, especially to the Ordnance Commissariat Department'.<sup>3</sup> What Neill alleged was unlikely but not altogether impossible. Wheeler's direction that the magazine should be blown up before the Mutiny does not necessarily prove that he was unaware that it contained a large number of guns. In any case, the destruction of the magazine would be a routine matter under the circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 233.

Apart from plundering the treasury and destroying the public offices, the sepoy did not do much damage to the city. They were not organized, and, following the precedent of their comrades at Meerut, they were anxious to march to Delhi. Some were undecided, and till the last moment had not thought of joining in the Mutiny. Some did so 'for fear of being implicated in the consequences of the revolt'. As the sepoys began their march to Nawabganj it was hoped that the danger was probably over. Sir George Parker and some other officers who lived near the entrenchment considered it safe to return to their homes. Some of the Europeans attempted to send their possessions to Allahabad by the river. But coolies were not available, and many of the sepoys who took such an active part in the siege helped the servants in carrying the goods to the boats.<sup>1</sup> The worst seemed to be over.

Nana Sahib's acceptance of the leadership entirely altered the situation. On 6 June the sepoys returned with Nana from Kalyanpur and took possession of the city. It came as a surprise to Wheeler and others. Many suspected that Nana Sahib had always been secretly in league with the sepoys, and that by pretending friendship with the English he had successfully deceived the authorities at Cawnpore. Shepherd called him 'this wolf in sheep's clothing'.<sup>2</sup> Kaye considered that Nana Sahib had planned to deceive the English from the beginning; 'all that was passing in the mind of the Maratha was a sealed book to the English.'<sup>3</sup> Forrest also spoke of Nana's 'hypocritical professions of friendship'.<sup>4</sup> Major Williams, while recording the evidence of the outbreak at Cawnpore, came to the same conclusion; 'whilst outwardly friendly [Nana] inwardly carried a bitter hatred to all who bore the name of the British and seized the favourable opportunity then afforded him by his presence at Cawnpore, to tamper with and foment the discontent of the native troops.'<sup>5</sup> Nana Sahib's conduct after the outbreak affords some justification for such statements, but the evidence of his intrigues is not very conclusive. It is largely based on an account recorded by Colonel Williams. A few days before

<sup>1</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleson, *op. cit.* i. 225.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 3.



the outbreak, a meeting was held at Sukha Mulla's Ghat, at which 'Nana and his brother Bala, Azeemoollah, the two *sowers*, Raheem Khan and Mudud Ali, with the leading conspirators of the 2nd Cavalry, met in consultation for the purpose, as we may suppose, of fixing the day on which the troops should mutiny'.<sup>1</sup> Forrest relied on this account when he wrote, 'on the evening of the 1st of June the Nana and his brother had been for two hours in a boat holding a consultation with certain officers and men of the 2nd Cavalry.' He also added that Nana plausibly accounted for the occurrence by saying that he was considering measures which would keep the troops loyal.<sup>2</sup> Kaye blamed Nana Sahib's followers more than Nana, and stated that in the 'first days of June there were frequent interviews between the chiefs of the rebellious *sipahis* and inmates of the Bithur palace'.<sup>3</sup> Nana Sahib denied that he played any part in fomenting the mutiny at Cawnpore. After his escape to Nepal he wrote to the Government that he had 'joined the rebels from helplessness'.<sup>4</sup> Tatyá Tope also made a similar statement. The sepoys 'surrounded us and imprisoned the Nana and myself in the treasury and plundered the magazine and treasury', and as the army marched from Cawnpore, 'the rebels took the Nana Sahib and myself and all our attendants along with them and said "come along to Delhi"'.<sup>5</sup> This was said a few hours before Tatyá's death, when he must have known there was nothing he could expect by making up a story; but one may naturally hesitate to accept it without corroboration by other sources. Some found it difficult to imagine Nana Sahib offering his leadership to the sepoys and eager to bear such heavy responsibility. Thornhill considered it unlikely, for had any understanding existed between the Nana and the troops, there would have been no object in the march they made on the Delhi road.<sup>6</sup> Mowbray Thomson never thought that Nana had such military skill or intelligence as would make him a leader. Before the outbreak, he 'passed his days in sensual indulgence and no trifling inducements could bestir him from the stupid listless

<sup>1</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* i. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* v. 305.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 154.

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (66).

<sup>6</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859.



apathy in which he squatted upon his haunches'.<sup>1</sup> The unrest in May might have appeared to him as an opportunity for winning the gratitude of the Government, with a fair chance of his claim to the pension being favourably reconsidered. But the sepoy's successes at Delhi and Meerut and the advice of his friends made him doubtful of the English holding their position at Cawnpore. It is quite possible that the threats of the sepoy leaders, as suggested by Tatyá Tope, was the deciding factor in changing his mind. When he deserted the English it must have appeared to him that he was abandoning a lost cause.

Nothing is definitely known as to when Nana Sahib joined the sepoy. Nanakchand was anxious to prove that Nana was with the sepoy from the beginning. He said that on 5 June Nana was joined by the 'troops of the 2nd Cavalry and the sepoy, with the object of attacking the entrenchment', and Baba Bhat, Bala Rao and Azimullah had the door of the treasury unlocked. Nanakchand also said that he had heard that Nana Sahib and Baba Bhat 'were against going to Delhi and were of opinion that the rebels should first conquer Cawnpore and slay their enemies'.<sup>2</sup> From the diary of Narpát Rao, a clerk in the opium department, it appears that Nana had committed himself earlier. On 4 June the magazine was taken over and Nana placed himself at the head of the troops, saying, 'I came in appearance to help the British, but am at heart their mortal enemy.' Next day he established himself in the magazine and released the prisoners. He told the sepoy that 'it was not proper to go to Delhi until all Europeans, men, women and children were destroyed', and brought the troops back to Cawnpore on the 6th.<sup>3</sup> The story of Nana joining the sepoy at Nawabganj is supported by Mowbray Thomson and Shepherd. Mowbray Thomson said that when the sepoy reached Nawabganj, 'the Nana came out to meet them and at their head proceeded to the treasury'.<sup>4</sup> Shepherd's statement is very similar: 'When the mutineers reached Nawabgunge, the Nana

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857 (Further Papers relative to Mutinies in the East India) pp. 51-53; also in Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 115 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 41.

came out to receive them and taking them with him proceeded to the treasury.<sup>1</sup>

One of the witnesses examined by Williams gave some interesting details; 'some of the native officers and troopers waited on the Nana with intimation that a kingdom was prepared for him' if he joined them with all his wealth, or death if he sided with the Europeans. The Nana replied that he was with them and 'told them to take the treasures'. He also agreed to lead the troops to Delhi. The sepoy asked him to place his hand on his head and take an oath. The same witness also mentioned that he had heard that 'the sowers of the 2nd Cavalry were plotting with the Nana and that a unity had taken place between the parties'.<sup>2</sup> According to Taty Tope, the troops marched 'to a place 3 *cosse* from Cawnpore', taking him and Nana Sahib with them. Next morning (6 June), the sepoy wanted Nana to accompany them to Delhi. As he refused, the sepoy decided to return to Cawnpore with him and fight there. 'Taking him with them as a prisoner,' the sepoy 'went towards Cawnpore, and fighting commenced there'. Taty Tope stated that Nana did not take any part in the plunder of the treasury and the magazine, and, till he agreed to lead the sepoy, he was not a free agent.<sup>3</sup> All these versions probably contain some elements of truth, and from them it is possible to get an idea of the general pattern of events. Nana Sahib, greedy and weak, and probably not a free agent, was at last convinced that the days of the British were over, and unwilling to miss his opportunity, allowed himself to be prevailed upon by the sepoy. As has been said, the sepoy 'felt the need of a leader of high rank and played upon his ambition and fear, and Nana placed himself at the head after some hesitation'.<sup>4</sup> His name lent them prestige and gave them a sense of unity, of leadership and of cohesion.

Early in the morning on 6 June the sepoy returned to Cawnpore. Nana immediately wrote to General Wheeler informing him that he was going to attack their entrenchment. The return of the

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 16); Williams, *op. cit.* pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* v. 305-6 (Taty Tope's deposition).

<sup>4</sup> Sen, *op. cit.* p. 138.



troops to Cawnpore was not anticipated, and some people had already left the entrenchment. General Wheeler issued an order summoning everybody. Mowbray Thomson, who wanted to run to the café and get some refreshment, was told that the General's order was 'most peremptory that not a soul should be permitted to leave . . . as the attack was momentarily expected'.<sup>1</sup> It was so much taken for granted that the sepoys would leave for Delhi that many had not considered it necessary to bring a change of linen into the entrenchment. 'Very few of our number', says Thomson, 'had secured a single change of raiment; some like myself was only partially dressed, and even in the beginning of our defence, we were like a band of seafarers who had taken to a raft to escape their burning ship.'<sup>2</sup>

Shepherd tried to find out the number of people in the entrenchment, and his list shows that there were about 1,000 persons, including women and children. Among them, 210 were European soldiers, about 100 were officers of the sepoy corps, about 125 were musicians or non-military personnel, and the rest were women and children. The entrenchment also sheltered some twenty-five or thirty Indian servants who had not forsaken their masters, and a small number of sepoys who had not joined the rebels and preferred to remain with the officers.<sup>3</sup>

With this small number, a plan of defence was adopted. Major Vibart, assisted by Captain Jenkins, was in charge of what was known as the *redan*, an earthcourse which protected the north. On the west, there was Lieutenant Dempster with three nine-pounders, assisted by Lieutenant Martin. On the south there was Captain Kempland. The south-east battery, with three nine-pounders, was placed under the care of Lieutenants Eckford, Burney and Delafosse. The north-east battery, with one howitzer and two nine-pounders, was commanded by Lieutenant Ashe, who was assisted by Lieutenant Sotheby. The main ground from south to west was held by Captain Turnbull. A three-pounder flanked the western battery, with a detachment under Major Prout. On the north-west, Captain Whiting held the command.

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



At each battery men were posted fifteen paces apart. The number of troops was very small, and therefore much of their work had to be taken over by civilians. In order to check any attempt to rush into the entrenchment, defenders were provided with three muskets each, and a fixed bayonet. Some soldiers had more.<sup>1</sup>

There was no dearth of muskets and no lack of ammunition for small arms. A quantity of ammunition had been 'brought away from the magazine and buried underground'. But there were not enough guns. Shepherd spoke only of eight. 'It was a matter of great regret,' he wrote, 'when we were besieged, that no larger guns or even a few mortars and howitzers had been provided.'<sup>2</sup> He said almost the same thing in a letter to his brother in England after the re-capture of Cawnpore by Havelock. 'Had we even had one 24-pounder, a great deal could have been done.'<sup>3</sup> The small number of guns they possessed had to be fired at considerable peril. None of the batteries was masked or fortified, and the gunmen found themselves targets for the sepoy's musketry.

For the safety of the entrenchment it was essential to hold the unfinished barracks near the Allahabad road. There were seven of them, of which only one (barrack number 4) had been covered with a temporary roof. But it was not finished and a great deal of work had still to be done. Of the rest, only the walls had been partly erected. In one barrack they were about forty feet high and in the others not more than seven or eight feet. These half-finished buildings and the piles of bricks and rubbish that lay about afforded a cover for approach to the entrenchment. To prevent the sepoy's from coming nearer, barrack number 4 was occupied and a picket was placed there. During the first three days it was held by civilians only, without any military superintendence. These men were railway servants and their 'sharp sight and accurate knowledge of distance acquired in surveying had made these gentlemen invaluable as marksmen'. Mowbray Thomson praised them for their skill and courage and 'still higher moral qualities'.<sup>4</sup>

Late in the morning these defensive measures were completed. By then smoke could be seen in the distance. The city was on fire.

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 62-64.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 19 Sept. 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 68-70.

Lieutenant Ashe took twenty or thirty volunteers with him and left the entrenchment to find out the position of the enemy. They had gone barely five hundred yards when they found the sepoy army approaching and 'came back at a trot into the entrenchment'. Meanwhile heavy guns were being drawn towards the entrenchment by the sepoys, and at about ten o'clock — Shepherd said 'exactly at half past ten' — Nana Sahib's battery opened fire.<sup>1</sup> The siege of the entrenchment, 'the fort of despair' as Azimullah called it, had begun.

Before Nana Sahib's guns opened fire on the entrenchment, the city had been given up to plunder. Much of the property owned by Europeans that had escaped destruction on the previous day was now set fire to or looted. It would not be correct to think that it was the sepoys only who plundered the city and that it was only the Europeans and the Indian Christians who suffered. The large number of undesirable persons in the city turned the situation to their advantage. Not only the Christians lived in terror, but also others who were known to possess considerable wealth. One witness examined by Colonel Williams said that in general respectable persons did not take part in the disturbances, but those who refused to join in the 'crusade' ran the risk of their property being plundered. Narpat recorded in his diary, 'all has been confusion; the shops of the city are plundered; Hindus cry out "Ram Chander is king"; Musalmans claim their head.' Some of the wealthy citizens were made special subjects for attention by the sepoys. The houses of Bahir Ali and the sons of Nawab Aga Mir were plundered.<sup>2</sup> Daroga Azim Ali, formerly of Lucknow, who was believed to be rich, was taken prisoner with his sons. Nana Sahib threatened to tie Azim Ali to a heated gun, but released him after he paid him one lakh of rupees. Another respectable citizen, Mohammed Ali Khan, better known as Nane Nawab, had a similar experience. His house was plundered and he was placed under arrest, but his imprisonment lasted only for a few hours. Nane Nawab decided to join Nana Sahib. He was

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 117; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857 (Further Papers relative to Mutinies in the East Indies) pp. 51-53.



placed in charge of one of the batteries and played a prominent part in the siege.<sup>1</sup>

General Wheeler's entrenchment sheltered nearly all the Europeans and Eurasians at Cawnpore, but there were a few who either did not find it possible to reach the entrenchment before the siege began or did not consider it necessary. Thomas Farnon, a Eurasian employed on the railway, was at Mar, twenty-three miles from Cawnpore. Warned by his clerk of the danger, he fled to Cawnpore, where he was sheltered by his friend Ahmed Ali Khan. Many Indian Christians, drummers and musicians in the army, adopted the easy way to safety and became Muslims. But this method of escape was not possible for everybody. Like Wheeler, some Christian inhabitants had thought that the danger would be of a short duration, and they were taken unawares when the sepoys returned from Kalyanpur. 'Five or six harmless old pensioners and others' were dragged out of their hiding-place and murdered. Mackintosh, an old resident of the city, and his son disguised themselves in Indian dress and tried to escape detection. But they were so very well-known that the disguise proved useless and they were put to death. Mackintosh's widow was taken to Nana, and she shared the same fate. One witness claimed to have seen Mackintosh, his wife and child, 'dressed in Hindustanee clothes, hiding under a bridge.' The same witness spoke of 'a lady and a gentleman with a child' taken by the cavalry from a house 'near the staging bungalow' and shot by order of Nana Sahib, and 'another gentleman of the road department' and his wife and child all put to death by Nana's order. Green, superintendent of the bridge of boats, was killed while trying to escape. De Gama, a merchant who 'used to have extensive dealings' with Nana, felt himself 'sufficiently secure' and did not leave his shop. When he was arrested and brought before Nana Sahib, Nana refused to listen to him and 'turned away his face in anger with sufficient meanings in his gesticulations', and De Gama was cut to pieces. Henry Jacobi, a watchmaker, hid himself and his family in the

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 117; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857 (Further Papers relative to Mutinies in the East Indies), pp. 51-53; For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 33); Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 30.



house of an Indian. While attempting to escape from Cawnpore he died of sunstroke a few miles from the city, and his widow and children were seized.<sup>1</sup>

In a few cases, attempts were made to resist the crowd. But in every case the result was the same. Near Generalganj, some Indian Christians armed themselves with matchlocks and barricaded the walls. But the house was set on fire and they perished in the flames. The Greenway family, the well-known merchants, had taken shelter in their country house at Najafgarh, sixteen miles from Cawnpore, in the hope that the anger of the sepoys would be confined to the city. Very soon, however, they discovered how mistaken they were. Hollings, a friend of the family who tried to defend his friends, was killed, and old Mrs. Greenway, her son Edward and other members of the family were taken prisoner.<sup>2</sup>

Like Farnon, some Europeans or Indian Christians found shelter with their Hindu or Muslim friends. But it was never safe to harbour them. The rumour that someone was protecting a Christian was always a good excuse for his house being searched and plundered. Persons who were known to be friendly to Europeans were treated with suspicion. There was an order for the arrest of Nanakchand. But he had received a prior warning and fled across the river. The large number of Bengalis at Cawnpore, who worked mostly as clerks in the army or in Government offices, were believed to be in sympathy with the English. It is not surprising therefore that they became very unpopular and were terrorized. A news-bearer, coming from Agra during the siege with a letter for General Wheeler, met on the way 'a number of Bengalis (some 150 in number) who had been plundered and maltreated' by the villagers.<sup>3</sup>

The main concern of Nana Sahib and the sepoys was the capture of the entrenchment. On the first day, Nana 'put a few heavy guns in serviceable order' and brought out about half a dozen more for an attack. Two of the guns were eighteen-pounders, and the rest were smaller. 'All that day and night a murderous fire was kept up,' and it was hoped that the English would not be able to

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 31, 42-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 25, 43 and 53).

hold out long and that they would surrender in a matter of hours. Nana Sahib, it is said, took an oath that he would not alight from his horse until the entrenchment was taken. But evening came and Nana Sahib realized that he would not be able to keep his vow. He spent the night on a piece of carpet near the battery. Next day he went to the nearby Duncan's Hotel, and after a few days removed his headquarters to a house in the Savada plain.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib and his advisers had thought of the obvious plan of softening the resistance of the English by continuously firing on the entrenchment. Their guns were larger, so they had some definite advantage over the English. Some of the guns in the magazine had been spiked by the English, but they were repaired and made ready for use. Four batteries were set up near the entrenchment, but details given by various persons about their position do not always agree. Edward William, a merchant, told Colonel Williams that he remembered that on the first day a battery was erected near Mogul Serai and another near the cavalry barracks. The first battery was then 'brought up to the bridge near the horse artillery bazaar' and the second 'was moved up close to the racket court'. Another witness, Sheoprasad Pande, described the position of Nana Sahib's batteries; 'one near the racquet court, one near the church, another on the Mall and the fourth near the cavalry line opposite the nullah.' Hulas Sing, who for some time was the *Kotwal* of Cawnpore under Nana Sahib, also spoke of four batteries: 'one was planted on the north of the entrenchment by the racquet court . . . one was planted by the cavalry parade ground . . . another was placed by the Dala Nulla,' and the fourth 'on the north of the Savada House and south of the entrenchment'. Nana personally commanded one of the batteries. Nawab Babu Ali and Nane Nawab each commanded one, and the fourth was placed under the care of some officers. Nane Nawab was popular with the Muslim troops. He was often seen seated on a chair near the racquet court with a table placed before him. One witness described him as richly dressed, carrying a sword and looking towards the entrenchment through a telescope. He was a person of considerable importance in Nana Sahib's army, and it

<sup>1</sup>Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 30-31.



was rumoured that Nana had promised to hand over Cawnpore as a prize to him after the final victory.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib had little difficulty in securing gunners for his batteries. Old pensioners of the Company were encouraged to join, and men who distinguished themselves were rewarded. People were also forced to perform manual work in the battery. Edward William, a Eurasian merchant who disguised himself as a Muslim, saw 'several troopers going about forcing people to carry water to the batteries'. One of them invited William to assist at the batteries, and said that it was 'a great shame for a young Mussalman' to idle away his time. William excused himself by saying that he 'possessed no arms and had never been a soldier'.<sup>2</sup> But everyone did not escape so easily. A Brahmin named Bijoylal was taken by force to Nane Nawab's battery and ordered to supply water to the men. When he begged the Nawab to let him go, he was told that as he was a Brahmin he had been given only light work. Bijoylal worked in the battery till evening, when he escaped. Sheoprasad Pande, another Brahmin, had a similar experience on the same day. He was seized and made to serve in the battery, but he also escaped in the evening.<sup>3</sup>

When the first shot was fired on 6 June, Nana Sahib's batteries were not ready. His men, however, kept on firing incessantly, but only a few shots hit the barracks. The guns were at too great a distance and it was difficult to aim with precision. There was no fire from the sepoy's muskets, but from the entrenchment a large number of armed men could be seen assembling, and it was feared that a general attack was being planned.

Shepherd gave a picture of the first day of the siege. The noise of the round shots and the defenders' guns, and the occasional sounds of balls from Nana Sahib's guns hitting the barracks, caused much alarm and excitement. Shepherd had been on sentry duty all day and his family had to go without a meal; 'we had no food from home as our servants could not bring us any.' But there was so much anxiety and fear that nobody felt like eating. At

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 9, 21, 24, 31 and 32).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 9).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 31 and 32).



midnight he was again pressed into service. His suspicion was roused when he found 'a dark object' appearing in the plain, 'as of a man crawling on all fours on the ground.' A corporal who was also keeping watch agreed with him, and Shepherd fired. The moving object transpired to be only 'a cow or bullock which had come to graze in the cool of the night'. He missed his target, and the 'report of the gun caused it to start away fast enough'. Much more excitement was created by the report of a European sentry who believed he had seen a column of sepoy infantry towards the north. Shepherd thought there was certainly something resembling what the sentry had reported, 'and when the moon became bright one could see the glitter of the bayonets.'<sup>1</sup> If it was really a sepoy column, it was not destined to make an attack on the entrenchment. After a while it could be seen no longer.

So the first night passed without any major incident. But gradually the ring round the entrenchment was tightened up. It took four or five days to mount the guns and erect the batteries. As Shepherd said, 'the enemy had us well surrounded with cannon.' It was feared from the first that attempts would be made by the sepoys to make a charge on the entrenchment. 'Waiting the assault,' Mowbray Thomson wrote, 'not a man closed his eyes in sleep, and throughout the whole siege snatches of troubled slumber under the cover of the wall, was all the relief the combatants could obtain.'<sup>2</sup> Except on one occasion, the entrenchment was never in danger of being overrun, but two of the unfinished barracks occupied by the defenders were frequently being attacked, and a close watch had to be maintained. For this purpose, a crow's-nest was built twenty feet high, from the top of which a man could observe through a hole the movement of the sepoys. All attempts to seize the outside barracks were beaten back by the defenders, and a group of seventeen men were able to hold out in barrack number 2 against a large number of assailants. Mowbray Thomson, who was in charge here, thought that had the sepoys been more enterprising, 'we could not have held the place for four and twenty hours.' The sepoys were reluctant to quit the safe cover of the buildings and make a charge, and the few indi-

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 67.

viduals who did so 'under the influence of infuriating doses of *bhang*', — Mowbray Thomson thought — were picked up as targets by riflemen.<sup>1</sup> In the city, attempts were made to organize the people and attack the entrenchment. Proclamations were printed asking the Hindus and the Muslims to join the 'righteous cause'.

On 9 June, three days after the siege began, two green flags were set up calling the Muslims to action. One was planted by the butchers. This does not seem to have made much impression and attracted only 'the scum of the population'. Another flag, which collected great crowds, was set up by Maulavi Salamatullah. The Maulavi stood by it 'with his beads in his hand praying for victory'. There were 2,000 or 3,000 armed men standing by the flag, and also Wasiuddin, the *Kazi* of the city, with some troopers of the 2nd Cavalry. Nothing, however, happened. The Maulavi, it was said, did not consider the day auspicious, and the attack was postponed. The Maulavi was reported to have said, 'we ought not to fight today, but to proceed towards the entrenchment . . . tomorrow.' A flag of the Hindus, *Mahavir Jhanda*, was also unfurled, calling upon them to join in an attack on the entrenchment.<sup>2</sup>

It was announced that the Peshwa's rule had begun. The new régime was proclaimed by a beat of drums, and a small body of troops carried the news to Bithur. Since Bajji Rao's death there had been constant quarrelling between Nana Sahib and the ex-Peshwa's widows. Nana Sahib now took the opportunity of putting an end to his enemies. Nanakchand says that 'the rebels murdered Goredhun, agent of the Baes . . . and slew the people of his house and blew up his house with guns. The other agent Apaji ran away, and the attendants of Chimnaji Appa . . . were all put to death; their hands and noses being first cut off'. The story of the disgrace of the advisers to Bajji Rao's widows was also reported by other sources.<sup>3</sup> Apaji Lakshman of Bithur said, 'on the 6th June when Nana's rule was proclaimed, Goordeen . . . together with his family were put to death by Nana's orders and

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 71-74.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 22 and 24).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Nanakchand's narrative).



Appa Sastri and myself, with five others, were put in confinement with irons.' The account was confirmed by Appa Sastri and also by Nana Ubhyankar of Bithur.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib had a small council of advisers, consisting of Bala Sahib, Baba Bhat, Azimullah and a few others. Subedar Tekka Singh of the 2nd Cavalry became a General and was placed in charge of the army. Jwalaprasad became a Brigadier, and Subedar Dalbhanjan Singh and Subedar Gangadin were promoted to the rank of Colonel.<sup>2</sup>

A proclamation was published nearly four weeks later laying down conditions of pay and compensation in the army. Nana Sahib promised pensions to all who joined him. 'Every man belonging to the Artillery, the Infantry and the Cavalry who has joined us or will join us in the contest, a pension will be given for one generation to his son or his wife or his mother or his sister or his daughter. And whoever has been, or may be, incapacitated by wounds, he will get a pension for his whole life according to custom, and those who are not incapacitated, and remain on duty, and those who get old in the service, will also receive pensions according to custom. And whatever the rate of pay at Delhi may be, that will be given here from the day of joining the army of the Sircar.'<sup>3</sup>

Another proclamation dealt with the administration and organization of the troops. In every regiment, infantry or cavalry, there would be one Colonel who was the commanding officer, a Major who was the second in command, and one Adjutant. The Colonel would have the authority to adopt all necessary measures with regard to the construction of batteries. The Major would assist the Colonel and would act as the commanding officer during his absence. The Adjutant would be in charge of drill and manoeuvres and would be required to perform 'all other duties which from old appertain to the post of Adjutant'. He would also be in charge of the records of the office of the Quarter Master and the magazine and ammunition. A Subedar would receive an allowance of fifty rupees every month for every Com-

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 38).

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleison, op. cit. ii. 238.

<sup>3</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 31 July 1857 (88).



pany, out of which a sum of thirty rupees was to be paid to 'those who command' and the remaining twenty rupees to be disbursed on account of repairs to be made by cobblers, blacksmiths and carpenters. There would be a *munshi* in every regiment. He would prepare every month the pay lists of the ten companies, as well as the muster rolls showing 'the number of sepoys present, absent, and wounded, and submit them under his signature to the Adjutant of his Regiment'. The Adjutant would maintain in his office one head *munshi* and two assistants, who would prepare the pay abstract of the Companies and send it every month to the commanding officer, who would forward it after scrutiny to the Government for the issue of the salary of the troops.

The proclamation also laid down how the records of the Court Martial should be maintained. The head *munshi* would 'record the allegation of the plaintiff, the depositions of the witnesses and the opinion of the Court', and, one may presume though it is not said explicitly, the case for the defence as well. It would also be his duty to get the judgments signed by the members of the court and send them to the Officer commanding the Regiment. The commanding officer would put his signature on the document and transmit it to the Brigadier, who would forward it to the Government for sanction before the sentence was carried out.<sup>1</sup>

This proclamation gave only a broad outline of the army organization and did not cover all essential points. It was described as 'the first proposal' by the Government, and other similar documents were to follow. Whether they did is not known, for Nana Sahib's rule lasted only a few weeks, and most of the documents relating to his administration perished when his palace at Bithur was destroyed by British troops. One may notice, however, some superficial resemblance to the army organization of the Marathas in Shivaji's time. It is not possible to say whether any serious attempt was made to give effect to the scheme laid down during his short period of administration.

One of the first acts of the new Government was to re-establish law and order in the city, and help the people to lead a normal

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 31 July 1857 (89).

life. A Supreme Court of Justice was established at Cawnpore. The chief of the judiciary was Baba Bhat. Sheoprasad Khazanchi testified that he saw him seated on a billiard table, holding his court in a small house 'in the present Post Office compound'. Others who also administered justice were Bala Bhat, Azimullah and Brigadier Jawalaprased. The sentences passed by Baba Bhat were much more severe than those in the Company's court. There was also a subordinate court presided over by Baba Bhat's deputy, Ramlal.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib seems to have had some difficulty in securing a *Kotwal*, [chief officer of police] for the city. He was expected to maintain order and also assist in procuring supplies for the army. But a suitable person was not easy to find. Sher Ali, the *Kotwal* under the Company, fled on 7 June, and Kazi Wasiuddin was appointed in his place. Wasiuddin is said to have held the office for one day. On 8 June he was seen mounted on a horse with Azizun, a well-known courtesan, but next day his term of office came to an end and he was succeeded by Haji Khanum's son. He was evidently an insignificant person, for nobody seems to have mentioned him by his real name. He is said to have remained in office two or three days. But the period was probably even shorter. Colonel Williams thinks his term of office did not last more than twenty-four hours, for Hulas Singh was appointed *Kotwal* on 10 June. Hulas Singh was not new to his job. He had worked in the *thana* of Tahsur, but shortly before the outbreak was suspended from service.<sup>2</sup> He had the longest period of office, and it terminated with the approach of General Havelock to Cawnpore, when he fled from the city.

On assuming office, Hulas Singh assured the merchants that the city would not be plundered if they maintained regular supplies to the troops and set up a *panchayet* from among them. To assist the *Kotwal* in his work, Nana Sahib appointed a Superintendent of Supplies. Hulas Singh was assisted by Moti Ram and Khati Ram, the two *chaudburis*, and procured supplies of saltpetre, wood, lead and sulphur. Supplies were not plentiful, and some-

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 24).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 23); Williams, *op. cit.* p. 6.



times stern measures had to be used. Jagannath, a dealer in indigo, was told that he must know where saltpetre was manufactured, and as he failed to give proper information he was sent to prison for a fortnight. Jagannath complained that the sepoys had demanded five hundred rupees from him. Nana Sahib secured tents and great-coats for the troops from two merchants, Gangaprasad and Sheoprasad. Jeweller Jayalkrishna supplied him with jewels worth several thousands. Both Gangaprasad and Sheoprasad later on said that reports about them were very much exaggerated, and that what little help they rendered to Nana was to save themselves from ruin and disgrace.<sup>1</sup>

It would be interesting to know what picture of the new régime Nana Sahib and his advisers had in mind when they were going to establish it. Many of the documents, as has already been said, are not available, but a bundle of papers found at Gwalior, where Bala Rao stayed after his flight from Cawnpore, gives a strange picture of the revival of the Peshwa's régime. The Governor-General's agent for Central India, who forwarded them, described the documents as of no importance: 'they only served to show the marvellous presumption of the rebels.' The number of Provinces to be ruled by Nana Sahib, the estimate of the revenue, and the amount of tributes from various States would appear incredible. They are so wild that no historian can take them seriously. Even as a piece of propaganda they would appear unconvincing and therefore useless. It transpires from one document that there were to be twenty-five *subas* or provinces, yielding a net revenue of twenty-five crores of rupees. These were Gwalior, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Kashmir, Amritsar, Lucknow, Murshidabad, Bengal, Calcutta, Bombay, Surat, Poona, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Rangoputher(?), Nagpur, Nugger, Nugger-Jat(?) Funaran(?) Ahmedabad, Ujjain, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Ratnagiri. As Delhi is included in the list, it is clear that all these were not to be placed directly under Nana Sahib, but some of them would be under Bahadur Shah and probably other leaders of the revolt. There does not seem to be any logic or reason in these divisions.

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 23, 24 and 26); Williams, *op. cit.* p. 7.



The list leaves out south-east India altogether, for obvious reasons, but it is not clear why cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Amritsar and Lahore were mentioned, where there was hardly any likelihood of the spread of the rebellion. Bengal was split up into three *subas*: Calcutta, Murshidabad and the rest of the province. Lucknow was to form a *suba*, but not Cawnpore or Bithur. Nana Sahib's sphere of influence was not mentioned at all. It was estimated that each *suba* would yield on an average one crore and ten lakhs of rupees, and the expenses of each would be about ten lakhs. This was to produce a net income of twenty-five crores of rupees.<sup>1</sup>

Another document, which mentions the amount of 'tribute from the Kings, Princes, Rajahs etc.', is even more absurd. The list includes the Emperor of China, who was to pay a tribute of Rs. 35,000,000, the King of 'Machin', Rs. 10,000,000, the Kings of Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh and Bokhara, Rs. 5,000,000 each. The King [Queen ?] of England was to pay the same amount. The King of Rome [Room] and the King of Siam [Sham] were to pay Rs. 7,500,000 each. The tribute of the King of Burma was Rs. 400,000. The smallest amounts were to be from the King of Bhopal and the King of Datia, who were to pay one lakh each. Some of the *subas* mentioned in the earlier list — Lahore, Lucknow and Hyderabad — enjoyed better status than the others; their governors were described as Kings and each was required to pay Rs. 250,000 as tribute. What is, however, more difficult to explain is the mention of 'Tipoo' in the list, and a sum of Rs. 1,000,000 written against his name.<sup>2</sup> It might be taken to mean Mysore, but that explanation again seems to be hardly satisfactory.

Some of the documents give the salaries of ministers and other officials. The salaries of ministers and important officials were exceedingly high; even in the heyday of the Maratha Empire the Peshwa could not have dreamt of granting such high salaries. The Prime Minister's salary was Rs. 100,000 a month. Principal officers such as those attached to the *Khasgi* office, or the *Fadnis*,

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Cons. 26 Nov. 1858 (27) (28).

<sup>2</sup> For. Sec. Cons. 26 Nov. 1858 (28). For Rome and Siam one should read *Room-Sham*, which indicates what was imagined to be the farthest expansion of Maratha territory. Room-Sham stood for Istanbul.

were to draw Rs. 25,000 a month, while *Potnis*, *Chitnis* and *Majumdar* would receive Rs. 10,000.<sup>1</sup> The lists also mention the salaries of doctors, officers in charge of public works, musicians, distributors of daily alms, 'officers for preserving the peace of the city' and other officers, and in every case the scale is so high as to make it incredible. But when one comes across the salary of the troops one meets the scale of pay current about that time. In the infantry a Havildar's pay was Rs. 8 and that of a sepoy only Rs. 7. A Jemadar would receive Rs. 15 and a Subedar Rs. 35. A Havildar in the cavalry was paid Rs. 100, and a trooper Rs. 15. A *barkara* and a *chaprasi* had the same pay, Rs. 6 a month.<sup>2</sup>

One document lays down the sitting arrangements and procedure in Court. The priests, the *sastris* and the astronomers would sit on the right of the throne, and after them the governors of the subas, the *kotwal* and representatives of different States and foreign countries. Representatives of foreign States and cities such as China, Mahachin, Kabul, Kandahar Balkh, Bokhara, Rome [Room], England and Siam [Sham], are mentioned as having had seats allotted to them in Court; similarly, agents of some Indian cities such as Bharatpur, Lahore, Hyderabad, Kotah and Jaipur. On the left, the first place was to be occupied by the Prime Minister, who was to be followed by the principal officers of the State, like *Ganga-jalwala*, *Khasgiwala*, *Fadnis*, *Potnis*, *Chitnis*, *Majumdar* and others.<sup>3</sup>

While the outline of the new administration was being made ready, Nana Sahib was also strengthening his grip on the entrenchment. He did not, however, exercise effective control over the sepoys, and the attack was not always carried on with enthusiasm. Colonel Williams observed that the troops 'did just as they pleased, manned the attacking batteries and joined in the assaults or not as they deemed fit, the greater portion taking their ease, lounging in the bazaars and on the banks of the canal and plundering the provisions as they were brought into the city'.<sup>4</sup> But the fire from

<sup>1</sup> *Khasgi*, 'one's own private or personal property in contradistinction to the revenues or concerns of the State' (Wilson, *Glossary*). *Fadnis*, Deputy-Auditor; *Potnis*, Cash Keeper; *Chitnis*, Secretary; *Majumdar*, Auditor and Accountant (Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas*, p. 62).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* p. 4.



the batteries had its effect on the barracks. Mowbray Thomson said, 'after a day or two of sharp cannonading, to which we were exposed, all the doors, windows and framework of this, the best of the two structures, were entirely shot away.'<sup>1</sup>

On 11 June an attempt was made to storm the entrenchment. Shepherd saw 'some thousands of armed men spread about under every cover available, their muskets and bayonets only perceptible, and they fired as fast as they loaded. Their batteries also threw in shot, shell and grape, and bullets came pouring in . . . tearing away tents and pillars of the barracks on every side'. It was 'incredible anguish' for two hours, and the din 'resembled continuous claps of thunder in a tremendous storm'.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier that day, a rumour that the flat-roofed barrack was on fire had caused a great deal of panic. It was found later on that some clothes and furniture in one of the rooms had caught fire, probably by accident. The real cause for alarm came two days later. The thatched roof of one of the barracks had not been properly covered, and it was always feared that it might catch fire easily. On 13 June, in the evening, a shell filled with burning materials fired from Nane Nawab's battery set fire to the thatch. Edward William, who then lived in the city disguised as a Muslim, apparently referred to this incident when he said that he had heard from a trooper that the son of a retired subedar 'laid a gun so precisely that the shot carried away a portion of the barracks . . . for which he received a reward of Rs. 90 and a shawl'.<sup>3</sup> The hot June days had rendered the roof dry as cinder, and the breeze spread the conflagration. The barrack was the shelter of a large number of women and children, and part of it was used as a hospital. 'By means of indomitable perseverance,' Mowbray Thomson said, 'many a poor agonising private was rescued from horrible death that seemed inevitable,' except two artillerymen

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 48. It is curious that Mowbray Thomson, who was in one of the outer pickets, did not make any special mention of the incident. One wonders if Shepherd, who had hardly any experience of military operations, did not exaggerate it.

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 9 and 21); Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 57; Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 92-94; Williams, *op. cit.* p. 8.



who 'perished in the flames'.<sup>1</sup> He was thinking of army personnel only. Shepherd mentioned among the dead, Gill, the school master, and his wife. The wounded and sick who could not be removed and were burnt, he estimated to be about forty in number.<sup>2</sup> The fire also destroyed the medical stores: 'all that the surgeons could save was a box or two of surgical instruments and a small chest of medicine.'<sup>3</sup>

An attempt was also made to take advantage of the confusion in the entrenchment and take it by assault. But it did not succeed. Ashe's battery opened fire on the sepoys with grape shot from nine-pounders, and in about half an hour Nana Sahib's troops were dispersed.

The fire destroyed all chances of recovery for the sick and the wounded, whose numbers were daily increasing. It also made the problem of accommodation extremely acute. Even the two barracks were hardly sufficient, and after the destruction of one it was impossible to render any help to those who had been dislodged. On the first day of the siege, Shepherd found it 'pitiful' to see those 'who had all their lifetime been accustomed to enjoy *khus tatties* and *punkbas* during the hot weather and who never ventured out in the hot winds, except in a covered conveyance, thus pitilessly exposed a whole day to the powerful heat of the sun—some covering their heads with cloth dipped in water and others putting up a temporary shelter of empty boxes, sheets etc.'<sup>4</sup> After the 13th it became worse. Women and children, numbering about two hundred, were compelled to find shelter in the trenches. Many of them, Mowbray Thomson says, 'had never known privation in its mildest form.' It was not possible even to put up a covering of canvas, for it proved a target for guns.<sup>5</sup> The sepoys of the 53rd Regiment who were still with their officers were asked to leave. There was no room for them. Rambaksh, the Pay-Havildar of the 53rd Regiment, said later that General Wheeler had decided not to have Indian troops in the barrack. 'The Major told us he could do nothing for us, there being an order of General

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 32.

Wheeler prohibiting any native from entering the entrenchment.<sup>1</sup> They were advised to provide for their own safety.

The life in the entrenchment was a story of human suffering, courage and endurance. Mowbray Thomson told the story of his friend, John McKillop of the Civil Service. He was no fighting man, but he wanted to 'make himself useful when he could' and undertook the perilous task of drawing water from the well for women and children. After about a week he was fatally wounded. Before his death he requested that 'somebody would go and draw water for a lady to whom he had promised it'. But danger does not always bring out the best in men. Mowbray Thomson also spoke of an officer 'of high rank and in the prime of life' who would not come out of the barrack or take the 'slightest part in the military operations'. He escaped from Satichaura Ghat with Mowbray Thomson and exhibited the same disinclination to work when their boat was stuck on a sandbank. He was killed by a bullet and Mowbray Thomson wrote, 'it was the only death we regarded with complacency.' Shepherd also narrated his unfortunate experience. The room in which he was staying with his family afforded hardly any protection against musket shots and he was compelled to find a safer place. A room was ultimately secured, 'having more than sufficient unoccupied space . . . So we thanked God and took possession of it.' But his happiness was a little premature, for almost immediately afterwards an officer, who had apparently been asleep, got up and rudely ordered them to get out. Shepherd begged to be allowed to remain there for an hour or so, until the fury of the sepoy's batteries abated a little, but his entreaties produced no impression, and he was threatened with violence. So Shepherd and his family had to leave, 'the shots . . . falling about thick and fast,' and find shelter elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

In the first few days of the siege constant fire was kept up from the entrenchment. But this practice was soon given up. The guns used by the English were of smaller calibre, and therefore would not reach the sepoy batteries. But they were effectively used to check any advance made by the sepoys. The artillerymen in the

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 13).

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 86-87, 91; Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 59.



Sati-Chaura Ghat, Cawnpore. General Neill's sketch-book, British Museum.





entrenchment had nearly all been killed in the first week of the siege, and their places were taken by volunteers. The guns began to show signs of wear as a result of operations and enemy action; 'the howitzer was knocked completely off its carriage — one or two of them had their sides driven and one was without a muzzle.' The situation called for a good deal of ingenuity. Ladies' stockings filled with grape shot were fired from guns which were damaged and would not allow the entry of canisters, and 'as regular ammunition could not be found a nine-pounder was filled with 6 pound shots' and 'a stocking full of grapes, all well rammed down'.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes parties were taken out to make an attack on the sepoy's guns and spike them. These measures entailed considerable risk, but did not bring any lasting results. Nana Sahib could always put his hand on a new supply.

The greatest cause of worry was the food supply in the entrenchment. In the beginning not much attention had been paid to husbanding the resources. Mowbray Thomson's picture of 'truly comical scenes during the first few days' — a private carrying 'a bottle of champagne, a tin of preserved herrings and a pot of jam', and another walking along with salmon, rum and sweetmeats — did not last more than a week; and 'all were reduced to the monotonous and scanty allowance of one meal a day, consisting of a handful of split peas and a handful of flour'. Mowbray Thomson described how, in one corner of his barracks, a fire was lit and the cooks made a gruel, which was 'served round in tin pots, and many a poor hungry fellow found his appetite whetted rather than appeased by the meagre allotment'.<sup>2</sup> Shepherd complained that only soldiers were served with cooked food, and others 'had to shift for themselves the best they could, and it was sometimes a difficult matter for many who had uncooked rations served to them'. The cooks and the drummers 'occasionally lent a helping hand', but charged high prices for their assistance. Shepherd had 'repeatedly paid a rupee and a half' and sometimes two rupees, 'for the cooking of one meal of coarse chupattis and dhal, and that too often not properly done'.<sup>3</sup> Shepherd and many

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 36-38.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 63.

others who had taken shelter in the entrenchment were men of moderate means, and it is a little surprising that with so many ladies about they should find it difficult to get their food cooked for them.

Variety in the diet was occasionally achieved when a horse or bullock strayed too near the entrenchment. Mowbray Thomson speaks of a bull that came grazing near the entrenchment and was shot down. A party of eight or ten risked the fusillade of shots and dragged the animal inside, where it was soon turned into soup. Nothing, unfortunately, reached Mowbray Thomson in the outpost 'more palpable than its irritating odour'. It was not easy to find such contributions to the commissariat, and the hope that artillery bullocks employed in the sepoy batteries might be 'transferred into stew' was not realized, for the 'pandies artfully kept their horned treasure under cover'. An old horse was, however, more obliging. It came within range and 'was down by a shot like lightning, brought into the barrack and hewn up'. It made a very savoury dish and 'two pickets, thirty-four in number, disposed of the horse in two meals'. Even a stray dog was welcome. Mowbray Thomson's men employed 'every possible blandishment' to tempt one 'into the soup-kettle'. He was offered 'some of his semi-roasted fabric', which, being 'more scrupulous than others', he was 'obliged to decline'.<sup>1</sup>

The supply of water proved one insurmountable difficulty. There was never enough drinking water, and 'not even a pint of water was to be had for washing from commencement to the close of the siege'.<sup>2</sup> There was a well within the entrenchment, which was the only source of supply. There was another outside, near one of the outer barracks, but it was used for a different purpose. 'We drew no water there,' Mowbray Thomson wrote, 'it was our cemetery.' The well inside the entrenchment was always a target for the sepoys, and even in the night the creaking of the tackle was invariably followed by shots from the artillery. The wood and brickwork surrounding the well was demolished by constant firing. It was the height of summer and the water had gone down to the bottom of the well, and unless one was prepared to risk one's

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 83-84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 88.



life, there was no means of alleviating the sufferings of women and children. 'I have seen', wrote Mowbray Thomson, 'children of my brother officers sucking the pieces of old water-bags, putting scraps of canvas and leather straps into the mouth to try and get a single drop of moisture upon their parched lips.'<sup>1</sup> Shepherd accused 'a few desperate characters' of making a trade of it and selling the water 'at so much per bucket'.<sup>2</sup> Mowbray Thomson also said that privates were paid eight or ten shillings for a bucket of water, but he is more kindly disposed towards them. 'It must be said, that when money had lost its value, by reason of the extremity of our danger, they were not less willing to incur the risk of drawing for the women and children.'<sup>3</sup>

The lack of food and water, the unhygienic surroundings, and the firing from the besiegers increased the number of the sick and wounded, and death took its toll. With hardly any medicine or surgical instruments there was very little a doctor could do. Outside the barracks carcasses lay rotting in the sun, waiting to be cleared by vultures and making the air putrid. A pestilence could easily have broken out. Even without it, the number of deaths quickly mounted up. Mowbray Thomson noted, 'in three weeks we buried two hundred and fifty of our number.'<sup>4</sup>

Death came in many ways. The first casualty in the entrenchment was a gunner named McGuire, who was killed by a shot on the first day.<sup>5</sup> It was impossible to arrange for proper burial, and except on two occasions there was no coffin. In all other cases dead bodies were wrapped in blankets and left in a corner of the verandah for the fatigue party to come and take to the well after nightfall. In less than three weeks, many of the familiar faces had disappeared. Colonel Williams, who had been wounded, had a stroke of apoplexy and died, and his widow, who had been struck in the face by a shot, died after two days of intense suffering. Hillersdon was killed by a round shot and Mrs. Hillersdon was killed by falling debris. Captain Halliday was shot dead while bringing some horse soup for his wife. One shot accounted for Jacobi the watchmaker, and Cox, a former army man. Lieutenant

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

Jervis and Lieutenant Eckford were shot, and both died almost immediately. A mother and daughter, attempting to protect themselves behind an empty barrack, were both killed by one shot. But everyone was not so lucky. Major Lindsay was blinded by splinters and lay in intense agony for days, till death relieved him from his misery. It was not the enemy's guns alone that they had to fear. Major Lindsay's widow died of sorrow. Major Prout and Sir George Parker died of sunstroke. The Reverend Haycock lost his reason over the sufferings of his mother. A Private's wife, unable to bear her sufferings, came out into the open with her two children, asking for death from the sepoy's guns. A soldier then risked his life by rushing out of the barrack to drag them inside. Lieutenant Wheeler, General Wheeler's son and aide-de-camp, was wounded in the trench and brought to his room, to be with his mother and sisters, where a shot struck him and 'left him a headless trunk'.<sup>1</sup>

The defenders in the entrenchment were reduced to a pitiable condition. But Nana Sahib also was not particularly happy. The surrender of the English, he had been told, would be a matter of hours. They had defended themselves for weeks, and though their defences had been badly battered, he did not know how long they might be able to resist. His difficulties about percussion caps, great-coats and tents for the army had been partially solved. But there were several irritating factors. He exercised little control over the city. His orders to the traders for supplies to the army had been obeyed, more from fear of the sepoys than for any other reason. There was hardly any enthusiasm among the officials and the trading classes. Not all the Government employees had come back to their offices. Some of the respectable people in the city kept themselves aloof, and some behaved as if this was a temporary phase and the English would again come to power. The Bengali employees of the Government, particularly, appeared to have no intention of co-operating. About the middle of June, it was considered necessary to call them to the police station under a guard and admonish them for their unwillingness to support Nana Sahib's administration. They were detained all night and brought

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 101-10.



before Nana next day, when he threatened that their lives would be in danger if they did not 'leave off writing English' and promise 'never to send any communication to the British entrenchment'.<sup>1</sup>

From time to time spies brought news of the entrenchment to Nana Sahib. Sometimes Wheeler also took prisoners. But such occasions were few, and it was believed that the sepoys would commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be captured.<sup>2</sup> On one occasion a sepoy who formerly belonged to the 1st Native Infantry escaped from custody while being taken to the main guard. On another occasion eleven sepoys were captured and tied with a rope and placed under the care of Mrs. Widdowson, wife of a Private. Mrs. Widdowson kept watch on them with a drawn sword and performed her duty admirably. But when they were placed under the regular guard, all the prisoners managed to escape. It was not wise to let the prisoners go, for they would certainly carry tales of the misery and helplessness in the entrenchment. 'So in future', Mowbray Thomson wrote, 'all we took were despatched without reference to headquarters.'<sup>3</sup>

It was not always possible to put a stop to news reaching Nana Sahib. One of his agents played a successful ruse on the English. After two weeks of the siege, a man dressed as a water carrier appeared in the entrenchment. He was apparently a friend of the English and he brought the welcome news that the British troops were on the other side of the Ganges, waiting to cross the river. He came again next day and repeated that the rising of the river had prevented the British troops from crossing, and that they were building rafts. The hope was never fulfilled, and eventually it dawned upon the defenders that the man was a spy sent to find out the real state of things in the entrenchment and throw the defenders off their guard by assurances of help. The object, it was suspected, was 'to prepare the way for an assault'.<sup>4</sup>

The assault came two or three days later, on 23 June, the centenary of the battle of Plassey. During the previous night Mowbray Thomson had noticed a large number of sepoys collecting

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 114-5.



near one of the outer barracks, and fearing an attack, he asked for reinforcements from Captain Moore. No one could be spared from the entrenchment. But Captain Moore, together with Lieutenant Delafosse, arrived at Mowbray Thomson's outpost and decided to try what he called a 'new dodge'. He shouted the order of command to an imaginary force to advance and attack, whereupon the sepoys fell back to the protection of the barrack walls. The 'whole of the night witnessed a series of surprises and false charges'. In the early morning, when things seemed to be a little quieter, the outposts and the entrenchment were simultaneously attacked. Mowbray Thomson and his sixteen followers killed eighteen men, and the rest retreated. The attack on the entrenchment by the cavalry and the infantry was also beaten back. The cavalry charge was stopped by firing a round from the guns, which 'threw the ranks into hopeless confusion'. The skirmishing parties advanced under the cover of large bales of cotton which they rolled before them. This measure deadened the effect of the shots to some extent and they 'managed to approach ominously near'. But the cannon balls soon set fire to the moving rolls of cotton and they had to be discarded.<sup>1</sup> After the discomfiture of the skirmishes, the main body of the infantry took no part in the operations.

The action on the centenary day ended in disappointment for Nana Sahib. His large force had been checked by a handful of men and a few nine-pounders. No further attempt was made to storm the entrenchment. It only remained to starve the English into surrender. This was what the defenders were afraid of. Since the beginning of the siege they had hoped that an army of deliverance was marching from Calcutta. Major Vibart wrote to Lucknow on 21 June, 'according to telegraphic despatches received previous to the outbreak, 1,000 Europeans were to have been here on the 14th instant. This force may be on its way up.' It was not understood why it was taking so long to reach Cawnpore. 'Often we imagined,' wrote Mowbray Thomson, 'that we heard the sound of distant cannonading. At all hours of the day and night my men have asked me to listen. Their faces would gladden with

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 124-8; Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* ii. 250; Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, pp. 447-9.

the delusive hope of a relieving force close at hand, but only to sink back again presently into the old careworn aspect.<sup>1</sup> Cawnpore was closed to the rest of India. The bridge of boats was destroyed, telegraph wires were cut, and all the fords up and down the river were guarded.

From the beginning of the siege General Wheeler was anxious to secure information about Nana Sahib's movements, and to open communication with other cities. Shepherd says he had sent out 'two or three natives previously under promises of high reward' but they never returned.<sup>2</sup> Mowbray Thomson also states that, with the exception of one, 'we never saw any of our spies again.'<sup>3</sup> The only person who had some success was a Eurasian named Blenman. He was dark in complexion and could easily pass for an Indian. Once or twice before he had left the entrenchment and brought some useful information to Wheeler. He was again sent out, with instructions to proceed to Allahabad and report the plight of the garrison. This time he had no luck. A trooper suspected him in spite of his cook's disguise, and robbed him of his pistol and the money he carried. But he did not quite disbelieve the story Blenman had made up, and let him go. Blenman returned to the entrenchment and was killed at the Satichaura Ghat a few days later.<sup>4</sup>

Shepherd, who no longer felt that his wife and children were safe in the entrenchment, wanted to 'ascertain how matters stood in the city'. According to him, there were others who also felt in the same way and wanted to leave the entrenchment. On 20 June Shepherd saw the General, but failed to secure permission to leave. Wheeler, he said, did not understand him, but dismissed him in anger.

On the 24th he made a second attempt, with a recommendation from Captain Williams, who was formerly his commissariat officer, and after some hesitation Wheeler agreed to Shepherd's proposal. He offered to reward Shepherd if he 'managed to bring him correct information of the intention and doings of the enemy', and also if there was any chance of 'receiving a reinforcement either

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 130.



from Allahabad or Lucknow'. It was not unknown to Wheeler that a section of the sepoy did not like Nana Sahib and would be happy to see Nane Nawab as their leader. From Shepherd's account it seems that Wheeler had reasons for expecting favourable consideration from him. 'He is faithful to us and I can trust him. Tell him to endeavour to cause a rupture among the rebels, and if they will leave off annoying us, or go away from the station, I will do a great deal for him.' If Shepherd was unable to communicate with Nane Nawab, he was to see the 'influential *mahajans*'. He was authorized 'to offer as far as a lakh of rupees, with handsome pensions for life to any person who would bring about so desirable an end'.

Shepherd cut his hair short, dressed himself in a piece of cloth and a cook's jacket 'well bedaubed with grease, and altogether very dirty', and tied a turban on his head. His exit from the entrenchment was not, however, unnoticed. Though he was able to shake off his pursuers, a trooper at last became suspicious of him and took him to the police station. After some cross-examination he was thrown into prison, from which General Havelock's army released him after the recapture of Cawnpore.<sup>1</sup>

On the day Shepherd left the entrenchment, Wheeler employed another agent to secure information from the city. This man was Ghous Muhammad, a sepoy of the 56th Native Infantry who still remained with his officer. He told the sepoy that his brother, who was working in a sepoy's battery, had been killed, and he was going to the city to buy clothes for his funeral. He concealed himself for a few days at Colonelganj, where he learnt about Wheeler's surrender and the massacre at the Satichaura Ghat.<sup>2</sup>

Early in June, General Wheeler had telegraphed to Lucknow that two Regiments had mutinied. When other communications failed, he attempted to keep in touch with Lucknow with the help of messengers. It was an extremely difficult task, and not until the middle of June was he able to send any information. On 14 June he wrote to Gubbins, 'we have been besieged since the 6th by the Nana Sahib, joined by the whole of the Native troops who broke out on the morning of the 4th. The enemy have two 24-pounders

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 83-90.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 14).



and several other guns. We have only eight 9-pounders. The whole Christian population is with us in a temporary entrenchment and our defence has been noble and wonderful, our loss heavy and cruel. We want aid, aid, aid. Regards to Lawrence.' 'If we had 200 men', he added in a postscript, 'we could punish the scoundrels and aid you.'<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Lawrence did not consider it possible to send any help. He replied on 16 June, 'with the enemy's command of the river, we could not possibly get a single man into your entrenchment. We are strong *in* our entrenchment, but by attempting the passage of the river, should be sacrificing a large detachment without a prospect of helping you. Pray do not think me selfish. I would run much risk could I see commensurate prospect of success. In the present scheme I see none. . . .' Lawrence also wrote to Lord Canning on 23 June, '. . . I would run much risk for Wheeler's sake, but an attempt with our means would only ruin ourselves without helping Cawnpore.'<sup>2</sup>

General Wheeler's letter asking for help caused some excitement at Lucknow. Mrs. Germon wrote of the news in her Journal on 16 June: 'a letter had come by a *coissid* from General Wheeler at Cawnpore dated the 14th, 11 o'clock. The General had lost a great number of men.' She was not told how many, so she feared 'it was very bad news'.<sup>3</sup> The Reverend Henry Polehampton, Chaplain of Lucknow, also mentioned it in his diary. He believed that Wheeler had written that he would be able to hold out for three weeks more, but thought this hope was not warranted by his letter. Polehampton also gives some additional reasons which might have prompted Lawrence's decision. 'The only force we could spare would be 200 men from the cantonment with two guns. The consequence to us of sending these would be, that the road would then be shut up in that direction, and that we should get no more supplies; and the sepoys hearing that we had sent away a part of our force, *might* summon up courage to attack us. The detachment would have great difficulty in crossing the river and would have to fight its way into the entrenchment at Cawnpore.

<sup>1</sup> Gubbins, *op. cit.* p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Lawrence*. ii. 350-7.

<sup>3</sup> Germon, *Journal of the siege of Lucknow*, p. 45.

So we are not going to send help to the gallant little garrison. It is a great pity; but those who know how affairs stand far better than I do, say that it will not do to send away a man.' Polehampton probably echoed the hope of Henry Lawrence and his advisers that troops from Calcutta had arrived near Cawnpore. 'Unless they have met with great opposition on the road up from Calcutta, reinforcements must be at hand.'<sup>1</sup>

General Wheeler does not seem to have anticipated the nature of Lawrence's reply. Captain Moore, who acknowledged the letter on behalf of the General on 18 June, was disappointed that Lawrence could not send them 200 men; 'with their assistance we could drive the insurgents from Cawnpore and capture their guns . . . our loss has been chiefly from the sun and their heavy guns. Our rations will last a fortnight and we are still well supplied with ammunition. Our guns are serviceable. Report says that troops are advancing from Allahabad; and any assistance might save our garrison. We of course are prepared to hold out to the last. . . . We trust in God, and if our exertion here assists your safety, it will be a consolation to know that our friends appreciate our devotion. Any news of relief would cheer us.'<sup>2</sup>

A letter written by Major Vibart, three days later, gives a picture of a fast deteriorating situation. 'For the last eight days' the entrenchment had been 'cannonaded for six hours a day by twelve guns . . . *an idea may be formed of our casualties* and how little protection the barracks afford to the women. Any aid to be effective must be immediate . . .'.<sup>3</sup> No help came from Lucknow where Mrs. Germon wrote in her Journal on 20 June: 'It is most distressing that we cannot send them any troops but even if we could spare them, they would never get across the river at Cawnpore — the enemy have both sides of it.'<sup>4</sup>

A private letter written by Major Wiggins to Colonel Halford at Lucknow on the 24th shows that all hope of receiving help from Henry Lawrence was not yet given up. 'We await the arrival of succour with the most anxious expectations, after all our en-

<sup>1</sup> Polehampton, *A Memoir, Letters and Diary*, pp. 306-7.

<sup>2</sup> Gubbins, *op. cit.* pp. 507-8.

<sup>4</sup> Germon, *op. cit.* p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 508.



duration and sufferings; for that Sir Henry Lawrence has been applied to by Sir Hugh and we hope earnestly it will be afforded, and that *immediately* to avert further evil. . . . Pray urge our reinforcement to the Chief Commissioner.' On the same day Wheeler also wrote what happened to be his last letter to Lawrence. 'We have been cruelly deserted and left to our fate.' The barracks were perforated in every direction, there were no surgical instruments, no medicine, 'provision for ten days at farthest, and no further possibility of getting any. . . . We have had a bombardment in this miserable position three or four times daily, now nineteen days exposed to two twenty-fours and eight other guns of smaller calibre and three mortars; to reply with eight nines, you know, is out of the question — neither would our ammunition permit it. All our carriages more or less disabled, ammunition short; British spirit alone remains, but it cannot last for ever.' The General felt that the end was near, and in a postscript added to the letter he left instructions to his friends as to the disposal of his property.<sup>2</sup>

At about the same time, Henry Lawrence was urging the local governments to send immediate help to Cawnpore. To the authorities at Allahabad he wrote on 26 June: 'General Wheeler is, I fear, in extremity, though I have been making every indirect effort to help him. Otherwise we have not the means. To help him your succour must be speedy.'<sup>3</sup> Next day he wrote to John Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces. Wheeler would 'no doubt hold out to the last . . . would that he could succour Wheeler, but the enemy hold all the boats on the Cawnpore side'.<sup>4</sup> He also sent a reassuring letter to Wheeler informing him that British troops would soon be at Cawnpore and advising him not to enter into any agreement with Nana Sahib. 'Brigadier Havelock with 400 Europeans, 300 Sikhs, guns and Cavalry, was to march from Allahabad immediately and *must* be at Cawnpore within two days. . . . I hope therefore you will husband your resources and not accept any terms from the enemy,

<sup>1</sup> Gubbins, *op. cit.* p. 509.

<sup>2</sup> Edwardes and Merivale, *op. cit.* ii. 352-3; British Museum, Addl. Mss, 39922.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Edwardes and Merivale, *op. cit.* ii. 354.



as I much fear treachery. You cannot rely on Nana's promises. Il a tué beaucoup de prisonniers.'<sup>1</sup>

General Wheeler did not receive this letter. Lawrence did not know that while he was writing it, Wheeler had surrendered, and the fighting at Cawnpore was over.

The siege came to an end in an unexpected way. On 25 June one of the pickets saw a woman approaching the entrenchment. He took her to be a spy and was going to shoot at her, when Mowbray Thomson 'knocked down his arm and saved her life'. He 'lifted her over the barricade in a fainting condition' and 'recognized her as Mrs. Greenway'. She was carrying a child at her breast and had no shoes or stockings. Mrs. Greenway handed over to Mowbray Thomson a letter addressed to 'the subjects of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria'. It read: 'All those who are in no way connected with the acts of Lord Dalhousie, and are willing to lay down their arms, shall receive a safe passage to Allahabad.' The letter was unsigned but the handwriting was recognized as that of Azimullah.<sup>2</sup>

Nana Sahib's offer was considered by General Wheeler, Captain Moore and Captain Whiting. Wheeler was not inclined to accept the terms. Like Henry Lawrence, he suspected Nana Sahib's intentions. But he was prevailed upon to yield by his younger colleagues. Captain Moore was very much influenced by consideration for the women and children and the wounded. In a few days' time it would be impossible to remain in the bullet-riddled, crumbling barrack, and the breaking out of the monsoon which was overdue, would wash down the barricade, fill up the trenches, and make any defence impossible.<sup>3</sup> Shepherd thought that one good monsoon shower 'would have rendered the place perfectly uninhabitable and extremely insecure'.<sup>4</sup> 'While the siege lasted,' Mowbray Thomson wrote, 'we were daily dreading the approach of rains. Had there been no women and children, we should have made a dash for Allahabad rather than have thought of surrender, and Captain Moore would have been the first to

<sup>1</sup> Edwardes and Merivale, *op. cit.* ii. 353-4.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 148-50.

<sup>4</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

lead the forlorn hope.' The other deciding factor was the lack of provisions. Distributed even at a half rate, they would last only a few days more. Mowbray Thomson considered that before the surrender 'there were only three days rations in store'.<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, however, seemed to think that the position was a little better than it was generally made out to be. On the 24th 'there was provision yet left to keep the people alive on half ration for another week', and as there were no animals to feed there was also a sufficient quantity of grain which had been stored for the use of horses and cattle.<sup>2</sup> Mowbray Thomson considered it an error, for at the time of the surrender 'we had already been placed several days on half rations, and there were then only supplies sufficient for four more days at the reduced rate'.<sup>3</sup> Shepherd published several editions of his book after the publication of Mowbray Thomson's account of the siege, and quoted extensively from it, but he never thought it necessary to alter his statements. On 18 June, replying on behalf of Wheeler to Henry Lawrence, Captain Moore wrote that the rations at Cawnpore would last a fortnight.<sup>4</sup> On 24 June Wheeler informed Lawrence that he had 'provision for ten days at farthest'.<sup>5</sup> This seems to be in general agreement with Shepherd's view.

In the evening when Mrs. Greenway returned, General Wheeler had agreed to surrender. Soon Azimullah and Jawalprasad came to the entrenchment and discussed the terms with Captain Moore, Captain Whiting and Roche, who was the postmaster of Cawnpore. The English proposed 'honourable surrender' of the 'shattered barracks and free exit under arms, with sixty rounds of ammunition per man', carriages for the women and children and boats 'furnished with flour'. These conditions were agreed to, and it was proposed that they should also be provided with sheep and goats.

In the afternoon of 26 June General Wheeler was informed that Nana Sahib had accepted the terms of the English, but they must leave the entrenchment the same night. It was considered

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 133-4.

<sup>3</sup> Edwardes and Merivale, *op. cit.* ii. 353.

<sup>4</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Gubbins, *op. cit.* p. 507.



impossible to leave before the next morning. But Nana would not hear of it. He sent a message that the English 'should instantly evacuate', otherwise his guns would open fire on the entrenchment and the English 'must all certainly be killed'. Captain Whiting replied that they had always repelled his attacks and if necessary they would set fire to the magazine and blow up both the armies. Finally Nana Sahib agreed to the proposal of the English that they should embark in the morning. His former English teacher, Todd, carried the agreement to him for his signature. Nana Sahib received him kindly and the treaty of surrender was signed. The siege had come to an end.<sup>1</sup>

The city *Kotwal*, Hulas Singh, was immediately ordered to secure boats and make arrangements for the departure of the English next morning. But he did not find it easy to collect such a large number at so short a notice. Buddhu, a commissariat contractor who was ordered to supply forty boats immediately, pleaded difficulties, for which he was given a beating and threats of being blown up from the mouth of a gun. While giving his testimony the contractor was no doubt anxious to prove to the British that he was an unwilling agent. But the main outline of his story seems to be correct. Another witness, Lachman, a *chaudhuri* of boats, also stated that he was 'abused and ill-treated' till he was forced to tell Hulas Singh that there was a large number of boats at the customs ghat.

In the early morning of the 27th, Hulas Singh, with the help of Buddhu, had the boats put in order. Many boats at Cawnpore had been destroyed in the past few weeks and it must have been difficult to secure so many at a few hours' notice. By the next morning, however, a sufficient number had been collected and made ready for the journey.

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 152-3. Mowbray Thomson's account is somewhat confused about the date and the time. 'Mrs. Greenway' returned at night, presumably on the 25th. 'Soon after' it was learnt 'that we were about to treat with the enemy'. The word was passed to a sepoy officer and 'presently Azimullah made his appearance' with Jawalaprased. The terms were submitted to Nana Sahib, and 'the same afternoon' Nana told the English that he had agreed to all the conditions. The only way to make sense of this is to assume that by 'presently', Mowbray Thomson means next day.



Meanwhile, a small committee of officers had been formed to look into the arrangements, and Captain Atholl, Captain Turner, Lieutenant Delafosse and Lieutenant Gould visited the ghat escorted by the sepoy cavalry. Mowbray Thomson said, 'they found about forty boats moored and appearing ready for departure, some of them roofed and others undergoing the process.' The men who collected the boats, however, give a much smaller number. According to one, there were twenty-four, according to another, about twenty-three or twenty-four, while Buddhu, the commissariat contractor, thought there were 'about twenty-two'. One witness says, 'a Captain Sahib . . . accompanied by another gentleman and two soldiers mounted on an elephant came to the ghat, and seeing the boats disapproved of them and asked me why I had not the boats put into proper order.' Another witness says that he had heard that the English gentlemen at the ghat 'were much vexed' because the roofs were not finished. However, more workmen were secured, and the work was completed before dawn.<sup>1</sup>

The guns in the entrenchment had been taken over by Nana Sahib. He had also sent three persons to General Wheeler as hostages. One of them was Jawalaprased, who seemed very friendly and sympathized deeply with Wheeler's sufferings. The residents in the entrenchment had not known such peace for more than a month. They had a double ration of chapati and *dal*, and the water from the well, muddy with fallen debris, tasted 'more delicious than nectar'. Nothing disturbed the stillness of the night except the action of a sleepy sentry, who accidentally dropped his musket and fired it. This immediately started a firing on the entrenchment, but it stopped as soon as the cause of the disturbance was known, and peace was again restored. But Mowbray Thomson found it difficult to sleep. 'After such an acclimation of the brain to incessant bombardment, the stillness was actually painful.'<sup>2</sup>

Early in the morning, elephants, palankeens and carts were sent to the entrenchment by Nana Sahib, and at about seven o'clock

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 46 and 47); Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 159.

women and children started for the ghat. The front part of the procession consisted of some 200 wounded persons, who were placed on the back of elephants and in palankeens. Captain Moore led the vanguard and came back for those who were unable to walk the distance. Many of the women and children rode on elephants or were placed in bullock-carts, while those who could, walked to the river. Major Vibart, bringing up the rear, was the last person to leave the entrenchment. By nine o'clock the evacuation was complete. The last batch had reached the river bank.

It is not possible to give a clear idea of the journey to the ghat. There was no proper order or precedence. It was a miserable sight; wounded persons in litter-carts or on the backs of animals, children weak and emaciated, women in rags, and soldiers in torn uniforms. There was a huge crowd on the river bank and people lined both sides of the road leading to the ghat. The news that the English were leaving Cawnpore had spread, and it had drawn thousands of spectators. Many were merely curious, but there were some who had come to see their officers or masters for the last time. Apart from one incident in the entrenchment, when a sepoy tried to seize the musket of a private, there was no unpleasantness. 'We got down to the river and into boats,' says Delafosse, 'without being molested in the least.' Some officers were treated with particular consideration. Major Vibart's baggage was carried by sepoys who had mutinied and taken part in the siege. They loaded a bullock cart with boxes, and escorted the Major's wife and family down to the boats 'with the most profuse demonstrations of respect'. A servant of Colonel Williams waited by the roadside for Mrs. Williams to pass and begged the Havildar Major of the 56th Native Infantry for an interview with her. When told it was impossible, he 'appealed to him, and begged him to remember the kindness he had received from the Colonel'. He at last found his mistress and her two daughters. He agreed 'to go to her son in the hills' and show him the spot where the Colonel was buried. He also fetched her cook, whom she wanted to go with her to Allahabad, but by the time they arrived at the ghat the firing had begun.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 34); Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 164-5.



The story of Colonel and Mrs. Ewart's death, if true, shows that all officers and their wives were not treated in the same manner. Ayodhya Prasad, a banker, gave evidence that while he was standing near the Artillery Hospital, he saw Colonel Ewart, who had been wounded early in the siege, being brought on a litter by four coolies. The rest of the English had gone on ahead and only his wife was accompanying him on foot. Some of the sepoy forced the coolies to set the litter on the road. They ridiculed the Colonel in his blood-stained garments and called out, 'Is the parade well-dressed now?' and then 'one or two of them killed him with the sword'. Mrs. Ewart was told to hand over everything she had, so she 'took a piece of stuff with something tied upon it out of her pocket and gave it to them. They took it and then cut her down . . .'. Kaye evidently accepts this story and comments that the sepoy 'stands out as a living inconsistency of the strangest kind'.<sup>1</sup> The story is also believed by Forrest and Trevelyan.

It is not impossible, but there are certain factors which must not be ignored. The story hangs on one slender thread, the testimony of the banker Ayodhya Prasad. There is no mention of it in Lieutenant Delafosse's account, or in the more detailed narrative of Mowbray Thomson. As Colonel and Mrs. Ewart are said to have fallen behind the rest, Mowbray Thomson could not possibly have seen the incident, but he apparently never heard of it. He must have seen Colonel Williams' synopsis of depositions of witnesses published in 1859, in which Ayodhya Prasad's evidence was incorporated, but he apparently did not consider it necessary to include it in the later editions of his book. From his account it does not seem possible that an officer, seriously wounded as Colonel Ewart was, would find no place on the back of an elephant or in any one of the palankeens or carts, and that the British soldiers who followed did not care what happened to their wounded officer. Ayodhya Prasad said that he 'stood looking on from a distance', but he was near enough to listen to the words spoken by the sepoys. What seems unusual for one who followed

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 34); Kaye and Malleison, *op. cit.* ii. 254-5; Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 164.



such a peaceful occupation as banking, is that Ayodhya Prasad did not bolt after Colonel Ewart was murdered, but waited till Mrs. Ewart was also 'cut down', and was still on the same spot when he 'saw the sepoys pass on, leaving the corpses on the ground'.<sup>1</sup>

It was the height of summer and the water was at a low level. It was necessary to climb down the high bank and wade knee deep through the water to reach the boats. Major Vibart, who brought up the rear, was the last to arrive and get into his boat. Delafosse said, 'we had laid down our muskets, and taken off our coats, in order to work easier at the boats.' The order to start was given and Allahabad seemed so near, when suddenly it happened. Let Mowbray Thomson tell the story:

'... At a signal from the shore, the native boatmen who numbered eight and a coxswain to each boat all jumped over and waded to the shore. We fired into them immediately, but the majority of them escaped. Before they quitted us these men had contrived to secrete burning charcoal in the thatch of most of our boats. Simultaneously with the departure of the boatmen, the identical troopers who had escorted Major Vibart to the ghat opened upon us with carbines. As well as the confusion, caused by the burning of the boats, would allow we returned the fire of the horsemen who were about fifteen or sixteen in number, but they retired immediately after the volley they had given us.

'Those of us who were not disabled by wounds now jumped out of boats and endeavoured to push them afloat; but alas! most of these were utterly immoveable. Now, from ambush in which they were concealed all along the banks, it seemed that thousands of men fired upon us; besides four nine-pounders, carefully masked and pointed to the boats, every bush was filled with sepoys.'<sup>2</sup>

The Satichaura Ghat presented a scene of the utmost confusion. The crowd on the river bank was pushed back by the cavalry, and at the sound of firing the sight-seers hurriedly melted away. Many in the boats were shot dead as they jumped into the water

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 19).

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 166-7; Chick, *op. cit.* p. 648.

to escape the flames; the wounded were burnt to death. 'Volumes of smoke from the thatch', says Mowbray Thomson, 'somewhat veiled the full extent of the horror that morning.'<sup>1</sup> Conflicting evidence and the absence of any reliable witness's account, except one, add to the difficulties of the historian. Of the four survivors, only Mowbray Thomson wrote an account of his adventures. Except a bare outline, Delafosse contributed nothing; his 'numerous engagements' are said to have prevented him from writing a fuller account. Both Private Sullivan and Private Murphy died shortly after the Mutiny, the former only a few weeks after his escape. One can only share Mowbray Thomson's regret that his narrative, based on personal observations, must necessarily be limited in scope, 'Very much must have escaped my observation which would have been equally worth preserving.'<sup>2</sup>

Of some forty boats at the ghat, only three succeeded in getting away. Two of these were soon swamped, and the remaining one in which Delafosse had found a place 'was crowded with wounded' and had 'on board more than she could carry'. Mowbray Thomson, it appears, was in another boat in the beginning, but got into this one when the firing started. He probably refers to this boat when he says that he found Major Vibart's boat getting off and drifting down the stream, and he 'struck out swimming for the retreating boat'. 'There was about a dozen of us, beating the water for life,' but only four were able to reach the boat, which had, in the meantime, become stranded on a sand-bank. It had also picked up survivors of another boat which had been struck by a cannon ball and was sinking fast, and it was so overcrowded that 'it left little room for working her'. Without the oars and with the rudder shot away, the boat moved along the Oudh bank of the river, just outside the range of the guns. By the evening, the fugitives had proceeded only six miles; then the boat was again stranded, and all efforts 'to move the keel an inch were in vain'. They were not yet able to shake off their pursuers, who had sent a burning boat down the stream in the hope of setting fire to Thomson's boat, but it glided past near them without causing any damage. Arrows with lighted charcoals fastened to them were

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 168

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. vi-vii.



shot at the thatched roof, which was thrown overboard to save the boat from catching fire.

The boat was set afloat during the night, and in the morning of 28 June it seemed that their pursuers had been shaken off. But on reaching Najafgarh the boat was again grounded, and a gun was aimed at it from the banks. As rain came down, it could not be fired more than once, but the sepoy also opened up with muskets, bringing death and serious injury to many. Among the casualties were Captain Turner, Captain Whiting, Captain Seppings, Lieutenant Quinn and Lieutenant Blenman. A boat filled with armed men was also sent to attack the English, but this was also grounded on a sandbank and nearly all the sepoy were killed by Mowbray Thomson and his companions.

A hurricane that night set the boat free, but it was again stranded in a backwater near Surajpur. The pursuers opened fire from the banks. Mowbray Thomson, Delafosse, Surgeon Grady and eleven privates were ordered by Major Vibart to come to the bank and attack the sepoy, while the others tried to free the boat. Mowbray Thomson and his companions drove the sepoy away, then came to the river to find that the boat had gone. They now sought safety in flight. Grady was shot dead, but the others succeeded in reaching a temple three miles away. The narrow door of the temple, guarded by men with fixed bayonets, prevented their pursuers from entering it. They first tried to dig at the foundation, and when this failed, collected faggots near the door and set fire to them in an attempt to suffocate the English. This was not as successful as they had hoped; so they brought out bags of gunpowder and threw them on the embers. This made it impossible to stay any longer in the temple, and Mowbray Thomson and his companions fired a volley and rushed out. Six were killed, but seven managed to reach the river. Two more were shot dead and one seized and put to death. The remaining four, Mowbray Thomson, Delafosse, Murphy and Sullivan, escaped and swam for six miles till they reached Murar Mau, the territory of Zemindar Digvijaya Singh. There some friendly villagers brought them out of the water, and, as they could hardly walk, carried them to the nearest village. Digvijaya Singh sheltered them in his fort in



spite of Nana Sahib's threats.<sup>1</sup> After about a fortnight, Mowbray Thomson and his companions left Murar Mau and joined General Havelock's army on its march to Cawnpore.

The other survivors of the firing at the ghat were placed under arrest. The men were immediately shot dead, while the women and children were temporarily imprisoned at the Savada House and a few days later removed to another building called Bibighar.

There is some uncertainty as to the circumstances of General Wheeler's death. Kaye considered it an instance of the 'difficulty of extracting the truth from a mass of conflicting evidence'.<sup>2</sup> It appears from Mowbray Thomson's account that General Wheeler, together with his wife and daughters, walked to the river bank. 'Poor old Sir Hugh Wheeler, his lady and daughter [daughters?] walked down to the boats.'<sup>3</sup> This is the last occasion Mowbray Thomson mentioned him, and he evidently meant that Wheeler was able to get into a boat, and was not killed before that, as some writers seem to think. Fitchett, a drummer of the 6th Native Infantry, who produced a very sensational though not very truthful account of his adventures, told Colonel Williams that 'General Wheeler was killed at the ghat by the sowers; that he took off his cap and his sword-belt and said they might kill him'. But Fitchett had also heard from some cavalymen that 'General Wheeler's boat had got away'.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Bradshaw, wife of a Christian drummer, claimed to have been a witness of General Wheeler's murder and gave a very different account. 'General Wheeler came last in a palkee, they carried him into the water near the boat. I stood close by. He said, 'Carry me a little further towards the boat,' but the *sowers* said, 'No, you get out here.' As the General got out of the palkee, head foremost, a *sower* gave him a cut with a sword on the neck and he fell into the water.'<sup>5</sup> The way Trevelyan uses this story shows that he believed in it. Some of those present at the ghat saw the General arriving there on the back of an elephant. Paramanand, a Jemadar in the employ of Wheeler, saw the

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 168-98.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 254.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 1).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 6).

General arriving at the ghat on an elephant and embarked on the same boat with him; — the 'General, his lady and daughters, the Adjutant-General, Brigade Major, Captain Thomson, Delafosse and we four servants embarking in one boat, depositing the things we had in it'. As other Englishmen were getting into boats, 'a shot was heard, two or three boats were set on fire, and a great outcry and noise arose. At this we all became terrified, but the General gave the boatmen a present of a bag of 1,000 rupees and they pushed off. . . .' But shortly after, 'about a gunshot distance from the Satichaura Ghat, a cannon ball hit the stern of the boat and Captain Delafosse and Captain Thomson jumped out, and one of the General's daughters followed, whether the elder or the younger, I cannot remember. We four men then leaped out too.'

Paramanand's evidence contradicts Mowbray Thomson's statement that Wheeler walked up to the river bank. It is also surprising that Mowbray Thomson did not consider it necessary to mention that in the beginning he was in the same boat as Wheeler. It is difficult to reject completely Paramanand's story. Other witnesses also reported having seen Wheeler on the back of an elephant or in a boat. Pir Bux, a camel *sower*, had brought a letter for Wheeler from Agra. He was told to wait at the ghat for the reply. He saw Lady Wheeler and her two daughters arriving 'on the General's elephant in the howdah', and being put on the boat. He also said that the General was 'coming down to the ghat' on a gallows, but meeting the elephant got on it, and was put on board his boat. He told Pir Bux to wait; almost immediately the firing began. Gurdayal, *chaudhuri* of the boats, saw the Europeans pushing off three boats, 'two of which grounded on the other bank of the river and one of them, which contained General Wheeler, went down the stream'. He also heard that it 'grounded near Sheorajpur' and 'an encounter with the *sowers* took place, in which General Wheeler was killed'. Another *chaudhuri*, named Lochan, also heard from a boatman that the General 'was on one of the three boats that had been pushed off into the stream'.<sup>2</sup> From

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 33).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 32, 33, 52 and 53).



all these accounts it seems that Wheeler was able to reach his boat and was killed when the firing started. The stories told by Fitchett, Mrs. Bradshaw and her friend Mrs. Setts do not appear to be based on fact.

Some mystery also hangs over the fate of one of Wheeler's daughters. It was said that a daughter of General Wheeler was carried away by a trooper when the massacre at Satichaura Ghat began. An informer named Mayur Tewari, of the 1st Native Infantry, stated that after the firing at the ghat, as the sepoys 'were taking the memsahibs out of the boat; a *sowar* (cavalryman) took Miss Wheeler away with him to his house. She went quietly, but at night she rose and got hold of the *sowar's* sword. He was asleep; his wife, son and mother-in-law were sleeping in the house with him; she killed them all with the sword and then going out threw herself into the well behind the house'.<sup>1</sup> The story was widely believed. Some witnesses testified before Colonel Williams that they had seen a trooper taking Miss Wheeler out of the water. Wheeler's orderly, Paramanand, saw 'a cavalry *sowar* take Miss Wheeler out of the *nullah*'. He was, however, himself running for his life and did not stop to find out what happened to her.<sup>2</sup> Elahi Bux, a sepoy of the 56th Native Infantry, saw 'a *sowar* carrying a lady on a horse; she had on a green dress, her legs were hanging over one side of the horse and the *sowar* held her with one arm'. Elahi Bux and his friends, Sepoys Govind Singh and Ghous Muhammad, were told that she was General Wheeler's youngest daughter, and later on they learnt that she had killed the *sowar* and thrown herself into a well.<sup>3</sup> William Clarke, a musician in the 6th Native Infantry at Allahabad, became, like Fitchett, a Muslim convert during the Mutiny, and accompanied the sepoys to Cawnpore. He saw two cavalymen 'carrying away a lady on horseback. . . . She was of eighteen or nineteen years of age' and 'wore a chintz gown'. Clarke learnt that she was the wife of an indigo planter. When asked if he knew of any similar case he replied that he had heard a rumour about Miss Wheeler, but 'did not

<sup>1</sup> Chick, op. cit. p. 658.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 1 and 33).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 14).



witness the occurrence'.<sup>1</sup> *The Times* published a story that 'one Portuguese woman, the daughter of a bugler, was made captive by a trooper of the 2nd Cavalry . . . but when he was asleep she took his sword and killed his wife and two children and then herself'.<sup>2</sup> This bears a strong resemblance to the story current about Wheeler's daughter. It is not always safe to rely on newspaper reports, but one wonders if the accounts of the 'daughter of a bugler', the 'wife of an indigo planter' and General Wheeler's daughter are not three different versions of the same story. The latter part of Miss Wheeler's story, a young girl putting to death nearly half-a-dozen persons by the sword, does not appear to be plausible. The Government of India also made enquiries to find out whether there was any European girl with the sepoys or in Nana Sahib's camp. Spies were sent to Nepal after Nana Sahib left India. The results were all negative.

There is, however, a reference to Miss Wheeler in the narrative of a Eurasian girl, a survivor of the massacre at the ghat. In August 1858, Dr. K. Knighton referred to this narrative in Indian and British newspapers. He had secured it from one G. W. Stuart of Calcutta and did not know if it was genuine. In November he wrote to *The Times* that the narrative was 'regarded in Calcutta as essentially truthful and genuine'. He also quoted an extract from the *Overseas Englishman*, according to which the narrative 'in mournful interest and graphic fidelity surpasses anything that has appeared since the beginning of the Mutiny'. When the firing started at the ghat, the young Eurasian girl was robbed of her money and jewels and thrown into the river. She managed with difficulty to reach the bank and came to a tree about half a mile away. After some time she heard stealthy footsteps, and saw, to her great relief, 'the wellknown face and form of Miss Wheeler, the General's daughter.' 'In a few words', she said, 'I understood that she had been dealt with in the same way as myself, i.e. thrown into the water by the man who perhaps thought she was not worth a bullet . . . we had not been together more than an hour, I should suppose, when a party of the enemy surprised us. We were dragged in different directions and of Miss Wheeler's fate I knew

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Depositions 1 and 2). <sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1857.

nothing till very lately.<sup>1</sup> She had apparently heard the story of Miss Wheeler's suicide. Fitchett, however, did not believe in the story of Miss Wheeler's death, for he 'saw the lady afterwards' when he was compelled to travel with the sepoy from Cawnpore to Fathegarh. He heard from them that Nana Sahib intended that Miss Wheeler should be surrendered, but the cavalymen 'refused to comply, and the rumour was given out that she had destroyed herself'.<sup>2</sup> It is a very interesting story, but the difficulty of accepting any uncorroborated statement by Fitchett is obvious.

There are certain other points which also need clearing up. Who was the lady who brought Azimullah's note to the entrenchment? Delafosse described her as 'an East Indian woman',<sup>3</sup> but did not mention her name. Mowbray Thomson recognized her as Mrs. Greenway.<sup>4</sup> She stayed in one of the outer barracks with Mowbray Thomson, and it is unlikely that he would make a mistake. There are other contemporary writers who refer to her as Mrs. Greenway. The author of the *Red Pamphlet* calls her 'Mrs. Greenway (a member of the family of Greenway Brothers, merchants of Cawnpore)'.<sup>5</sup> Shepherd also referred to her 'as a very aged European lady, Mrs. Greenway'.<sup>6</sup> Shepherd, however, was not an independent witness. He was at the time a prisoner of Nana Sahib and he recorded only what he had later on heard from others. Moreover, some of those who testified before Colonel Williams described her as a Eurasian woman named Mrs. Jacobi, a relation of the watchmaker of the same name. Kalkaprasad, an employee of Thomas Greenway, said that on 23 June Azimullah and Jawalaprasad saw Mrs. Jacobi, 'the watchmaker's sister-in-law,' who was a prisoner in the same room with Mrs. Greenway. Mrs. Jacobi told them that 'she would get the entrenchment vacated'. Next day, Kalkaprasad saw her 'proceed to the entrenchment in a doolie about 9 or 10 a.m.' and 'return about 12 at noon and go to Nana's tent'.<sup>7</sup> Fateh Singh, a guard employed

<sup>1</sup> Chick, *op. cit.* pp. 659-61; *The Times*, 13 Aug. 20 Aug. 16 Nov. 1858; *The Friend of India*, 20 May 1858.

<sup>2</sup> *For. Pol. Pro.* 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 1).

<sup>3</sup> Chick, *op. cit.* p. 642; *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> *Red Pamphlet*, p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 642. <sup>7</sup> *For. Pol. Pro.* 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 20).



by Nanakchand, also said that Jawalaprasad, Azimullah and Shah Ali 'had an interview with an old lady (a relative of Mr. Jacobi, the watchmaker) at the Savada House, who was taken by them to the Nana's tent', and 'she engaged to have the entrenchment vacated'.<sup>1</sup> Fateh Singh's account was apparently based on what he had heard from agents who were securing information for Nanakchand. Nanakchand also relied on the same source when he entered in his diary on 24 June, 'sister-in-law of Mr. Jacobi has gone into the entrenchment with a message from the Nana in a dooly.'<sup>2</sup> Marian Ayah mentions 'Mr. Jacobi's wife' and also imagines a conference between Nana Sahib, Baba Bhat, Bala Rao and a group of sepoys before the surrender.<sup>3</sup> It is probably because of such conflicting evidence that Sherer and Holmes did not mention any name. Martin found it difficult to make up his mind, and stated, 'Some accounts say by an Eurasian named Jacobi, the wife of a watchmaker; others by an aged widow named Greenway.'<sup>4</sup> Forrest, however, believed that 'the note was brought to General Wheeler by an elderly person, Mrs. Jacobi.'<sup>5</sup> He came to this conclusion because it was 'affirmed' by Kalkaprasad, 'the confidential servant of Mr. Greenway,' and 'supported by the majority of the depositions'. Perhaps similar considerations prompted Colonel Williams to believe it was Mrs. Jacobi. The argument that the same thing was repeated by the majority of the witnesses does not appear to be very convincing, because many of the depositions do not have any independent value of their own. It is extremely difficult to shake off Mowbray Thomson's evidence when one remembers that he 'recognized' her as Mrs. Greenway, and that she spent several hours in his outpost.

Another question about which there is some difference of opinion is the part Nana Sahib really played in the massacre of Satichaura Ghat. Some contemporary writers were not convinced of Nana Sahib's responsibility and were inclined to believe that the part played by him was exaggerated. Maude doubted whether

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Deposition 43).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (Nanakchands narrative).

<sup>3</sup> Chick, *op. cit.* pp. 652-3.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, *op. cit.* ii. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 451.



Nana Sahib was 'guilty of complicity in the murders of our women and children', and was 'rather of opinion that his hand though guilty, was forced by his more blood-thirsty followers, whose acts he dared not disavow'.<sup>1</sup> Russell thought 'as yet all is obscure', and therefore found it impossible to come to any conclusion.<sup>2</sup> Lang also was disinclined to believe that Nana Sahib was responsible for the incident at the ghat. He saw 'so much of English gentlemen and ladies, was personally (if not intimately) acquainted with so many of the sufferers, that it is only fair to suppose, when he ordered boats to be got ready, he was sincere in his desire that the Christians should find their way to Calcutta'. Lang added that Nana Sahib must have known that 'in the event of the British becoming again the conquerors of India, the very fact of his having spared the lives of those who surrendered, would have led to the sparing of his own life; and hence the promise he made to Sir Hugh Wheeler'. The massacre was, in Lang's opinion, the 'act of those who wished to place for ever between Nana Sahib and the British Government an impassable barrier, so far as peace and reconciliation was concerned'. He quoted the opinion of one of his friends, 'a gentleman of great experience writing from India,' who believed 'it was the Mahommedan soldiery who insisted on that awful massacre'.<sup>3</sup> Some, however, considered Nana Sahib to be primarily responsible for the massacre at Satichaura Ghat, though Tatya Tope or Azimullah also played a very important part in it. Kaye called Tatya Tope the 'master-butcher', but held Nana Sahib as responsible, and pictured him 'restlessly pacing in his tent' awaiting the issue with full faith in the malevolent activity of his lieutenants on the river bank'.<sup>4</sup> Holmes considered that the plan had been devised by Nana Sahib, and that Tatya Tope was on the river bank to execute his master's orders.<sup>5</sup> Trevelyan also thought Nana Sahib was the person behind the plan and blamed him for the 'memorable treachery of Cawnpore'.<sup>6</sup> Mowbray Thomson, who gave a

<sup>1</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Russell, *op. cit.* p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Lang, *op. cit.* pp. 412-13. Lang was not in India during the outbreak. His conclusions were based on letters received from India.

<sup>4</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 257-8.

<sup>5</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.* p. 247.

<sup>6</sup> Trevelyan, *op. cit.* p. 227.

detailed description of the massacre, did not mention Nana Sahib, but made it clear that there was a premeditated plan.<sup>1</sup>

In a recent book on the outbreak of 1857, the evidence for the firing at the ghat has been critically examined. Dr. S. N. Sen thinks that the 'story, though it rests on very doubtful evidence, cannot be lightly dismissed'. The testimony of some of the witnesses would have been disregarded in a court of law, but from the mass of material it is clear that troops had been posted on the river bank and guns had been placed at several strategic points. The preparations seem to have been more elaborate than would have been warranted by ordinary security measures. 'It is not easy to ascertain, what share Nana had in the plot.' It is possible to argue that even if he wished, he could no longer control the sepoys. The story of Neill's atrocities had reached Cawnpore and probably influenced the decision of Nana Sahib's advisers. Nana Sahib himself, however, denied all responsibility for the massacre and put the blame on the sepoys.<sup>2</sup> In a letter dated 20 April 1859, addressed to 'Her Majesty the Queen, Parliament, the Court of Directors, the Governor-General, the Lieutenant-Governor and all officers Civil and Military', he said: 'All I could save by any means I did save, and when they left the entrenchment provided boats in which I sent them down to Allahabad. Your sepoys attacked them. By means of entreaties I restrained my soldiers and saved the lives of 200 English women and children. I have heard they were killed by your sepoys and *budmashes* at the time my soldiers fled from Cawnpore and my brother was wounded.' Tatyá Tope's statement, recorded shortly before his death, also blamed the sepoys for the massacre and exonerated himself and his master. He stated that Nana Sahib sent a note to General Wheeler saying 'that the sepoys would not obey his orders, and that if he wished, he (the Nana) would get boats and convey him and those with him in the entrenchment as far as Allahabad. . . . The following day I went and got ready forty boats, and having caused all the gentlemen, ladies and children to get into the boats, I started them off to Allahabad. In the meanwhile the whole army, artillery included, having got ready, arrived at the

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 166-7.

<sup>2</sup> Sen, *op. cit.* pp. 149-50.



river Ganges. The *sowars* jumped into the water and commenced a massacre of all the men, women and children, and set the boats on fire'.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of accepting these versions is obvious. It is further increased by a *parwana* (order) addressed to Subedar Bandu Singh of the 17th Regiment, giving him details of the plan of the attack on the English. On 25 July 1857, General Neill, who had then assumed command at Cawnpore, informed the Commander-in-Chief that he had got hold of some of Nana Sahib's correspondence, 'implicating parties of the 17th Regiment under Subedar Boondoo Singh (name doubtful)' for the attack at the ghat. Two days later, he sent four documents, including the order to Bandu Singh, 'they [the English] sought protection for the *Sarkar*, and said, 'allow us to get into the boats and go away; therefore the *Sarkar* has to make arrangements for their going and by ten o'clock tomorrow those people will have got into boats and started on the river.

'The river on this side is shallow and the other side deep. The boats will keep to the other side and go along for three or four *koss*. . . .

'Arrangements for the destruction of these English will not be made here, but as these people will keep near the bank on the other side of the river it is necessary that you should be prepared and make a plan to kill and destroy them on that side of the river, and having obtained a victory come here.'<sup>2</sup>

It appears from this letter that Nana Sahib intended that the attack should be made on the English from the Oudh bank of the river, so that he might be absolved from the charge of breaking his faith. It could then be explained as an act of the sepoys, who were not directly under Nana Sahib's control. But everything did not go according to plan, and the firing began sooner than was intended, before the boats moved and passed on to the other side. It was likely that the action of Mowbray Thomson and his friends who opened fire on the escaping boatmen hastened the

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (63-70).

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 44 (Further Papers no. 4, re Mutiny in the East Indies) pp. 59-60, also printed in Ball, *Indian Mutiny*, i. 389. One *Koss* is equal to two miles.



attack. It led to Major Vibart's escorts also firing upon the English with their carbines, and the guns opening up from the river banks. Undoubtedly Nana Sahib was very much dominated by his advisers and had hardly the power to go against the wishes of his troops, but it is difficult to see how he can be absolved from responsibility.

## ALLAHABAD—FATEHPUR—CAWNPORE

THE news of the risings at Meerut, Delhi and Cawnpore caused great consternation in Calcutta. The Christian population in the city, Kaye says, was mostly 'of the non-official type', of little help in times of emergency, and 'stunned and bewildered by the tidings from the northwest'.<sup>1</sup> It was feared that the sepoy at Barrackpore would march to Calcutta and seize the fort, or that the followers of the exiled Nawab of Oudh, at Matiaburaz, a few miles away, might create disturbances. The Indian population might rise against the whites. The Europeans went about with revolvers and trained their servants to fire, and arrangements were made for sending away their women and children to a place of safety by the river. Fireworks in celebration of a marriage would be taken for an attempt to liberate prisoners from jail and would bring a crowd of panicky Europeans 'on the street, the males armed with swords and revolvers and the ladies assembling in one house, where carriages were ready to transport them to the fort'.<sup>2</sup>

The Indians of Calcutta, however, had little sympathy with the outbreak. A number of meetings were called to 'sympathise with the Government . . . and to offer assistance if required'. One such meeting, held in the premises of the Metropolitan College on 25 May, was attended by representatives from various sections of the Indian population, Raja Radhakanto Deb, Raja Kalee Kissen Deb, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ramgopal Ghose, Kaliprasanna Sinha, Gourdas Bysack and Kissory Chand Mitra. But the resolutions in these meetings were not always taken seriously and the organizers were often ridiculed by the Anglo-Indian Press. A newspaper which published a report of the meeting on the 25th also came out with a lampoon directed against the organizers:

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* ii. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85; *The Friend of India*, 28 May 1857; *The Englishman*, 8 June 1857.

March, march, baboos of Calcutta  
 Let us offer our aid with the choicest 'Soft Sawder'  
 March to the meeting though each heart may flutter.  
 To think that black baboos are bound into  
 'Keep Order'.  
 Paunchy old Toolsee Doss'  
 Fat, flabby Ramdhone Ghose  
 Come to the meeting and offer assistance.  
 Neither Dutt, Seal and Sen  
 Come now, but don't come when  
 There seems to be the least chance of resistance.

Englishman from this day,  
 Often will tell the way,  
 How the black baboos proposed to keep order<sup>1</sup>

A letter published in the same newspaper recommended an 'importation of 20,000 European soldiers' and 'a few hundred Mini rifles', the 'formation of a local European Militia' or national guards of Horse and Foot and a marine battalion to be formed from the crews of ships when in Port.<sup>2</sup> This was impossible at the time. Lord Canning wrote to the President of the India Board, 'in that length of seven hundred and fifty miles' from Barrackpore to Agra, 'there is one European regiment at Danapur, and that is all . . . the two points to which I am straining are the hastening of the expulsion of the rebels from Delhi, and the collection of the Europeans from here to be pushed up the country.' The offer made by the British inhabitants of Calcutta to train and discipline themselves as a volunteer army was turned down by the Governor-General. He considered it unlikely that it would create much confidence in the city.<sup>3</sup>

The unpreparedness and the inaction of the Government came in for a good deal of criticism in the Press. Early in the year, when the stories of the unrest of the sepoy army were being reported in the newspapers, a correspondent from the North-Western Provinces wrote in obvious anger that the Governor-General knew

<sup>1</sup> *The Englishman*, 26 May 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *The Englishman*, 18 May 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Kaye and Malleison, *op. cit.* ii. 83.



'about as much of military matters as a boarding-school miss' and the Commander-in-Chief, who 'never led a squadron in the field' knew 'not more than a spinster'.<sup>1</sup> As the mutiny spread in the North-Western Provinces, Lord Canning drew from Madras the only European Regiment that could be spared. It was a long time before any help could be expected from England. He therefore wrote to Lord Elgin, who was then proceeding to China as envoy, informing him of the situation in India and asking him for military help. 'In the valley of the Ganges between Calcutta and Agra for a length of 750 miles there are barely one thousand European soldiers whilst there are several towns and stations of importance . . . which are held by native troops alone. If mutinous rebellion raised its head at any of these spots the Government of India is literally without any force to put it down.' He, therefore, requested that the soldiers at his disposal for service in China should be first employed 'in restoring safety to our Indian possessions in Bengal'.<sup>2</sup> Lord Elgin received Lord Canning's letters on 3 June, on his arrival at Singapore. 'I have not a man,' he recorded in his journal on the same day.<sup>3</sup> He also wrote to Clarendon, 'at present, there is not one European soldier at this place and at Hong Kong; if our latest advice be correct, we have only one very weak European regiment and a few artillerymen. I have therefore resolved that if before the arrival of the next mail from India either the 5th from the Mauritius or the 90th from England shall have reached Singapore I shall at once despatch them to Calcutta.'<sup>4</sup> On the 5th he again wrote in his journal, 'I received letters from Canning imploring me to send troops to him from the number destined from China. As we have no troops yet, and we do not well know when we may have any, it was not exactly an easy matter to comply with this request. However, I did what I could; and have sent instructions far and wide to send the transports back and give Canning the benefit of the troops for the moment.'<sup>5</sup> Lord Canning again wrote to Lord Elgin on the 24th that his appeal for military help would not reach England

<sup>1</sup> *The Englishman*, 13 Feb. 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Pol. Sec. Pro. 29 May 1857.

<sup>3</sup> Walrond, *Letters and Journal of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin*, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Sec. Pro. 26 June 1857 (32A).

<sup>5</sup> Walrond, *op. cit.* p. 187.

until late in July, and requested him to send to Calcutta as many European soldiers on their way to China as could be spared. Lord Canning did not know that on 19 June the troopship 'Simoon' had reached Singapore with 700 men of the 5th Fusiliers, and the Commander of the vessel had been directed to proceed to Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

About the end of May Lord Canning had promised help to General Wheeler and assured him that a 'steady stream of reinforcements' was being 'poured into Benares' and that 'every horse and bullock' that could be 'bought on the road' was engaged, and 'the dak establishments' had been 'increased to the utmost'.<sup>2</sup> But it was not possible to send reinforcements immediately. Colonel James Neill arrived in Calcutta from Madras on 23 May and left for Benares with 900 men of the 1st Madras Fusiliers. The mutiny at Benares delayed his departure, but he was able to leave there on 9 June, reaching Allahabad two days later. At Allahabad there was a prolonged halt. The 6th Native Infantry had mutinied and the city was looted. Neill's arrival altered the situation, and in about a week's time the administration was re-established. But it was not possible to push forward before the end of June. Neither carriages nor bullocks were available. Many British and Anglo-Indian newspapers cried for retribution. *Punch* advised the British troops to 'make shortish war with the niggers'.<sup>3</sup> The *Naval and Military Gazette* published a poem called 'Avenge O Lord, thy slaughtered saints' and called upon England to

. . . avenge those wrongs, by vengeance  
deep dire,  
Cut out the Canker with the sword, and burn it out  
with fire;<sup>4</sup>

The *Friend of India* wrote in an editorial after the capture of Raipur by British troops: 'We shall drive the rebels before us and leave nothing in our rear, but lines of burning villages and the

<sup>1</sup> Pol. Sec. Pro. 26 June (22) (34).

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* ii. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Punch*, 3 Oct. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> The *Naval and Military Gazette*, 5 Sept. 1857.



hanging bodies of felons, swinging to every breeze.' This was exactly what Neill did at Allahabad. His soldiers were not likely to make any distinction between 'traitor legions' or 'felons' and the ordinary villagers. Kaye refers to the 'great incubus of fear' which 'pressed universally on the trading classes'. 'Those who would have come forward as contractors at such a time had fled in dismay — some from the violence of the insurgents, and some in ignorant terror, from the anticipated retribution of the English.'<sup>1</sup> There were good reasons for keeping away, and the terror of the people was not based on sheer ignorance. The *Friend of India* blamed Colonel Simpson, but for whose 'negligence and incapacity' the stores could have been saved. 'When General Neill arrived at Allahabad there was not only no commissariat, but no materials out of which one could have been organised. It was this that destroyed the advance of the troops on Cawnpore.'<sup>2</sup>

On 22 June Sir Patrick Grant wrote to Neill from Calcutta, 'I am very anxious that Sir Hugh Wheeler at Cawnpore and Sir Henry Lawrence at Lucknow should be made aware that overpowering support is fast approaching them, a strong European Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Havelock is being pushed up with the greatest despatch. Endeavour to have the information conveyed to Sir Hugh and Sir Henry by *cossid* or otherwise.'<sup>3</sup> The Commander-in-Chief also advised Neill 'to be cautious not to commit too small a force of Europeans towards Cawnpore'. The letter reached Allahabad on 25 June and it was not possible to send any message to Wheeler, who surrendered the next day. Neill's diary of 22 June reads, 'arrange to push on 400 Europeans and two guns with Irregular Cavalry towards Cawnpore as soon as I can get them . . . we are getting in supplies of all kinds, things improving.'<sup>4</sup> But it was a week before a

<sup>1</sup> The *Friend of India*, 23 July 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleison, op. cit. ii. 205.

<sup>3</sup> The *Friend of India*, 6 Aug. 1857. The *godowns* 'were gutted under the very nose of Colonel Simpson . . . But not a shot was fired'. Neill thought the *Friend of India* had 'certainly made a mistake'. He wrote to the Head of the Commissariat department thanking him for his enterprise and denying that the store inside the fort had been neglected. Quoted by Kaye and Malleison, op. cit. ii. 205.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (16).

<sup>5</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).



detachment was ready to march to Cawnpore. An outbreak of cholera in the camp added to Neill's difficulties; the policy of chastisement destroyed the hope of securing assistance from the villagers. 'For everywhere', Kaye says, 'the terror-stricken native stood aloof from the chastising Englishman. It was as though we have dried up the wells and destroyed the crops from which we were to obtain our sustenance.'<sup>1</sup>

General Neill was not destined to lead the army to Cawnpore. General Havelock, a senior officer, superseded him in command and was directed to leave for Allahabad and relieve Cawnpore and Lucknow. Havelock left Calcutta on 25 June and reached Benares on the 28th. Neill wrote in his diary on the 29th: 'Received telegraphic from General Havelock that he is to be here tomorrow and requesting me to prepare carriage for two complete regiments to start by the end of the week, reply that all will be ready.'<sup>2</sup>

General Havelock arrived at Allahabad on the morning of the 30th and received a letter from Lawrence. 'I am glad to hear you are coming up: 400 Europeans with four guns. 300 Sikhs, with 100 cavalry will easily beat everything at Cawnpore, *as long as Wheeler holds his ground*; but if he is destroyed your game will be difficult.'<sup>3</sup> Neill had earlier planned to send to Cawnpore on 30 June an advance detachment under Major Renaud, but it was delayed. He wrote in his diary on the 29th, 'issue orders for march of Cawnpore column tomorrow morning at 5 a.m. All getting ready jollily, at the 11th hour no lascars and bearers to be had, can't start tomorrow morning.' This delay was not long. Major Renaud was able to leave with his columns, 400 Europeans, 300 Sikhs, 120 native irregular cavalry and two nine-pounders, on the evening of 30 June. Neill's diary reads, 'Lascars in, got sick carriage, tilt carts and bullocks. Renaud's column marches off at 5 p.m. well equipped.'<sup>4</sup> Neill had prepared for his army a set of instructions which were approved by Havelock. Major Renaud was to march as quickly as possible, 'the great object being the relief of

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleison, *op. cit.* ii. 206. <sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>3</sup> Marshman, *Memoirs of Sir Henry Havelock*, p. 279.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

Sir H. Wheeler and Cawnpore.' The march was to start early in the morning, and Europeans were to be exposed as little as possible. All places *en route* close to the road occupied by the enemy were to be attacked and destroyed, but Renaud was to 'touch no others', but encourage the villagers to return and 'instil confidence into all of the restoration of British authority'. It was to be circulated that more British troops were on the way and that Delhi had been taken by them. The village of Mubgoon and its neighbourhood were destroyed. 'Slaughter all men' and 'take no prisoners'. Fatehpur was to be promptly attacked and a 'signal example' was to be made of this place. 'But don't let that detain you,' Renaud was told, 'as what you can't finish Brigadier Havelock will do.' 'All heads of insurgents particularly at Futtehpore' were to be hanged. The Deputy Collector, if seized, was to be hanged, and his head 'cut off and stuck up on one of the principal Mahomedan buildings in the town'. All sepoy regiments that had mutinied, found without papers and unable to give good accounts of themselves, 'were to be hanged forthwith.' The sepoy's cavalry was to be reported if it did not act zealously. The guns were to be kept in the centre of the Europeans or 'entirely with them; never allow the Sikhs or any natives, to get on the flank next to them'. Should Cawnpore fall, Renaud was to attack the enemy and hold his own unless Havelock joined him.<sup>1</sup>

On 2 July instructions were also issued to Captain Spurgin, proceeding on a steamer to Cawnpore. On arriving there he was to inform Wheeler that Renaud's column would arrive on the 8th. After the landing of men and goods at Cawnpore, the steamer was to be used for transporting women and children and the wounded and the sick to Allahabad. But if Cawnpore had already fallen, Spurgin was to take up a position in the river and establish communication with Renaud.

Renaud's force left Allahabad in the evening of 30 June. Almost at the same time Havelock received the news of the disaster at Cawnpore. Not much reliance was placed on the earlier report, but two news writers coming from Lucknow testified to

<sup>1</sup> Kaye, *Lives of Indian Officers*, ii. 374-6.



the account and stated that 'they passed through Cawnpore and saw Wheeler's force destroyed'.<sup>1</sup> Neill at first refused to be convinced. He wrote in his diary on 2 July, 'I don't believe this, but General Havelock does and his staff also have lost nerve, are for halting Renaud's column and not sending steamers up, urge that Renaud should on no account halt and that the steamer should go on.'<sup>2</sup> On 4 July Renaud was at Kuttohur and wrote to Neill, 'push on 2 or 300 men to me. I stand fast here.' In another letter, on the same day, he also reported what he had heard about the incident at Cawnpore. 'My messenger says, Sir H. Wheeler was shot on Thursday, first through the leg and afterwards in a vital part. The garrison there became disheartened and sued for peace. They had boats furnished them, and were allowed to take away everything they pleased, 3½ lacs of rupees included. They were shot down in the boats. One boat escaped ten miles down the river to Narainghat. The party in it was pursued, captured, brought back and shot in cold blood before a big crowd.'<sup>3</sup>

The account Renaud received was a mixture of truth and fiction, but it left no doubt as to the fate of Wheeler and his men. Henry Lawrence also wrote to Renaud on 28 June that Wheeler's force had been destroyed, and advised him to halt or return if the enemy were in force about him.<sup>4</sup> Neill wrote in his diary on 5 July with obvious annoyance, 'Renaud is in evident state of alarm, sends in to me for 2 or 300 men and writes off to Spurgin to join him; hope Spurgin will see him d — d first and have written to him showing his mistake, directing him on no account to retire but hold his own boldly, that General Havelock marches with 1,000 Europeans and 6 guns on Monday morning . . . that I still doubt Cawnpore falling.'<sup>5</sup> On receiving the news of Cawnpore from Havelock, Sir Patrick Grant in Calcutta had earlier advised that Renaud's force should be halted 'until Havelock's column can support him'.<sup>6</sup> But his mind was evidently uncertain. He wrote to Neill on 9 July, 'I continue to think Cawnpore still holds out . . . I know Sir Hugh Wheeler too well not to feel convinced

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (16).

<sup>3</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 79.



that while mind and body held together with him he never would put himself into the power of any Asiatic, thoroughly cognisant as he was of native character and native treachery.<sup>1</sup>

Havelock had instructed Renaud to halt at Lohanga till he joined him, and to burn no more villages unless actually occupied by insurgents, and 'spare the European troops as much as possible'. Renaud's position was rendered more difficult by the contradictory orders he began to receive. Henry Lawrence wanted him to halt or 'if necessary fall back'. Sir Patrick Grant had meanwhile changed his mind, and believed the story of the fall of Cawnpore was a fabrication. He urged Renaud 'to push on thither'.<sup>2</sup> Renaud marched another seven miles to Kutinghee and established contact with Spurgin. He then proceeded to Syani, and was joined by Havelock on 12 July.<sup>3</sup>

Havelock had left Allahabad on the 7th. He had with him about 1,000 men from European regiments, 130 of Lieutenant Brayser's Sikhs and eighteen volunteer cavalry and six guns.<sup>4</sup> The sky was overcast with cloud and as the column moved out it began to pour. After marching for about three hours in blinding rain Havelock stopped for the night. The cloud lifted next day and the column 'moved briskly on through a beautiful, flat, fertile, well-wooded country'.<sup>5</sup> But it was not always so pleasant. Renaud had intended hanging 'all black creations' and traces of his punishment were evident, burnt villages and dead bodies swinging from the trees, their lower portions eaten up by animals.<sup>6</sup>

In the beginning of July Nana Sahib issued two proclamations. One, published on 1 July, advised 'all the subjects and servants of the Government . . . to carry on their respective work with comfort and ease' and 'rejoice at the delightful intelligence' that all Christians 'who were at Delhi, Poona, Sattara and other places' and 'even those 5,000 European soldiers who went in disguise into the former city' were 'destroyed and sent to

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (16).

<sup>2</sup> North, *Journal of an English Officer in India*, pp. 37-38; Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 286.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 81; *Saturday Review* quoted by Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 373.

<sup>6</sup> North, *op. cit.* p. 27; Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 41.

hell'.<sup>1</sup> A second proclamation published on the same day also stated that the 'yellow-faced and narrow-minded people have been sent to hell and Cawnpore has been conquered' and that the 'subjects and landholders should be as obedient to the present Government' as they had been to 'the former one'.<sup>2</sup>

The proclamations did not quite remove the misgivings of the people, and on the rumour of the approach of the British troops from Allahabad some began to leave Cawnpore and seek shelter in villages. Nana Sahib ordered the *Kotwal* to 'proclaim in each lane and street of the city that regiments of cavalry, infantry and batteries' had been despatched to check Havelock's army either at Allahabad or at Fatehpur.<sup>3</sup>

After Havelock had joined Renaud's detachment he proceeded to Khaga, five miles from Fatehpur, and halted. He knew that an army from Cawnpore was advancing to oppose him, but he had not anticipated an action so soon. A scouting party under Colonel Tytler was sent out to reconnoitre. Maude writes: 'The bugle had just sounded for breakfast, for which we were more than ready. . . . Suddenly our reconnoitring party and cavalry came in at a gallop, followed by a few round shot.'<sup>4</sup> Nana's cavalry made an imposing sight as it bore down upon the British line. Havelock decided to bring on an action. 'In ten minutes', he says, 'the action was decided, for in that short space of time the spirit of the enemy was utterly subdued.' The sepoys did not realize the strength of the British and thought that they had only Renaud's advanced guard to deal with. They were at a disadvantage as the fire from Enfield rifles reached them 'at an unexpected distance'. Maude 'pushed his guns through flanking swamps to point blank range', and opening fire at 800 yards, 'disabled their leading guns'.<sup>5</sup> Their infantry tried to reform and a large body of cavalry appeared. So Maude's guns again went into action. Nana Sahib's cavalry fled, leaving behind two elephants, two guns and the infantry, which was thoroughly 'peppered into'. Taty Tope was commanding the troops from the back of an elephant. Maude was

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 44. pt. i. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 44. pt. i. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 87.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Shepherd, op. cit. p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> Maude and Sherer, op. cit. i. 42.



told to 'knock over that chap on the elephant'. He laid the gun himself and 'as luck would have it' the 'first shot went in under the beast's tail and came out at its chest . . . rolling it over, and giving its rider a bad fall'.<sup>1</sup>

The battle was nearing its end. As the British advanced, Nana Sahib's guns fell into their hands. His troops were pushed out of garden enclosures and from the barricades on the road and driven out of the town. They made an attempt to make a stand about a mile outside Fatehpur. Havelock's guns and riflemen were pushed to the front and the sepoy were dispersed. By one o'clock everything was over. The firing from Maude's artillery did immense harm to Nana Sahib's army. He lost 12 guns, and the 'road was strewn with dead and wounded men and bullocks, besides broken carts, tumbrils, etc.', and the entrance to the town 'was jammed with guns and waggons'. The British troops entering the city captured 'an immense quantity of guns, ammunition, stores, uniform and baggage' and a large amount of money.<sup>2</sup>

After a rest of twenty-four hours, Havelock's column advanced. The capture of Nana Sahib's guns at Fatehpur enabled him 'to equip and take into the field nine excellent guns . . . with the facility of also bringing into action two light 6-pounders'. He wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on 14 July from Kalyanpur: 'Here I have arrived and could be in Cawnpore on the 16th instant; but as it is rumoured that the bridge over the Pandoo Nuddea is entrenched . . . it is not probable that I can arrive so soon; if the stream is not defended I promise to march on the 16th to within five miles of Cawnpore and attack it the next day.'<sup>3</sup> Before the column reached Pandu Nadi, however, it had to fight an action on the way, at Aong. Havelock learnt that the village was occupied by Nana Sahib's troops, who were entrenched across the road and had two artillery guns in position. Havelock did not consider the entrenchment very strong, but the ground was thickly wooded, and it gave excellent cover to the troops. The battle lasted for two hours and a half, and as it progressed, large

<sup>1</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Groom, *op. cit.* p. 26; Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 91.



bodies of Nana Sahib's cavalry repeatedly advanced on both flanks with the intention of capturing the baggage. Havelock with the help of his infantry and artillery kept Nana Sahib's men at a distance, and Maude's guns forced the defenders to abandon their position. Before midday Aong was occupied by the British. Their loss was severe. Major Renaud was mortally wounded and Captain Fraser of the 1st Madras Fusiliers was also injured. The battle of Aong, Maude observed, 'showed the rebels the advantage they gained by holding a good strategical position; while it taught us the necessity of following them as swiftly as possible, so as not to give them time to fortify themselves.'<sup>1</sup>

After a short respite, Havelock's army was again on the march. A few miles from Aong is the small rivulet called Pandu Nadi. The bed of the channel was only seventy feet wide, but the monsoon had rendered it unfordable. Havelock had no pontoons, and the only way to cross it was by a narrow masonry bridge. It was at first feared that Nana Sahib had planned to destroy this, but Havelock learnt before the march began that it was still intact. Nana's troops, however, had entrenched themselves near it and placed two guns of garrison calibre for defence. After a march of two hours Havelock's column came near the river; then 'there suddenly came crashing several 24 lb shots, which were very well-aimed, killing two or three of the infantry'. The bridge was 'at a salient bend of the river', in Havelock's direction. Maude planned 'to envelop it with his artillery fire' by placing 'three guns on the road and three on either flank'. The Madras Fusiliers armed with Enfield rifles lined the bank of the river and kept up continuous fire. The ground on both sides of the road was heavy and uneven, so that Maude, assisted by Lieutenant Crump, proceeded by the road at a much quicker pace than the slow-moving artillery pieces on the flanks. 'We were nearly alone', says Maude, 'and presented a fair mark for these guns.' But Nana Sahib's artillery men did not depress their guns to meet the advancing line, so their shots did little damage, while Maude's guns opened fire from a distance of 600 yards and the fire of the Fusiliers softened the resistance of the defenders. A clumsy attempt to blow up the

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 91; Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 50.

bridge ended in failure. As the smoke cleared, it was seen that only one of the arches had been badly damaged and it was still possible to use the bridge. Maude succeeded, by what he called 'a wonderful providence', in breaking the sponge staves of Nana Sahib's heavy guns. Marshman, however, was told that Nana Sahib's gunners themselves 'broke their staffs and spiked their guns'. This was possible only if a retreat was planned. There seemed a general slackening of firing from the bridge, and the right wing of the Fusiliers crossed the bridge and captured both the guns.<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib's defeat at Pandu Nadi brought the British troops within twenty miles of Cawnpore. Nana Sahib and his advisers evidently hoped to defeat Havelock in a pitched battle, and the plan to destroy the bridge had not originally been thought of. The attempt was postponed till the last moment and, when made, was crude and obviously hasty.

Nana Sahib had failed to arrest the progress of the Company's army. The British troops were, however, suffering from the effects of a long march under the July sun and continuous actions. Their ranks were thinned not only by bullets but also as a result of intense heat and cholera. Havelock was afraid that with his dwindling force it would not be possible for him to leave a portion of his army at Cawnpore and march to Lucknow with the rest. Frequent use of Enfield rifles had also told on his store of ammunition and a supply was urgently needed. It was also necessary to replenish his stock of rum, to prevent 'the necessity of our being reduced to half rations, which would be a most trying deprivation' to troops exposed to fatigue and hardships.<sup>2</sup> His 'immediate and pressing wants' were ammunition for Enfield rifles and for guns, field artillery and commissariat stores. Havelock also asked for a supply of troops from Allahabad, and directed Neill 'to push up to Cawnpore', with as little delay as possible, 300 Europeans or, if that was not possible, to 'spare two hundred men at least'.<sup>3</sup> Neill telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief on 16 July that he had received a 'pressing requisition for three hundred Europeans and

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 93; Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 51-52; Marshman, *op. cit.* pp. 298-9.

<sup>2</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 95.



guns from General Havelock' and had started two hundred and eighty seven. A few hours later he handed over the command of Allahabad to Captain Drummond and proceeded to Cawnpore.<sup>1</sup> On the same day Havelock's troops met an army under Nana Sahib in person in the outskirts of Cawnpore.

As Havelock reached the village of Maharajapur, six miles from Cawnpore, he learnt from his spies that Nana Sahib himself was defending the entrance to the city with 5,000 men. He had entrenched himself about 800 yards behind a fork where the Grand Trunk Road meets the road to the cantonment, and was 'strongly posted behind a succession of villages'. His left wing was about a mile south of the Ganges and was protected by four 24-pounders, the centre was placed in a village and separated from the left by the road leading to the cantonment. Here Nana Sahib placed a 24-pounder howitzer and a horse 6-pounder. The Grand Trunk Road lay between the centre and the right wing, which, with two nine-pounders, was stationed in a village. The two wings were in advance of the centre and the whole line presented the shape of a crescent. Behind his left wing, a little to the north, Nana Sahib had placed his cavalry and his infantry. The strength of Nana Sahib's position was apparent to Havelock and he felt it would be extremely difficult to dislodge him. Havelock wrote, 'his entrenchments cut and rendered impassable both roads, and his guns seven in number . . . were disposed along his position which consists of a series of villages.' Behind those his infantry was disposed for defence. It was evident that an attack in front would 'expose the British to a murderous fire from his heavy guns sheltered in his entrenchment'. Havelock therefore decided to manoeuvre in order to turn his left. The ground near Nana Sahib's right wing was 'low and swampy, and moreover commanded by the railway embankments' while that between the left wing and the river was 'more elevated'. The sick and the wounded and the baggage were left at the village of Maharajapur under an escort and the troops were halted for 'two or three hours in mango groves to cool and gain shelter from a burning sun'. Havelock's plan no doubt involved some risk. He was not able to maintain

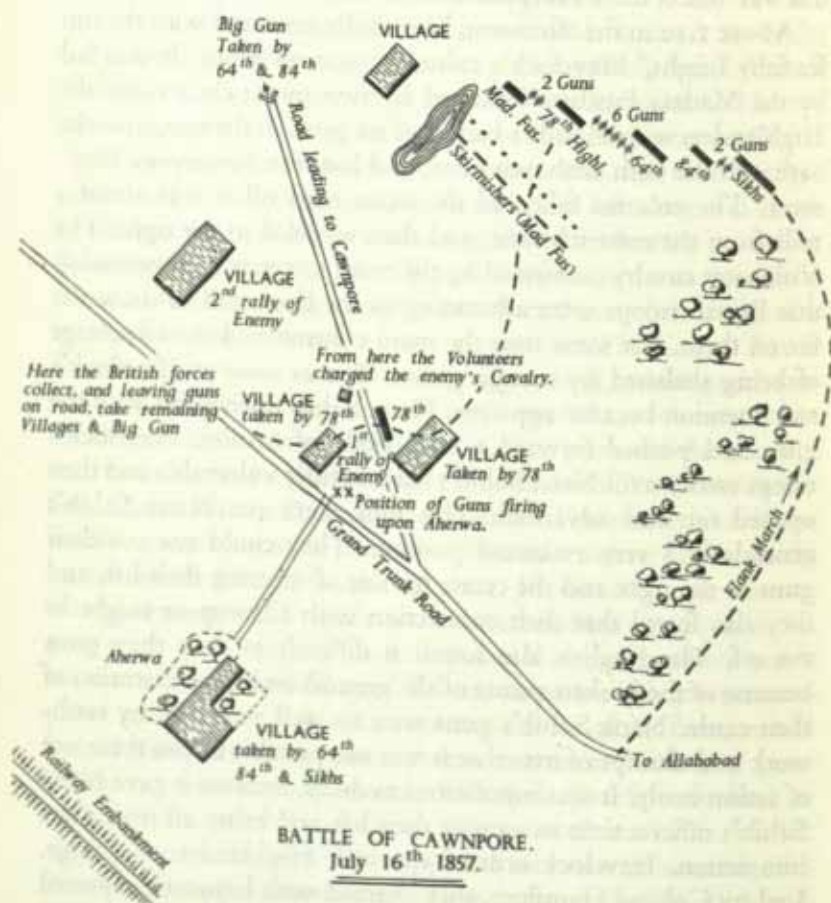
<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 94.



any communication with Maharajapur, and his rear was liable to be attacked by Nana Sahib's troops. Besides, he would be fighting with his back to the river. This was, as Marshman says, 'apparently opposed to the rules of war,' but Havelock evidently thought that this was 'one of those exceptional cases which creates its own rule'.<sup>1</sup>

About 1.30 in the afternoon, 'dreadfully tired and with the sun fearfully bright,' Havelock's column began to move. It was led by the Madras Fusiliers followed by two guns; then came the Highlanders with Maude's battery of six guns in the rear, then the 64th and the 84th with two guns, and last, the Ferozepore Regiment. The column followed the main road till it was about a mile from the entrenchment, and then wheeled to the right. The Volunteer cavalry continued by the road, to create the impression that British troops were advancing to the front and to draw the fire on them. For some time the main column had the advantage of being sheltered by mango groves. But as soon as Havelock's real intention became apparent, Nana Sahib opened up with the guns and pushed forward a large body of cavalry. Havelock's troops went on till Nana Sahib's left was fully vulnerable and then opened fire and advanced. This movement put Nana Sahib's generals in a very awkward position. They could not use their guns in the right and the centre for fear of injuring their left, and they also feared that their connection with Cawnpore might be cut off. The English also found it difficult to drag their guns because of the broken nature of the ground and the exhaustion of their cattle. Nana Sahib's guns were so well protected by earth-work and clumps of trees that it was not possible to put them out of action easily. It was injudicious to delay, because it gave Nana Sahib's officers time to arrange their left and bring all their guns into action. Havelock ordered the 78th Highlanders to charge. Led by Colonel Hamilton, they charged with bayonets, captured the guns, and occupied the village. At about the same time, another village was captured by the 64th. A portion of Nana Sahib's infantry fell back on the road to Rampur, and another group came to the centre and took up their position near the howitzer. But they were dislodged by the 78th Highlanders and

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 99; Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 303.



After *A History of the Indian Mutiny* by T. Rice Holmes, London, 1904.

the 64th. Meanwhile, Maude had engaged the guns on the right and silenced them, and the 78th, the 64th and the Sikhs of Ferozepore Regiment attacked the village and cleared it of Nana Sahib's troops.<sup>1</sup>

This seemed to have broken Nana Sahib's resistance. His infantry was retreating when suddenly a 24-pounder opened on the British, and Nana Sahib's cavalry and infantry rallied again. Havelock's tired infantry was exposed to heavy fire. Meanwhile, Maude had been told to form his battery and halt there, as that would be the centre of the British camp at night. But he was being 'threatened by cavalry on both sides . . . who came so near' that he had to 'bring his flank guns in action', while at the same time a 'gradually increasing fire' from Nana Sahib's infantry on the railway embankment broke out in his rear. Soon Nana Sahib's guns opened out on his left front. Maude received a pressing message to advance to the help of the infantry, and in attempting to 'pick out a fairly good bit of road . . . plunged into the sodden ground'. 'If the cavalry who were close to us', Maude wrote, 'had possessed one atom of dash, they could have taken the whole of our eight guns at that moment without losing a dozen men.'<sup>2</sup> A Private of the 84th Regiment recorded his impression of the damage done to the British army: 'The force lost a good many killed and wounded; all commanding officers had been wounded and the General's horse killed, my left hand man and old comrade was killed along side of me by a 24-pound shot; it struck him on the breast and the same ball nearly killed our Captain; . . . it carried away his sword and the lower part of his seat; it was a dreadful wound and he is not expected to live. . . . The 24-pounder . . . played on us three quarters of an hour . . . we were lying down, waiting for our artillery, who were two miles in rear; the enemy cavalry was very close at this time; they came on, their band playing and shouting.'<sup>3</sup> Havelock was determined that Nana Sahib's guns must be silenced. They were 'letting severely on our soldiers, and they had a long line. I saw the longer the men looked at it the less they would

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 99; Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 55; Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 56-58.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 1 Oct. 1857.



like it. So I called them to spring to their feet and advance'. Havelock wrote in his official report, 'the enemy sent round shot into our ranks, until we were within three hundred yards, and then poured in grape with such precision and determination as I have seldom witnessed.' But Havelock's troops advanced 'steadily and silently' and 'then with a cheer charged and captured the unwieldy trophy of their valour'. Nana Sahib's sepoy were on the retreat, Maude's guns came up, and completed their discomfiture by a heavy cannonade and chased them into the town. The British troops had then nearly entered the cantonment and Havelock could see through the gathering darkness the roofless barracks of the artillery.<sup>1</sup>

In his order of the day, after the battle of Cawnpore, Havelock expressed his admiration of the troops under his command. 'Your General is satisfied and more than satisfied with you.' The victories were not easy. Everywhere they had fought against strong entrenched positions. Only Brigadier Jwalaprasad at Fatehpur did not seem to have given a very good account of himself and in his official despatch Havelock described the action at Fatehpur as an easy victory.<sup>2</sup> At Pandu Nadi the battle was 'short but spirited'. At the battle of Cawnpore, except for the first few moments, Nana Sahib's men fought every inch of the ground and, pushed back by the Highlanders, tried to reform three times, and 'fired with such precision and determination' as was seldom witnessed.<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant Crump commented on the battle of Pandu Nadi, 'it was universally remarked how much closer and fiercer the mutineers fought that day. . . . The inferior details of the movements were perfect but the master mind was wanting.'<sup>4</sup> This would be largely true of other actions as well and goes a long way in explaining Nana Sahib's ultimate failure.

Before Havelock entered Cawnpore on 17 July, one more disaster befell the British. Early in June, a group of refugees from Fatehgarh, ignorant of the conditions in Cawnpore, had sought shelter there and been arrested by Nana Sahib's troops. Nearly all

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 1 Oct. 1857; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 100; Marshman, op. cit. p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 91-92.

<sup>4</sup> *Saturday Review*, 19 Sep. 1857. Quoted by Rice Holmes, op. cit. p. 286.

the male captives were put to death and the women and children, about forty in number, were removed to a small building called Bibighar. This had been built by a British Officer for his Indian mistress. But it was no longer used for its original purpose and before the Mutiny it served as a military depot. The Fatehgarh refugees were soon joined by other prisoners. After the firing at Satichaura Ghat on 27 June, the survivors, numbering about 170, mostly women and children, were first taken to Savada House and four or five days later were brought to Bibighar.<sup>1</sup> Sherer wrote, 'common matting was provided for them and chappatees and water were supplied. . . .'<sup>2</sup> Forrest recorded that 'there was neither furniture, nor bedding, nor straw, and their food was cakes of unleavened bread and lentil porridge'.<sup>3</sup> The food was later on slightly improved. It was a hard life. But Sherer thought there was no basis for the allegations of torture, mutilation and dishonour. The prisoners seemed 'to have been suffering fearfully from disease' and were looked after by 'a Bengalee native doctor'.<sup>4</sup>

The news that the battle of Pandu Nadi was lost and that Havelock would soon reach the outskirts of Cawnpore led to the death of the prisoners. It was feared that the hour of retribution had come and that the prisoners would serve as witnesses and implicate many of the leading citizens.<sup>5</sup> Shepherd, who was in prison at the time, heard that 'about noon on the 15th July, a few troopers came in with the intelligence of the fight' and reported to Nana Sahib that the Europeans were 'coming like mad horses or mad dogs' and 'if it were not for the rescue of the women and children in confinement, the soldiers would not rush on with such impetuosity, and even then it was not too late — "kill the *maines* and *baba logues*" they said, and inform the English force of it, and you will find the Europeans will be discouraged and go back'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 152; Forrest gives the number as 'five men and two hundred and six women and children'. *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 476.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (666).

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, i. 476.

<sup>4</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (666). Sherer believed that the account of the girl published by Dr. Knighton in *The Times*, if true, would be the only authentic case. He had doubts about the stories told of 'poor Miss W—'.

<sup>5</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *op. cit.* ii. 279–80.

<sup>6</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 155–6.



It was perhaps as the result of such advice, fear or rage or 'wantonness of bestial cruelty' that it was decided to put to death all the prisoners at Bibighar. The male prisoners, four or five in number, were taken out and murdered on the road. But the destruction of women and children presented a difficulty, for the sepoys were reluctant to obey orders, and 'fired at the ceiling of the chamber'. A woman named Hussani Khanum, known as the begum, who attended on the prisoners there, called some butchers from the bazaar and two or three probably from among Nana's guards. They entered the house and cut down the prisoners with their swords. A few still lived and their groans could be heard all night. In the morning the dying and the mangled remains of the dead were thrown into a well in the compound.<sup>1</sup> Sherer wrote in his report: 'It seems probable, that volleys were first fired into the doors and windows and then the executioners were sent in to do the rest with swords. If the work was anything like completed, it must have taken a considerable time. At length the doors were closed and night fell upon what had happened. The hotel, where Nana had his quarters, was within fifty yards of this house, and I am credibly informed that he ordered a *nautch* and passed the evening with singing and dancing. Early next morning, orders were given for the Beebeegurh to be cleared. There must have been near upon 200 corpses. So many, I do not think, could have been thrown into the well. It seems probable, that a portion was dragged down to the Ganges. Considering the smallness of the house, and crowded condition of the captives it is next to impossible that all can have been slaughtered the previous night. It is exercising therefore no morbid imagination and pandering to no prurient curiosity to say that I hold no doubt some of the living met a more terrible death than assassination, even by being plunged with their dead companions into the tainted waters of the well.'<sup>2</sup>

Next day, on 17 July, when Havelock entered Cawnpore, Bibighar bore ample evidence of the massacre.

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 157-9; Williams, *op. cit.* pp. 18-21; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. xlvii-xlix; Kaye and Mallsen, *op. cit.* ii. 280-1.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (666).



## HAVELOCK — NEILL — NANA SAHIB

As Havelock and his army bivouacked near Cawnpore on the night of 16 July, Nana Sahib and his troops rushed back to the city and retreated towards Bithur. Before the day broke, Havelock learnt of the flight of Nana Sahib and the fate of the prisoners at Bibighar. He sent out an advance party under Colonel Fraser Tytler to reconnoitre. As they came near the magazine, 'there was a sudden concussion resembling that of a violent earthquake, and a dense cloud of smoke was seen to rise in the air, followed by a deafening report.'<sup>1</sup> Sherer, who was accompanying Havelock's army, 'suddenly saw far in the distance, a great tongue of fire fly up towards the sky, and immediately afterwards, what looked like a vast black balloon ascended, as if in pursuit of it, showing us, in its dispersion, that it was smoke. Then after a perceptible pause there was a violent explosion. . . .'<sup>2</sup> The magazine had been blown up. Nana Sahib had given up all hopes of opposing the English at Cawnpore.

It had been announced by beat of drums that the British army had been defeated in Delhi and other places, and there had seemed hardly any possibility of Havelock's troops arriving at Cawnpore. But within a few weeks, Nana Sahib's troops had been defeated at Fatehpur, and as Havelock approached the neighbourhood of Cawnpore there was panic and a general exodus from the city. Shepherd writes, 'the entire population was so panick-struck that leaving house and property, every man that had a hand in the rebellion took to his heels. . . . People deserted their families on the way to escape with their own lives. From noon till midnight nothing but immense mobs were seen rushing away as fast as possible towards the west; some crossed over to Lucknow from Bithoor Ghat, others went towards Delhi; and the most part of

<sup>1</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 200.

the city people hid themselves in the neighbouring villages when they were nicely robbed by the Zamindars.' Many crossed the river, 'on the banks of which they pitched away their muskets, coats, pantaloons, etc. and dispersed in different directions into the district.'<sup>1</sup>

There was no opposition. As Sherer, accompanied by a trooper, entered the town, they were met by a man with a small kettle-drum who put himself just before them and 'proclaimed the restoration of the former rule.' Sherer wondered if he had in similar manner proclaimed the Nana.<sup>2</sup> The drummer 'diligently rattled away, sonorously shouting an intonation', the establishment of the rule of the Company Bahadur. The city only waited to be taken over. The Company's flag was hoisted over Cawnpore. But the 17th of July was a day of gloom for Havelock. He had not only learnt of the fate of the prisoners of Bibighar but also of the death of Henry Lawrence at Lucknow. Fraser Tytler was the first to find the way to the house of massacre. As he and his men were entering the city they were met by a 'haggard looking almost naked East Indian, a clerk in some office'.<sup>3</sup> This was Sheperd, who had escaped from Nana Sahib's prison. He took the Quarter-Master-General to the house where the ladies were imprisoned. There were others who arrived shortly after. North says, 'eager, maddened, we sped round to the dreary house of martyrdom where their blood was outpoured like water; the clotted gore lay ankle deep on the polluted floor.'<sup>4</sup> Swanston of the Volunteers found that the 'floor of the yard and the verandah and some of the rooms were bespattered with blood and bore bloodmarks of children's hands and feet; women's dresses, hats, Bibles, marriage certificates etc. lay scattered about the place.'<sup>5</sup> Sherer also was one of the first to visit the place. 'The whole story was so unspeakably horrible,' he said, 'that it would be quite wrong in any sort of way to increase the distressing circumstances which really existed. And I must say once for all that the accounts were exaggerated.' Sherer found that the 'whole of the pavement was thickly caked

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Volunteer, *My Journal*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Volunteer, op. cit. p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Maude and Sherer, op. cit. i. 202.

<sup>4</sup> North, op. cit. p. 76.

with blood'. He was, however, annoyed with North's description. 'Surely this is enough,' without saying, 'the clotted gore, lay ankle deep,' which 'besides being most distressing is absolutely incorrect'.<sup>1</sup>

The re-occupation of Cawnpore did not mean immediate return to peace and order. 'Havelock's fighting men', Kaye wrote, 'looked upon every native' found near Bibighar 'as an adherent of the Nana and struck at all with indiscriminate retribution', and the Company's troops 'were plundering in all directions'. One of the first things that Havelock did was to appoint a Provost-Marshal 'with special instructions to hang up in their uniform, all British soldiers that plunder'.<sup>2</sup> Havelock was to leave for Lucknow as soon as possible and Neill was to take charge of Cawnpore during his absence.

On 12 July Neill learnt that he had been 'appointed Brigadier-General to rank next to General Havelock'. He left Allahabad on the 16th and next day received a note from Havelock 'of the enemy being thrashed on the 15th, with loss of six guns at ridge beyond Futtehpore'. He received another letter on the way and the day before he reached Cawnpore, he wrote in his diary, 'have a note from General Havelock by the *dawk* anxiously waiting my arrival; immediately I do, he will strike a blow that will resound through India. God in his infinite mercy grant we may.'<sup>3</sup>

He arrived at Cawnpore on 20 July. The British position had then been strengthened by men stationed in the Nawabgani area, near the junction of the Grand Trunk Road and the road leading to the cantonment. This enabled Havelock to ensure the defence of Cawnpore and check any attempt made by Nana Sahib's troops from Bithur to overrun the city. Marshman mentioned some of the advantages of Havelock's position. 'It interposed between Bithoor and Cawnpore, covering the city and its resources in its rear, with the Ganges on its right and the canal on its left, with a network of ravines in front extended down to the river.'<sup>4</sup> Sherer also calls it a wise measure, for it 'not only protected

<sup>1</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 207-8.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* ii. 291-2.

<sup>3</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>4</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 319.



the station in the direction of Bithoor, but also preserved the soldiers from the temptation of liquor, as well as from any desire to take vengeance with their own hands.<sup>1</sup>

The fear that Nana Sahib would attack Cawnpore soon proved baseless. It was at first reported that he was assembling troops. On the 18th Havelock telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief, 'Nana Saheb is at Bithoor in force with 5000 men and 45 guns.'<sup>2</sup> But whatever strength Nana Sahib gathered soon melted away and he decided to cross the river and enter Oudh. He was having difficulty with his men, 'they had thrown off restraint and abused him and Baba Bhat in open terms, clamouring with threatening gestures for money.'<sup>3</sup> Havelock did not know when he sent the telegram to the Commander-in-Chief that Nana Sahib had already left Bithur. On the evening of the 17th Nana got into a boat with the ladies of his family. He had spread the rumour that he was going to commit suicide by drowning himself. As the boat approached midstream its light was extinguished. This was to be the moment when Nana Sahib would throw himself in the river, and 'with a yell that must have reached the boat the mendicant Brahmins rushed up to the palace and commenced plundering all they could lay their hands on'. Nana Sahib reached the other bank and vanished in the darkness. Sherer rightly suspected that it was a 'blind to avoid pursuit'.<sup>4</sup> The story of the suicide was, however, believed for sometime. A commissariat clerk at Cawnpore reported that he 'saw the end of Nana Saheb'. When the British troops 'moved upon Bithoor he took the whole of his family out in the Ganges in a boat, knocked out a plank and went down with them all'.<sup>5</sup>

Almost immediately after Nana's 'suicide' Narayan Rao, of Bithur, sent a message to Havelock that Nana Sahib and his troops had left Bithur, and invited him to come and occupy the town.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, iii. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ii. 97.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid. iii. xxxvii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 25 Sept. 1857 (63).

<sup>6</sup> Narayan Rao was the son of ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II's *dewan* Ramchandra Pant. Nana Sahib placed him under restraint during the Mutiny. Nanakchand stated that Rao's loyalty to the British was false and was troubled by the thought that he would not be able to produce witnesses against him.

On the morning of 19 July Major Stevenson led a party of the Madras Fusiliers and Sikhs to Bithur, and reaching there in the afternoon, occupied the town without any resistance. 'Not a single shot it has cost us,' wrote North, 'Nana . . . has suffered Bithur to fall in to our hands without the expenditure of any more gunpowder than what had exploded when the magazine blew up.'<sup>1</sup> Havelock wrote to the Commander-in-Chief two days after the occupation of Bithur, 'Nana Saheb's force at Bithoor is entirely dispersed. . . . We have brought from the place 16 guns and a quantity of animals, set fire to his palace and blown up his powder magazine.' Nana Sahib's palace and menagerie were thoroughly looted.<sup>2</sup> Groom, who accompanied Stevenson, 'bivouacked in the Nana's compound, a magnificently furnished English house with all sorts of cows, dogs, horses in a large English paddock.' 'We looted a good deal', Groom wrote. His servant got 600 rupees. He himself got a chain and a silver plate, which he hoped he would be able to keep. One of his men found a pair of thorough-bred English bulldogs which would 'bring him 500 rupees at least in Calcutta'.<sup>3</sup> Among other animals brought from Bithur, Sherer mentioned 'two of Nana's pets, a wanderoo monkey and a squirrel, quite as big as a small rabbit'. The monkey ultimately reached the Zoological garden in London. The squirrel was made over to Sherer, but 'he died — poor beautiful creature'. It was widely believed that large hoards of treasure were buried in Nana's palace and Sherer regretted destruction of it by the Company's troops, 'any chance of finding treasure' had been 'rendered far more remote'.<sup>4</sup> The destruction of the palace does not appear to have been very thorough, for four weeks later the British troops made another attempt to demolish it, and this time pulled it down brick by brick.

Meanwhile, Havelock at Cawnpore was busy making preparations for crossing the river. His army was housed mostly in the cavalry stables near Wheeler's entrenchment.<sup>5</sup> This was, however,

<sup>1</sup> North, *op. cit.* p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 151; *Parliamentary Papers*, 44. pt. i.

<sup>3</sup> Groom, *op. cit.* pp. 37-41.

<sup>4</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 223-4.

<sup>5</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* p. 175.



a temporary measure. It seemed likely that Nana Sahib would attempt to recover Cawnpore as soon as Havelock had left for Oudh. Havelock, therefore, was in search of a position for a new entrenchment which could be defended with a small number of troops and from which it would be possible to keep watch on the river. Such a place was found near the Baxi Ghat on the Ganges. It was an elevated piece of land with an area of 200 by 100 yards. Havelock considered that it would be possible to hold it with 300 men, keep an eye on the neighbouring area, and guard the passage of the river. Almost opposite the plot there was a partly submerged island in the river, and beyond that two more which were completely under water. These would be useful while crossing the river.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the entrenchment began on the 19th, and it was hoped that by the time Havelock's troops crossed the river it would be strong enough to defend itself. The bridge of boats connecting Cawnpore with Oudh had been destroyed. Havelock wrote to the Commander-in-Chief of the 'difficulties of a swollen, broad and rapid river, with only one small steamer and a few boats'.<sup>2</sup> The heavy rain which began on the 20th continued for several days. The steamer *Brahmaputra*, on which much reliance was placed, proved too weak to fight the currents of the river, and they had to rely instead on some twenty country boats collected from the neighbourhood. The first detachment of the Company's troops, with three guns, crossed the river on the 21st. Groom wrote on the 22nd: 'Here we are still and the rain falling in torrents. Nearly the whole of the force are now on the other side of the river without tents. They say that the Sikhs are to cross this morning and we cross this evening. . . .'<sup>3</sup> On the 24th Havelock wrote to the Commander-in-Chief, 'the passage of the troops across the river goes on unremittingly.'<sup>4</sup> Next day Havelock himself crossed into Oudh with the last detachment. The work on the entrenchment took another fortnight. Shepherd wrote,

<sup>1</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* pp. 324-5; Crommelin, *Three Passages of the River Ganges at Cawnpore*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Groom, *op. cit.* pp. 38-39; Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 326.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 152.



'thousands of native labourers, men, women and half-grown people were employed daily' upon the fortifications, 'so that in less than a month these ant-like swarms managed to throw up earth-works of very considerable dimensions.' It was a wall 'seven feet high and fifteen feet thick all round, which was turfed over to prevent its being washed away by the rains [and] fitted with sally ports and gates; field magazines, embrasures and platforms for the guns made of brick on edge set in concrete by masons'.<sup>1</sup>

As Havelock crossed over to Oudh, Neill was left in charge at Cawnpore. On 27 July, Havelock telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief from his camp at Mangalwar, 'I have left General Neill to hold Cawnpore and organise everything. He will complain of this but I have not another officer to whom I could entrust the duty for an hour.'<sup>2</sup> Neill was anxious to be in the front and was sorry that he could not participate in the fighting. He commented in his Journal a few days later, 'there is a farce in two Generals being with a handful of men and one of them allowed to do nothing.'<sup>3</sup> But he also realized that 'private feeling should be sacrificed at a time like this'. He informed the Commander-in-Chief on 25 July, 'I assumed command here yesterday on General Havelock crossing over. I have at once set about re-establishing police and our authority in bazaar and city.'<sup>4</sup> Shepherd's *Narrative* describes Neill setting himself 'most energetically to establish order and authority. Plundering by British troops was stopped. Police and intelligence departments sprang up in no time' and a corps for sweepers was organized. An order was issued calling upon everybody to return looted English property before a particular date. Shepherd said that the people were too frightened to come out openly with the loot, but they lost no time in throwing away what they had secured. They threw it in the river or in the canal or in the streets at night, and the 'compounds of bungalows, ditches and gardens were all strewn over' with china, glass and crockery, ladies work-boxes and dresses, toilet articles and books.<sup>5</sup>

Captain Bruce was appointed Superintendent of Police. A

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 183-9.

<sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 183-4.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 156.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 154-5.

man named Aiturya was appointed to the post of the *thanadar* of Bithur. He is described as an impressive figure in a suitable dress and shoes, a silver badge and a belt. He even 'procured a large horse to ride'. Shepherd was, however, unhappy about the appointment. His 'real character was not known' at the time, but later on it was discovered that he was 'one of the principal butchers or executioners employed by the Nana'. Complaints were heard about his administration, and another police officer named Parsunarayan was sent to Bithur to put things right. He was hardly a better choice. In the midst of a dancing party he was attacked by a group of Nana Sahib's horsemen and cut to pieces while trying to escape. Aiturya succeeded in escaping to Cawnpore, but his end was also near. He was found to have secreted jewels and European articles of wear in his house, and was hanged by order of Neill.<sup>1</sup>

Neill's letter describing the cleaning of the Bibighar has been quoted by Kaye. 'I wish to show the Natives of India that the punishment inflicted by us for such deeds will be the heaviest, the most revolting to their feelings and what they must ever remember. I issued the following order. . . . The well . . . will be filled up, and neatly and decently covered over to form their grave. . . . The house in which they were butchered, and which is stained with their blood will not be washed or cleaned by their countrymen [but by] such of the miscreants as may hereafter be apprehended, who took an active part in the Mutiny, to be selected according to their rank, caste and degree of guilt. Each miscreant after sentence of death is pronounced upon him will be taken down to the house in question under a guard and will be forced into cleaning up a small portion of the blood-stains; the task will be made as revolting to his feelings as possible, and the Provost Marshal will use the lash in forcing anyone objecting to complete his task. After properly cleaning up his portion, the culprit is to be immediately hanged, and for this purpose a gallows will be erected close at hand.' One of the persons was 'a Subahdar of the 6th Native Infantry, a fat brute, a very high Brahmin'. The sweeper's brush was put into his hands by a sweeper; and he was ordered to clean

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.* pp. 183-4; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 155.



about half a square foot. He was made to work under the lash and 'was then hung, and his remains buried in the public road'. A Mohammedan officer of the Civil Court, one of the leading men, was made to lick part of the blood with his tongue. 'No doubt this is strange law,' Neill wrote, 'but it suits the occasion well and I hope I shall not be interfered with until the room is thoroughly cleansed this way.'<sup>1</sup>

Neill also referred to one of these incidents in his diary on 27 July. 'Subadar of I.N.I. hanged and buried, being a Brahmin, in road, made him clean up part of the blood of our poor women and children. He is the first hanged by me, all the Brahmins will be buried, all the Mahommedans burned.'<sup>2</sup> By the middle of August it was found that order was 'gradually emerging out of chaos'.<sup>3</sup>

On the other side of the river, however, things were not going on well for Havelock. Nana Sahib's men sometimes joined with Oudh troops against Havelock, but Nana himself was not very much in evidence. North wrote, 'the entire population of Oudh is against us,'<sup>4</sup> and Havelock had to encounter strong opposition as he attempted to proceed to Lucknow. He began to realize gradually that the number of his troops, his ammunition and stores fell far short of what was necessary. The march was rendered difficult by the monsoon rain. North's Journal of 19 July mentions 'heavy and frequent rain turning the ploughed ground beneath one's feet' into 'a regular swamp', and describes the 'great, unsightly, bloated-looking creatures', frogs. Dysentery and cholera continued to increase,<sup>5</sup> and after ten days Havelock found that unless he was able to check the spread of disease and secure reinforcements, he would have to abandon the hope of relieving Lucknow. On 29 July he defeated an assembly of sepoys near the town of Unao and followed up this victory by another on the same day at Bashiratganj, 'a walled town with wet ditches,' about eight miles away. But there was hardly any likelihood of getting reinforcements. The troops at Dinapore had mutinied and he could not expect to receive any help within a couple of months.

<sup>1</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23); Kaye and Malleon, op. cit. ii. 299-300.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. <sup>3</sup> North, op. cit. p. 124. <sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 94. <sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 87-88.



Havelock therefore decided to fall back, and with Nana Sahib threatening his rear, arrived at Mangalwar. On the 31st he informed the Commander-in-Chief: 'My force is reduced by sickness and repeated combats to 1,364 rank and file with two ill-equipped guns. I could not therefore move on against Lucknow with any prospect of success, especially as I had no means of crossing the Sye or the Canal. I have therefore shortened my communication with Cawnpore, by falling back two short marches. . . . If I am speedily reinforced by 1,000 more British soldiers and Major Olphent's battery complete, I might resume my march towards Lucknow or keep fast my foot in Oudh or I might re-cross and hold the head of the Grand Trunk Road at Cawnpore.'<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Tytler also telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief on the same day his full agreement with Havelock's decision. 'Busheratgunge is a strong place . . . it is in rear of an extensive jheel, traversed by a narrow raised road and bridge; 150 men might hold it against us and cut off our retreat.' The river in the rear also presented a problem. He did not agree with Neill that the guns at Cawnpore commanded the opposite bank — 'its breadth is at the lowest estimate, three quarters of a mile — I make it more; the range of a 24-pounder is 1,400 yards; his shot would do more harm to us than the enemy.'<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances there was little possibility of relieving Lucknow immediately. 'If we failed,' Tytler said, '(and I saw no chance of success) Lucknow was inevitably doomed and Government in a worse position than ever, while if we waited for reinforcement we might still be in time to save it.'<sup>3</sup>

Neill informed the Commander-in-Chief on 1 August that he would send over to Havelock 'Olphent's half battery and the detachment of 84th escorting'. On the 4th Havelock was joined by the half of Major Olphent's battery under Lieutenant Smithett.<sup>4</sup> The Commander-in-Chief was, however, surprised at Havelock's decision to withdraw his troops. He wrote to Neill on 5 August, 'I have been astonished by a telegram from Havelock intimating

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 162, 166, 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168, 171.

that his force being reduced by sickness and repeated combats, he could not move on against Lucknow with any prospect of success, and that he had therefore fallen back within 6 miles of Cawnpore; but that if reinforced by 1,000 Europeans and Olphent's battery he may yet obtain good result. All this puzzles me inexpressibly.' Neill did not attempt to hide his disappointment and anger in his letter to Havelock. He considered it regrettable that he had fallen back. 'The effect on our prestige is very bad indeed. . . . In fact the belief among all is, that you have been defeated and forced back. . . . The effect of your retrograde movement will be injurious to our cause everywhere. . . . You talk of advancing as soon as reinforcements reach you. You require a battery and a thousand European infantry. . . . [The guns] will detain you five or six days. As for infantry, they are not to be had, and if you wait for them Lucknow will follow the fate of Cawnpore.' This brought out an angry reply from Havelock. 'I do not want and will not receive' any reply or advice from 'an officer under my command'. He made it clear to Neill that 'consideration of the obstruction . . . to the public service' alone prevented him from placing Neill under arrest. 'You now stand warned. Attempt no further discussion.'

On 5 August Havelock fought an action at Bashiratganj and scattered a group of sepoys who had re-occupied the town. Next day he informed the Commander-in-Chief that his staff officers were unanimous that an advance to the walls of Lucknow involved 'the loss of the force', in which opinion he concurred.<sup>1</sup> On the 11th, preparations were completed for crossing over to Cawnpore. But he had to fight yet another action. A sepoy army about 4,000 strong had proceeded towards Bashiratganj and entrenched at a village named Burhia-ka-chauki. Their guns were well-served and the earthwork gave them good protection. But the Highlanders made a dash at the guns and captured them and used them against the infantry, which retreated in haste. After the action Havelock moved again to Mangalwar. He wrote, 'this action has inspired much terror amongst the enemy and I trust will prevent his effectually opposing our embarkation at Cawnpore

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 172.



[sic].<sup>1</sup> Some of Havelock's baggage and spare ammunition had already been sent across the river. On the 13th, at about eight o'clock in the morning, the embarkation began. There was no attempt to disturb the crossing, and by half past one the whole force, except the rear guard, had crossed over to Cawnpore. By five o'clock the operation was completed and the bridge was broken up.<sup>2</sup>

Sherer observed that Neill was 'elevated . . . by the general opinion of him' and would have gone on to Lucknow 'had he been in command; and however imprudent it might have been, perhaps he might have succeeded. . . . But still, judging by what did happen when Outram went, perhaps if Neill had got into Lucknow he would not have been able to get out'.<sup>3</sup> Neill, however, considered that once Havelock had fallen back it would be wiser for him to return to Cawnpore. He wrote in his diary on 10 August, 'General Havelock ought no longer to remain in action where he is, he ought to recross; he has missed his opportunity by falling back the first time; his men have lost confidence and are dispirited with cholera and bad cover.'<sup>4</sup> He also wrote to the Commissioner at Benares on the 14th that Havelock's men were 'much worn out by fatigue and exposure' and 'much too weak to attempt any advance on Lucknow, which is not to be thought of until reinforcements arrive'.<sup>5</sup> On the 15th Havelock telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief about the 'fearful inroads' cholera was making in his force. Of the total British strength, 1,415 in number, there were 335 sick or wounded.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after his defeat at the battle of Cawnpore, Nana Sahib crossed over to Oudh. It is difficult to indicate with accuracy the route of his movement. For three weeks, however, his troops were reported to be causing obstruction to Havelock's column. On 28 July Havelock informed the Commander-in-Chief that Nana Sahib was at Fatehpur Chaurasi with 3,000 men and several guns, 'with the avowed intention of cutting in upon our rear when

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 177; Marshman, *op. cit.* pp. 351-2.

<sup>2</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* pp. 352-3; Crommelin, *op. cit.* pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>5</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 180.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



we advance towards Lucknow.<sup>1</sup> Next day Neill reported that Nana Sahib was 'about twenty miles off the Oudh side' and threatened to pass near Bithur.<sup>2</sup> On the same day Havelock fought the battle of Unao, and during the action Nana Sahib's troops threatened his left flank. As he fell back to Mangalwar after the battle, they followed him and threatened his retreat.<sup>3</sup>

Before Havelock had crossed over to Cawnpore on 13 August, Nana Sahib's men were assembling at Bithur. Neill's diary on 30 July records 'much uneasiness in the city', the people expecting an attack. Neill learnt that there was a 'regiment of mutineers . . . about twelve miles off; find out if it is the 42nd, they were intending to come here but had heard of our being here; they were either entrenching themselves or pointing towards Bithoor'.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes under cover of darkness groups of cavalry came near Cawnpore. More than once Sherer heard 'the clatter of troops as of a body of horse on the road'. At night constant firing of matchlocks from the villages 'produced a general effect of disquiet'.<sup>5</sup>

Neill had planned destroying the boats used by the sepoys to prevent their escape to Oudh. On 6 August he sent the steamer with some Madras Fusiliers and Sikhs on board and several guns 'to look up Bithoor'. Men of the 42nd Native Infantry from Saugor who had assembled there were 'driven out and punished'.<sup>6</sup> This, however, did not put an end to the threat to Cawnpore, and Neill had to ask for help from Havelock, who was still in Oudh. Havelock could ill afford to spare a detachment and was afraid that he would be attacked as soon as it was learnt that he had been weakened. But he promised to help Neill with 300 men and three guns. They were to cross the river during the night and strike the enemy early in the morning, returning to the Oudh bank immediately.<sup>7</sup> For a few days, however, it seemed that the danger was over. But on 11 August Neill learnt that 4,000 men with five guns were assembled at Bithur and sent a frantic message to Havelock, 'I cannot stand this; they will enter the town and our communications are gone; if I am not supported I can only hold

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 161-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).

<sup>5</sup> Maude and Sherer, *op. cit.* i. 235.

<sup>6</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 350.

out here; can do nothing beyond our entrenchments.'<sup>1</sup> His telegram to the Commander-in-Chief on the 18th after the danger was over, was in a more optimistic vein, 'about 4,000 enemy with five guns had been at Bithoor and Sheorajpore for some days, threatening this, but I could have kept them out.'<sup>2</sup>

The assembly of a large number of troops near Cawnpore produced a good deal of excitement in the neighbouring cities. The Commissioner at Benares telegraphed to the Governor-General on the 17th, 'I hear . . . that the rebels are at Bithoor with eight guns and will be attacked soon.'<sup>3</sup> He did not know that the action had been fought on the previous day.

Havelock had informed the Governor-General of his intention of marching against Bithur on the 16th. He had a discussion with Neill, who advised him that 'the people about Bithoor must be attended to and destroyed'. Neill's plan was to send troops in a steamer to Bithur, leaving Cawnpore early in the morning, while a column in bullock van was to move out to Sheorajpur at dusk. The latter measure was to cut off the retreat and settle a small force there. Havelock, however, did not adopt his plan. Neill sounded disappointed and sulky when he wrote in his diary on the 15th, 'General Havelock after a great deal of parade determines to move out tomorrow against Bithoor in one column, and will not employ the steamer. I only fear he will fatigue his men and will not strike the blow. We shall see, however.'<sup>4</sup>

It had been decided to start the march at 4 o'clock in the morning, but it was only half an hour before sunrise that Havelock was able to make a move. The men were housed in various localities in the city and some time was lost in assembling them. Havelock had with him 1,400 men and 14 guns. The road lay through a plantation of castor oil and sugarcane, and there was a 'fresh breeze blowing'. It was pleasant and cool in the morning. But as the sun came out it proved to be one of the hottest days, and Havelock's tired troops took eight hours to cover the distance. About half way from Bithur there was a bridge which 'afforded every facility for a good defence', but Havelock found it unforti-

<sup>1</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.* p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 726 (23).



fied. As they entered the town they had to cross a narrow stream, spanned in those days, as now, by a narrow bridge. This was protected by infantry stationed before it and by an entrenchment. Marshman considered that the defenders had failed to utilize fully the advantage of their position, and it was a mistake to place their men in front of the bridge, which was the 'only means of retreat, in their right rear'. Havelock, however, had other views. He described it as one of the strongest positions he had ever seen.<sup>1</sup>

On the approach of the British troops hundreds of horsemen appeared on the left. Some galloped down the road 'as if they were to indulge in a charge', but stopped before they came in contact with the Fusiliers. Havelock then advanced his men. The Madras Fusiliers were fired on by some sepoy from the cover of a village and found themselves in an awkward position. Nana Sahib's troops, however, were dislodged after a hand to hand fight. They fell back behind the earth wall and kept up an incessant fire on the British line. 'They fought obstinately,' Havelock wrote in his despatch, 'otherwise they could not for a whole hour have held their own, even with much advantages of ground, against my powerful artillery fire; the stream prevented my turning there, and my troops were received in assaulting the position, by a heavy rifle and musketry fire. . . .'<sup>2</sup> But a bayonet charge finally threw them back. They lost 250 men, dead or wounded. It was not possible to chase the retreating sepoys. Havelock did not have cavalry and his men were too tired to pursue the broken army.

Havelock's troops returned to Cawnpore next day in the afternoon. He had captured two guns and demolished a part of the town. He wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on the 19th, 'I . . . destroyed everything there.' He lost 49 men in action. Neill also wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on the 18th that Havelock lost in his three operations 324 men 'besides by enemy, from sunstroke, cholera and effect of exposure and fatigue'.<sup>3</sup> The battle

<sup>1</sup> Volunteer, op. cit. pp. 32-33; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 181; Marshman, op. cit. pp. 354-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 25 Sept. 1857 (239) (240); Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 185, 188.



✓ of Bithur on 16 August demolished a base of operation for Nana Sahib, but it did not produce any permanent result.

Soon Havelock received disturbing news. A part of Sindhia's army had risen at Gwalior and, accepting Tatyá Tope as leader, had moved to Kalpi. It was feared that they would next proceed to Cawnpore. Havelock was evidently worried when he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on 19 August: 'There is a combination against us which will require our best exertions to baffle. The troops from Oudh have come down to left bank and will threaten Cawnpore, meanwhile boats are collecting at Futtehpore to enable a position of their troops to cross there and interrupt the communication with Allahabad; whilst the Gwalior contingent (strong in artillery and provided with a siege train) passes at Culpee and attacks my diminished force. I will do my best against them but the risk is so great . . . my nine hundred soldiers may be opposed to five thousand organised troops. The loss of a battle will ruin everything in this part of India. My force which lost men in action and has been assailed in most awful way by cholera is reduced to 700 in the field; exclusive of detachments which guard the entrenchments here, and keep open communication with Allahabad. I am threatened by a force of 5000 men from Gwalior with some twenty or thirty guns. I am ready to fight anything but the above are great odds . . . I solicit your Excellency to send me reinforcement.'<sup>1</sup>

The anticipated attack on Cawnpore did not take place for several months. But the city was not free from panic. On 24 August Neill reported, 'rebels have advanced their 18-pounder guns to within 150 yards from our position; the garrison has fired for twenty days on half rations.'<sup>2</sup> He wrote again in the beginning of October, 'All quiet at Cawnpore, only we have no military occupation of the country to the west beyond Bithoor, which is held by Nana's civil officer.'<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile important changes had taken place. In August Sir Colin Campbell was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army in the place of Sir Patrick Grant. The Dinapur and

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 25 Sept. 1857 (239); Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 188.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 210-11.

Cawnpore Divisions were combined in one and placed under Sir James Outram. This was considered to be Havelock's supersession by Outram and was the subject of criticism. 'A great deal of tawdry rhetoric', Forrest observed, 'has been poured forth on the subject,' but 'there was no supersession', for Havelock never had the command of the Cawnpore Division. 'His rank did not entitle him to command a Division.'<sup>1</sup> Outram arrived at Cawnpore on 15 September, and next day he announced that he would 'cheerfully waive his rank' and 'accompany the force to Lucknow, as Chief-Commissioner of Oudh, tendering his military service to General Havelock as a volunteer'.<sup>2</sup> The relieving force under Havelock, now more than 3,000 strong with Outram and Neill, crossed the Ganges on 19 September and on the 25th fought its way through the streets of Lucknow and reached the Residency. There was a heavy loss of life. Neill was among the killed.

Cawnpore was generally quiet and undisturbed, only 'a few petty Zemindars and plundering parties' troubled the neighbourhood.<sup>3</sup> Arrangements were made for sending reinforcements to Lucknow to bring back the sick and the wounded. Nana Sahib was reported to be at Fatehpur Chaurasi preparing to cross the river and join with the Gwalior contingent.<sup>4</sup> Some excitement was caused by the arrival of groups of sepoy from Delhi with guns, elephants and treasures. They were concentrating near Bithur, and Nana Sahib was reported to be inducing them to join him. One group was expected to reach Sheorajpur on 18 October and Colonel Wilson moved out with 600 Infantry and six guns. In a telegram to the Chief of Staff he hoped 'to thwart and if possible to seize on the murderous rebel Nana'. Wilson succeeded in driving away the sepoy and they were scattered 'with hardly more than a nominal resistance'.<sup>5</sup>

Nana Sahib was not with them. For some time he was contemplating the possibility of escaping to Chandernagore, a French possession in Bengal, and securing the help of Emperor Napoleon III. It was impossible to break through the chain of British troops, but two of his agents arrived at Chandernagore in the autumn of

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857-8, xii. pt. 3. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



1857 and tried to establish contact with one M. Moras and through him communicate with Napoleon III. In a letter to the English in April 1859, by which time he was in Nepal, Nana Sahib referred to this when he wrote; 'I sent a letter to Chundernagger but it did not reach, this has disappointed me or you would have seen what I could do. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib's projected alliance with the French was at the time unknown to the Government of India, but several years later Lord Canning's private secretary, L. B. Bowring, heard about it from Napoleon III himself. In 1874, when there was a good deal of excitement at the arrest of a person at Gwalior believed to be Nana Sahib, Bowring wrote to *The Times* that the Emperor Napoleon had related to him in 1871 'a curious circumstance', — namely that 'Nana had applied to him for aid against the English after the Mutiny broke out, alleging that we had invaded all the most cherished customs of the Hindoos'. No reply was sent, and he believed 'Nana's letter was destroyed in the conflagration of the Tuileries'.<sup>2</sup>

The letter which Bowring refers to was signed by two persons, Durgaprasad and Bhagwandas, who stated that they were in the service of the great Nana Sahib. The Governor of the French settlements in India at Pondicherry, forwarding the communication to the Minister for Naval Affairs, observed that he was unable to substantiate this statement. This may be one of the reasons why the letter remained unanswered. But Bowring's belief that it had been destroyed in the palace fire was not correct. In the Bibliothèque Nationale there is a bundle of letters written by Nana Sahib's agents between August and October 1857, one of which is addressed to the Emperor Napoleon III, two to Moras and two to the Governor of Chandernagore. One addressed to Moras dwelt on the 'iniquities of the British Government' and hoped that the French Emperor would 'send out a deputy and satisfy himself of the British misrule' and address himself to the princes and people of India on the dangers with which they were menaced. The letter to Napoleon III sought his 'protection over the people

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (66). The letter actually reached Napoleon III.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1874.



of Hindustan and above all to Nana Sahib', for the 'ancestors of Nana Sahib were in close ties with France'. The Emperor was requested to send an emissary who would see 'into what dire conditions the great Nana Sahib has fallen'. Some of the letters expressed concern at the rumour that the French Government had decided to abandon Chandernagore to the Government of India.

The Governor of the French settlements in India, transmitting the documents to France, observed on 31 March 1858 that these confirmed his information that the insurgents had nearly all escaped to Lucknow and that they were 'employing a strategy of wearing out the English army by compelling them to undertake long marches that must result in the annihilation of all the European forces'.<sup>1</sup>

A danger to Cawnpore in the winter of 1857-58 was the concentration of Gwalior troops at Kalpi forty miles away. Outram had suggested attacking them before the relief army marched to Lucknow. 'It is obviously to the advantage of the state', he said, 'that the Gwalior rebels should be first effectively destroyed, that our relief should be a secondary consideration.' Campbell was of a different opinion. He was afraid that the garrison at Lucknow might fall for want of food, but he was also uneasy that his communications were being threatened by the swelling number of Gwalior troops.<sup>2</sup> He chose what he considered the lesser evil and proceeded to Lucknow on 9 November, leaving General Windham to hold Cawnpore. In a memorandum dated 6 November Campbell gave Windham detailed instructions in case of an emergency. He summarized these in a letter to the Duke of Cambridge on the 8th: 'I have placed General Windham in command at Cawnpore, where he is engaged in adding to the defences which I found very miserable and defective on my arrival. He is ordered in case of an advance on Cawnpore to show the best front he can, but not to move out to attack, unless he is compelled by the threat of bombardment. His garrison will consist of 500 British soldiers, 550 Madras Infantry and gunners, and if he is seriously threatened — of which, of course, I shall have instruction

<sup>1</sup> The correspondence is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and copies of the letters may be seen in the National Archives, New Delhi.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 277-8.

— he will be further strengthened by some of the detachments which will be in the course of arrival during the next week.<sup>1</sup> On the 10th, the day after he left Cawnpore, Campbell informed Outram that his communications were threatened from Kalpi, where the Gwalior contingent with forty guns were 'swelled by remnants of many regiments under Koer Singh to about ten thousand men'.<sup>2</sup> Within a week two detachments of the Gwalior contingent arrived within fifteen miles of Cawnpore.

Windham asked for the Commander-in-Chief's permission to advance. He also informed the Governor-General on 21 November that the Gwalior force had begun crossing the Jumna. This was followed by another message on the 23rd that half of the Gwalior contingent had crossed. On the 25th he telegraphed to the Governor-General: 'Thousand men, twelve guns from Gwalior contingent are at Secunder, about six miles from my camp on the canal, which is six miles from Cawnpore. I should think it quite possible I may have a fight tomorrow or next day.'<sup>3</sup> Windham received no instructions from Campbell and he decided to act on his own. He marched six miles off the Kalpi road and on the 26th met Tatya Tope with a detachment near the Pandu Nadi and defeated him and captured three guns. He did not consider himself strong enough to proceed further and so fell back on Cawnpore, pursued by his enemy, who almost entered the city but stopped near the Ganges canal. Windham occupied a new position at some brick kilns near Kalpi road. It had certain advantages. He was able to 'cover the city and save it from pillage, and also to guard against any injury to the bridge over the Ganges'. Windham now received a letter from Lucknow which said that all was well with the army, and that they were coming back at once to Cawnpore.<sup>4</sup>

The attack, however, came before the Commander-in-Chief returned. On the morning of the 27th Tatya Tope began a heavy cannonade. Windham held his position for five hours, when he found that the Gwalior contingent 'had fully penetrated the town'

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 410-11; Shadwell, *Life of Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde*, i. 451-2.

<sup>2</sup> Shadwell, *op. cit.* p. 455.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 337-8. <sup>4</sup> Adye, *The Defence of Cawnpore*, pp. 20-21.



and was attacking the entrenchment. He then ordered the whole force to fall back into the entrenchment with stores and guns. Early in the day he ordered baggage and the camp equipage to be taken for safety to an island in the Ganges. But because of a misjudgment of the situation, the order was rescinded. The camp followers had fled and it was now impossible to remove the stores. Windham's troops were seized with panic and fell back into the city 'without any semblance of order'.<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Moore, a chaplain with the army, wrote to his brother at Serampore in Bengal of 'the jolly good licking we have received from our friends the Gwalior'. They 'came down in fine style and commenced the favourite game of long bowls which I regret to say General Windham answered with small guns. . . . We tried the bowling game until our new Regiment got into a regular funk. An order was now given to spike guns and return, no enemy being up to then in sight. Cavalry, however, charging the gunners advanced by the naval brigade who retreated to such good purpose that no 3 men were to be found together when our Infantry advanced to retaliate the guns. The 88th who had charged the day before refused to advance (it is said) . . . it was a case of save who can. The troops bolted in through the city any way they could and our whole camp fell back into the hands of the enemy, and only if they had followed it up they could have taken the entrenchment, I believe, for we had hardly a man in the place fit for duty. . . .

'For the entrenchment the scenes of confusion baffle description. In the outside hospital, poor fellows whose legs were only amputated the night before sprang out of bed in agony of fear and it was not until 10 o'clock that anything like order was restored. In the meantime the troops broke open every place for drinks; private stores and baggage were looted, even the hospital comforts were broken open and carried off. The commissariat stores were robbed and in fact the whole place was a scene of the direst confusion and drunkenness. If the enemy had come on that night, I fancy that few men were sober enough to fight. The only exception I know of was the 64th. . . .'<sup>2</sup> Tatya Tope held the town at his mercy.

<sup>1</sup> Adye, op. cit. pp. 35-43; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 376-82.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum, Addl. Mss. 37151.



The fighting on the next day, the 28th, Windham described as 'very severe'.<sup>1</sup> The Gwalior troops proceeded 'along Nawabgunge and advanced steadily past the church until their guns began to play on the entrenchment'.<sup>2</sup> Windham had issued his instructions on the previous night. Colonel Walpole was to defend 'the advanced portion of the town on the left side of the canal', Brigadier Wilson was to hold the entrenchment and establish a picket at the Baptist chapel, Brigadier Carthew was to hold the Bithur road in advance of the chapel, while Colonel Maxwell and Windham were to 'defend the portion of the town nearest the Ganges on the left of the canal, and support Colonel Walpole if required'.<sup>3</sup> After Carthew had moved out in the morning, he received fresh instructions recalling him to the bridge, the position he had occupied on the previous day. After midday he was again ordered to advance and was told that Wilson would also make a parallel advance on his right. Carthew moved out against an overwhelming number of troops and silenced a sepoy battery. But Wilson and other officers who were advancing were killed, and Carthew's right was seriously threatened. He then fell back to the bridge, his former position, but as he was isolated and no reinforcement reached him, he was forced to retreat to the entrenchment. Walpole was more fortunate than his colleague. He received regular supplies from the base and was able to resist the attack.

This was the first occasion when Windham held an independent command. Malleeson praised him for not adopting 'a purely defensive system', which 'should have ensured the destruction of his force and the occupation' of Cawnpore by Gwalior troops.<sup>4</sup> But Windham's conduct has been the subject of much comment. It has been said to be a matter of regret that he has been 'criticised both by competent and incompetent writers'.<sup>5</sup> It is no use raking up what have been described as 'ashes of an old controversy'. But the fact remains that some of Windham's actions are difficult to understand. On the evening of the 28th his position was no

<sup>1</sup> A dye, *op. cit.* p. 39; Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 379.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum, Addl. Mss. 37151.

<sup>4</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* ii. 180.

<sup>3</sup> A dye, *op. cit.* p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Windham, *Crimean Diary*, p. 219.

better than on the previous day. But for the timely arrival of the Commander-in-Chief it is extremely doubtful whether he would have been able to preserve communication with the Oudh bank.

Sir Colin Campbell had been worried about Cawnpore. After the 19th he had no news from Windham. He left Lucknow on 27 November with 4,000 men. Reaching Bani bridge in the evening he heard sounds of firing. Next day, in the afternoon, he 'received two or three notes in succession' telling him that Cawnpore had been attacked and Windham had been compelled to fall back on the entrenchment and that reinforcement was necessary.<sup>1</sup> Leaving his army on the Oudh bank, Campbell crossed the Ganges with only his personal staff accompanying him, and reached the entrenchment. Next morning his army began crossing the river. Tatyá Tope's attempt to destroy the bridge was foiled by the naval brigade.

On 3 December women and children and the sick and the wounded were removed to Allahabad, and Campbell was free to make an attack on the Gwalior contingent. After the victory over Windham, Tatyá's position was particularly strong. His troops surrounded the city of Cawnpore in a semi-circle, and the 'whole station and city within 200 yards of the field works' was in their possession. Their left occupied the old cantonment near the Ganges, their centre was posted near the heart of the city, and the right on the places to the south. Campbell's plan was to attack Tatyá Tope's right. He wrote to the Governor-General, 'it appeared to me if his right were vigorously attacked that it would be driven from his position without assistance coming from other parts of his line, the wall of the town which gave cover to our attacking columns on our right being an effective obstacle to the movement of any portion of his troops from his left to right.'<sup>2</sup> On the 6th, at about nine o'clock in the morning, Windham opened a heavy bombardment to induce a belief that the attack was developing from his position. Two hours later, the cannonade became slack and the attack commenced. Tatyá's troops were pushed back on all points, and early in the afternoon his camp was reached

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Eight Months' Campaign against the Bengal Sepoy Army*, pp. 163-4.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *State Papers*, ii. 388.



and his men fled in disorder. Sir Colin and Hope Grant pursued them for fourteen miles and captured some guns. General Mansfield chased the broken bands of Gwalior troops on Bithur road.

Two days later, a detachment was sent in pursuit of the fugitives. It was expected that some of them would assemble at Bithur, and Hope Grant was directed to proceed there. He was to 'use his own discretion and act according to circumstances'. Roberts, who accompanied him, learnt on the way that 'Nana had slept at the place the night before', but hearing news of the advancing British troops, 'decamped with all his guns and most of his followers.'<sup>1</sup> As Hope Grant pursued them they 'retreated as fast as possible along the river-bank'. He captured 15 guns, but the marshy state of the ground rendered further pursuit impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Hope Grant next proceeded to Bithur to 'perform the work of destruction'. Roberts observed that Nana Sahib's palace was in good order and 'there was little evidence that it had been visited by an avenging force'.<sup>3</sup> The British troops lost no time in blowing up his temple and burning his palace. The furniture and the fittings of the palace 'were ransacked, broken up and burnt by the soldiers'.<sup>4</sup> Gough was disappointed that Nana Sahib 'got warning of our approach and fled with all his treasure'. It was not, however, possible to take away everything. A quantity of his treasure was reported to have been 'concealed in a deep well in which was forty-two feet of water'. After the water was drained out and a heavy log was removed two pewter pots were found. Further search yielded gold and silver articles of 'extreme antiquity . . . some curious gurrhas or pots, lamps which seemed of Jewish manufacture and spoons of a barbaric weight. All were of the purest metal and all bore the appearances of antique magnificence'.<sup>5</sup> Mackay's letter of 28 December reads, 'Quantities of Nana's gold and silver plates have been got up out of the well at Bithur since Christmas morning. The massive golden bowl

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>2</sup> Hope Grant, *Incidents in the Sepoy War*, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, p. 210.

<sup>4</sup> Hope Grant, *op. cit.* p. 213; Gough, *Old Memories*, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Hope Grant, *op. cit.* pp. 213-4.



weighs forty pounds. It is believed that 12 lakhs of rupees are buried in the same well or one of the other two near it or somewhere there about.<sup>1</sup> There is another entry on 3 January, '... the last day the Highland Brigade was encamped at Bithoor they got so much gold and silver in one of the Nana's wells that one man could scarcely carry the load. They had previously obtained from the same well 75½ lbs. of gold and 252 lbs. of silver ... Baji Rao's jewels are believed to be concealed somewhere at Bithoor.'<sup>2</sup>

Where was Nana Sahib when Tatya Tope attacked Windham's entrenchment in November? It was rumoured that the Gwalior troops were joined by a body of sepoys commanded by the Nana in person. But Captain Bruce of the Intelligence Department learnt that Nana Sahib was not with the Gwalior contingent, but 'with some friend at a distance' who 'urged the Nana to keep away from Cawnpore'.<sup>3</sup> Mackay suspected that 'the host referred to probably intends to possess himself of the £10,000 offered by the Government for the apprehension' of Nana.<sup>4</sup> After the defeat of the Gwalior contingent, Nana Sahib was reported to be near Lucknow. Bala Sahib and Rao Sahib were also stated to have fled across the river. According to the statement made by Tatya Tope, Nana Sahib next proceeded to Kalpi and took charge of the Oudh force stationed there.<sup>5</sup> The recapture of Delhi and Lucknow turned the tide in favour of the British, and Tatya Tope's failure to seize Cawnpore ended all hopes of securing power on Nana Sahib's behalf. Tatya Tope soon joined the Rani of Jhansi. Nana Sahib was never able to recover his position and soon became a fugitive, trying to escape Hope Grant's column.

The whereabouts of Nana Sahib between January and March 1858 were uncertain. Earlier intelligence of his movements was sometimes contradicted by later reports. Sindhia's minister

<sup>1</sup> Mackay, *From London to Lucknow*, ii. 341.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 355; Forbes-Mitchell, *Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny*, pp. 151-2. Forbes-Mitchell mentions among articles recovered from the well a 'silver howdah which had been the state howdah of the ex-Peshwa'.

<sup>3</sup> Hope Grant, *op. cit.* p. 242; Forbes-Mitchell, *op. cit.* p. 139. Forbes-Mitchell says the Gwalior contingent was 'under command of Nana in person'.

<sup>4</sup> Mackay, *op. cit.* ii. 293.

<sup>5</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 29 Jan. 1858 (73); Kaye and Mallsen, *op. cit.* v. 306.

Dinkar Rao learnt that in the early part of the year Nana's family and some troops were seen at a fort near the tank of Duldul, about forty miles from Lucknow. With the Nana were 'two *pultans* and 10,000 Zemindars and others. . . . And from Lucknow he gets money for his expenditure'.<sup>1</sup> Tatyá Tope at Kalpi had Nana's seal with him and addressed letters in his name. Several of them addressed to various persons urging them to 'destroy the Kaffers (English) and all other enemies' were seized.<sup>2</sup> A more interesting find was a proclamation issued by 'Dhondo Punt Nana Peshwa, Pant Pradhan by order of the Emperor of Delhi addressed to various office holders and the whole of the population of the Deccan and the Carnatic'. It said: ' . . . Tyranny, wickedness and injustice having been much practised by the Kaffer English on the faithful and sin-fearing, I have been commissioned by God to punish the Kaffers by annihilating them and to re-establish the Hindoo and Mahomedan Kingdoms as formerly and to protect our country, and I have conquered the country north of the Nurbuda river.

' . . . At the present time the English having disagreements among themselves about their religion are quarrelling and fighting and killing each other. The French and the Russians who entertained from a long time a hatred against the English and a design to turn them out of Hindoostan have thought this a proper time to carry it out and with this intention they have been sending armies by sea these three months past. The Chinese also have declared war against these Kaffers and the latter having no armies to send against the Chinese are much alarmed. The Persians, Afgans and Beloochees, moreover, are ready with their arms collected to aid us. In short, this is the golden time to root out completely the English from this country. The Kaffer English in order to discourage the population, fabricate false information of their having retaken Delhi and other places and having defeated us and make it known among the public, but such ought not to be believed. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

The proclamation is without a date, but it is perhaps safe to

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 28 May 1858 (177-9).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. *Kaffer* means, literally, infidels.

<sup>3</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 22 Oct. 1858 (18).

assume that it was written after the occupation of Delhi by the British, when it was found necessary to contradict the prevailing news.

On 10 February a body of about 500 from Oudh crossed the Ganges at Sheobasar, between Bithur and Sheorajpur, passed the Grand Trunk Road and destroyed a police station. There were two palankeens with the party and it was at first supposed that Nana Sahib or his brother was travelling with it. It soon became known that Nana Sahib was still in Oudh and the person accompanying the force was his nephew Rao Sahib.<sup>1</sup> Almost immediately a report was received from Fatehgarh that Nana had crossed the Ganges into the Doab, with the intention of entering Bundelkhand.<sup>2</sup> At the same time another rumour also spread that he had not crossed the river and the earlier report was wrong.<sup>3</sup> Roberts, who was at Unao on 8 February, says, 'Wolf had been cried so often with regard to him that but little notice was taken of the reports' until a sepoy brought information that Nana Sahib 'really was hiding in a small fort about twenty-five miles from our camp'.<sup>4</sup> This was Fatehpur Chaurasi, a small fortified place on the Ganges. Hope Grant received an order from General Mansfield 'to make a *dour* to it'. He left Unao on 15 February (Roberts thinks on the 16th) but he could not get there in less than two days. It was a distance of only 25 miles, but the progress was slow because there was no proper road and the sappers had to construct one over 'interpassing nullahs and watercourses'. On reaching Fatehpur Chaurasi, Hope Grant found that Nana had 'fled precipitately before day break'. About the end of February he was believed to be at Birmar [Birwa?] near the frontier of Rohilkhand, about 50 miles from the Ganges. There was also a rumour that he was at Kalpi with his troops and 16 guns. But this proved to be incorrect.<sup>5</sup>

The month of March brought further reports of Nana Sahib's movements. Early in the month it was reported at Cawnpore that Nana Sahib was proceeding towards the river Gogra. Another

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 26 March 1858 (263).    <sup>2</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 26 Feb. 1858 (201) (268).

<sup>3</sup> For. Sec. Pro. 26 March 1858 (274) (289).

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Hope Grant, *op. cit.* p. 230.



message said that he was attempting to cross the river at Sheoghat with 3,000 men. But if Nana had any intention of crossing the river he must have abandoned it. On 11 March he was at Shahjahanpur on his way to Barielly, and on the 15th was reported to be still at Shahjahanpur, while his men had 'broken into the district'. He reached Barielly about the end of March and met Khan Bahadur Khan. Khan Bahadur, it is said, offered him the command of his army.<sup>1</sup>

In April Nana Sahib crossed the Ganges near Bithur with 500 horse and proceeded towards the Jumna. But threatened by Brigadier Grant's column from the flank and the rear, he retreated towards Rohilkhand. About the end of April he was at Shahjahanpur, but escaped when a party of British troops crossed the Ramganga and arrived there. The town was 'well-nigh deserted and every house in the cantonment, except one, had been destroyed'.<sup>2</sup> Nana Sahib had taken care that the pursuing army would not get any shelter there.

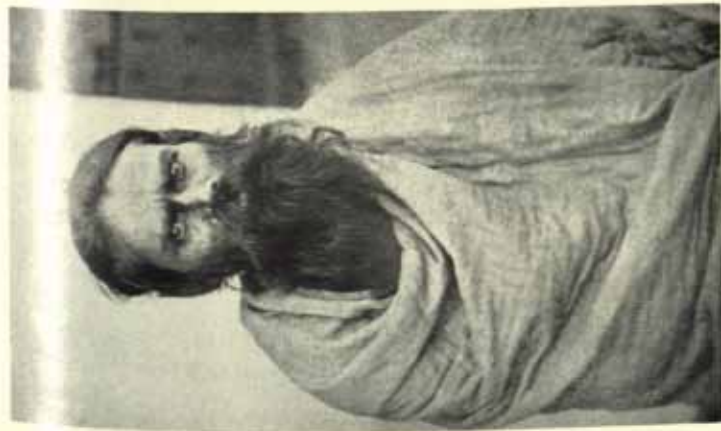
For some time there was no news of Nana Sahib, but when Bareilly was attacked by Sir Colin Campbell he was able to send a force to fight the British. The rising of the army at Gwalior and Sindhia's escape to Agra resulted in a temporary improvement in Nana's position. In June 1858 the Rani of Jhansi led an army to Gwalior, and Nana Sahib was proclaimed the Peshwa. His eminence, however, lasted only for a few days. With the death of the Rani of Jhansi in battle and the arrest of Khan Bahadur Khan, Campbell, now Lord Clyde, wrote that 'two great causes of anxiety' were removed and the surrender of Nana Sahib was only a matter of time.<sup>3</sup> For the next six months Nana was a fugitive keeping out of the reach of the British troops.

In December Nana Sahib and the Begum of Oudh were reported to be in the town of Bahraich. Lord Clyde crossed the Gogra from Fyzabad and entered Bahraich on 17 December. Nana Sahib fled, but the pursuit was maintained, and on the 26th the British troops followed his track to the village of Intha, seventeen miles away, and then to Buridiah, a village with a fort where

<sup>1</sup> Kaye and Malleeson, *op. cit.* iv. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Shadwell, *op. cit.* ii. 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; Shadwell, *op. cit.* ii. 209.



*a.* Prisoner believed to be Nana Sahib, captured at Gwalior. Royal Library, Windsor.  
*b.* Prisoner shaved and dressed in the clothes of a Maratha gentleman. Royal Library, Windsor.





Nana Sahib had stayed for some weeks. Russell, the special correspondent of *The Times*, who accompanied the Commander-in-Chief, was told by a villager that he had seen Nana once, 'a stout man, with pockmarked face, but that when he went to walk in the garden the bystanders were driven away. . . .'<sup>1</sup> On the 27th the troops took up the pursuit again and after midday came in sight of the fort of Mejidia, 'a dun-coloured parapet of mud with three embrasured bastions.' The heavy guns and mortars of the British opened on it, and in the afternoon the fort was evacuated. There was an earlier report that Nana Sahib was living at Churda, about ten miles from Nanpara. But Nana had already fled, and Lord Clyde encamped at Nanpara. It was not long before the news of Nana Sahib's movements began to reach the Commander-in-Chief; he learnt on 30 December that Nana and 'some thousands of sepoy and desperadoes had collected near Bankee',<sup>2</sup> about twenty miles to the north.

It was decided to catch him unawares, and within a couple of hours a night march was arranged. The attempt to keep the destination a secret was not quite successful. Russell says that 'in the camp bazaars it was stated, an hour after Lord Clyde had decided on his movements, that we were going to march that night to Bankee'.<sup>3</sup> But this did not in any way disturb the plan, for Nana Sahib had no information of the approach of the British troops, and a sepoy who was with Nana told Russell that the first intimation of the British advance 'was the sound of the guns opening upon the head of the column'.<sup>4</sup> The British troops covered a distance of twenty miles during the night, and it was still dark when they reached Banki. In the early morning a cavalry picket was seen, but it vanished at the sight of the British column. After about an hour the British troops came near Nana Sahib's army, placed between 'a long deep swamp' in front and 'a dense high wall of a jungle' behind. After brief firing on both sides, Nana Sahib's troops were pushed back in disorder towards the river Rapti. A battery of guns from the other side of the river opened on the pursuers and gave cover to a section of the retreating troops,

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *op. cit.* pp. 447, 457.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 457-60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 461.

which were able to ford the river and assemble on the other side. But others who were not so fortunate were chased by the Hussars and pushed into the water, and the 'river was full of struggling men and horses'. As soon as he got scent of the danger, Nana Sahib loaded eight elephants with treasures and swiftly retreated towards the river, and at the time when his troops were being chased by the British cavalry, he was safely on the other side.<sup>1</sup>

Soon his brother, Bala Rao, was also driven across the border of Oudh by Hope Grant. Grant arrived at Balrampur about the middle of December and learnt that Bala Rao had taken shelter in the old and dilapidated fort of Tulsipur, twelve miles away, and had been joined by Muhammad Hussain, a local leader of Gorakhpur. Directed by Hope Grant, Rawcroft advanced from Hir, in Gorakhpur district, and found Bala Rao's troops drawn up in readiness to receive him. Rawcroft had an easy victory, and Bala Rao with 6,000 men and fifteen guns fled eastward towards Kandakot, 'a half-ruined fort at the confluence of two rivers with a jungle in rear.' Hope Grant attacked them on 4 January. 'All the courage had been driven out of the faint-hearted wretches,' Hope Grant said, 'they would not stand a moment running away like wild fire, and leaving their 15 guns in our possession.'<sup>2</sup>

The escape of Nana Sahib and his brother to Nepal practically closed the last phase of the Mutiny of 1857. The Commander-in-Chief returned to Lucknow about the middle of January, but the army kept watch on the passes to prevent Nana Sahib or his men from crossing the border. Except in April in 1859, when some sepoys re-entered India and created disturbances near Sikrora in Oudh, the country was quiet. Before the end of the year reports began to reach the Government of India from Nepal that both Nana Sahib and his brother were dead.

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *op. cit.* p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> Hope Grant, *op. cit.* pp. 320-3.

## NANA SAHIB IN NEPAL

ABOUT a year before Nana Sahib escaped into Nepal, the Government of India had considered this possibility. During the *Sivaratri* festival, which takes place in February or March, roads were opened for pilgrims and no passports were required.<sup>1</sup> Nana Sahib's followers, however, far exceeded the number anticipated. He was accompanied by his wife Kasibai, his sister Saraswatibai, the widows of Baji Rao, Bala Rao and his family, Azimullah Khan and thousands of sepoys. Begum Hazrat Mahal, Brijas Kudar, and some well-known leaders of the rising in Oudh also entered Nepal with him. It was at first believed that the Begum and her son intended returning to India, and the Government contemplated assigning sufficient maintenance for them and keeping them as State prisoners at Lucknow or any other suitable place. The British Resident in Nepal failed, however, to persuade them to return, and they ultimately proceeded to Katmandu.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Nana Sahib's life never ceased to excite popular imagination. In Europe also he had a large public. In English literature, Maude says, he was one of the 'extraordinary monsters of ferocity and slaughter' but in the hands of the French, he became 'a scented sybarite, who read Balzac, played Chopin on the piano, and lolling on a divan, fanned by exquisite odalisques from Cashmere, had a roasted English child brought in occasionally on a pike for him to examine with his pince-nez'.<sup>3</sup> Jules Verne, in one of his less known novels, imagined Nana Sahib as a wandering fakir who returned to India a few years later and met an old enemy, a British Officer, near Aurangabad.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to say if Nana Sahib ever returned to India, but the last phase of his life was perhaps even more exciting than the French novelist had imagined.

<sup>1</sup> For. Sec. Cons. 29 Jan. 1858 (372). <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 20 Jan. 1860 (136-55).

<sup>3</sup> Maude and Sherer, op. cit. i. 214.

<sup>4</sup> Verne, J., *The Demon of Caumport*.



The idea of writing an account of Nana Sahib's days in Nepal first occurred to Perceval Landon. More than fifty years ago, he published what is probably the first account of Nana Sahib's stay in Nepal.<sup>1</sup> The Mutiny was then within living memory and Landon collected his information from official records as well as from current stories. But he had, as he said, only partial information to help him. Twenty-two years later, he published a fuller account of the last phase of Nana Sahib's life based on the records of the Governments of India and Nepal. Landon believed that he had examined every possible source, and observed with obvious satisfaction, 'more than this will probably never be known.'<sup>2</sup>

The historian, today, will find Landon's statement somewhat exaggerated. For the story of the first few months of Nana Sahib's stay in Nepal, however, one has to depend almost entirely on Landon. For the period from January 1859, when Nana Sahib entered Nepal, till October, when his death was reported, there is little one can add to Landon's account. From the moment Nana and his party crossed the frontier of India, Landon says, 'a curious fog descends upon the story.'<sup>3</sup> Landon, however, was able to piece together the main threads of this story. Nana was received by a military officer on behalf of the Government of Nepal and escorted to a village near Tribeni Ghat, where Jung Bahadur's terms were communicated to him. 'Kasi Bai and the other women were to put themselves under the protection of the Prime Minister; but Jung Bahadur emphatically refused to extend any shelter to Nana Sahib himself.'<sup>4</sup> It was, however, suggested that the Prime Minister would wink at his escape, and provided that Jung Bahadur 'never saw him again, he would not be hunted for'.<sup>5</sup>

Nana Sahib probably felt that his reception by Jung Bahadur was not as warm as he had expected, and may still have had some hopes of coming to a settlement with the British. On 23 April he sent a messenger to Major Richardson with a letter addressed to Queen Victoria, the British Parliament, the Court of Directors of the East India Company, the Governor-General, the Lieutenant-Governor and all Civil and Military officers. He said he

<sup>1</sup> Landon, *Under the Sun*, pp. 272-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 158.

<sup>4</sup> Landon, *Nepal*, i. 157.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Landon, *Under the Sun*, p. 280.

was surprised that the Queen's Proclamation should have pardoned even those who had killed British women and children, yet he who had joined the rebels from helplessness had not been forgiven: 'I have committed no murder. Had General "Humla" (Wheeler) not sent for me from Bithoor my soldiers would not have rebelled . . . I previously urged that so insignificant (*gureeb*) a person as myself could render no material aid to the British. But General "Humla" (Wheeler) would not listen to me . . . when your army mutinied and proceeded to take possession of the Treasury my soldiers joined them. Upon this I reflected that if I went into the intrenchments my soldiers would kill my family and the British would punish me for the rebellion of my soldiers, it was therefore better for me to die. . . . At Cawnpore the soldiers disobeyed my orders and began killing the English women and the ryots. All I could save by any means I did save, and when they left the entrenchment, provided boats in which I sent them down to Allahabad. Your sepoy's attacked them. By means of entreaties I retained my soldiers and saved the lives of 200 English women and children. I have heard that they were killed by your sepoy's and *budmashes* (rogues) at the time that my soldiers fled from Cawnpore and my brother was wounded.'

The second part of the letter was written in a different strain. 'You are well aware that I am not a murderer nor am guilty, neither have you passed any order concerning me. You have no enemy besides me, so as long as I live I will fight. I also am a man. I live two *coss* distant from [you]. It is strange that you, a great and powerful nation, have been fighting with me for two years and have not been able to do anything; the more so when it is considered that my troops do not obey me and I have not possession of my country. . . . You will see what the soldiers I have been preserving for two years can do. . . . If I alone am worthy of being an enemy to so powerful a nation as the British, it is a great honour to me, and every wish of my heart is fulfilled; death will come to me one day, what then I have to fear . . . ?'

Major Richardson replied on the 23rd that the Proclamation issued by the Queen of England was 'not for any one party or

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (66).



person but for *all*' and that the identical terms under which the Nawabs of Banda and Farrakkabad and the chiefs of Oudh surrendered to the British were also open to him. 'In writing as you do that you have not murdered women and children... it becomes you to come in without fear. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Nana Sahib, however, felt that he could not surrender himself in this manner. 'If a letter written by Her Majesty the Queen and sealed with her seal and brought by the Commanding Officer of the French... or the second-in-command' reached him, he would 'accept of the terms without hesitation... the thing can only be done in this way and to this I consent. If not, life must be given up some day. Why then should I die dishonoured? . . .'<sup>2</sup>

Nana Sahib's brother, Bala Rao, also sent a petition to the English in which he said that he had always been completely under the control of his brother and never a free agent. His brother would not permit him to separate from him and placed his wife 'with his women and they are together to this day'. He was not guilty of any crime and he deserved consideration for saving the life of a child, the daughter of the Judge of Fatehpur, whom he kept concealed. Bala Rao was anxious to surrender to the English and 'relate everything'.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing resulted from this correspondence. Nana Sahib was sent a copy of the Queen's Proclamation so that he could peruse it and determine his future conduct. He was told that 'by adopting the style of defiance', he made his case worse. Another copy of the Proclamation was sent to Bala Rao, and he was informed that beyond those which were laid down by the Queen, the Government had no power to offer any terms.<sup>4</sup>

The authorities did not approve of Major Richardson's reply to Nana Sahib's letter of 20 April. The Governor-General-in-Council considered that it should have been answered 'by a simple reference to the Queen's Proclamation and nothing more'. Richardson was instructed that he was 'not to reply to any further letters from the Nana without taking instruction upon them'.<sup>5</sup> The Government of the North-Western Provinces felt that

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (66).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (68).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (64).



Richardson's reply could easily 'mislead the recipient', who might conclude that if the guilt of murder was not brought home to him, he would be free from all punishment 'notwithstanding his persistence in rebellion'.<sup>1</sup> The Government of India considered it unfortunate that Major Richardson should refer to the cases of the Nawabs of Banda and Farrakkabad, with the particulars of which he could not be fully acquainted. It was desired that in future 'all overtures from rebels' who had been 'proscribed by the Government' or who were 'suspected of having taken part in murders' were to be 'answered by a communication of or reference to the Queen's Proclamation without further comment' and the communication was to be forwarded to superior authority.<sup>2</sup> There was no further correspondence with Nana Sahib or his brother, and the Government of India informed the Government of the North-Western Provinces on 13 May that 'as the Nana had failed to avail himself of the terms of the royal proclamation', those terms would 'no longer be extended to him' and as regards him the Proclamation had 'ceased to have effect'. If he again offered to surrender he must be told that he would have 'a fair trial and nothing more'.<sup>3</sup>

Nana Sahib ultimately accepted Jung Bahadur's conditions, changed into the dress of a mendicant, and proceeded westward. When he fled from Bithur he made a gift of some of his jewels and ornaments to a dancing girl at Cawnpore. But he succeeded in escaping with his more valuable family heirlooms. This was not unknown to Jung Bahadur and he took advantage of the helplessness of his guest by proposing to buy his jewels at a fraction of their real price. The most valuable ornament in Nana Sahib's possession was the *naulakha*, 'the principal jewel of the Peshwas . . . a long necklace of pearls, diamonds and emeralds,' for which Jung Bahadur offered only 93,000 rupees. Later on a settlement was made by which, in exchange for the *naulakha*, he bestowed two villages on Kasibai. After paying the revenues she had an income of six or seven thousand rupees a year.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (65).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (67).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 27 May 1859 (69).

<sup>4</sup> Landon, *Nepal*, i. 159; *Under the Sun*, pp. 280-1.

Kasibai, who was then a young girl of thirteen or fourteen, continued to live in the suburb of Katmandu. Jung Bahadur gave her a house and settled on her an allowance of four hundred rupees a month. The fate of the young lady, forsaken by her husband, naturally evoked a good deal of interest. Seven years later, when Nana Sahib was reported to be dead, Kasibai's father came to visit her and was surprised to find that his daughter did not dress like a widow, but had the vermilion mark on her forehead, wore bangles, and had the shade of antimony in her eyes.<sup>1</sup> Landon says that Kasibai's life was not 'uneventful'. She was 'far from being faithful to Nana. Jung Bahadur she could perhaps hardly resist, but the list of her lovers is much more extensive'.<sup>2</sup> However, she seems to have retained some affection for her husband, for, if the story Landon heard is true, every year during *Sivaratri* Nana Sahib used secretly to pay a visit to Kasibai, and she 'managed to snatch a few minutes' conversation with her husband'.<sup>3</sup>

After the arrangements with Jung Bahadur were concluded, Nana Sahib and his followers proceeded towards the district of Butwal. In October 1859, Major Ramsay, the British Resident at Katmandu, was informed by Jung Bahadur that Nana Sahib, who was then in Dang district in the Nepal terai had died of fever on 24 September.<sup>4</sup> This was not unlikely. The unhealthy terai and the rainy season had spread disease and death among Nana Sahib's followers. Towards the end of June Nana Sahib wrote to General Badri Narsing of Butwal that Bala Sahib had been ill for two months and his condition was causing anxiety, and he asked that a 'clever doctor' might be sent to the camp.<sup>5</sup> On 25 July there was a letter from General Sidhiman Singh to Jung Bahadur which said 'half their number is sick'. Nana Sahib himself was suffering from '*aoul* (malaria) fever', but he was not 'much overcome by it'.<sup>6</sup> This was followed by another message received from Sidhiman Singh on 7 October, which said that Nana Sahib had died on 24 September. Colonel Ramsay, who conveyed this

<sup>1</sup> Landon, *Under the Sun*, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 4 Nov. 1859 (159).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 5 Aug. 1859 (267).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 4 Nov. 1859 (159).



information to the Governor-General on the 8th, believed it to be correct. But he examined the possibility of its being a false report spread by the local officials. 'It is not unlikely that they may have connived at his escape into the mountains, but I have no grounds for asserting that they have done so.'<sup>1</sup> It was also said that Bala Rao, and also Azimullah, had died earlier, near Butwal. After October the names of Nana Sahib, Bala Rao and Azimullah frequently occurred as dead in the list of 'rebel leaders delivered up by the Goorkha troops or otherwise accounted for'.<sup>2</sup> Brigadier Holdich, who was commanding the forces on the Gorakhpur and Oudh frontier, wrote to the Chief of Staff that the deaths of Nana Sahib, Bala Rao and Azimullah 'have been most satisfactorily established'. Five days later, another letter jointly addressed by Major Holdich and General Grant to the Chief of Staff, expressed the same opinion. By December it was almost universally believed that Nana Sahib was dead. The Governor-General reported the news to the Secretary of State. Sir Charles Wood, however, was not quite convinced. He asked Lord Canning whether there was 'any information of a positive character',<sup>3</sup> and again, wrote to him early in 1861 that Ramsay's opinion on Nana's death was 'not decisive'. It was 'therefore very desirable that further efforts should be made to place the matter beyond doubt'.<sup>4</sup>

It was impossible to establish the story of Nana Sahib's death. Colonel Ramsay failed to find any additional information and wrote to the Government of India on 22 July 1861, 'I have exhausted all the means of enquiry that I possessed but without being able to obtain any intelligence calculated to throw additional light upon the matter.'<sup>5</sup> Whatever evidence there was must have been known to Jung Bahadur. Colonel Ramsay wrote in despair: 'If the Nana be still alive the secret is buried in the breast of Maharajah Jung Bahadur, known only to himself and to the very few confidential agents here and in the district to whom he may have chosen to entrust it.'<sup>6</sup> Jung Bahadur was not anxious

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Cons. 20 Jan. 1860 (148).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Political Despatch from Secretary of State, 17 May 1860 (41).

<sup>4</sup> Political Despatch from Secretary of State, 16 Jan. 1861 (3).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1861 (177).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



to pursue the question, and the Resident observed, 'once only during the past twelve months has he adverted to it.'<sup>1</sup>

It would not, however, be true to say that no fresh evidence was available. Some interesting bits of information came to light, but they were hardly of a satisfactory nature.

Soon after Nana Sahib's reported death, a piece of bone was sent by one of Baji Rao's widows to Sidhiman Singh, with a request that it might be thrown into the Ganges at Benares.<sup>2</sup> The practice of immersing the *asthi*, the last remains of the dead, in the holy water is a common custom, and the Rani's request was quite natural. But it was not necessarily a proof of Nana Sahib's death. One piece of bone would be very much like another and it would have been an obvious means of deception.

The story of Nana's death was also substantiated by the evidence of a man named Badri Tewari. He was a sepoy formerly in the service of the Raja of Balrampur, in Gonda district, and was asked by his master 'to go and obtain information [concerning the] designs and movements' of Nana's followers. He went to Deokar valley in May 1859 and found that Nana Sahib and Bala Rao were encamped with their force near the village of Narayanpur. He next followed the party to Dang valley, where he learnt that Bala Rao was ill. Badri Tewari was staying in a neighbouring village, where he soon heard that Bala Rao was dead, and returning to Dang, saw 'Brahmins being fed and the usual ceremonies of death being performed'. Nana Sahib himself, he said, died a few days later at the village of Narayanghar (Narayanpur?). Badri Tewari knew both Nana Sahib and Bala Rao by sight and had seen them 'riding about as long as they were well'. He believed both these reports, for 'was not I there all along?'

In spite of such assurances, it is clear that Badri Tewari's evidence does not take us very far. On both occasions he was at some distance from the camp, and was not allowed to penetrate into Nana Sahib's encampment. According to him, Nana Sahib died on 2 Kowar, which is equivalent to 14 September, while the

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1861 (177)

<sup>2</sup> For. Dept. Part A. Sept. 1861 (562-3).

<sup>2</sup> Landon, Nepal, i. 161.

date given by Jung Bahadur to the Government of India was the 24th. It is quite possible that Badri Tewari had been at the places named, and he was apparently sincere when he made his statement, but his evidence had no other value 'than as showing there was a belief in the Nana's death'.<sup>1</sup>

Another witness, Ram Tewari of Balrampur, servant of a Gurkha official who had been sent to the camp at Butwal, gave similar evidence in December 1861. Bala Sahib died in his presence, but he was not present when Nana Sahib died some twenty days later. He had no direct knowledge of it.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Nana Sahib's death was corroborated by other sources. A Eurasian drummer of the 17th Native Infantry who was made to work as a grass cutter in Nana's camp stated that Nana was dead. A sepoy of the 60th Native Infantry who joined the mutineers was told by a friend of his that he 'not only saw the dead body, but was present when it was burned'. A report published by the Government of Oudh in November 1860 stated, 'no doubt can be entertained of the death from fever sometime previously of Nana and Bala Rao. The same malady proved fatal to Azimoolah'.<sup>3</sup>

This belief, however, was shaken by the publication of an account in the *Friend of India*, on 22 November 1860. A tenant of one Mr. Bridgman, a European planter in Gorakhpur, was for several weeks reported missing. He suddenly reappeared in his home town on 18 August, very much fatigued and ill, and died a few days later. But before his death he made a statement that he was kidnapped by the sepoys and had been a prisoner in Nana Sahib's camp. He had seen Nana Sahib and Bala Rao, both of whom he described. Nana Sahib, he said, was accompanied by some thousands of sepoys, thirty guns and elephants. Before quitting the plains, each had cut off their little fingers and performed last rites. He travelled with Nana's party in the hills for fifteen days and arrived at a line of boundary pillars, and went further beyond to a place called Thuaria or Therwaria. There the people 'never shave their heads, have long hair, wear thick cloth of dog's hair

<sup>1</sup> For. Dept. Part A. Sept. 1861 (562-3).    <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Jan. 1862 (88).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (526) (530); *Oudh Report*, Nov. 1860.



and kept large dogs with long shaggy hair'. It was unlikely that Bridgman's tenant would make up a story like this. He was apparently referring to some part of Tibet which he had visited.

The publication of this account caused a good deal of excitement. If the account of Nana Sahib's journey to Tibet in 1860 was true, the report of his death in Nepal in September 1859 would have to be rejected. One may understand the excitement of the editor of the *Friend of India*, who urged Colonel Ramsay to find out the truth and 'leave no stone unturned' in the process.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, extremely difficult to find a proper explanation of the story. In his letter to Beadon on 3 September 1860 Ramsay discussed the possibilities. He said he had never heard of a place called Therwaria. It might have been a corruption of Tuglakot [Taklakot] or Tuglakor. Names were so badly pronounced by the common people that it was easy to commit a mistake like that. Ramsay did not altogether disbelieve the story, for it contained the 'stamp of truth', and it was just possible that Bridgman's servant had visited some largish village in the Tibetan frontier. Many places beyond Nepal were marked by pillars, and a journey of fifteen days would have carried the party into Tibet. But the story also presented certain problems. The narrator had no clear idea of the route, and the difficulties of the road were almost insurmountable. It was impossible to arrange for supplies for so many men unless there was a 'long and expensive prearrangement', and Ramsay failed to see how Jung Bahadur could have kept it a secret. The guns also presented another difficulty. It was not possible to drag them along the rugged and narrow mountain passes, and the parts must have been taken off and slung and carried upon men's shoulders. Assuming that thirty guns were carried, they must have needed 1,400 to 1,500 men for the job.<sup>2</sup>

If the report in the *Friend of India* shook the belief in Nana Sahib's death, further doubt was cast on it by the evidence of one Ramdin, a former sepoy, who had joined the mutineers and was then undergoing imprisonment in Lucknow jail. According to his statement, made in April 1861, Nana could not have died in September 1859, for he had seen him alive five months ago, that

<sup>1</sup> The *Friend of India*, 22 Nov. 1860.    <sup>2</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, 725 (26).



is in December 1860, and had been with him for eleven months. He was dressed like a mendicant and accompanied by 22,000 men. He also mentioned Nana Sahib's journey to the frontier of Tibet, 'a month's journey from Gorakhpur'. There was some resemblance between his account and the Gorakhpur story. It is, however, doubtful, as the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow observed, whether any reliance should be placed on the testimony of a man like Ramdin.<sup>1</sup>

A former sepoy of the Begum of Oudh also reported that the Nana 'was still alive and had gone away with only one servant, to an unknown destination'.<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of 1861 Colonel Ramsay himself began to have his doubts about Nana Sahib's death. He wrote to the Government of India that he had obtained what he believed to be 'fair presumptive evidence of the Nana's existence'.<sup>3</sup> He now believed that the story of his death was circulated 'to favour his escape and to aid in his concealment in the Nepalese territories'. There were several witnesses who confirmed his suspicion. A fakir told Ramsay's Orderly Havildar that he had been in Nana Sahib's camp for some time after Bala Rao died, 'until after Jung Bahadur went down in the terai with his army in cold weather.' On reaching Butwal Jung Bahadur sent for all the 'Pugreewallas', but Nana Sahib feared treachery and would not see him. He was aggrieved that Jung Bahadur had deceived him, 'taken his money and now refused to give him any assistance.' The fakir said that after some time Nana went up into the hills, but he did not know whether he was alive.<sup>4</sup>

Ramsay suspected that the fakir had not told the Havildar all he knew and was anxious to find him. He could not be traced, but the Havildar fell in with a Punjabi sadhu to whom he represented himself as an old servant of Nana Sahib anxious to serve his master. The sadhu claimed that he had seen Nana and had spoken to him. According to his story, he visited Badrinath and Kedarnath and entered Nepal from Kumaon and proceeded to Muktinath, accompanied by his disciples and other pilgrims. On

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Jan. 1862 (86).      <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. 30 Dec. 1859 (525-30).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. Oct. 1861 (33) (34).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the way he halted at a village named Dongargaon, situated on the top of a hill about a mile to the west of the river Banganga. Below the village there was a camp of three or four hundred people where a sentry mounted guard and prevented strangers from approaching the camp. 'I was bathing one day in the Banganga', the sadhu said, 'when a person dressed like a fakir, with long hair plaited round his head passed close to me on an elephant attended by from 15 to 20 followers, all very dirtily dressed and looking like fakirs. The latter spoke to me and asked me who I was, and where I was going? Their master shortly afterwards, when on his way back, turned his elephant round and came towards me, and asked me if it were true that I was going to Mooktinath. I said "yes". Upon this he immediately took out ten Company rupees and gave them to me.'

The sadhu remained there for several days and was told by the villagers that the person who gave him money 'was a great Marhatta Rajah, who was continually engaged in religious ceremonies and performed more Poojahs than any one they had ever seen, and who was very charitable'. His utensils for the *puja* were made of gold and silver. He had with him about 300 sepoy's disguised as fakirs, three elephants and three small guns. Some of the sepoy's told the sadhu that their master was the brother of Bala Rao. He greatly abused Jung Bahadur, who had 'deceived him, had invited him into the terai and afterwards taken away his Ranees and many lacs of rupees and jewels in Nepal and left him to shift for himself'. Colonel Ramsay's Havildar met the sadhu a second time in a temple outside the city, but he seemed annoyed and was reluctant to mention the incident. Some sadhus, he said, had been ordered out of Katmandu by the authorities and warned not to speak about anything they knew. The Havildar also came across other pilgrims returning from Muktinath who told him 'they had heard that there was a Mahratta Rajah in the hills on the other side of Muktinath who gave a great deal away in charity'. Another group of pilgrims was told that he was 'somewhere in the hills between Mooktinath and Kumayun'. A third batch of pilgrims said that they had met some former sepoy's of the 10th Native Infantry disguised as fakirs between Kumaon and Muktinath. They had 'come into the hills with Nana' and were returning to



his camp 'from a short trip to the plains'. Near Muktinath they separated themselves and turned to the north for Nana Sahib's encampment. The sepoy described Nana Sahib as being 'exactly like a fakir now, from having bound a large roll of hair, made of the tail of the chowree cow (Yak), around his head . . . he is very charitable and is constantly engaged in religious ceremonies, but he is exceedingly desponding (afsoos) and often says that he knows he shall not escape, for that the English Government has promised a lac of rupees to any one who will give him up, and that he is sure that some day that will happen'. Colonel Ramsay himself met a man dressed as a sadhu who confessed he was in the 3rd Rissala and had been to Muktinath. He did not see Nana but heard that he had gone 'beyond Muktinath in the hills towards Tibet (Bhote ke turf)'.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of accepting such statements is obvious. Much of them is hearsay and not always based on impeccable sources. Colonel Ramsay was inclined, however, to treat them seriously. The information had been collected 'from separate individuals who appeared to be quite unconnected with each other'. There was an 'air of probability about the statements . . . plain assertions for which no interested motives can be assigned, and they tend to confirm' the Gorakhpur story. The discrepancy in the number of guns, thirty according to this account and three according to the sadhu, Ramsay believed could be easily explained. The man from Gorakhpur was so ill that he might 'easily have been misunderstood to say *tees*, when he really said *teen*, or in his feeble condition, he may have said *tees* when he meant to say, or ought to have said *teen*'. These accounts confirmed the 'very strong conviction' in Ramsay's mind that the story of Nana's death 'was given out to favour his escape and to aid in his concealment'. He was 'still alive in the hills between the shrine of Muktinath and the Kumaon frontier'.<sup>2</sup>

There is hardly any evidence that Ramsay had earlier doubted the story of Nana's death. After the publication of the Gorakhpur story in the newspaper, Jung Bahadur asked the Resident what he

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. Oct. 1861 (33)(34).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Political Despatch to Secretary of State, 8 Oct. 1861 (164).



thought about it and whether the Government of India believed that Nana was alive. Colonel Ramsay was unable to express any opinion. Jung Bahadur then came out with a strange proposal. The Government of India might send a party to Nepal in search of Nana Sahib. It would be assisted by his officers. If the Government of India succeeded in finding Nana Sahib, he would be arrested by Jung Bahadur and handed over to the Resident. But if Nana was not traced 'within a reasonable time', the Government of India would cede to Nepal 'the low lands now comprising the British terai, north of the eastern portion of Oudh, which lie between the Arrah Nuddea and Bhungonee *tal*'. This suggestion did not appeal to Colonel Ramsay. It was, he pointed out, 'a wager which Jung Bahadur could not lose.' He 'could with the utmost facility keep the Nana or any other party out of the way of any cavalcade of persons.'<sup>1</sup>

Jung Bahadur now made a surprising statement. Hitherto he had been anxious to prove that Nana Sahib was dead, but in November he told Dr. Oldfield, the Residency Surgeon, that he had no doubt about Bala Rao's death but that Nana Sahib's case was different. The only evidence of Nana Sahib's death came from some villagers, 'a very degraded and ignorant class,' who had heard of his illness and death and 'had seen a corpse which they were told was that of Nana'. Jung Bahadur suggested, 'it may not have been the Nana's body which was burned, but the corpse of some other person . . . in order to confirm the report of Nana's death.'<sup>2</sup> If Nana were alive he would not be in Nepal or Tibet. Had he lived in Nepal it could not have been unknown to Jung Bahadur, and had he reached Tibet it would have been reported to Jung Bahadur by his agents or by Nepalese traders in that country. He told Ramsay that Nana must have gone to the south (Dukheen ko guya). Ramsay suspected that Jung Bahadur knew more about Nana than he cared to express.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to say if there was any truth in Jung Bahadur's assertion. His statement could easily have been taken to mean that Nana was in India, and from 1862 to 1874 several persons were

<sup>1</sup> For. Dept. Pro. A. Aug. 1861 (177).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. A. Dec. 1861 (17) (18).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

arrested in India for their alleged likeness to Nana Sahib. About the middle of 1862, a man named Harji Brahmachari and his cousin, Brajadas, were arrested in Karachi and brought down to Calcutta, on suspicion that Harji was really the Nana. It was arranged that they would be taken to Cawnpore for identification. Harji Brahmachari, who was in poor health, died after a few days in the Medical College Hospital in Calcutta, and his companion was released. Major Wroughton of the Commissariat, who knew Nana well, said he was 'unlike the poor faquir'. It was evidently a case of mistaken identity. The prisoner was suspected on account of 'a mark under the eye'. Harji's companion said that he had told the police that the prisoner had lived at Dwarka for twenty years, and was a writer of religious books, and that it was 'their custom every year to travel about'. The police acted hastily, and no enquiry seems to have been made at the place of residence before the party was taken to Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

Much greater excitement was in store next year. On 1 August 1863 *The Times* published a telegram from Reuters, 'Nana Saheb has been captured in the temple of Ajmere by Captain Brodigan of the 28th Infantry on an information supplied by the Bombay Police. According to official report of Major Davidson, no doubt whatever exists of the prisoner's identity.'

'The papers found on Nana Saheb show plans of extensive conspiracy and of his having large sums of money at his command.'<sup>2</sup>

The message refers to an amazing incident. In the afternoon of 22 June a man dressed as a fakir asked for a private interview with

<sup>1</sup> For. Dept. Pol. Pro. A. July 1862 (173) (174); *The Friend of India*, 26 June 1862. This mark is not mentioned in the description of Nana Sahib circulated by the Government.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 1 Aug. 1863. The telegram also said: 'Five thousand Bengal sepoy are rumoured to be at Saloomba under Tantia Topee. The man hanged in that name four years ago is now supposed not to have been the leader.' It is difficult to take much of the information seriously. The story of the assembly of troops under Taty Tope was without foundation and there was no trace of the 'large sums of money' said to have been lying at Nana Sahib's command; and the documents found on the prisoner at first believed to be 'plans of extensive conspiracy' turned out to be papers containing prayers and religious songs described as 'rubbish' by the police. For. Pol. Pro. A. Dec. 1863 (38).



Major A. G. Davidson, Deputy Commissioner of Ajmere and Marwara. He was Dwarka Tewari, a Jemadar of the Bombay Native Infantry employed on secret service to obtain intelligence and, if possible, to 'effect the capture of the Nana'. He and his companion, Gaya Prasad, learnt that Nana had 'left Nepal with other chiefs of the rebellion and had come towards Hyderabad in Sind'. He was also reported at Jaipur. Gaya Prasad got himself acquainted with 'three of Nana's Brahmins performing poojah for him', who provided them with guides, and with their help he arrived at Salumbar, near Udaipur. Then they followed Nana Sahib's party, which was proceeding towards Bikaner. There was an escort of 1,000 troops with Nana, but when they reached Chitor the escort left him. Dwarka Tewari and his companions joined Nana's party, and learnt from one Ganga Tewari that attempts were being made to restore Nana Sahib and that many people in the south had made arrangements to raise 4,000 men if he would return to Poona. The person said to be Nana at first wished to proceed to Bikaner to meet Taty Tope, and then to attack first Dussara, and after it Nasirabad and Poona, burning the cantonments. He had been promised help by the ruler of Bikaner and other Rajput chiefs, but he had had no communication with Udaipur and Jaipur. It was ultimately decided that they 'should all go to Ajmere to worship'. On arriving there they put up in a temple near the court. But 'Nana' became fidgety and wanted to leave Ajmere and go to a village a few miles away. He was, however, finally persuaded to remain there, and Gaya Prasad took the earliest opportunity to report the matter to Major Davidson.<sup>1</sup>

One may doubt some portions of the story. Major Davidson evidently believed it. It was planned to surround the temple in the evening and arrest Nana Sahib and his companions. The Jemadar once more appeared and reported that Nana was in a panic and had changed his residence. In the evening, after some fruitless search, Davidson was able to trace him in a house near a *kund*. He found Dwarka Tewari near the entrance. Davidson wrote: 'At a short distance from the entrance, I came across a figure

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (116).



standing up, and on my calling out and asking who they all were, the Jamadar, who was close to me, replied (as has been previously arranged with me that he should do), "we are so-and-so and that is the Pundit;" the person he was to point out as the Pundit was the Nana.'

The person described as Nana Sahib was then handcuffed; his companions, Naro Pant and a blind priest, were also arrested and placed under a European Guard. Next morning Davidson brought out the descriptive roll of Nana circulated during the Mutiny. It described him as of 36 years of age, fair in complexion, five feet eight inches in height, of powerful and stout appearance, with flat and round face, straight and well-shaped nose and large round eyes, with regular teeth, black hair and ring marks on ear. It also added that he had the 'features of a Mahratta strongly depicted'. On one of his toes there was a lancet mark. After his flight from Bithur he wore a beard and presented a Mohammedan appearance.<sup>1</sup> Davidson compared these details with the features of the prisoner before him, and, he stated, 'we were all struck at the resemblance.' The prisoner 'allowed himself to be a Deccany Brahmin; his age at this time appears to be 43 or 45, and he himself puts it at 45. His complexion even now in parts, where slightly protected, is fair, but his forehead, points of his cheekbones, and exposed parts of the face are dark clearly from exposure. The skin of his body is fair, and whosoever my prisoner may be, who himself states he has been wandering as a fakeer for 28 years, from Cashmere to all parts, he must have been carefully attended to and well treated by those along with him, for his feet show no marks of rough usage, such as would be the consequence of constant walking but are quite soft. His face is thin and a little haggard, but if filled out it would be round and full rather than a long face; his

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (116). The following is also an official description of Nana sent by Sherer to Muir in October 1857. 'The Nana is 42 years of age. Hair black; complexion light wheat coloured; large eyes; flat round face; he is understood now to wear a beard; height about 5 feet 8; he wears his hair very short (or at least he did so), leaving only so much as a small skull-cap would cover; he is full in person, and of powerful frame; he has not the Mahratta hooked nose with broad nostrils, but a straight well-shaped one; he has a servant who never leaves his side, with a cut ear.' Muir, *The Records of the Intelligence Department*, ii. 315.

general frame is even now decidedly a powerful one... his height measured without shoes or head dress is 5 feet 6 inches or a little more. He has a perfectly straight and well-shaped nose, a decided Mahratta contour of face, but his most marked features just now are his peculiarly large round eyes. He has lost several of his teeth, as well as have both of the others who are with him, and their own account is that, when up in Cashmere, drinking the burf-water destroyed their teeth and caused them to fall out... on my asking him his reason for wearing a beard, he replied, he did so because he was wandering about... he has also ring marks on his ear, and there is a scar on the lower part of the lobe of his right ear as if the ring had cut it through'. Major Davidson was also certain that he understood English for 'on anything being said in that language he pricks up his attention at once'.

Dr. Murray, the Civil Surgeon at Ajmere, noted that he had the 'mark of a small wound or cut on the anterior portion of the first phalanx of the second toe of the right foot', the cicatrix was 'a little more than half an inch in length and is as fine as a horse hair... slightly oblique and... precisely the sort of mark that would be made with a lancet or a fine, sharp-pointed bistoury', there was also 'a small cicatrix on the lower part of the lobe of right ear'. The prisoner, he concluded 'answers in nearly every particular to the published descriptive roll of the Nana'.

Major Davidson was convinced of the prisoner's identity: 'We really have got the man himself,' and fearing that a rescue might be attempted from the neighbouring Indian States, he requested the commanding officer at Nasirabad to strengthen the European detachment at Ajmere.<sup>1</sup>

Major-General Lawrence, who was the Agent of the Governor-General for the States in Rajputana, sent a report to the Government of India and observed that he did not believe the story of the 'wide-spread intrigue ripening for revolt' in Rajputana and the 'gathering of rebels' in some States. Some of the 'mutinous soldiery', however, had got employment in some States and their leaders might be 'in hiding out of British territory'. Lawrence also added that Major Davidson had informed him that he found he

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (116).



had 'expressed himself too strongly in writing of the identity of the Nana', although he felt 'morally convinced' that he was the man.

The weak spot in Major Davidson's argument was that 'no one who had known [Nana] well had fully identified him'.<sup>1</sup> This was also very much the reaction of the Government of the North-Western Provinces. They were anxious for further reports about the identity of the prisoner, and Davidson was asked to send photographs to Dr. Cheek at Benares, Major Wroughton at Fyzabad and Captain Wallace at Meerut and to any other persons known to be intimately acquainted with the Nana.<sup>2</sup> The Government of India directed that the prisoner should be brought to Cawnpore and a report enclosing the result of attempts to identify him submitted without delay.<sup>3</sup>

The photographs taken of the alleged Nana did not please Davidson. He thought they were of poor quality and did not bring out the resemblance. The pictures did not 'give the large round eye of the individual', nor did they 'convey the intelligent expression of his countenance, besides making him appear more aged'.<sup>4</sup> Soon after the photographs were circulated the Government of the North-Western Provinces wrote to the Government of India that very little confidence was felt in the identity of the prisoner with Nana Sahib. Dr. Cheek and Mr. Court, who were well acquainted with the Nana, declared that the photographs bore no resemblance to him.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Cheek believed that one of the photographs was the likeness of Baba Bhat, Nana's elder brother, whom he used to see weekly at Bithur. He said he should have picked out this picture as his from a hundred photographs. But he did not find Nana Sahib in any of the photographs, and when the prisoner arrived at Cawnpore Dr. Cheek did not 'identify him in either voice, age, general appearance or special marks'.<sup>6</sup> The prisoner appeared to him 'apparently 15 years older, more common looking and darker than the Nana'. This was in general agreement with Court's view. Court, who was Inspector-General of

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. Aug. 1863 (118).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. Aug. 1863 (116).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. Aug. 1863 (117).

<sup>4</sup> For. Dept. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (126).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (125).

<sup>6</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Oct. 1863 (39); Nov. 1863 (45) (166).



Police in the North-Western Provinces, recognized one of the photographs as one of the Bithur men known to him. He was nearly certain it was of Baba Bhat. But the pictures did not in the least resemble Nana Sahib.<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Moore, who had seen the Nana in 1854, did not think that the prisoner resembled him.<sup>2</sup> Major Wroughton, who knew the Nana well, stated that the 'portraits did not answer to his recollection of the Bithoor Nana'.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Tresidder, the former Civil Surgeon at Cawnpore, who was the physician of the ex-Peshwa's family, failed to identify the person in the photographs. His features seemed vaguely familiar. But he was sure 'he is not Azimullah Khan, nor Naroo Punt (Baba Bhutt), nor is he the Nana Dhondoo Punt'.<sup>4</sup>

There was a number of Indians who naturally had greater opportunities of meeting Nana Sahib, but most of them failed to identify the prisoner or his photographs. Narayan Rao, son of Subedar Ramchandra Pant of Bithur, had 'not the least doubt as to the prisoner not being the Nana'. He said that the latter 'had some impediment when he began to talk, and this man has none; that the Nana would be about 40 years of age and the prisoner seems 60; that the Nana was much fairer and had larger eyes and a fuller rounder face, and was taller by two or three fingers' breadths, and stouter figure'. Ganesh Sastri, Bhikaji Pant, Chuni Singh and other residents of Bithur also failed to recognize the prisoner.<sup>5</sup>

Against these witnesses we have the evidence of Sergeant Wilkins, formerly in the 14th Dragoons, who constantly saw the Nana at Meerut shortly before the outbreak and had frequently spoken to him. Wilkins seems to have had a special reason for remembering him, for they had quarrelled over a dancing girl. He was convinced that the arrested person was Nana, for when known persons were mentioned, the prisoner gave a start and looked up.<sup>6</sup> Of the two informers who had identified him, Dwarka Tewari had never seen the real Nana, but supposed the prisoner

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Aug. 1863 (126); Nov. 1863 (45).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1863 (166).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Feb. 1864 (239).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 5 Aug. 1863.

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1863 (166).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

to be Nana on the statements of other persons, and the magistrate of Cawnpore did not think Gaya Prasad, the other informer, to be 'a man of trustworthy character'; 'hopes of fame and reward' inflamed his imagination and 'he too readily believed what he wished to be true'.<sup>1</sup>

The Press in India and in England at first shared the optimism of Major Davidson. On 5 August *The Times* published an extract from *The Times of India* which said the 'news of the capture of Nana at Ajmere . . . is well founded. It appears that he has been skulking in the Rajputana States during the last four months, while we have been supposing him to be hidden in the wilds of Nepal. It is said the prisoner has no wants, having several lacs of rupees at his command — an incidental corroboration of his identity'. On the same day *The Times* observed in its editorial, — 'it is stated so positively as to be beyond doubt that Nana Saheb of Bithoor . . . has been captured at Ajmere . . . and is now a prisoner awaiting his trial'. On 28 August it published a letter from its Calcutta correspondent dated 23 July, which said, 'official opinion in Calcutta is unanimous as to the identity of the man captured in Ajmere with the fiend Nana Dhondoo Punt.' The blind beggar accompanying him 'has confessed that the suspected prisoner is the real Nana.'

But as the evidence unfolded itself, the newspapers found it difficult to maintain their enthusiasm and soon changed their tone. The *Bombay Gazette* wrote on 24 July, 'the man captured at Ajmere as the Nana of Bithoor has not yet been satisfactorily identified.'<sup>2</sup> The Calcutta correspondent of *The Times* also wrote on 10 August, 'opinions continue to be divided. . . . The half of the Government of India which is in Calcutta consider that the real fiend has been secured while the other half in Simla doubt this.'<sup>3</sup> The correspondent of the *Times of India* became more critical of the story as he reported the arrival of the prisoner at Cawnpore. There was 'considerable commotion in the city at first, for it was generally believed that the coming prisoner is veritably the Nana, but in a very few hours after he left the railway station that

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 5 Aug. 1863; For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1863 (166); Dec. 1863 (38).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The Times*, 19 Aug. 1863.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 15 Sept. 1863.



excitement had quite subsided. Hundreds of people to whom the person of Nana was well known had seen the prisoner, and all declared that he was not the man. Among them are people who had been daily with the Nana and some of them in constant attendance upon him at Bithoor and elsewhere for years before his flight'. The prisoner, however, appeared to have been in Cawnpore before. 'He was anxiously observant of faces around him, as if in search of persons whom he recognized and who might perhaps recognize him. The same curious scrutiny on his part was observable as he passed through the station on his way from the railway to the gaol. He is no stranger to Cawnpore; but that does not prove him to be the Nana.'<sup>1</sup>

It was not surprising that the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces should have considered the case one of mistaken identity and ordered the release of the prisoner.<sup>2</sup> A. Forjett, the Acting-Commissioner of Police in Bombay, did not agree. He had advised the Government on the arrangements for the arrest of the prisoner, and he thought that the enquiry at Cawnpore could not be deemed to be complete. The discrepancies in the prisoner's appearance observed by the witnesses could be easily explained. 'Six years of such a life with its vigils and vicissitudes would very much alter his appearance.' It would render a 'fair complexion rough and dark', a 'well-built stout powerful frame, well-formed and graceful figure' into one that is 'spare, bony, unmuscular, lean, stooping, bent and ungraceful'. Forjett thought that the prisoner did not give a proper account of himself because he feared it might 'lead to his ruination'. He suggested that a full pardon might be offered to him 'on condition, if he be not the Nana, that he makes known who he is'. It was unwise to release the prisoner till every doubt as to his identity was set at rest.<sup>3</sup>

There were no doubt several unsatisfactory features in the case. The prisoner appeared secretive, and there was more than a possibility that he had things to hide. He stated that his name was Appa

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1863.

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Dec. 1863 (38) (39).

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1863 (168); Forjett, *Our Real Danger in India*, pp. 190-4.



Ram, he was the son of Damodar, and born at Neri near Ellichpur, a village on the Wardha river 'washed away three years ago'. He began a pilgrim's life when he was twelve years old. On enquiry it was found that there was 'no such village as Neri on Wardah river, neither has any village been washed away on its banks within the last three years, in fact there was no village called Neri in the whole district'.<sup>1</sup> Much of what the prisoner had said was obviously untrue. This, however, did not prove that he was Nana Sahib, nor did it establish a link with him. The Government saw no reason to accept Forjett's suggestion. On 9 November the magistrate of Cawnpore reported that the person supposed to have been Nana Sahib had been released on that day. It did not look, he added, 'as if he had suffered from his imprisonment in Cawnpore jail'.<sup>2</sup>

The excitement had hardly died down when another 'Nana' was reported to have turned up in Mewar. Coming so soon after the Ajmere incident, this one hardly caused any enthusiasm. Popular imagination was glutted and it was felt that there could be too much even of the Nana Sahib mystery. The *Englishman* in Calcutta wrote indignantly that the best way to stop the appearance of pseudo Nana Sahibs would be 'to hang pretenders on the strength of their own assertions'. The real Nana was either dead or in the hands of Jung Bahadur. The former was more probable, for the only reason for Jung Bahadur's keeping him alive would be 'the intention of playing him as a trump card'; but 'as a winning card' Nana Sahib 'always was and will be, not worth playing'.<sup>3</sup>

But this was by no means the last to be heard of Nana Sahib. There were persistent rumours of his appearance. Argyll, Secretary of State for India, evidently got tired of such reports when he wrote to Granville in May 1873, 'I often feel like handing over India to Nana Sahib and retiring from India.'<sup>4</sup> Next year an amazing account of Nana Sahib's arrest by Maharaja Sindhia was

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1863 (166), Dec. 1863 (38).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Dec. 1863 (38) (39).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *The Times*, 11 Feb. 1864.

<sup>4</sup> Granville Papers in the Public Record Office, London. I am indebted to Dr. S. Gopal for this information.

received from Gwalior. There is a prologue to the main story, which it is necessary to relate first.

In the cold weather of 1856, Sindhia had visited Calcutta. While returning to Gwalior, he met Nana Sahib at Cawnpore and Bithur, and as a token of his esteem to the heir of the last Peshwa and the traditional leader of the Maratha people, presented him with a *Sasanpatta*, a sword with an appropriate appellation inscribed on it.<sup>1</sup> The outbreak of 1857 produced a rupture between the two, and they had not met each other since then.

In the evening of 21 October 1874, a letter said to be written by Nana Sahib was brought to Sindhia. It said, '... I have arrived at Gwalior after long continued suffering distress. While here I felt that your ancestors were always obedient to and well-wishers of my ancestors. Relying on this and taking you as one of my family, I make no hesitation to put my head on your lap and leave you to do as you think fit. I am helpless and friendless and so you may act as you like. I have to add nothing but a prayer for your increased prospect.'

Sindhia accompanied the bearer of the note and hastened to a suburb of Gwalior where Nana Sahib was reported to have been staying and met a frail looking person dressed as a monk. 'I could not let him know my motives,' Sindhia stated but 'put him such questions as were appropriate to his detection'. Sindhia then brought him to his palace in the city, and after further examination, was convinced that he was 'without doubt the Nana Saheb Peshwa'. The man referred to the previous meetings in Cawnpore and Bithur and the presentation of the sword. Sindhia said 'the conversation I had with him at Cawnpore was remembered by him' and 'brought back to my recollection'.

About midnight, Colonel Osborne, Political Agent at Gwalior, was called to the palace and the prisoner confessed to him 'all his crimes and explained all the particulars of his whereabouts in the last 16 years'. Next day, he and his companions were made over to the British.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. Pro. A. Nov. 1874 (67).

<sup>2</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (65) (66) (84). The prisoner was apparently surprised at Sindhia's conduct. A newspaper report said 'when apprehended the prisoner



The arrest of the alleged Nana Sahib was an unpopular measure. It was feared that there might be a general rising in sympathy with the prisoner, and military pickets were placed on the roads. In his address to the chiefs and officials on the Dussera day, Sindhia considered it necessary to justify his action, — '... this man was concerned in the wholesale massacre, which took place at Cawnpore, of Englishmen and their families whom he had promised to save.

'Our internal dissensions ruined the State in 1844 but the British Government magnanimously spared it. It was again lost in 1857-58 by the flame of mutiny spreading through it at the instance of the late Rao Saheb Peshwa. It was saved once more by the Government acting upon its promise in the treaty that it will protect the State from external foes.

'The Nana Saheb is an enemy of both Governments and was the originator of the mutinies. I therefore made him over to the Resident at Gwalior on the 22nd instant.'<sup>1</sup>

It was considered advisable to remove the prisoner from Gwalior, and he was taken to Cawnpore.<sup>2</sup> His identification proved difficult, as in the case of the 'Ajmere Nana' ten years earlier. He soon retracted his confession. George Bernard, Surgeon-General at the Residency, who examined him on 30 October, observed that he was most anxious to disprove himself the Nana. Dr. Bernard had seen Nana Sahib on several occasions at Cawnpore in 1856, but he had 'no recollection of him except that he was a young-looking man of the ordinary lightest brown complexion of the better class' of Indians. 'I know I could not recognise him now. The man I saw this morning was a slightly built rather delicate-looking Hindoo... lightish brown, deeply pitted with small pox on the cheeks and slightly all over the face... I do not think his age can be more than 40. On the forehead are two small cicatrices of cuts, said to be with shoes thrown at him by his brother, ... apparently in good health, intelligent, quick and willing to do all that is asked of him and rather alarmed as to be in his present

threw himself on his face on the ground and said "For God's sake don't".<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 2 Nov. 1874.

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (74) (84).      <sup>2</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (56) (76).



position.<sup>1</sup> The prisoner, however, produced a poor impression on a newspaper correspondent, 'a poor miserable object, thin and worn but with a bright eye and mouth which seems to have in it a perpetual laugh . . . be he who he may, he has a lying face.'<sup>2</sup>

Sindhia, however, had no doubt about his identity and he informed General Daly that Baba Apte, a relation of Nana Sahib, had recognized the prisoner.<sup>3</sup> The correspondent of *The Times* reported on 31 October that the 'old man was as clear as before' and that Nana's nephew Una Bhat also recognized him. 'We ate together for 12 years. He is the Nana. I did not know him till he was dressed as a Mahratta Chief, but there could be no mistake.'<sup>4</sup>

Two other witnesses struck a different note. Dr. Tresidder and Mowbray Thomson were directed by the Viceroy to come to Gwalior and identify the prisoner. The former did not think that he was Nana Sahib. The prisoner was much younger, 'not more than 38 years of age.' He had 'not the round face of the Nana and not the Nana's eyes or expression'. His voice was also different.<sup>5</sup> Mowbray Thomson noticed a scar on his forehead similar to that the Nana had, but he did not think him to be the man he was said to be. If he was really the Nana, 'he was so changed, being much thinner, well bearded, with long unkempt hair, appearing a most disreputable fellow, cringing and humble, and utterly different to what I remember him in his glory at Bithoor.' Thomson suggested that the prisoner might be 'shaved and dressed in the clothes of a Mahratta gentleman'. This was done and it 'changed his appearance materially and made him look strangely like what I remember the Nana of Bithoor was'. Thomson, however, did not quite know his mind: 'still I cannot go so far as to swear he is that man. All I can say is the likeness is extraordinary,' and the 'presence of the scar a most strange coincidence'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 25 Nov. 1874.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874* (52). Baba Apte's son married Baji Rao's daughter. The correspondent of *The Times* wrongly described him as the 'late Peshwa's daughter's husband'. 'The identification . . . was dramatic, coolly putting on his spectacles, the old man gazed intently at the prisoner and said, "you are the Nana".' (*The Times*, 29 Oct. 1874.)

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 2 Nov. 1874.

<sup>5</sup> *For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874* (51) (84).

<sup>6</sup> *For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874* (83). Northbrook wrote to Salisbury on 6 Nov. 1874 '... I saw Colonel Mowbray Thomson yesterday, who inclines to think the pris-

General Daly had earlier observed, 'the probabilities are all with Sindhia. If he has been deceived, the deception is remarkable.' The withdrawal of the confession was probably 'due to the belief that Sindhia would stipulate for his life'.<sup>1</sup> But as the Government probed more into the case it became apparent that there was some mistake. The Calcutta correspondent of *The Times* telegraphed on 30 November, 'public opinion grows daily more sceptical.' Four days later, he telegraphed again, 'the Government is satisfied that the Gwalior prisoner is not the Nana, Scindia admits he was mistaken.'<sup>2</sup>

Fitzpatrick, Secretary of the Legislative Department, who was placed in charge of the investigation summarized his findings in a letter addressed to the Government of India on 15 December. The most important witness was Sindhia, who no doubt believed that the man he arrested was Nana Sahib. Fitzpatrick said, 'the truth is His Highness never professed to recognise the prisoner as Nana.' From the knowledge displayed by the prisoner of the circumstances of the interview in 1857, and from the details of the conversation, he inferred that he must be the Nana. 'The circumstances of a sword . . . having been presented must of necessity have been known to several persons besides the Nana, and anyone designing to personate the Nana would have little difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of it.' Mowbray Thomson was not sure about the identification, but he found the likeness extraordinary. His evidence was no doubt 'above suspicion', but he seems to have seen Nana Sahib only twice and had no occasion to come in contact with him. His memory of Nana Sahib had grown so faint that in 1862 he thought that he would not be able to recognize him. The mark which he noticed on the forehead of the prisoner was 'an accidental coincidence'.

Baba Apte, who was so very definite in the beginning, was not certain later on, and 'considerably modified his statement'. He said he 'saw the prisoner only from a distance and was ill at the

oner is the Nana; but his evidence is worth very little, for he had only the kind of acquaintance with the Nana that a subaltern has with a Raja near cantonments. . . .'  
(Northbrook—Salisbury Correspondence.)

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (65).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 1 Dec. 5 Dec. 1874.



time'. The nephew Una Bhat withdrew what he had stated earlier and said that the prisoner was like the Nana, particularly about the forehead. Only Dada Bhat clung to his former belief that the prisoner was Nana Sahib. But all attempts to get a direct statement from him failed and Fitzpatrick was inclined to regard his evidence with suspicion.

There were twenty-seven other witnesses, some of whom said that the prisoner looked like Nana Sahib, though they all agreed that he was not the man. The list included men like Dr. Norman Chavers, John Power, Judge of Moradabad, Musamat Adla of Cawnpore, Narayan Rao of Bithur and Kesho Rao Vaid, physician to Nana. Dr. Chavers shared Dr. Tresidder's view that the prisoner was much younger, not more than about thirty-five, 'forty-five being the utmost limit.' Fitzpatrick pointed out some other incongruities also. It was well known that Nana Sahib used to wear a particular type of ear-rings known as *bbik bauli*, which must have left a mark in the upper rim of his ear. But no trace of such a mark 'can on the most minute examination with lenses be detected on the prisoner.' On the evidence of Kesho Rao Vaid, Nana Sahib 'had sustained a considerable loss of tissue by sloughing from a virulent disease', but the prisoner showed 'no sign of having suffered in this way'. His handwriting bore no resemblance to the handwriting of Nana Sahib. The signature on the letter to Sindhia was not genuine. It was 'altogether of a different character from the signature of the Nana on the Government promissory notes'. The prisoner could 'neither read nor write the Marathi Character'.

While the prisoner was confined within Sindhia's palace in Gwalior, Sindhia observed that 'some of his habits characteristic of a wealthiest [sic] person were visible in his transaction'. This was, however, not the general impression. The correspondent of *The Times* described him as 'a poor miserable object'. General Daly thought that the prisoner was likely to be, as he himself confessed, a 'wandering fakeer' and from his accent, probably came from the country about Benares. Fitzpatrick also found that his 'appearance, bearing and mode of speaking' indicated a 'person of a very low rank in life'. He concluded that the attempt to



identify the prisoner with Nana Sahib had utterly failed. The name of the prisoner was Jumna Das, and not one of the witnesses had positively declared the man Jumna Das to be the Nana.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of India concurred entirely with Fitzpatrick's findings.<sup>2</sup> From the evidence it is not perhaps possible to come to any other conclusion. But one may have an unhappy feeling that there are certain loose ends in the story. What could be the motive of the prisoner when he claimed to be Nana Sahib before Sindhia and also before the Political Agent a few hours later, when 'he did not refuse to his being Nana Peshwa' and 'confessed all what he did'?<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that he made up a story 'under the influence of hunger and drugs' is a shade too thin. Sindhia wrote to the Viceroy on 31 October, 'there would be no man in the world who could throw off his life at risk without any purpose.'<sup>4</sup> Daly suggested that the prisoner believed that Sindhia 'would stipulate for life and when it proved otherwise', considered it wise to withdraw his statement.<sup>5</sup> Sindhia said almost the same thing when he wrote to the Viceroy about the middle of November, 'nothing is more valuable than life . . . hence it is not surprising in contradiction to his former statement [he] now denies his personality.'<sup>6</sup> The correspondent of *The Times* considered two explanations which were apparently suggested to him in India. One was that the 'genuine Nana was at Gwalior at the time of the arrest and he put forward this man, one of his followers, as a kind of feeler to test Scindia'. The other was that Sindhia 'did actually arrest the real man, but finding Colonel Willoughby Osborne declined to pledge the British Government to spare the prisoner's life, substituted an impostor before any European had seen him'. The second explanation was dismissed as groundless but it was considered possible that there may be something in the first.<sup>7</sup> General Daly shared this view, 'I think the inference is . . . the Nana is still alive and that the prisoner was sent to test the

<sup>1</sup> *The Gazette of India*, Supplement, 2 Jan. 1875; For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (67); *The Times*, 25 Nov. 1874; 2 Jan. 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gazette of India*, Supplement, 2 Jan. 1875.

<sup>3</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (67).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> For. Pol. A. Dec. 1874 (59).

<sup>5</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (65).

<sup>7</sup> *The Times*, 4 Jan. 1875.

Maharaja's feeling' towards him. Northbrook wrote to Salisbury on 18 December 1874 that the prisoner would be 'detained under Regulation III of 1818 for a short time longer in order to obtain some further information as to his antecedents'.<sup>1</sup>

General Daly's belief that Nana Sahib was alive was shared by many, and for several years popular imagination was not tired of finding him in different parts of India and also outside the country. In 1877 a newspaper at Indore published a rumour that Nana Sahib was about to invade India with a Russian army and establish once more a Maratha empire 'through the auspices of the Czar'. The news is said to have 'perceptibly affected trade and money market' in Bombay.<sup>2</sup> In 1891 a sadhu named Puran Das, who had lived in Manipur for more than thirty years, suddenly roused the suspicion of the Political Officer. He 'may be Nana Sahib for what we know' he informed the Government, and asked for the services of a detective. It was suggested that the man should be kept under observation, but the Government did not show much enthusiasm.<sup>3</sup>

That the policy of the Government of India had undergone considerable change gradually became evident. On 14 August 1894 Lord Elgin wrote to the Secretary of State about the arrest of a man at Kathiwar by the Government of Bombay. The Viceroy was vexed because the authorities in Bombay 'have studiously endeavoured to keep us in the dark' and thought it was a wrong policy to arrest a person on suspicion so long after the Mutiny. In a letter to Harris, the Governor of Bombay, on 11 August, Lord Elgin explained his views. 'There must be immense difficulties in identifying a man after an interval of 37 years' and 'supposing that a strong *prima facie* case of identification is made out what is to follow? . . . On what charge can we try him? What would certainly be demanded and naturally so by a strong body of opinion from those who suffered directly or indirectly from his atrocities, and the still more numerous persons who

<sup>1</sup> For. Pol. A. Nov. 1874 (84); Northbrook—Salisbury Correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 1877, xvii. 178-9.

<sup>3</sup> For. Sec. E. Jan. 1892 (57-59).



sympathised with the sufferers [is] that he should be tried for murder. I am told that it is practically certain that no sufficient evidence could now be adduced for any Court to convict of murder. He could be tried for treason, but if convicted on this charge, do you suppose public opinion would permit the execution of a man after an interval of 37 years? If he was executed the Natives would say, and I think with some justice, that he was really put to death for a crime we could not prove, and if he was not executed we should view the indignation of those whose feeling would not be bound by the intricacies of legal evidence. We shall certainly be accused of weakness if not worse, and we should suffer in the estimation of Anglo-Indians and Natives alike.

'There is the further consideration what we could do with the man if convicted and not executed. I presume we should send him to the Andamans but wherever he was, he would be a centre to whom the disaffected could look and his existence would be the origin of intrigues.

'To sum up the whole in a sentence, I think this is eminently a case of "heads you win, tails I lose". . . . An identification, whether it failed or succeeded, would stir passions which it is I believe the primary object of everyone of us concerned in the Government of India . . . to allay.'

The Secretary of State agreed with the Viceroy's opinion and considered that his letter to the Governor of Bombay was 'a wise and statesmanlike review of the position and all its difficulties and possibilities'.<sup>1</sup>

The interest in Nana Sahib died down, and a far more exciting event in 1895 failed to revive it. It was at a small town about thirty miles from Rajkot that an old man in the dress of a mendicant was found pestered by children. He did not appear quite right in the head and was placed in the local jail during the night for his own safety. Next morning the young English police officer who was in charge was told that the old man 'claimed to be Nana Saheb and appealed to the protection of Jung Bahadur', who was then dead.

<sup>1</sup> Elgin Papers in the India Office Library. (Elgin to Fowler, 14 Aug. 1894; Elgin to Harris, 11 Aug. 1894; Fowler to Elgin, 12 Oct. 1894).



In his sleep he also 'spoke of Nepal and claimed that if he had his rights he would be the Peshwa'. Some marks on his body also resembled those in Nana Sahib's description. The young officer in excitement telegraphed to Calcutta: 'Have arrested Nana Saheb. Wire instruction.' The reply must have terribly disappointed him. It said, 'Release at once.' The Government was tired of hearing of Nana and decided to put an end to all speculations.<sup>1</sup>

The ghost was laid at last. The case of the 'Gwalior Nana' in 1874 was the last to call for the serious attention of the Government. But stories about Nana Sahib continued to be reported from abroad. A representative of the *Daily Mail* in Constantinople related a story that during the outbreak at Cawnpore Nana Sahib had 'added to his harem' a young girl, Alice Clayton, the 'daughter of a British Captain'. She lived with him for twenty years and then travelled with him to Mecca, where they lived for twenty-two years, and then in Constantinople for ten years, where she died.<sup>2</sup> The story seems extraordinary. There was no Clayton among the list of the dead or survivors at Cawnpore, and all attempts by the Government of India to trace any European woman with the fugitive Nana Sahib in Nepal ended in failure. Another source also reported that in the seventies Nana Sahib was in Mecca. In 1878 'all the Hindustanis in Stamboul believe that the Nana is in Mecca, and talk about it, as if there was not the slightest doubt about it'. One informant claimed to have 'himself seen the Nana (or some one believed to be the Nana)' in Mecca, in February 1878; and 'for the last five or six years'. He was a 'tall, broad-chested man', 'between 60 and 70 years of age,' 'neither very dark, nor very fair.'<sup>3</sup> It was sometimes said that he was a friend of Prince Feroze Shah, a descendant of the Emperor of Delhi, another fugitive, and both were planning the overthrow of British rule in India.<sup>4</sup>

What was then the subsequent fate of Nana Sahib? Did he really die in Nepal, as Jung Bahadur said, or did he return to India? Was he present near Sindhia's palace at Gwalior while his emissary was being arrested? It is perhaps difficult to believe in

<sup>1</sup> Landon, Nepal, i. 170.

<sup>2</sup> For. Sec. Pro. Feb. 1878 (61-116).

<sup>3</sup> Price, *Extra Special Correspondent*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the picture of an ageing Nana Sahib wandering in the Middle East with his English wife. But any of the other suggestions is possible, and the reader may easily be tempted to believe that Nana Sahib was actually seen at Rajkot in 1895, as Landon so ably describes him, 'old, discredited, half-witted . . . still claiming the horrible honour of being himself.' It would have been a more fitting end to his strange career. The historian has his limitations and is tied down to his facts. But it is a comforting thought that sometimes Clio takes a hand and writes a story beyond the scope of the chronicler of facts.



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## GLOSSARY

*attardan*: a tray or pot for keeping perfumes, *attar* is 'essential oil obtained in India from the petals of the flower'. Hobson and Jobson, *A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases* (London. 1903).

*baba logues*: 'usually applied in Anglo-Indian families, by both Europeans and natives, to the children, often in the plural form *bābā lōg* (*lōg* = folk).' Hobson and Jobson.

Here a double plural has been used.

*badmash*: a rogue.

*Bagh-o-Babar*: title of Urdu book, often recommended as a text book to European officers in Indian army.

*babies*: more correctly, *bhais*, brothers.

*bhang*: leaf of hemp, crushed, mixed with other ingredients and usually taken in liquid form; has a narcotic effect.

*brahmakund*: a place of special sanctity; literally a bathing place for gods. *Kunda* means a receptacle for water.

*chaprasi*: a public or private servant, generally wears a badge or plate (*chapras*) with the name of his master or office inscribed on it.

*chaudhuri*: 'the head man of a profession or trade in towns.' Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* (London. 1855).

*chaukidar*: village policeman.

*chitnis*: secretary.

*chob*: staff overlaid with silver, mace.

*chula*: cooking place.

*koss*: about two miles; the measure varies in different parts of India.

*cossid*: a courier or a running messenger.

*crore*: ten million.

*dak* (*dawk*): post.



*dewan*: used in various senses: minister in charge of finance and judiciary, chief minister of an Indian State, also chief officer of an establishment.

*dball*: (*dal*) lentils, strictly split peas.

*dooly*: a litter.

*dour*: to run, to race.

*fadnis*: deputy auditor.

*gangajalwala*: one who brings or keeps water of the Ganges.

*ghat*: a landing place or steps leading to the water in a river or a tank, also a mountain pass.

*ghee*: clarified butter, used for cooking in India.

*godown*: warehouse.

*golabpash*: spray for rose water.

*golondaz*: gunner.

*gomosta*: agent.

*guddee*: throne or a seat of eminence.

*guru*: preceptor or teacher.

*barkara*: a courier or a spy.

*bavildar*: 'a non-commissioned officer (Sepoy) of the Indian army, subordinate to the Subahdar,' also used in the sense of an 'officer in a fort', 'subordinate revenue officer' &c. Wilson.

*bowdah*: 'a chair or framed seat carried by an elephant.' Hobson and Jobson.

*jagir*: from Persian *ja* (place) and *gir* (taking).

'Literally the *place of taking*. An assignment of the government share of the produce of a portion of land to an individual.' One kind was called 'bodily or personal *jaghire*, being for the support of the person of the grantee': the other 'an assignment for the support of any public establishment, particularly of a military nature'. Firminger, *Fifth Report on East India Affair*, III, Glossary.

*jemadar*: 'a native Subaltern officer second to the Subahdar'. Wilson.

*kazi*: Muslim judge.

*khasgi*: 'one's own private or personal property in contradistinction to the revenues or concerns of the State.' Wilson.

*khasgiwala*: 'A title usually given to the confidential minister of

the Peshwa or other Maratha prince, who was especially entrusted with the management of their private receipts and disbursements, or other personal interests.' Wilson.

*khus tatti*: screen made of *khus*, a kind of grass (*vetiver*): placed in front of doors and windows and sprayed with water brings down the temperature in the room.

*kotwal*: an officer in charge of a police outpost, exercised the powers of a magistrate.

*kund*: a pond or receptacle for water.

*lakh (lac)*: 100,000.

*mahajan*: a banker or merchant, a creditor.

*mame*: European woman (*mem sahib*).

*moulvie*: Muslim religious and learned man.

*mazumdar*: auditor and accountant.

*munshi*: secretary; a teacher of Arabic, Persian or Urdu languages.

*nachbatra*: literally star; here 'auspicious planet' is meant.

*nautch*: dance, usually performed by women.

*nullab (also nulla)*: a ditch or stream.

*pagreewalla*: one who wears a turban (*pagri*), an Indian, as opposed to *topiwalla*, one who wears a hat, a European.

*palankeen*: 'a box litter for travelling in, with a pole projecting before and behind, which is borne on the shoulders of 4 or 6 men.' Hobson and Jobson.

*palkee (palki)*: same as *palankeen*.

*palki-gharee*: 'a carriage shaped somewhat like a palanquin on wheels.' Hobson and Jobson.

*paltan*: platoon.

*panchayat*: a committee of five persons, acts as a jury or a court of arbitration.

*pandan*: tray for betel leaves, *pan* is betel leaf.

*pankha*: fan in general. Here it means 'large, fixed, and swinging fan, formed of cloth stretched on a rectangular frame, and suspended from the ceiling, which is used to agitate the air in hot weather'. Hobson and Jobson.

One could see these in the country some forty or fifty years ago, but now they have completely vanished.

*patel*: headman of a village.

*patwari*: village accountant.

*potnis*: cash keeper.

*puja*: worship.

*sadbu*: a mendicant, literally an honest man.

*sanad*: a document, a patent or a deed of grant.

*sati*: also spelt *suttee*. A Hindu woman who burnt herself on the pyre of her dead husband; also used to describe this custom.

*sbastras*: ancient religious books of the Hindus.

*sower* (*sowar*): a horseman.

*sūbā*: province; sometimes used in the sense of Subedar, a governor.

*subedar*: 'a native officer in the Company's army holding a rank equivalent to that of Captain under the European officers,' Wilson. It also means a governor or a viceroy in the Mughal times.

*tal*: a lake.

*teen*: three.

*tees*: thirty.

*terai*: 'a belt of marshy and jungle land which runs along the foot of the Himalaya north of the Ganges,' Hobson and Jobson.

*thana*: police outpost.

*thanadar*: officer in charge of a police outpost.



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*The Royal Library, Windsor*

The library contains various documents about Nana Sahib; but these are transcriptions of records in the India Office Library or the National Archives of India. There is, however, among Queen Victoria's papers a miniature, one of the few genuine portraits of Nanā Sahib, sent by Lord Northbrook from India.

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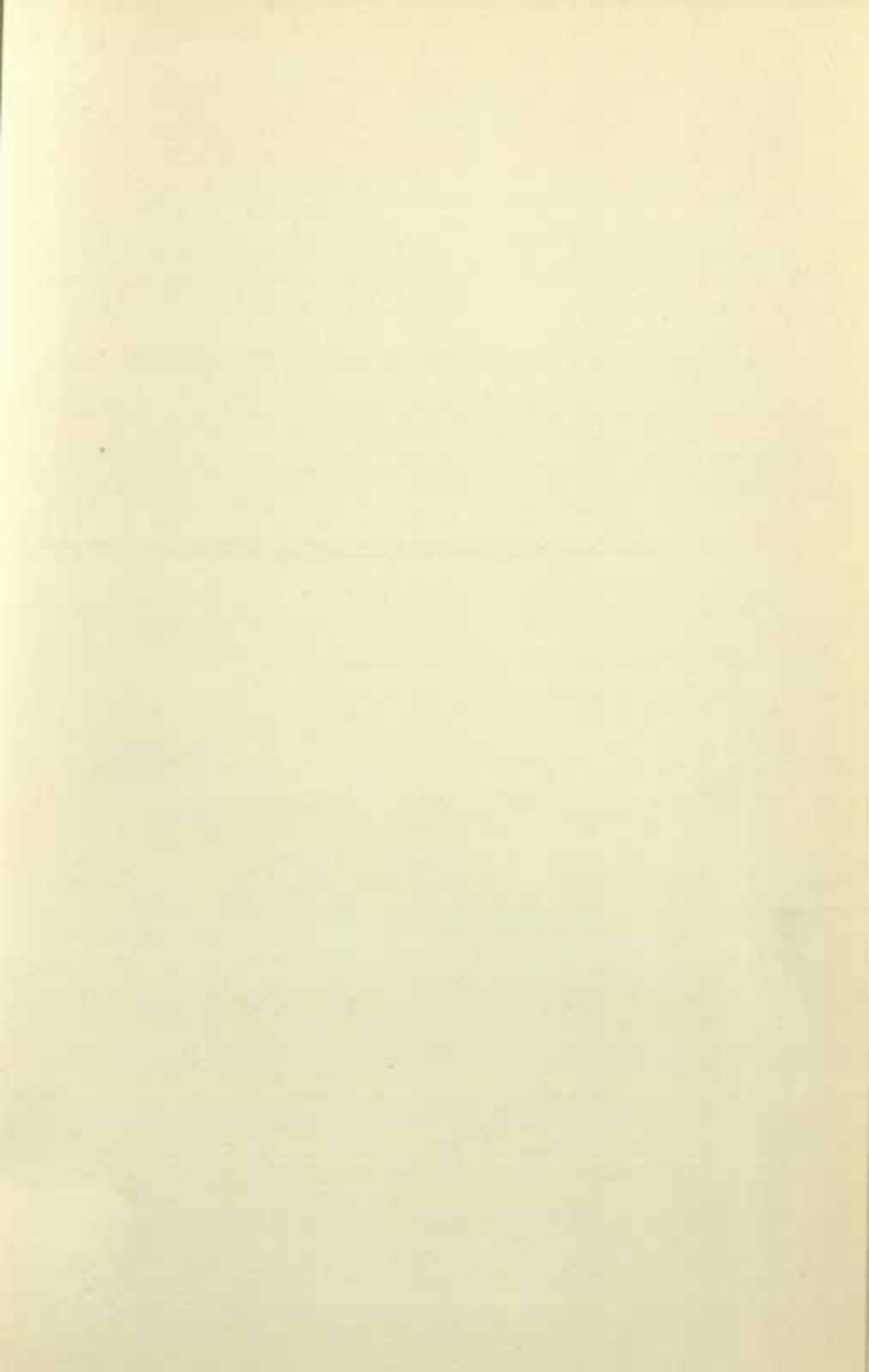
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