



EAST INDIA (BURMA REBELLION)

REPORT ON THE
REBELLION IN BURMA

up to 3rd May, 1931,

AND

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF BURMA,

19th MAY, 1931.

*Presented by the Secretary of State for India
to Parliament by Command of His Majesty
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Report on the Rebellion in Burma, up to 3rd May, 1931.

The first outbreak occurred on the night of the 22nd December, 1930, in villages in the south-east corner of the Tharrawaddy district, a few miles from Tharrawaddy Town, which lies about 75 miles north of Rangoon on the Rangoon-Prome railway line. Even in Burmese times Tharrawaddy had an evil reputation as a criminal and restless district, and it is still notorious for the same reasons. In recent years it has become the favourite resort of political agitators. Numerous *athins* or village societies have been formed in the district. Many speeches have been delivered, all preaching disaffection against the Government. Many of these speeches were particularly directed against the capitation tax. This tax is the mainstay of the revenue in the neighbouring Kingdom of Siam, but in recent years it has been the target of political attack in Burma. The result of the campaign was a general refusal to pay the tax in parts of this district in the cold weather of 1927-28, and strong measures had to be taken to put down this movement. A strong force of Military Police was sent to the area, and punitive police were subsequently imposed on the worst villages. A large number of the village societies were also declared unlawful under the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908. These measures were successful and it is noteworthy that the area which gave trouble in 1928 has taken little part in the present rebellion. In 1929 and for the greater part of 1930 the district was to all appearances quiet. The local societies were quiescent. There were very few political meetings, and there was no indication either that there would be any resistance to the payment of the capitation tax in the present year, or that a rebellion would break out. When the rebellion did break out, therefore, the district authorities were taken entirely by surprise. They had received no warning from the village headmen, or from police surveillance patrols. It is true that a few days before the outbreak occurred the District Superintendent of Police had received an anonymous petition to say that trouble was brewing in the area where the outbreak took place. Two Police Officers were sent out to the area, and they reported that they had been unable to discover any signs of trouble. This is the first point which requires notice. It may seem surprising that the district authorities were taken so entirely by surprise: but in former years both in Lower and in Upper Burma attacks on police stations have been made and districts have rebelled with absolute secrecy and without warning.

2. Within a few hours it was realised that the outbreak was on a large scale. Two headmen and a Deputy Ranger of Forests were killed on the first night, and several villages were raided and guns stolen. A small Civil Police party which went out from Tharrawaddy at once came in contact with a mob numbering 400 or 500 people. A hundred Military Police were sent out from Rangoon on the 23rd December and arrangements made for further reinforcements if required. The rising rapidly spread to villages in the north of the neighbouring district of Insein, where the rebels adopted the same tactics of attacking villages for the sake of obtaining guns and killing the headmen and any other gun holders who refused to surrender them. On the night of the 23rd December they attacked the small railway station of Inywa, a few miles north of Tharrawaddy, and broke up the telegraph instruments. They also burnt a number of houses in the village and killed a Chinaman and two Indians. The next day, Mr. Fields-Clarke, Forest Engineer, was murdered in camp at Weywa, and further raids on villages were reported. As no more Military Police were available immediately, troops had to be called out, and arrangements were made to send a company of the 2/15th Punjabis on the 26th. On the night of the 25th, news was received of an attack on a post of 50 Military Police by several hundred rebels. The first report gave the impression that the Military Police had broken and retreated in disorder. Later information showed that this was not the case, but that on the contrary they had inflicted a large number of casualties on the rebels, and had only been forced to retire from lack of ammunition in the face of heavy odds. The situation was evidently so serious that a company of the Buffs was immediately sent up, in addition to the company of the Punjabis, and the next day the whole battalion of the 3/20th Burma Rifles was requisitioned from Maymyo. They reached Tharrawaddy on the 28th December, and command of the troops and the Military Police was then taken over by Colonel Spankie, Officer Commanding 3/20th Burma Rifles. By this time it was estimated that between 1,200 and 1,500 rebels were out, and they had looted about 30 guns and one or two rifles and a considerable amount of ammunition.

3. There was evidently a definite organisation behind the rising. Most of the rebels were reported to be wearing uniforms and were also tattooed in order to make them invulnerable. Information was obtained of a mysterious leader whose name was ascertained to be Sava San, and of a headquarters, considered by the rebels as their "king's palace," in the forests, 10 or 15 miles east of Tharrawaddy. An attack on his palace by the Burma Rifles was arranged and the battalion, after marching through very difficult country, reached it on the afternoon of the 31st December. Only a small number of men were found at the headquarters, and 17 were killed. Unfortunately, it was considered impossible to remain

in this exposed position for the night, and there was insufficient time to examine the palace and its contents. The whole place was therefore hurriedly burnt, and the battalion returned to a safer camping ground. It was hoped that this affair would have a great effect in stamping out the rebellion; but though it had some temporary effect, it was not as lasting as was expected at the time, and it is doubtful whether any important leaders were among those who were killed. On every occasion on which the Police had met the rebels, the latter suffered heavy casualties, and their belief in invulnerability was obviously shaken because after the first few days of January they showed very little disposition to attack the Police, and during the whole of the month of January the rebels avoided contact with the Government forces in the Tharrawaddy and Insein Districts. The main body of the rebels retreated into the foot-hills of the Pegu Yomas which bound the two districts on the east.

4. To meet this situation it was first decided to put a cordon of posts along the foot-hills with the object of intercepting the rebels if they raided into the plains, and patrols were carried out between the posts. The rebels, however, continued to avoid contact with the troops, and had little difficulty in slipping between the cordon of posts. Accordingly a drive through the Yomas was organised, and a column of Military Police under the command of Captain Conner of the 2/15th Punjabis marched up from the north-east corner of the Insein District along the Yomas. The object was to locate any rebel camps that might exist in the Yomas, and if possible to drive the rebels down on to the cordon of Military posts along the edge of the foot-hills. The jungle, however, was so thick that practically no rebels were seen.

5. In the middle of February, therefore, the whole situation was reviewed. It was considered that the rebellion would pursue exactly the same course as similar rebellions had followed in the past, that the rebels would continue to avoid collision with the Government forces except where they could surprise them or otherwise get them at a disadvantage, and that what was now mainly to be feared was an outbreak of dacoities in which local bad characters would take part all over the disturbed area. In other words it was thought that conditions in Tharrawaddy and in the north of Insein would become much the same as they were in the same area just after the annexation of Upper Burma. It was decided, therefore, that the problem had become a police problem rather than a military problem, and that since it had now become possible greatly to strengthen the force of Military Police in Tharrawaddy and Insein, the 3/20th Burma Rifles might safely be withdrawn. Accordingly, the disaffected area in Tharrawaddy, which measured some 800 square miles, was divided up into 16 squares or areas, and in each area a mixed force of civil and military police under the command of a European officer was stationed.

At the same time, by arrangement with the Military authorities a company of the 2/15th Punjabis was stationed at Tharrawaddy in order that it might be used as a striking force and sent to any place where it might be required. The object of this area scheme was to make a beginning with the restoration of civil administration in the disaffected tract. The area forces were required generally to keep order in their squares, to prevent outrages, and to arrest dacoits. They were instructed to organise their own local intelligence services, and it was hoped that the presence of a force of this kind within a comparatively small area would create such confidence in the villagers that they would come forward to assist the Government by giving information and would also be encouraged to resist dacoits. It took some time to get the scheme into working order, and dacoities continued to be numerous at the end of February and in the beginning of March. The scheme, however, had an early success. Shortly after it had been brought into force, the rebels attacked a post at Zaingthwe, west of the railway, and were repulsed with very heavy losses, at least 35 being left dead on the field. This reverse did much to break up the gang, known as the Krishnamutu's gang, operating in this part of the district. One effect of the scheme, however, was that the rebels finding it very difficult to operate in Tharrawaddy moved down to the north of Insein District, which had been quiet for several weeks, and the distribution of troops and Police had to be altered in order to meet this situation. A decisive success was, however, obtained in the Insein District on the 25th of March. On this day the rebels attacked a small Police outpost at a place called Kinpadi, which they had twice previously attacked. They were driven off, leaving a number of dead behind; and on the same day a column which had gone out under Mr. Stewart, District Superintendent of Police, and Captain Connor of the 2/15th Punjabis succeeded, with the aid of a wounded rebel whom they found trying to make his way back from Kinpadi, in discovering three rebel camps in the forests in the north-east of the Insein District. These camps were cleverly concealed in extremely difficult country, and the troops incurred great risk in attacking them. The engagement, however, was completely successful. A large number of rebels were killed, among them being two very important leaders, Saya San and Han Tha. The losses of the rebels were not exactly known, but from information subsequently received it is believed that nearly a hundred were killed in action or died of wounds received in action. There were no Government casualties. This decisive victory has had an excellent effect in checking the rebellion in the Insein District.

6. The position in the Tharrawaddy and Insein Districts at the beginning of May, may be described as follows:—The military

police in these two districts had been reinforced by 728 men, and additional civil police had also been raised in both districts. There were troops at Okkan in the Insein District, at Tharrawaddy itself, and at Zigon in the north of the district, the role of these troops being to maintain confidence among the people and to act as striking forces wherever required. Dacoities still continued in both districts, but they were becoming fewer. Cases of resistance on the part of villagers to such dacoities were becoming more numerous. In January it had been found necessary to recall guns from isolated villages and in most cases the villagers were only too glad to be relieved of them. Subsequently, however, many villagers had asked to be supplied with guns to enable them to defend themselves, and in some cases they had resisted dacoits with success. Loyal Karen villagers had rendered excellent service in this respect. One of the large gangs known to be operating in the district, namely Krishnamutu's gang, had been completely broken up and Krishnamutu himself had been wounded and captured. Two other gangs were believed to be operating in the district, one led by one San Htu, an ex-soldier, and the other believed to be led by a leader called Aung Myat. These gangs were reported to be in hiding in the Pegu Yomas and a party of Chin military police, who are accustomed to jungle warfare, had been sent to the district, and arrangements made to round up both gangs. A careful study has been made of the methods employed by Sir Charles Crosthwaite in 1886 and 1887, and some of the measures then found successful had been adopted. Liberal rewards had been offered for the capture of *bohs* or leaders of gangs, and free pardons had been offered to any rebel surrendering proclaimed leaders or giving information leading to their capture. Action was being taken under Section 20 of the Village Act against villagers known to be harbouring or assisting dacoit gangs, and many rebel sympathisers had been deported to a concentration camp at Tharrawaddy. Permanent arrangements have since been made for the maintenance of order in the district. Selected police stations have been strengthened by a guard of Military Police, and a number of additional police stations have been established. It is doubtful whether sporadic dacoities will cease before the rains break, but it is hoped that, as the result of the measures taken, order will eventually be restored.

7. So far this report has been confined to the events in the Tharrawaddy and Insein districts. It remains now to refer briefly to the risings which took place in other districts of the Province. The first of these occurred in Yamethin District, about 275 miles north of Rangoon on the Mandalay line on the 4th of January. This rising was organised by a *pongyi*, who had recently come from Tharrawaddy, but it is not certain whether he was acting under the orders of any central organisation or whether he started the

rising on his own initiative in sympathy with that in Tharrawaddy. He succeeded in recruiting 40 or 50 men and raided two or three villages, killing a headman and a Police Constable and capturing one or two guns. The district authorities acted with great promptness and went out at once with parties of Military Police, including mounted infantry, for whom this part of the country is eminently suitable. The rebels had not expected such prompt measures to be taken against them, and they were run down before the outbreak had a chance of spreading, and in two or three days, the whole band, including the leader, was accounted for and they are now under trial. The organisation in this district does not appear to have been in any way as elaborate as in Tharrawaddy and elsewhere, and the surrounding villages showed little disposition to join the rebels.

8. The next rising which occurred was in the Dedaye Township of the Pyapon District south-west of Rangoon on the 7th of January. Here there had been careful organisation and subsequent inquiries indicate that this organisation was made under the instructions of Saya San, who organised the Tharrawaddy rebellion. He is known to have visited Pyapon, and local leaders from Pyapon are known to have visited him in the Tharrawaddy District. Reports of impending trouble reached the district authorities before it actually broke out, and they were already on their way to the spot when the outbreak occurred. Practically all the inhabitants of four or five villages in the extreme south-east corner of the district close to the sea joined in this rising. The locality, however, was very much less suitable to the rebels than that in the Tharrawaddy District. The country is an open paddy plain with a narrow belt of not very thick jungle along the coast, and there is nothing corresponding to the dense forests on the east of the Tharrawaddy District to give cover to large bodies of rebels. The Deputy Commissioner and the District Superintendent of Police, who had a Military Police party with them, were met in the paddy fields by 600 or 700 rebels, whose only arms consisted of *dahs* and spears and about three shot guns. The rebels were, however, so convinced of their invulnerability that they advanced openly against the Police, shouting out that they were going to kill them, and continued to advance in spite of being warned that the Police would open fire. This the Police were finally compelled to do, and they had to continue firing for about an hour and a half before the rebels finally retreated, leaving behind them 30 or 40 dead. This summary defeat at the outset completely crushed this rising. It only took two or three days to search the small area of jungle into which the rebels had retreated and to comb out all the villages in the neighbourhood. Some 600 men were arrested, of whom about 500 were subsequently released as having taken quite an unimportant part in the rising, and 103 were eventually sent up for trial. Two or three of the most important leaders unfortunately escaped, but one [Maung Aung Hla]—probably the most

important of all—was subsequently captured in Upper Burma and has been brought to trial. The speedy rounding up of these rebels prevented their breaking up into dacoit gangs, and there has been no further trouble in the Pyapon District.

9. The next district in which an outbreak occurred was Henzada, which lies on the west bank of the Irrawaddy opposite Tharrawaddy. The two districts are closely connected, and it was no surprise that Henzada should follow the example of Tharrawaddy. The outbreak, however, did not occur on the district border, but in the centre of the district west of the railway line which runs from Henzada to Myanaung. In this area, two attacks were made on the same day in February by parties, one of over 100 and one of about 50 villagers, one on the Township Officer and one on the Assistant Township Officer, who were on tour separately. The course of events in Henzada has followed very closely that in the Tharrawaddy District. There was at the moment only a small force of Military Police at the district headquarters, and though reinforcements were sent as quickly as possible from Rangoon, it was impossible to gain contact with the main body of rebels, who had behind them a large block of forests on the west of the district in which they could take refuge as the Tharrawaddy rebels did in the Pegu Yoma forests on the east. A company of the 2/15th Punjabis and 100 extra Military Police have been sent to the district and the disaffected areas have been thoroughly combed out, more than 900 arrests having been made. Dacoities are still numerous, and the situation is not yet under control.

10. Bassein was the next district to cause anxiety. It is known that tattooing had been started in certain villages on the Henzada border, and it is probable that a rising was contemplated. But the district authorities got wind of the impending trouble and prompt action was taken. The tattooed persons were arrested and charged under the security sections of the Criminal Procedure Code and it is hoped that trouble has been averted. As a measure of precaution, however, the military police in the district has been reinforced.

11. There have been similar alarms in other districts, and early in May a band of rebels slipped across from Insein into the adjoining district of Ma-ubin. But district officers are on the alert and in most districts trouble has so far been averted. An exception is Thayetmye where a serious outbreak occurred in April, the scene of the trouble being the Kama township in the extreme south of the district. Reports received indicate that this outbreak was organised by a *pongyi* [named U Arthapa], who is believed to have been largely responsible for the rising in Henzada and who escaped from there. He made his way to the Kama Township of the Thayetmye district, where he organised a rising on the usual lines in a group of villages well

known for their political tendencies. Rumours reached the district authorities early in April, and the District Superintendent of Police went down the river to Kama and set out with a party of military police. On the very day that he marched out, an attack by 80 to 100 villagers was made on a village headmen's conference at a village some 10 or 12 miles from Kama. One headman and a veterinary assistant, who happened to be at the conference and who was apparently mistaken for a Sub-Inspector of Police, were murdered in the most brutal and coldblooded manner, and their guns were taken by the rebels. Subsequent events have been on exactly the same lines as elsewhere. The rebels, some of whom were tattooed and some of whom wore rosaries, were convinced of their invulnerability, and on 21st April a party of several hundred attacked a military police outpost of 25 men, and came to sufficiently close quarters slightly to wound nine policemen with shot guns, two or three of which were the only firearms they possessed. As usual, they were repulsed with heavy losses, leaving 15 dead behind. Reinforcements of military police and troops have been sent to the district and on the 23rd April a small party of mounted infantry were fiercely attacked by a large band of rebels at Imbe a few miles north of Kama. The Mounted Infantry were reinforced by a platoon of the 2/15th Punjabis, and the rebels were driven off with heavy loss: 42 rebel corpses were picked up after the engagement, and it is believed that at least 100 were killed or wounded. It was hoped that this severe defeat would result in the collapse of the rebellion as happened in Pyapon, but this hope has not been fulfilled. The whole of that part of the district which lies south of the Thayetmyo-Mindon road is still in a very disturbed condition. One party of rebels has raided into Prome and others have committed dacoities in the north of the district. A strong force of Military Police has been sent to deal with them and arrangements are being made to send more troops to the district.

12. The above completes the narrative of the course of the rebellion up to date and of the measures taken to deal with it. It should be emphasised that in taking these measures the Local Government has acted throughout in close consultation with the Military authorities and that in particular they have freely availed themselves of the advice of Major-General Coningham, C.B., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding Burma Independent District, and of Brigadier C. F. Watson, C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding Rangoon Brigade Area.

13. Full details of casualties on the Government side have since been collected. All that can be said now is that having regard to the wide area covered by the rebellion and the number of rebels, casualties among the troops and Military Police have been remarkably few. U Maung Maung Gale, a

Deputy Superintendent of Police, was killed in action. Mr. A. C. Smith, District Superintendent of Police, Thayetmyo, was grievously wounded by gun-shot in an engagement in the Thayetmyo district. Captain Rust and Captain G. F. Jones of the Military Police were wounded in the arm and leg respectively and have had to proceed home on disability leave. A Subadar of the Military Police was also seriously wounded in action and will probably have to retire on pension. Mr. Fields-Clarke a Forest Engineer, was murdered at the beginning of the rebellion and two other officers, Mr. Peacock, a Deputy Conservator of Forests, and Dr. Iyer, Civil Surgeon of Insein, received wounds on the head which necessitated treatment in hospital. In addition a number of subordinate officers and men of the Civil and Military Police have been killed or wounded in action, and there have also been murders particularly among the subordinate officers and men of the Forest Department. Many village headmen have also been murdered, it being part of the policy of the rebels to render administration and the collection of revenue impossible. Rebel casualties have been far heavier. The number of killed and wounded will probably never be accurately known, but it is estimated that the number is in the neighbourhood of 1,000 in all the districts concerned. The reckless way in which the rebels, armed for the most part only with *dahs*, have attacked well-armed parties of troops and police accounts for their heavy casualties. There has been a certain amount of damage to Government property, and quite a number of isolated Forest Rest Houses having been burnt. Numerous arrests have been made in all the disturbed districts.

14. It now remains to explain the causes of the rebellion as the Local Government sees them, and to make a general appreciation of the present situation and of the prospects of the rebellion spreading or breaking out again in the next cold weather.

15. As regards the causes it is well known :—

- (1) that the Burman is by nature restless and excitable ;
- (2) that in spite of a high standard of literacy the Burman peasantry are incredibly ignorant and superstitious, the belief in the efficacy of charms and tattooing as conferring invulnerability being still widespread ; and
- (3) that such rebellions are usually started with the object of overthrowing the Government, the history of Burma being a record of sudden and successful rebellions usually ending in the seizure of the throne and there being many prophecies current especially in Upper Burma that the throne of the King of Burma will be won again.

16. It should also be mentioned that special factors combined in 1930 to create the conditions favourable for a rebellious outbreak. The political ferment of the last two years had disturbed men's

minds. Prices had been falling, and though the really big drop in the price of rice did not begin until after the rebellion had started, the Burman peasantry had already begun to feel the pinch. Minds were also disturbed by the earthquakes at Pegu and Pyu which were regarded as portents and by the rioting between the Burmans and Indians in Rangoon last May, which rioting ended, so Burmans thought, in a Burman victory.

17. The actual leader of the rebellion was one Saya San. He is a native of the Shwebo District in Upper Burma, the district which furnished most of the recruits to the army of the Burmese Kings and which is well known as the home of pretenders and leaders of rebellions. He has spent a considerable part of his life in Lower Burma and in Siam, and has been in turn, a *pongyi*, a quack doctor, and a fortune teller. He has been twice convicted of running lotteries, and was once tried for murder but was acquitted. There is reason to believe that he conceived the idea of the rebellion as far back as 1928, but it was not till 1930, that he settled down in Tharrawaddy, evidently having selected this district by reason of its reputation as the scene of his operations. Nothing is known of his activities, before November, but it is certain that before this, he had begun preparations for the rebellion. Information, however, has been obtained about his activities in November and December, and it has been established that he made active preparations for a rising in Tharrawaddy, Insein and Pyapon districts. It is clear that the object of the rising was to overthrow the Government. It is known that Saya San proclaimed himself King of the Galons, and that he issued a proclamation (of which a copy has been obtained) declaring war upon the British. His appeal was mainly to the credulity, ignorance and superstition of the peasantry. Tattooing was freely resorted to. Rebels were tattooed with the "galon" and were styled the Galon army. The *galon* or *garuda* of Hindu Mythology is a fabulous bird which destroys the *naga* or snake. The *naga* is the emblem of the foreigner. Thus the *galon* emblem was in itself a symbol of victory over the British. It is probable that he also exploited the dislike of the capitation tax, but the Government regard it as certain that the rebellion was a definite attempt suddenly to overthrow the Government and that it was almost entirely political in origin. It cannot be said for certain whether there was any central organization behind Saya San. All that can be said is that probably there was some kind of organization of this kind.

18. In support of the view that the rebellion was primarily political rather than economic in its origin, it has already been pointed out that Saya San's preparations began before the real slump in the price of rice and paddy began. The months of November and December, 1930, were not a period of distress in Tharrawaddy and Insein. A bumper crop of paddy was being reaped, and though there was a considerable shortage of cash, there

was no lack of food, and though paddy prices were falling, there was no reason then to anticipate that the fall would be as serious as it has since turned out to be. The collection of taxes had not yet started. Capitation tax falls due only on the 1st of January, and land revenue not till the 15th of February, and it is quite untrue to state, as has been said, that the rebellion was directly caused by oppression on the part of tax collectors. At the same time it is reasonable to believe that economic depression has contributed to the spread of rebellion. Burma, especially Lower Burma, lives on its paddy crop, and the price of paddy has fallen to less than Rs. 70 per 100 baskets—a price lower than anything within the memory of living man. Since the war the average price has been well over Rs. 150. The rebellion has been spread largely by the activities of itinerant *pongyis*. All classes of agriculturists have been hit terribly hard by the disastrous fall in the price of paddy, and economic distress no doubt helped to make them lend a ready ear to inflammatory preaching against the Government, especially as the *pongyis* were careful to select for their operations villages which were strongholds of *wunthanu athins*. It is no doubt true also that what is generally regarded as the failure of the Government to put down the rising in Tharrawaddy, Insein and Henzada has contributed to the spread of the rebellion and the tendency of the vernacular press has been to foster this impression. No allowance is made for the difficulties of the task. It took four years to pacify Burma after the annexation of Upper Burma, and the country was described by Sir George White in 1886 as itself "one vast military obstacle." It has already been pointed out that after their early defeats the rebels in Tharrawaddy and Insein have avoided contact with the Government Forces. One or two large gangs are believed to exist. They hide in the thick jungle at the foot of the hills, and they get early information of the approach of bodies of Military Police and they slip away further into the hills. For the rest, the problem may be described in the words of Sir Thirkell White on page 222 of his book "A Civil Servant in Burma." Speaking of the post-annexation period in Lower Burma he said, "it was not so much a question of dealing . . . with organised resistance on a large scale as of suppressing countless small isolated gangs." The difficulty is enhanced by the lack of information, even loyal villagers being afraid to report the movement of dacoits.

19. Another potent factor in the present situation is the rising tide of national feeling in Burma. The Burman has always been proud of his race. The war and the political ferment succeeding the war tended to foster national consciousness, and the feeling has been increased recently by the visit of the Indian Statutory Commission and by the separation controversy. The "victory" of the Burmans in the Rangoon riots gave a further impetus to

this feeling. It has tended to assume a racial bias against Europeans and Chinamen as well as against Indians. In this respect the repercussion has been felt of events in India. The Burman, however, does not readily respond to the same kind of agitation as the Indian. It is true that a movement for the boycott of foreign cloth and of cigarettes has recently been started, but it is doubtful whether a movement of this kind will long command general support among the Burmans. The volunteer movement, which again has been copied from India, is more dangerous while it lasts. But open rebellion headed by a real live pretender appeals at once to Burman imagination and their amazing superstition leads them to believe in the efficacy of charms and magic. This is the reason why a charlatan like Saya San can easily in Burma become a pretender to the throne and can raise an army to fight the British Government.

20. A dangerous development of this national feeling aided and abetted by economic causes has been the growth of communal feeling against the Indians. This feeling first manifested itself in the Rangoon riots of May last. These riots were primarily economic in origin. The Burman in Rangoon was beginning to feel the pinch of hard times and, when the stevedore strike broke out in the beginning of May last year, many Burmans were taken on as shipping labourers by the stevedore firms. When the strike came to an end, some of these Burman labourers were summarily discharged by certain stevedore firms. This led to rioting between the Burmans and the Indians in which the Indians were severely handled. One reason was that the Burmans were definitely attracted by the rate of pay offered for stevedore labour, which labour they had formerly never undertaken. A further outbreak of communal feeling directed against the Indians took place in March this year on the borders of Pegu and Toungoo districts. It subsequently spread to the north of the Toungoo district and since then it has broken out in parts of the Hanthawaddy and other districts. There have been a number of assaults on Indians in these districts and burning of their field huts and strawstacks. There is no doubt that this trouble is largely economic. Until recently the average Burman found no difficulty in supporting himself comfortably, and he then tolerated the existence of the Indian labourer in Burma. Conditions have now changed. In the first place, a number of Indians have settled down as permanent cultivators in Lower Burma districts and the Burman now finds himself living side by side with a considerable Indian population who by reason of their lower standard of living are able to offer higher rents than he can. In the second place, economic pressure has compelled the Burman to take to cooly work more than he needed to in previous times and he is beginning to feel the competition of the Indian labourer, with which he finds it hard to compete, as the standard of living

of the Indian labourer is much lower than his own. These causes combined with the rising tide of national feeling in Burma have produced ebullitions of bad feeling and of violence which it is extremely difficult to deal with. It is very difficult to prevent villagers from going out at night, one or two at a time, and setting fire to isolated huts where Indians are living alone in the fields. Every possible measure to stop these acts of violence is being taken and patrols have been started in the most affected parts. It is difficult, however, to get evidence as the sympathy of the villagers is entirely with their own people and there is the risk of this disturbance spreading to other districts.

21. To sum up, the Government of Burma believe that the rebellion began by a definite attempt to overthrow the Government in a district specially selected by reason of its history and traditions. The rebellion has been spread mainly by disaffected *pongyis* who have been helped by unexampled economic depression, by the failure of Government immediately to suppress the rising in Tharrawaddy and Insein and by a general access of national feeling among Burmans directed primarily against Indians, but also against Europeans and Chinamen.

22. The present position is that rebellion has broken out in the districts of Tharrawaddy, Insein, Henzada, Pyapon, Thayetmyo and Prome. In Pyapon it has been suppressed, but the other districts are still in a disturbed state. Some rebel gangs are still at large and may still give trouble, but generally speaking the rising has degenerated into an orgy of small dacoities. These dacoities will probably peter out as the rains make the country impassable. In some other districts there have been alarms, but so far vigilance on the part of the district officers has averted trouble. A complicating factor of the situation is the spread of communal feeling on the part of Burmans against Indians in the Pegu, Toungoo, and Hanthawaddy districts. It is possible that when the rains have set in and Lower Burma becomes impassable, the rebellion may spread to the dry zone and to Upper Burma generally.

23. As has already been explained, the Government of Burma in dealing with the situation have acted in close consultation with the Military Authorities. Applying the experience gained in the closely analogous situation which supervened after the annexation of Upper Burma, they have regarded the problem as one for the Police rather than for the Military. All available Military Police have been concentrated in the disaffected districts and in the districts where there has been trouble between Burmans and Indians, and the troops have been used in support of the civil power.

24. His Excellency the Governor in Council wishes to take this opportunity of recording his gratitude to the General Officer Commanding Burma Independent District, and to the Brigadier.

Rangoon Brigade Area, for the assistance which has been rendered by the Military Authorities in the last few months. It was necessary to enlist the aid of the Military at very short notice at the beginning of the operations, and all the demands which have been made by the Local Government have been met without demur and with the greatest promptitude. The Governor in Council also wishes to record his great appreciation of the services rendered by District Officers and by the Police, both Military and Civil, who have shown in the most trying conditions a spirit of unswerving loyalty and of undaunted courage in situations at times of great danger, and of marked moderation in the face of extreme provocation. He also wishes to thank the officers of other services, and gentlemen, mainly in the employment of various business firms in Burma, who have volunteered for active service against the rebels, and have given great assistance to Government.

Press Communiqué issued by the Government of Burma on the 19th May, 1931.

The situation in regard to the rebellion has again been reviewed by the Government of Burma in consultation with the General Officer Commanding, Burma Independent District, and the following statement is issued for general information.

2. The garrison of Burma has now been reinforced by a battalion from India, and the main question under discussion has been whether this new battalion should be used to reinforce the troops and other Government forces in the rebel areas.

3. Two battalions are now operating in those areas, the 2/15th Punjab Regiment and the 3/20th Burma Rifles. One company of the 2/15th Punjabis is in the Henzada district and the rest of the regiment is distributed along the railway line in the Prome, Tharrawaddy and Insein districts. Two platoons of the 3/20th Burma Rifles are in Prome and two at Yenangyung. The rest of the battalion is in Thayetmyo district.

4. In Thayetmyo district the rebels have sustained severe defeats on three occasions recently; at Yenatha on 21st April, at Inbe on 23rd April and at Mezali Ywama on 7th May. In these engagements they are known to have lost more than 100 killed and wounded and many prisoners have been captured. The rebellion is confined to the area south of the Thayetmyo-Mindon Road. Posts have been established in this area, and more columns of troops and military police are also operating.

5. In Prome two platoons of the 3/20th Burma Rifles and two platoons of the 2/15th Punjabis are operating in addition to more than 100 military police. The only rising in this district took place in four villages near Wettigan, at one of which Mr. Austin and a party of civil police were surprised, with the result that Mr. Austin, an inspector of police, and a number of constables were killed. A party of military police came into contact with the rebels the same day and dispersed them, killing seven and wounding others. As far as is known the rebellion is purely local and has not spread beyond the four villages implicated, but the rebels have disappeared, probably into the Yomas.

6. In Tharrawaddy and Insein the rebels have for the most part avoided contact with the troops and military police since their defeats at the end of December. Some of them formed themselves into gangs under *Bohs* or leaders of local importance and these gangs have retreated to hiding places in the jungles and hills. Others have gone back to their villages and formed themselves into

smaller gangs for the purpose of robbery and dacoity. The measures taken to meet this situation have been based on the experience of similar rebellions of the past, and they have been taken with the concurrence and approval of the military authorities with whom Government has maintained close touch. The troops have been stationed at strategic centres along the railway line and have been used as a striking force wherever required. The patrolling of the disturbed area and the search for gangs have been entrusted for the most part to military police, though in some places the troops have also rendered valuable service in this respect. 728 additional military police have been concentrated in the disturbed area. They have been divided into parties from 25 to 30 each under a European officer and each party has its own area. The military police are not so highly trained as regular troops, but they are quite capable of dealing with the rebels and have defeated them wherever they have come into contact with them. Also they are more mobile than regular troops and less tied to transport. It was for this reason that they were created by Sir Charles Crosthwaite and they have rendered excellent service. In addition, a large number of extra civil police have been enlisted. Liberal rewards have been offered for the capture of *bohs* or leaders of gangs, and free pardons have been offered to any rebel surrendering proclaimed leaders or giving information leading to their capture. Action is being taken under section 20 of the Village Act against villagers known to be harbouring or assisting dacoit gangs and many of the rebel sympathisers have been deported to a concentration camp at Tharrawaddy. Loyal villagers have been armed and have been encouraged to resist dacoits. Additional police stations are being established and some of the more important ones are being converted into armed police stations. The casualties among the Government forces have been remarkably small, but a number of village headmen and of loyal villagers have been murdered by rebels. Exact figures of rebel casualties have not yet been collected, but it is known that several hundred have been killed and wounded and more than one thousand have been arrested. The nature of the country makes it extremely difficult to exterminate gangs hiding in the hills and it is equally difficult to hunt down numerous gangs operating over a wide area. But one large gang operating in the Bilin area has been broken up and its leader has been captured. On the 23rd March Captain Conner, Mr. Stewart, District Superintendent of Police, of Insein, and a detachment of the 2/15th Punjabis, surprised and stormed three rebel camps in the Insein district. Two well known leaders and many rebels were killed. On the 13th May four camps which probably were the headquarters of the Tharrawaddy and Insein rebels were discovered and attacked. The rebels fled, sustaining loss, and ammunition, large quantities of food and many valuable

documents were captured. Small sporadic dacoities still continue, but have decreased in number.

7. In Henzada a rising broke out in February. A company of the 2/15th Punjabis and 100 military police have been sent to the district and the disaffected areas are being thoroughly combed out. More than 900 arrests have been made. Here again, there are one of two gangs in hiding in the Arakan Yomas and sporadic dacoities are continuing. Raids are occasionally made by rebels from Tharrawaddy and Insein into this district. Raiding parties surprised the civil police posts at Ahpyauk and Ledu and another recently made an attack on the police station at Henzada.

8. Risings occurred in Pyapon and Yamethin, but were rapidly suppressed. Reports of tattooing, which has been the usual preliminary to a rising, have been received from Bassein and some other districts. Hitherto, however, the vigilance on the part of district authorities has averted the outbreak of trouble.

9. The main question which has been under discussion is whether martial law should be proclaimed in the rebel areas and whether these areas should be handed over to military control. The military authorities, while they consider that the situation should be carefully watched and that cut-and-dried plans should be prepared for handing over these areas if necessary, have advised the Government that no immediate advantage would be secured by their taking over the rebellious areas, especially in view of the near approach of the rains. It has been decided, therefore, that while every effort should be continued to suppress the rebellion in Lower Burma, precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of the rebellion during the rains into the dry zone and into Upper Burma. With this object in view, a scheme is being worked out by the General Staff, and it is proposed to occupy important centres in Upper Burma with troops. The new battalion which has just arrived from India will be employed in this way, and further reinforcements will be requisitioned if the military authorities think that this action is necessary. It has also been decided to raise immediately five more companies of military police, in addition to the five companies sanctioned in February.

10. The information in the possession of the local Government leaves no doubt that the rebellion began by being a definite attempt to overthrow the Government by armed force. The rebellion has pursued the usual course of similar rebellions in the past in Burma. Experience shows that such rebellions have always begun by a sudden attempt to overthrow the Government, and that when this attempt has failed, the rebels break up into gangs, the larger gangs hiding in the jungles, and the smaller ones, joined, no doubt, by local bad characters, committing sporadic dacoities all over the affected area. In the present case economic difficulty has operated to facilitate the spread of the rebellion. The unprecedented fall in the price of rice and paddy has caused hardship among the

agrarian population of Burma, with the result that they lend a ready ear to the preaching of persons whose aim it is to spread disaffection against the Government. In almost all the districts to which the rebellion has spread, the beginning of the rebellion has been tattooing and inflammatory preaching by emissaries of this kind, and one of the main duties of district officers in all districts of the province is to get the earliest possible information of the movement of preachers of this kind and of the beginning of tattooing. The policy of Government must be to suppress the rebellion by all possible means, and they will not hesitate to adopt such measures as may seem required to achieve this object and to declare martial law if and when they are satisfied that advantage will be secured by this course and that it is necessary. At the same time, they have taken, and are taking, such action as seems possible to alleviate the economic situation. Orders have been issued to district officers not to collect the principal of outstanding Government agricultural loans this year and to collect the interest only when this can be done without resort to coercive process. The question of increasing the Budget allotment for agricultural loans is being considered. In addition to the ordinary seasonal remissions, the land revenue settlements have been summarily revised as a temporary measure in 15 districts, which were resettled after the War, and remissions of revenue estimated at about 20 lakhs of rupees have been given in this way. In all districts, district officers are being given discretion to remit land revenue in cases where they are satisfied that there is genuine inability to pay and are being instructed to resort to the sale of land for arrears of revenue only where necessary to meet contumacious default by persons able to pay. These measures relate to the revenue now being collected for the year 1930-31. As regards the land revenue demand for the year 1931-32, the course of the paddy market will be watched, and if there is no improvement or only a small improvement in prices the question of further reductions of land revenue will be sympathetically considered.

11. Another disquieting factor of the present situation is the anti-Indian movement which broke out first in the Pegu and Toungoo districts and subsequently spread to the Hanthawaddy district. The Government believe that this movement also is largely, if not entirely, economic in character. Hitherto the Burmans have been content to leave certain classes of work to the Indians. In the present economic depression, however, the Burman is apt to resent the fact that he has to meet the competition of Indians in this class of work, especially as the Indian is ordinarily willing to accept lower wages than the Burman and also to pay higher rents for agricultural land. Police patrols and other similar measures have stopped this manifestation of communal feeling in Pegu and Toungoo, and the latest information is that

the situation in Hanthawaddy and Pyapon is now under control. The Government wish it to be known that they will use all means in their power to protect Indians resident in the country, and that if outrages continue they will be compelled to resort to the expedient of fining villages where such outrages occur. They also propose to re-examine the very difficult question of agrarian legislation, but it will be some time before they can come to any conclusions on this controversial matter.
