

The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946

Nationalist competition and civil-military relations in postwar India

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Abstract

This article argues for the importance of the Royal Indian Navy mutiny of 1946 in two key aspects of the transition towards Indian independence: civilian control over the Indian military, and a competition for power between Congress and Communists that undermined Indian workers and their student allies. The article begins with an investigation of the mutiny drawing on three sources: a first-person account from a lead mutineer, a Communist history of the mutiny, and the papers published in the *Towards Freedom* collection. In 1946 a handful of low-ranking sailors sparked a naval mutiny that ultimately involved upwards of 20,000 sailors, and then crashed into the streets of Bombay with revolutionary fervor. The Communists party in Bombay seized upon the mutiny as an opportunity to rally the working class against the British raj, with the hope of ending British rule through revolution rather than negotiation. Yet the mutiny proved less of a harbinger for what was ending, and more of a bellwether for what was to come. Congress, sensing the danger of the moment, snuffed out support for the mutiny, and insisted on a negotiated transfer of power. Congress' action thereby set a precedent for civilian dominance over the military in post-independence India. At the same time, however, Congress betrayed the effectiveness of some of organized labour's strongest advocates, namely the Communist Party, Bombay students, and Bombay labour, thereby undermining their costly mass protest, and hobbling them in future conflicts against Indian capitalists.

Keywords: Indian independence, mutiny, Royal Indian Navy, nationalism, political violence, Indian military, postwar India, British military, Indian communism, political competition, decolonization.

In February 1946, as the wartime powers of the British military continued their slow disarmament, Indian nationalist aspirations spilled into Bombay's military ports and harbors during the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny. The strike proved to be a pivotal testing ground for the means and methods of Indian independence. The strike ultimately involved thousands of sailors—low of rank and out of depth—and took on more interesting dimensions as nationalist parties struggled to secure a foothold in postwar India. Documents depicting these events occupy some eighty pages in the *Towards Freedom* volumes, the Oxford University Press series of primary and archival sources relating to the transition towards Indian independence, and the events of February 1946 continue to draw broad scholastic interest.¹ The mutiny bore an especially large impact on two key aspects of the transition towards Indian independence: the competition for power between Congress and Communists, and civilian control over the Indian military. This article shows the progress of the mutiny through the eyes of one of the most important strikers (Balai Chand Dutt), and charts how the strike appeared to Communist organizers. Whereas previous writers have viewed the RIN mutiny as a point of no return for the British raj,² this article emphasizes that the mutiny of 1946 was a crucial starting point in newly independent India for two reasons: first, the mutiny's collapse cemented Congress' dominance over the Indian military and, second, it represented a decisive closing of radical left-wing action in the emerging independent India, which in turn contributed to the eventual failure of Nehru's government to discipline capitalist industry in the years to come.³ The failure of the RIN mutiny of 1946 ensured that the movement for Indian independence morphed from a radical revolutionary fire to a conservative transfer of power.

Introduction

Mutinies, as a political problem, represent a loss of control within the military's strict hierarchical structure, and signal a danger to the state's ability to control its armed forces.⁴ They typically occur on a small scale, and during times of low morale.⁵ Rarely, mutinies spill into significant bloodshed, such as the Indian revolt of 1857.⁶ In terms of character and danger to the state, the RIN mutiny of 1946 more nearly approached the Invergordon mutiny of 1931, wherein roughly a thousand low ranking British sailors refused to work due to an impending pay-cut of twenty-five percent.⁷ In both Invergordon and Bombay, the mutineers edged closer to an industrial strike rather than a violent insurrection. Whereas the Invergordon mutiny involved critically important vessels such as the *Hood* and the *Nelson*, the RIN mutiny mainly took place on shore establishments, though once again with low ranking ratings⁸ leading the way. Most of the mutineers intended the strike to redress relatively minor grievances; nationalist aspirations represented a secondary concern. The mutiny of 1946, nevertheless, threatened the British with the loss of control over forces that played a crucial role in British victories in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe during the Second World War. The Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, Claude Auchinleck, and the naval chain-of-command responded firmly to the mutineers and demanded their peaceful capitulation. Violence within the ranks never amounted to more than a handful of casualties. Most of the bloodshed surrounding the mutiny occurred in the streets of Bombay during a Communist *hartal*. In the words of historian Dipak Kumar Das, 'the British faced a legitimacy crisis on a scale and frequency as never before'.⁹ Seeking to rekindle a close relationship with the British raj, the Muslim League and National Congress repudiated the Communists and the *hartal*, and strongly advised the naval ratings to surrender. The firm opposition to any violence surrounding the mutiny pointed the way towards an independent India in which civilian government maintained a steady hand on the reins of military power.

Congress and the Muslim League used the mutiny to enhance their reputation as legitimate purveyors of liberal justice and liberal values, intent on working within a constitutional framework to establish Indian independence. They created political space between their own left-wing contingents versus the actions of the Communists. The Communists viewed the RIN mutiny as an opportunity to drive Indian independence in a more revolutionary direction; they called for a Bombay-wide *hartal* in support of the mutineers. For a short time, the Communists garnered widespread support from Bombay students and workers, regardless of religious affiliation. Hundreds died in clashes with police and soldiers; police stations burned, buses overturned, and life ground to a halt. Congress and the Muslim League quickly distanced themselves from the Bombay *hartal* and the RIN mutiny. Consequently, however, they also distanced themselves from the mass demonstrators that responded to the Communist call for action. Congress leaders, including the socialist-leaning Jawaharlal Nehru and capitalist-leaning Sadar Vallabhbhai Patel, made no attempt to lead the students, workers, and naval ratings to revolutionary victory. Congress and the Muslim League left the Communists out in the cold, but at the cost of turning off the heat lamp for the demonstrators as well. United Hindu-Muslim political demonstrations became a dull instrument for social change; future demonstrations lacked a united Hindu-Muslim front, and became increasingly communal in character.

Early Signs of Dissension within the Ranks

Unrest within the Indian military was not a sudden development. Poor conditions led to unrest throughout the war, especially in the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) and the Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF), both of which 'remained on paper' throughout the 1930s only to expand suddenly in the early 1940s.¹⁰ Wartime pressures resulted in inadequate officership, training, and organisation. Recruiting posters twisted the story of the RIN's brief life to imply that it had a long and glorious history, and that it was part of a strong tradition.¹¹ The pay for civilian labour rose faster than the

basic pay for most soldiers.¹² Desertion from the RIN and RIAF remained endemic throughout the war.¹³ In the RIN, work stoppages occurred when young recruits 'insisted on following caste taboos,' and the rations were often insensitive to dietary restrictions.¹⁴ As the war ended, Indian soldiers and sailors faced demobilisation and an uncertain civilian job market.¹⁵

There were further signs of military discontent in the months leading up to the strike of the naval ratings.¹⁶ In Bombay, the *Free Press Journal* reported that tensions arose at a Royal Indian Air Force camp between airmen and the camp commander over the wearing of civilian clothes in the dining facility.¹⁷ On a more serious note, American journalists reported the desertion of hundreds of Indian soldiers in Indonesia, where 'British troops [were] disgusted with the dirty work of shooting Indonesian patriots'.¹⁸ Both these events occurred in an atmosphere already fraught with tension due to the impending court martial trials for the soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA). The INA consisted of Indian-born British soldiers captured by Japanese forces, who then volunteered in small numbers to turn their arms on the forces of the British Empire.¹⁹ The 1945 death of INA leader Subhas Chandra Bose left the INA rudderless, but not politically defenseless—recently released Congress leaders rallied to protect the soldiers of the former president of Congress. This show of support for the INA helped set the stage for the coming RIN mutiny. Nationalist leaders encouraged urban Indians to think of the INA soldiers and Quit India participants as heroes.²⁰ Loyal members of the armed forces were considered boot lickers.²¹ Impending demobilisation and high civilian unemployment created an atmosphere of increasing tension within all branches of the Indian military, but especially in the newer, less conservative branches, the navy and the air force.²² These tense conditions stacked atop the racial discrimination that was always at play in the armed forces. The British soldiers received better pay than the Indian soldiers, and they received better food and facilities. When the Indians protested, their officers invited them to gamely accept the difference in treatment as a competition between rival military units. The officers prodded the Indian ranks to prove they could do more with less; the efforts of the soldiers, the officers suggested, would result in equal treatment after the next training exercise—or failing that, the next battle—or if nothing else

then after the war. Equality became an ever-receding goal line, and the Indians could never cross it.²³ Frustration simmered throughout the Second World War, especially in the recently formed RIN and RIAF, and boiled over in 1946.²⁴ As veteran sailors awaited demobilisation, RIN officers foolishly insulted the ratings with tactless high-handedness, a disregard for overcrowded barracks, and the assignment of mind-numbing menial labour.²⁵

The tension found clearest expression at a moderately-sized naval base that housed and trained signal operators along the shores of Bombay. One of those operators was B.C. Dutt, an aspiring nationalist and five-year veteran of the Royal Indian Navy. At the end of the war, he found himself redeployed to the very naval establishment where he had received his initial training: the *HMIS Talwar*. He was frustrated with the discrimination he had encountered throughout the war. He met many a kindred spirit in the *Talwar* canteen. 'Without quite realising it,' he later wrote, 'I became a conspirator'.²⁶ Dutt and his friends secretly assumed the name Azad Hindi (Free Indians) in a nod to both the INA (Azad Hind Fauj) and the Indian nationalist movement in general. During its brief four month existence, the circle of conspirators never grew beyond a dozen sympathizers and twenty regulars.²⁷ But they eventually managed to have an outsized impact on the Royal Indian Navy.

The first act of *Talwar* sabotage came on Navy Day, 1 December 1945. The RIN commanders wanted to open *Talwar* to the public for the first time in history. But on the morning of 1 December, officers found the parade ground 'littered with burnt flags and bunting; brooms and buckets were prominently displayed from the masthead. Political slogans in foot-high letters were staring from every wall: "Quite India", "Down With the Imperialists", "Revolt Now", "Kill the British".²⁸ The officers and petty officers cleaned the *Talwar* as best they could before the public arrived. The mild success of the vandalism (and the weak response of the officers) left the small group of conspirators hungry for more.²⁹

The weakness of the response came in part due to the military's awareness of changing political conditions throughout India. Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck had rung in the New Year with

a letter to all commanding officers wherein he implored them to remember the importance of cooperation between India and Britain, and the need for a smooth changeover to self-rule; he also emphasized the need for tolerance, equality, and goodwill between service members, all of which could provide a 'firm base' for the transition.³⁰ Auchinleck may not have liked the idea of letting go of India, but he took steps to prepare his military as best he could. This was partly to ensure the stability of a critical British interest. But stability and tolerance would also pave the way for British officers to continue to serve in the independent Indian Army—a hope which eventually came to fruition.³¹ In the near-term, however, it perhaps placed his commanders on uneasy grounds for enforcing discipline, especially in the RIN and RIAF, the two newest and weakest components of the Indian military.³² Unable to catch the guilty party, and unwilling to castigate the mass of sailors, the officers simply increased the pace of demobilisation, effectively hoping to push the conspirators overboard before they could cause any more trouble.³³ The conspirators thus rapidly dwindled in number, but those remaining (including B.C. Dutt) remained enthusiastic for nationalistic action.

As it happened, Auchinleck³⁴ was scheduled to visit the *HMIS Talwar* on 2 February 1946. As is often hoped for among general officers, the men at *Talwar* were, ironically, thrilled at the prospect of Auchinleck's visit. The possibility of being in the presence of their C-in-C emboldened B.C. Dutt and his fellow conspirators to take strong action. Sentries, however, barred the path of any unified vandalism. Thus the conspirators operated in even smaller groups than before, but still succeeded in their task. At dusk on 1 February, naval ratings quickly painted 'Jai Hind' and 'Quit India' on the platform from which Auchinleck was to take the *Talwar's* salute.³⁵ In the middle of the night, B.C. Dutt added a few smaller slogans. Then he used a bottle of glue to paste leaflets on barrack walls. In a touch that spoke to the complexity of RIN culture, the leaflets quoted the Bible. 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other,' Mathew 6:24.³⁶ The sentries discovered the vandalism before sunrise. Before he could sneak back into his barracks, B.C. Dutt was caught with glue on his hands, and the bottle and leaflets in his pockets. 'My locker was opened for inspection,' Dutt recalled. '[The officers

discovered] mimeographed copies of "Indian Mutiny, 1857" by Asoka Mehta, my diaries, the copies of the leaflet I had distributed and some incriminating letters'.³⁷

B.C. Dutt's almost comical capture soon resulted in unintended consequences for all involved. The capture transformed a bashful conspirator into a reckless catalyst. He claimed sole credit for all acts of vandalism. He announced his status as a political prisoner. He demanded a bench to rest on, and a chair to sit on. In quick succession, he faced down five interrogating officers, including a Rear-Admiral.³⁸ Outside of Dutt's confinement cell, the vandalism continued. And on 8 February, Commander F.W. King, the British officer in command at *Talwar*, lost his cool when he heard naval ratings 'catcall some WRINs (Women in the RIN);' when he entered the barracks to reprimand the ratings, they failed to leap to attention.³⁹ In response, King lashed out at his men. The context for King's invective against the ratings appears in Dutt's memoir, but drops out of the news reports (and official reports) appearing in the *Towards Freedom* collection.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, people were dying in the street protests occurring in much of urban India. In New Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay, massive marches continued to celebrate the soldiers of the INA, and nationalist leaders continued to harangue the British efforts to punish the offenders. Indian cities like Bombay were a hotbed of discontent, not only due to nationalist pressures, but also because of changing conditions for urban workers. Many Indian cities had more than doubled in population during the first half of the twentieth century, largely due to rural migration.⁴¹ Urban workers, many with strong rural ties, often had to balance their urban and rural interests, thereby limiting their commitment to strikes and other forms of urban dissension lest they compromise their commitments to their rural families and friends.⁴² In some instances, however, the remnants of their rural ties even provided a safety net in case worker protests led to unemployment.⁴³ Uncertainty surrounding the inchoate transfer of power perhaps encouraged further risk-taking among the urban population.

In the winter of 1945-1946, the naval ratings made their mark with glue and paint, while the nationalist leaders made their mark with words. But the civilians of India painted the streets with

their own blood in scores of clashes with the British authorities.⁴⁴ In the post-war environment, the brunt of nationalist unrest and the costs of mass expression occurred not within military ranks, but among organized urban students and workers.⁴⁵ And for the first time, the ratings were about to touch that blood with their own hands.

The Strike Begins

And so the true spark for the naval mutiny began on 8 February, and not on an ocean-going ship, but upon the shore establishment *Talwar*. As eventually reported in the *Free Press Journal* on 18 February, the 'insulting behavior' of Commanding Officer King infuriated the naval ratings under his command with taunts of 'Sons of Coolies' and 'Sons of Bitches'.⁴⁶ Dutt's memoir adds the phrase 'Sons of bloody junglees'.⁴⁷ Anger accumulated, and a hunger strike commenced on 18 February.⁴⁸ Embarking on a hunger strike, the ratings embraced tactics favored in the nationalist movement. Now the officers on *Talwar* took the strike seriously, and quickly minimized the risk of violence and confusion through the disbursement of non-striking personnel away from the establishment.⁴⁹ What began at *Talwar* quickly spread throughout the harbors of Bombay. Some of the most significant actions took place at Castle Barracks, one of the shore establishments located near the *Talwar*. On the morning of the 19 February—the same day on which Whitehall announced a Cabinet Mission to India—the Castle Barracks ratings received newspaper accounts of the strike from the *Free Press Journal*. They saw B.C. Dutt on the front page. The headlines read 'Indian Naval Men in City on Hunger Strike;' 'Insulting Behavior of C.O. Infuriates the Ratings;' 'Authorities Get Panicky;' and 'Communications between Indian and Abroad Dislocated'⁵⁰ According to Subrata Banerjee's pro-Communist account of the RIN strike, the newspaper reports set off arguments among the ratings.⁵¹ Interestingly, the poor quality of their breakfast seemed to arouse the strongest sentiment. The navy offered them 'just what we have been eating ever since we joined the service—foul-smelling, half-cooked and full of stones and husks'⁵². The ratings rejected the meal, and took action. They

seized vehicles and spilled into the streets of Bombay. Some drove, some ran, some marched. All headed towards the *Talwar*. Their momentum drew 3,000 ratings together. The ratings took a largely non-violent approach to the mutiny. They even formed a Central Naval Strike Committee in anticipation of negotiations. B.C. Dutt assumed a supporting role on the committee.⁵³ All the members were under twenty-six years of age.⁵⁴ Some were Muslims, other Hindu.⁵⁵ At the conclusion of the initial meetings and rallies at *Talwar*, the naval ratings dispersed, and for the most part returned to their ships and shore establishments.⁵⁶

The committee quickly generated a coherent list of demands. These demands suggest the precipitating conditions that led to the strike. First, they demanded the release of all political prisoners, to include the soldiers of the INA. Second, unspecified action against Commander King for ill-treatment and insulting language. Third, the speedy demobilisation of RIN personnel, but with provisions for peacetime employment. Fourth, a revision of pay-scale, such that RIN personnel would earn equivalent pay to their counterparts in the regular Royal Navy. Fifth, adjusted pay allowances for family and children. Sixth, better food. Seventh, no refund of clothing kit at the time of discharge—in other words, allow the ratings to keep all their uniforms upon completion of their service. Eighth, better treatment from the officers. Ninth, withdrawal of Indian forces from Indonesia.⁵⁷

Wider political concerns bookended the demands, but the core of their concerns regarded equality of pay between the Royal Navy (RN) and the Royal Indian Navy, as well as direct address to the needs of the Bombay shore establishments. The strikers refused to negotiate without the intervention of nationalist leaders, especially Aruna Asaf Ali, a popular Bombay political leader, and the wife of Asaf Ali, a man who figured to become the first Defense Minister in the new Indian government.⁵⁸ The ratings broadcast their action to ships throughout the Bombay area. At the end of 18 February, some 1,100 men on the establishment had joined the strike.⁵⁹ The next day, eleven additional shore establishments also joined the strike. The ratings boarded the twenty-some naval ships in Bombay, and flew the Indian tri-color flag rather than the Union Jack.⁶⁰ This brought the

total number of ratings involved to around 20,000, though some estimates place the actual number of strikers at a much lower number—perhaps fewer than 15,000. Thus, a strike that began with a handful of veterans quickly spread to thousands. Many of these were raw recruits.

Aruna Asaf Ali, a member of Congress whom the strikers cited as their preferred correspondent from the nationalist movement, responded in due course. On 20 February she saluted the ratings for refusing to 'submit sheepishly [to] the hectoring and swearing of their British rulers'.⁶¹ Confident of broad support for the strike, she encouraged the ratings to maintain their stance, seek further guidance from nationalist leaders, and undertake disciplined collective action. 'Firmness, discipline and unity on the [part] of the strikers and the pressure of public opinion should result in a successful conclusion to this spontaneous strike'.⁶²

The ratings adhered to Aruna Asaf Ali's guidelines for discipline and collective action—at least for the time being—but the political context darkened even as more military personnel fell in with the strikers. Some eighty ratings specializing in signal communications joined the strike from the naval headquarters in New Delhi on February 20.⁶³ Members of the Royal Indian Air Force joined in the strike on the 21st.⁶⁴ The air force strikers repeated the RIN demand for equal pay to that of the RAF. Nevertheless, 'the heady wine of freedom had run down noticeably' among the naval units of Bombay.⁶⁵ The strikers notified the *Free Press Journal* that they feared the government intended to deprive them of food. (Apparently the hunger-strike was stopped soon after it began on the 18th, or else not widespread.) In a move that initially baffled the ratings, FOCRIN John Henry Godfrey, admiral, offered to accept the ratings' 'request' for better food.⁶⁶ The authorities even dropped off a truck of food at Castle Barracks.⁶⁷ Yet at the same time, General Sir Rob Lockhart, leader of Southern Command, assumed responsibility for subduing the mutiny. He deployed Indian troops—a battalion of the Mahratta Regiment—to herd the mutineers off the streets and into their quarters.⁶⁸ No one was hurt on the first day of Lockhart's operation, but that would soon change.⁶⁹ Through runners and telephone calls, the ratings began to discover that 'their heroes, the leaders of the liberation movement, had no use for them'.⁷⁰ The ratings in Bombay grew apprehensive as British

Indian Army soldiers formed pickets around their facilities. Still, the Central Strike Committee relayed to their comrades that they should remain non-violent.

Dutt, Banerjee, British military reports, and Indian government reports all differ as to who exactly made the next move; but in all versions, violence occurred at Castle Barracks.⁷¹ According to Dutt and Banerjee, the violence began with a prepared assault against the ratings.⁷² According to official reports (which most nationalist leaders accepted), ratings at Castle Barracks attempted to break through Lockhart's picket on 21 February.⁷³ The pickets repulsed the ratings, and the ratings took up arms and fired on the pickets. The pickets—Army trained—fired back at the naval ratings with rifles, Lewis Guns, and Tommy Guns. Both sides tossed grenades.⁷⁴ With the onset of violence, the Central Strike Committee moved from the *Talwar* to the *HMIS Narbada*, a sloop, and the most modern ship in the harbor at that time. The committee told all ships to prepare, if necessary, to take up battle stations throughout Bombay. They sent the message without using any attempt at code. The British easily intercepted the message.⁷⁵

National Politics, Local Consequences

The ratings expected broad support from the leaders of the Indian independence movement, but that support never fully materialized. From Congress and the Muslim League, the ratings only received words of sympathy and promises of legal assistance. Demarcating the severe limits of support for the RIN uprising required a test in the streets, newspapers, and radio programs of Bombay. The Communists pushed for just such a test. As in Calcutta one month prior,⁷⁶ the street demonstrations that ostensibly supported the revolutionary action of nationalist soldiers soon burned bright-red as the Communists rallied the urban masses towards their own vision of an independent India. Contrary to the claims of observers like M. R. Masani, the civilian population possessed no 'indelible conviction' that the Indian Communists served as a mere 'fifth column of the Soviet Union,' but could rally around the warmest nationalist ember, Communist, Congress, or otherwise.⁷⁷

Tensions within Congress, and between Congress and the Communists, soon became apparent. Gangadhar Adhikari, a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee, called for a one-day general strike 'in all shops, schools, colleges, and mills as a mark of ... disapproval of Government repression ...'.⁷⁸ But even as the Communists called for *hartal*, Congress leaders like S.K. Patil, Mohatma Gandhi, and Vallabhbhai Patel appealed for peace, order, and normalcy.⁷⁹ Patil, General Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC), led the local chamber in passing a resolution in support for the RIN ratings. The BPCC stayed in constant contact with the ratings, and urged the authorities to redress their concerns. Yet at the same time (and on the same day as Adhikari's call for *hartal*) he noted that 'some interested persons, wanting to take advantage of the situation or incapable of realising the consequences of their action, have asked the mills in the city to close as a part of general hartal;' he counseled Bombay that such actions did more harm than good.⁸⁰ 'It is our sad experience every time, that when the atmosphere is tense the *hartals* or the general suspension of business accentuate the tension rather than relieve it, and they afford an excellent opportunity to hooligans and irresponsible elements to intimidate people and lead them to violence ...'.⁸¹ Congress knew that the raj was on the way out, and that they had an opportunity to play a decisive role in the transfer of power. Congress in 1946 could ill afford a military-led insurrection that might cost them their place at the negotiating table, or a delay of the transfer. Nor could Congress risk the annoyance (or the destruction) of the Indian capital that formed their base of support. The sudden burst of patriotism from the mutinous, low-ranking ratings came too late in the raj's lifespan to convince the Congress leaders of its good effects. After all, the ratings, however low-ranking, were an integral part of the war machine that kept Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel in prison throughout much of the war. From the Muslim League, Jinnah offered his services to redress the grievances of the RIN strikers, but on the condition that they adopt 'constitutional, lawful and peaceful methods'.⁸² Jinnah, and his rivals in Congress, saw little use in calling for *hartal* or any other popularly-charged sign of support for the naval ratings. It was a remarkable (albeit brief) moment of unity between the Hindu and Muslim workers in streets who pressed for an immediate

transfer of power; it was also a moment of unity for the Muslim and Hindu leaders who vehemently insisted on a more gradual process.⁸³

Regardless of the calls of Congress and the Muslim League, a *hartal* commenced throughout Bombay. Violence followed. The headline in the *Free Press Journal* read, 'Demonstrators Machinegunned'.⁸⁴ The disruptions began on Thursday evening, 22 February, and continued through the next day. Demonstrators set fire to military and police vehicles, constructed roadblocks, and turned over tramcars. Eventually, military rule prevailed throughout the city, but not without opening fire on the crowds with heavy machineguns. The *hartal* choked the life out of the city, at least for a day, and the streets 'presented a desolate and forlorn appearance' with the exception of a rare passing demonstration made of students and labourers. Rioters looted government shops, as well as those of wealthy merchants, such as a wine shop in Cheera Bazar.⁸⁵ Thousands of clerks from the Great Indian Peninsula railway walked out in the early afternoon and joined the mill workers and other labourers in the streets.⁸⁶ An intelligence report on the following day placed the number of injured in the Bombay riots at 777, with 63 dead; the police also suffered casualties; 37 officers and 93 constables were injured, and two of the constables were killed.

The oral history archives at the Imperial War Museum in London include an account of the street violence from an anonymous, low-ranking British officer who considered himself a socialist.⁸⁷ He travelled to Bombay in civilian clothes in hopes of seeing a revolution; after seeing the mutinied ships quietly lining the harbor, he travelled deeper into the streets to be among the crowds of protesting workers. Shortly after his arrival a British Army fifteen-hundred weight truck came around a corner—the protestors threw themselves to the ground and a machine-gun from the back of the truck opened up. Many were wounded, but the officer, as the only white man among the crowd, began to fear a retaliatory lynching, and so he took a train to Sandhurst Rd, near the Communist Party headquarters. As the crowds passed down Sandhurst Rd, the people shouted 'Jai Hind' and 'Ink Zal Ind-Ibd'—Long Live the Revolution. 'Talking to the comrades during the afternoon and evening ... they were wondering if this might be signal for revolution'. Mutiny played a large role in

'communist romanticism,' reaching back to the uprising aboard the Russian battleship *Potemkin* in 1905. The police, in the officer's view, were not making a serious effort to stop the demonstrations, 'So it was not inconceivable that a Soviet might be declared and that Bombay might have been in the hands of revolutionary forces and that this might have spread to the whole of India and who knows what might have happened'.⁸⁸ What in fact actually happened was that Indian National Congress leaders decided that the prospect for revolution must not get out of hand.

As the violence in the streets wound up, the naval ratings wound down. On 22 February, Admiral Godfrey, commander of the Royal Indian Navy, demanded their surrender; he suggested that he would annihilate the RIN rather than let it fall into chaos.⁸⁹ The ratings realized that no significant national leader supported their efforts in an unconditional way. They had stumbled into the fight for Indian independence with naive expectations, and now they found they had little stomach for truly radical politics. When their Central Strike Committee failed to produce a national leader that could unequivocally guide the fight, the ratings lost confidence and enthusiasm.⁹⁰ Thus, back at the naval yard, the ratings at Castle Barracks surrendered their arms in accordance with the wishes of Vallabhbhai Patel. They attempted to renew the strike on a non-violent basis, and paid their respects to 'those brave citizens and workers who have perished or have been injured ... at the hands of the British authority'.⁹¹ The mutiny also reared its head in Karachi and Calcutta, but was quickly contained in similar fashion.⁹² Soon, all the ratings capitulated. Those that played a key role in the strike, like B.C. Dutta, were eventually discharged from the navy, never to return, and never pardoned.

If the ratings found scant hope from the Bombay riots, most nationalist leaders found none at all. Mahatma Gandhi denounced the violence as unholy, even if it represented a united Hindu-Muslim action against the British forces. 'A combination between Hindus and Muslims and others,' he wrote on 23 February, 'for the purpose of violent action is unholy and will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence—bad for India and the world'.⁹³ Not everyone agreed with the Mahatma. Aruna Asaf Ali pushed back against Gandhi on 25 February. She insisted that she would

only help bring disturbances to an end if the British military forces withdrew from the city, and the government lifted the ban on meetings.⁹⁴ In the halls of the Central Assembly, Congress leadership shuffled the question of enquiries into subcommittees and out of the main chamber; they refused to even address the possibility of refuting any disciplinary actions taken against the mutineers.⁹⁵

With the ratings losing enthusiasm for revolutionary action, the Communist Party quickly sensed the closing of a small window of opportunity. Shripad Amrit Dange, a founding member of the Communist Party in India, alleged a systematic cover-up by the government. He said the violence in the streets of Bombay constitutes 'an unprecedented orgy of shootings ... even for the British administration of this country'.⁹⁶ He charged the British with the mass shooting of 250 civilians during the Bombay *hartal*. He made out the shootings as a class issue, and said they mostly took place in working class areas. 'One can understand the Government and its spokesmen raising the cry of hooliganism; but it is distressing to find Congress leaders like Sardar Patel lending support to this interpretation'.⁹⁷

Thus far, the difference in action between the Congress and Communists seems straightforward. But this was not the case. The *Towards Freedom* collection juxtaposes S.A. Dange's criticisms of Congress with a private letter from Dr Mukund Ramrao Jayakar that offers a local reading of political tensions. In the letter, Jayakar, a member of the Constituent Assembly in India, explained to INA defense lawyer Tej Bahadur Sapru that the disparate actions of the Communists and Congress leaders divulged the presence of subtle nationalist power struggles. 'There is a secret rivalry between the Communists and Congressmen,' he wrote, 'each trying to put the other in the wrong. In yesterday's speech Vallabhbai almost said, without using so many words, that the trouble was due to the Communists trying to rival the Congress in the manner of leadership'.⁹⁸ The Communists sought to rally support for the mutineers with a broad call for *hartal* throughout the city of Bombay. The Communists used the *hartal* in an attempt to pry the support of the masses away from the hands of Congress. They wagered that initiating a politically potent *hartal* might grant them enough political momentum to drive the independence movement leftward. Patel, however, firmly

repudiated the *hartal*, and instead concentrated even more political power in the direction of capital-friendly Congressmen. Nehru's biographer, S. Gopal, noted that Patel grew annoyed when socialist-leaning Jawaharlal Nehru came to Bombay to look into the riots for himself.⁹⁹ British bureaucrats and Indian business leaders both preferred the orderly calls of capital-friendly Patel to the threat of revolutionary socialism. Patel's influence proved strong enough to wrestle left-leaning Congress leaders into line, and he effectively discouraged them from showing any support for the actions of the Communists, the rioters, or the ratings. In short, despite the burnt vehicles, tram shelters, and post offices, and despite the massive movement of students and labour, the Communist *hartal* effectively solidified the collusion between a moderated Congress, Indian capital, and the British government. This was the absolute opposite of the intended effect. Jayakar's letter continued with a celebration of Congress' turn against the naval strikers. 'I feel often surprised at the wonderful change which has come over these big Congressmen. No hartals, no meetings[,], no processions, no closing of schools, no defiance ... even the Mahatma now says that it is foolish to distrust the intentions of the British'.¹⁰⁰ In noting the 'secret rivalry' between the Congressmen and Communists, Jayakar actually expected the Communists to make political gains in national politics due to Congress' apparent meekness. These gains never materialized. The Communists continued to excoriate Congress and the British military for their actions against both the naval ratings and the people of Bombay, but to no effect.¹⁰¹ The Communist denunciation of the Patel-organized surrender also seems to have had no effect.

In any event, both the Communists and Congress in Bombay overestimated their ability to control the 'masses,' even if they could inspire occasional conflagrations. Contrary to the post-war expectations of Dr Mukund Ramrao Jayakar and his peers, historian R. Chandavarkar argues that incidents of urban strife (such as the mutiny) did not simply encourage further working class cooperation, but could occasion further sectional splintering and rivalry for scarce jobs.¹⁰² Urban strife encouraged uncertainty, mistrust, and fierce competition among the workforce, not unity. From the 1940s onward, the fortunes of the Communists in Bombay began to wane, and were fully

eroded by the 1970s.¹⁰³ Throughout the transfer of power, the inconsistent pattern of support that Congress showed for strikes reminded urban workers of their precarious political position; a labour force already fractured along sectional lines faced uncertain prospects of elite support, even if they managed to overcome the internal competition inherent among Bombay workers.¹⁰⁴ For years, Gandhi and other Congress leaders had fuzzily described the relationship between capital and labour using the metaphor of a family,¹⁰⁵ but now they had criticized the actions of labour even within the nationalist context of the 1946 mutiny. Based on Congress' past rhetoric, labour might have known that Congress' nationalist agenda did not perfectly align with the interests of urban labour,¹⁰⁶ but now workers had little certainty as to how they could use their basic political instrument—*hartal*—to support even the broadest nationalist agenda. Opposition to the British Empire had been a unifying element among members of the working class throughout the 1920s and 1930s,¹⁰⁷ but Congress' rejection of the working class' radical nationalist sentiment as expressed in February 1946 stands as a key moment when Congress doused working class enthusiasm with an alienating reserve. The possibility of non-communal, cross-ideological revolution from 'below' was firmly closed, despite the brief sparks of Hindu and Muslim worker cooperation seen in Bombay and Karachi during the RIN mutiny.¹⁰⁸ Ironically, the coolness with which Congress treated the February 1946 *hartal* weakened an ally that Congress could have used to discipline capital in post-transition India. It was a pivotal moment in modern Indian history, but not in the way that working class, the naval ratings, or the Communists could have expected.

The view from the Raj

Intelligence bureau reports from the time period show the typical government employee only too happy to distinguish between Communist violence and Congress' moderation. But the political fallout remained uncertain until the smoke cleared. 'Congress were against today's *hartal* and Vallabhbhai Patel was emphatic about this,' wrote one intelligence officer, 'but the Communists' call

for sympathy with the RIN ratings has won the day and the Congress Labour Union has been totally ineffective'.¹⁰⁹ A telephone report the next day drew a clear line between Communist and Congress: 'Congress advised against the hartal yesterday. The communists however called for hartal and sent representatives distribution leaflets ... there is no doubt that the Communists are directly responsible for the trouble'.¹¹⁰ The intelligence reports failed to mention Congress member Aruna Ali Asaf's support for the *hartal*. Yet any successful mobilisation of labour proved short lived. The government curfew on 22 February effectively put an end to the rioting and violence, as well as to any working-class collective action.¹¹¹

Up at the very top, Viceroy Archibald Wavell took the mutiny in stride. Before the onset of the strike, the INA riots in Calcutta on 12 and 13 February firmly held his attention.¹¹² Wavell described 19 February as 'a day of alarms but not excursions'.¹¹³ Wavell felt that Auchinleck took the news harder than himself. 'Though [Auchinleck] talked about sticking to our principles, he was really hoping hard that I would give a lead to recommend to H.M.G., surrender to public opinion and total abandonment of I.N.A. trials. I refused to play and said we should stick it out. What a cheerful day—prospect or reality of three mutinies and two strikes! However, I got in 18 holes of golf with Pompey Howard in between and played well'.¹¹⁴

Part of Auchinleck's angst may have derived from his personal tensions with FOCRIN Admiral John Godfrey. According to Major-General Shahid Hamid, Auchinleck's personal secretary, Godfrey had earlier resisted Auchinleck's efforts to encourage the navy to plan for demobilisation, as well as the 'Indianization' of the RIN's officer corps.¹¹⁵ During the mutiny, Rear-Admiral A. R. Rattray, Godfrey's Second-in-Command, insisted on parleying with the mutineers; this annoyed Auchinleck, who wanted the RIN to hold firm and demand an immediate return to discipline.¹¹⁶

On the 20 February neither Wavell nor Auchinleck acknowledged any interest in giving way to the naval ratings; they hoped to severely punish the ringleaders of the mutiny; they had yet to discover that the mutiny was largely rudderless. When the mutineers fired on their troops, Auchinleck and Wavell coolly refused the notion of any further parley with the mutineers.¹¹⁷ Despite

the threat of serious violence, Wavell telegraphed to Prime Minister Clement Attlee that the mutiny did not 'indicate any inherent rottenness in the R.I.N.,' but that the 'proportion of experienced officers and petty officers is very small owing to rapid expansion during war, and number of young and excitable men ...'.¹¹⁸ After two months marked by violence throughout the country, Wavell wrote on 27 February of his frustration with Indian political leaders for inciting mass action in the past, but showing little ability to control it in the present. 'They have often condemned "police rule," but it is at any rate better than student rule or mob rule, as they are beginning to find out'.¹¹⁹ Neither Wavell nor Auchinleck associated the mutiny or the street protests with communist subversion, a starkly different response to the oncoming Cold War than seen in among the likes of the MI5 back in England.¹²⁰ Still, the blithe response of the higher echelon imperial establishment seems to jar uncomfortably with the brutality shown in the armed response to the violence on the streets, and perhaps betrays how commonplace state-sanctioned violence remained in late 1940s India.

As winter passed into spring, and spring into summer, the military locked up the 'ringleader' naval ratings, discharged others, and forgave the remainder. It reclaimed nearly all its vessels (and most of its equipment) intact. An exception was the sloop *HMIS Hindustan*, which had exchanged fire with Indian Army howitzers and required serious repairs.¹²¹ In July the Bombay government advised against public trials of the mutineers. The trials, they felt, would strain the ability of capitalist-minded Congressmen to 'maintain ascendancy over Congress Socialists who are at present bitterly critical of Vallabhbhai Patel and others for lack of support to the RIN mutineers. Public trials will give Congress Socialists an opportunity to strengthen their influence and this may make future negotiations for Congress participation in Central Government more difficult'.¹²² Also in July, freshly promoted Field Marshal Auchinleck softened his approach to the RIN participants. Falling in line with Bombay's advice, he opted for the more private (and less stringent) punishments made possible through summary proceedings, rather than the harsher prospects of court martial. He made one exception—Commander King, the commanding officer at *Talwar* that used racist language, would

still undergo court martial for his use of unbecoming language, and his failure to investigate a complaint when brought to his notice.¹²³

Conclusion

This essay has offered a narrative of the RIN mutiny and its consequences from the perspective of the *Towards Freedom* collection, as well as narratives written or recorded by interesting participants and observers: the naval rating credited with sparking the mutiny, a Communist essayist, and a Communist British officer hoping to witness the declaration of an Indian Soviet. As a consequence of its sources, especially the *Towards Freedom* collection, this essay offers an 'elite' driven analysis of the event. Additional research could lean on sources recorded in local dialects and the local Bombay Home Department proceedings to better understand the urban dynamics of the mutiny, and challenge elite assumptions about urban political behavior.

Still, for the purpose of the present essay, the consequences of the mutiny can be summarized in terms of how the event affected Indian elites and their leadership of the country. The mutiny of the naval ratings burst upon the scene of national politics unexpectedly; it set off unintended reverberations that lasted for years. From one perspective, the affair ended tidily, and possibly eased fears of an internal security dilemma within independent India. From another, however, the RIN mutiny put a firm wedge between organized labour and Congress, thereby spoiling the economic plans of Indian socialists for years to come. The RIN mutiny of 1946 thus helped shape conditions depicted in two recent works of outstanding scholarship; each examines different aspects of India's political development: Zoltan Barany's *The Solider and the Changing State* and Vivek Chibber's *Locked in Place*. The findings of the present study indicate that neither developmental outcome stemmed from strategic choice, but through happenstance.

Barany argues that Indian democracy benefited from Jawaharlal Nehru's relatively smooth assumption of executive military command at the time of the transfer of power.¹²⁴ The Indian Army,

still an elite and disciplined force, calmly moved from one master to the next. But this outcome was far from certain prior to the mutiny. The military and Congress, after all, distrusted one another tremendously after standing on opposite sides throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and especially during the Second World War. Their opposition to one another hardly represented a promising start for civilian dominance over military affairs, itself an essential precondition for democracy. Curiously, the mutiny played a large role in ensuring civilian dominance over the military. As previously stated, a mutiny represents a threat to a government's ability to control its armed forces. In the case of the 1946 mutiny, however, the actions of Congress and the raj helped cement civilian dominance over military matters, and ensured the welfare of officers in the Indian military. Congress leaders like Patel and Gandhi sought to end the mutiny merely because it represented a threat to the progress of near-term negotiations between Congress and the British government. To ensure the fidelity of a transfer of power, they strove to use their leverage as national leaders to encourage the mutineers to a peaceful, negotiated settlement. The mutineers wanted active leadership, but instead received quiet advice. The mutineers claimed they were behaving in a politically legitimate way; Congress leaders coolly denied the claim. This set a precedent that held strong throughout the subsequent tumultuous decades: in the early years of independent India, military units were not welcome to take independent political action of any kind, thus mitigating their threat to the state.¹²⁵ The RIN mutiny ultimately had a negligible effect on the military's internal cohesion or discipline.¹²⁶

Second, Congress refused to support the *hartal* of workers and students; Congress' refusal stanching the confidence of labour-based political actors in India. Indian capital, already strengthened from their output throughout the Second World War, embraced Patel's willingness to quickly end the strike of the naval ratings. In Patel, the capitalists found a leader capable of speaking directly to strikers; Patel was equally capable of keeping the other Congress leaders from going too far in their support of movements that tasted of revolutionary socialism. But Patel's dispersal of the RIN mutiny and dismissal of the accompanying *hartal* eventually had far reaching

consequences; when it came time to implement Nehru's economic plans, India lacked the confident working class necessary to provide leverage *vis-a-vis* domestic capital. Congress' actions during the 1946 mutiny, though only intended to ensure a rapid transfer of power, perhaps had a serious influence on economic outcomes for decades to come, weakening the most likely political counterweight to capitalist campaigns against Nehru's attempt to build a 'developmental state'.¹²⁷

As B.C. Dutt reflected in his own memoirs some forty years ago, 'Indian society has so evolved that there is no room for revolution'. Indeed, for that fact, proponents of moderation might wish to thank an unlikely (and unlucky) group of young men: the Royal Indian Navy mutineers of 1946.¹²⁸

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Notes

¹ Historian D.O. Spence argues in 'Beyond *Talwar*' that the behavior of sailors throughout the RIN was more complex and interestingly varied than typically described; he also argues for the role of organised crime in exacerbating and facilitating civil unrest in Bombay, a narrative completely absent from the *Towards Freedom* and *Transfer of Power* papers. In a separate series of recent articles, geographer Andrew Davies leverages the RIN mutiny to explore three related problems: the peculiar maritime character of resistance and discipline during the RIN mutiny, the multi-faceted identity of RIN sailors, and the way that ocean-going service allowed sailors to develop identities and political agendas in ways distinctly different from Indians that remained on the subcontinent. See 'Learning "Large Ideas" Overseas;' 'Identity and the Assemblages of Protest;' and 'From "Landsman" to "Seaman"?''. Aniruth Deshpande's forthcoming *A Spring of Despair: Mutiny, Rebellion and Death in India, 1946* also examines the period of the RIN mutiny.

² Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 405.

³ See Chibber, *Locked in Place*.

⁴ Rose, 'Mutiny,' 317-318.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Stokes; Bayly (ed.) *The Peasant Armed*.

⁷ Bell, "The Invergordon Mutiny, 1931."

⁸ A rating is an enlisted naval soldier, as opposed to a commissioned officer. They tend to be from lower status backgrounds than officers. A naval rating may proceed up the enlisted ranks to the non-commissioned rank of Petty Officer or Chief Petty officer. In the RIN mutiny, the vast majority of participants were below the rank of Petty Officer. See Hastings, *The Royal Indian Navy* and Das, *Revisiting Talwar*.

⁹ Das, *Revisiting Talwar*, 315.

¹⁰ Deshpande, 'Hopes and Disillusionment,' 180.

¹¹ Ibid., 188.

¹² Ibid., 183.

¹³ Ibid., 181.

¹⁴ Ibid., 189.

¹⁵ Ibid., 198.

¹⁶ At the time, discontent was not solely occurring in the Indian Army. Phillip Warner notes that 'The causes of grievance were ostensibly slowness of demobilisation' and that 'units which had won a high reputation during the war were now disgraced by the activities of an influx of newcomers who had no genuine motivation and no sense of responsibility'. Warner, *Auchinleck: the Lonely Soldier*, 196-197.

¹⁷ *Free Press Journal*, 7 Jan. 1946, 'Indian airmen in city camp on hunger strike,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 43.

¹⁸ Ibid. Allied soldiers from virtually all ethnic and national backgrounds (including American) expressed growing discontent in 1945 and 1946; it was not solely tied to colonialism. See Alton, 'The Army "Mutiny" of 1946' for an American perspective on the demobilisation problem, and see Das, *Revisiting Talwar*, 30-47, for the potential influence this had on the RIN mutiny.

¹⁹ Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*.

²⁰ Ibid., 216.

²¹ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 60-61.

²² Spector, 'The Royal Indian Navy Strike', 271-284.

²³ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 62-66.

²⁴ Marston, *The Indian Army and the end of the Raj*, 143.

²⁵ Deshpande, 'Hopes and Disillusionment,' 202.

²⁶ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 77.

²⁷ Ibid., 78.

²⁸ Ibid. 80-81.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Letter by C.J.E. Auchinleck, C-in-C India, to all Commanding Officers, RIN, IA, RIAF; New Delhi, 1 Jan. 1946, File No. 62/46 NAI, in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 43.

³¹ Barany, *The soldier and the changing state*.

³² Marston, *The Indian Army and the end of the Raj*.

³³ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 84.

³⁴ Dutt suggests Auchinleck was scheduled to appear, but *Free Press Journal* 19 Feb. claims the officer was Flag Officer Commanding RIN John Henry Godfrey. I opt for Auchinleck, as *Free Press Journal* was reporting on events that transpired more than two weeks in the past, and B.C. Dutt was present at the time. It is possible that Dutt intends to mean Godfrey when he refers to the 'Commander-in-Chief'. See 'Indian naval men in city on hunger strike' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 44.

³⁵ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 86.

³⁶ Ibid., 87.

³⁷ Das argues Dutt was not caught in the open, but in his barracks. Das' source for this is Lieut. H.L. Verma, who testified during Comdr. King's court martial trial after the mutiny. Das, *Revisiting Talwar*, 64-65.

³⁸ Ibid., 91-100.

³⁹ Ibid.; Das, *Revisiting Talwar*, 67-68.

⁴⁰ Sarkar, *Towards Freedom*, 42-128.

- ⁴¹ Chandavarkar *The Origins of Industrial Capital in India*, 124
- ⁴² Ibid., 126-130.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 397-398.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 7-41.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 126-130.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 101.
- ⁴⁸ *Free Press Journal*, 19 Feb. 1946, 'Indian naval men in city on hunger strike,' in Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 44.
- ⁴⁹ *Free Press Journal*, 19 February 1946, 'Indian naval men in city on hunger strike,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 44.
- ⁵⁰ As seen in a photocopy of the *Free Press Journal* front page found in the front-matter of Dutt's *Mutiny of the Innocents*, 1971.
- ⁵¹ Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, 17.
- ⁵² Anonymous speaker in Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, 17.
- ⁵³ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 126-135.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 126.
- ⁵⁵ Bonner, 'The Mutiny of the Innocents' in *Averting the Apocalypse*, 104.
- ⁵⁶ Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, 26.
- ⁵⁷ *Free Press Journal*, 19 Feb. 1946, 'Indian naval men in city on hunger strike,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 44.
- ⁵⁸ Natarajan's foreword in Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 7.
- ⁵⁹ *Free Press Journal*, 19 Feb. 1946, 'Indian naval men in city on hunger strike,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 45.

⁶⁰ *Free Press Journal*, 20 Feb. 1946, 'City naval strike spreads,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 44.

⁶¹ *Free Press Journal*, 20 Feb. 1946, 'United and discipline should be watchwords,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 46-47.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Free Press Journal*, 21 Feb. 1946, 'Delhi naval men fall in line with Bombay strikers,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 47.

⁶⁴ *Free Press Journal*, 25 Feb. 1946, 'All RIAF units in Bombay area on strike,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 59.

⁶⁵ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 139.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁶⁷ Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, 42-43.

⁶⁸ Robertson, *Auchinleck*, 828-829.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 139.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 146-160; Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, 47-61.

⁷² Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 149.

⁷³ *Free Press Journal*, 22 Feb. 1946, 'All-out offensive planned to crush ratings' revolt,' and 'Several ships at sea in the hands of ratings,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 48-50.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 149.

⁷⁶ Report by the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, 3 April 1946, File No. 5/22/46 NAI, in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 40-42.

⁷⁷ Masani, 'The Communist Party in India', 25.

⁷⁸ *Free Press Journal*, 22 Feb. 1946, 'City Communists call for hartal,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 48.

⁷⁹ S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 50-61.

⁸⁰ *Free Press Journal*, 22 February 1946, 'Non-violence commended to RIN men facing fire!' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 50-51.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² *Free Press Journal*, 22 Feb. 1946, 'My services at disposal of RIN,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 54-55.

⁸³ Deshpande, 'Sailors and the crowd: Karachi, 1946,' 9.

⁸⁴ *Free Press Journal*, 23 Feb. 1946, 'Demonstrators machinegunned,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 55-56.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Anonymous, 'Oral history 10495'.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Free Press Journal*, 22 Feb. 1946, 'Admiral threatens to destroy the navy,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 54.

⁹⁰ Both Banerjee's *The R.I.N. Strike* and Dutt's *Mutiny of the Innocents* repeatedly state the ratings wish for a strong, action-minded nationalist leader to guide their hand, and the loss of confidence they experienced when no such leader stepped forward.

⁹¹ *Free Press Journal*, 23 Feb. 1946, 'Naval ratings agree to surrender arms,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 57-58.

⁹² *Free Press Journal*, 22 Feb. 1946, 'RIN ratings in pitched battle with British,' and 'Hindustan opens fire on Karachi,' 23 Feb. 1946, 'Ratings give up after 25 minute battle,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 89-91.

⁹³ Extracts from M.K. Gandhi's 'Statement to the Press', 23 Feb. 1946, published in *Harijan*, 3 March 1946, and reprinted in his *Collected Works*, Vol. LXXXIII (New Delhi, 1981), 171, in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 59.

⁹⁴ *Free Press Journal*, 25 Feb. 1946, 'Peace can come only when military retire,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 55-56.

⁹⁵ *Statesman*, 23 Feb. 1946, 'Less than 12,000 men involved in RIN mutiny,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 55-56.

⁹⁶ *Free Press Journal*, 26 Feb. 1946, 'It was undeclared martial law,' in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 61-62.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Extracts from a letter by M.R. Jayakar to T.B. Sapru dated Bombay 27 Feb. 1946, File No. 807; M.R. Jayakar Papers (1946) NAI in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 55-56.

⁹⁹ Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A biography*. See also the extract from a letter dated 27 Feb. 1946, File No. L/P&J/5/167:ff 158-62, from Sir J. Colville (Bombay) to Field Marshal Viscount Wavell, *Transfer of Power VI*, 1084.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 63-64.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 65-67; excerpted articles from *People's Age*, 3 March 1946, *Towards Freedom*.

¹⁰² Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capital in India*, 398, 402.

¹⁰³ Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 320.

¹⁰⁴ Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capital in India*, 402-404.

¹⁰⁵ Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 280-291.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 280.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 317-319.

¹⁰⁸ Deshpande, 'Sailors and the Crowd: Karachi, 1946,' 21.

¹⁰⁹ Secraphone message received by Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., Government of India, from CIO Bombay at 3.40p.m. on 22 February 1946, File No. 5/21/46 (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, NAI in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 82.

¹¹⁰ Telephone message received by Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., Govt. of India, from 'Mr Simms' at 1245hrs on 23 Feb. 1946, File No. 5/21/46 (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, NAI in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 83.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Wavell, *Wavell: the viceroy's journal*, 211-212.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Hamid, *Disastrous Twilight*, 23-26.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Wavell, 215.

¹¹⁸ Telegram from Field Marshal Viscount Wavell to Mr Attlee, dated 27 Feb. 1946, File No. L/PO/4/28: ff 66-7, *Transfer of Power*, 1054-1056.

¹¹⁹ Wavell, *Wavell: the viceroy's journal*, 217.

¹²⁰ McGarr, "'A Serious Menace to Security'", 441-469.

¹²¹ Baker, 'HMIS Hindustan incident'. See also Deshpande, 'Sailors and the Crowd: Karachi, 1946' for a narrative of the mutiny in Karachi and a detailed social history of the events surrounding February 1946.

¹²² Extracts from a telegram by the Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bombay, to Private Secretary to the Viceroy, on 1 July 1946, File No. 21/8/46 (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, NAI in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 116.

¹²³ Letter by A.D.F. Dundas, Secretary, War Department, Govt. of India, forwarding a message from C.J.E. Auchinleck, Commander in Chief in India, to G.E.B. Abell, Private Secretary, Viceroy; dated 3 July 1946, File No. 21/8/46 (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, NAI in S. Sarkar, ed., *Towards Freedom*, 116-117.

¹²⁴ The Cabinet in London had expressed concerns about the civil control of the military when considering the punishment of Indian National Army members. See Cabinet minutes, Indian and Burma Committee, I.B. (45) 6th Meeting, October 1945, File No. L/WS/1/1577: ff 128-32, in N. Mansergh, *Transfer of Power VI*, 402-406.

¹²⁵ Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State*, 245-274.

¹²⁶ Marston, *The Indian Army and the end of the Raj*, 144.

¹²⁷ Chibber, *Locked in Place*.

¹²⁸ Dutt, *The Mutiny of the Innocents*, 237.

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