



---

## RAJA MAHENDRA PRATAP AND FIRST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF FREE INDIA

Dr. Ramesh Kumar, Associate Professor of History,  
Government College Aharwala (Bilaspur), Haryana, 135102

### Abstract:

This paper presents a comprehensive examination of the formation of First Provisional Government of Independent India. It investigates the roles of Indian revolutionaries in abroad for the independence of India specially Raja Mahendra Pratap. Outbreak of the First World War in July, 1914, brought about crucial changes in the political life and socio-economic conditions of India. For the Indian revolutionaries it was at the same time a signal and a hope. For years, like Irish revolutionaries, "They had believed that England's difficulty is India's opportunity." Mahendra Pratap heard the news of outbreak of the first world war on train, when he was going from Dehradun to Brindaban to attend annual function of Prem Mahavidyalya. This war changed his political thinking considerably. He also wanted to encash this opportunity. In August 1914, the Commissioner of Agra division came to preside over the annual function and distribute the prizes to the students of Prem Mahavidyalya Brindavan. Mahendra Pratap in the course of his address said that he want to "dethrone injustice and crown justice in its place." This bold assertion of Mahendra Pratap annoyed him. At the end of the function, the Commissioner asked Mahendra Pratap to visit him next morning at Mathura, where he was staying with the Magistrate. Next day, Mahendra Pratap found commissioner rather unfriendly and stern. The Commissioner complained to him about his unwanted behaviour and feelings. He asked the Raja to be careful in future. The incident proved very decisive in his life. Herein after, he began to feel sympathetic for Germans, who were fighting "this dirty British Empire." Then influenced by the Kamagatamaru incident of Nov. 1914 at Budge-Budge, he made a plan to go outside India and make attempt to liberate his motherland with outside help.

**Keywords:** Provisional, Revolutionaries, World War, Dethrone, Injustice, British, Empire, Kamagatamaru, Motherland



For the Indian revolutionaries, at home and abroad, the pre-world war I years had been more or less, years of preparations. Revolutionary emissaries had been sent out, fresh revolutionaries had been recruited abroad and revolutionary movements among Indians in various countries and continents had been set on foot. But as long as Britain was not involved in a major war, their efficacy was strictly limited. They could, at best, occasionally scratch the British lion, keep up the tempo of the revolutionary movement and inspire their countrymen through a saga of sacrifice. "Before and during world war 1 Indian émigrés had considerably stepped up their revolutionary activities, having created their fighting organizations, and revolutionary centers in various counties of the world. It was easier, in their opinion to press for the liberation of India with the help of the powers hostile to Britain in the years of an international crisis and exacerbation of inter-imperialist contradictions."<sup>1</sup>

Outbreak of the First World War in July, 1914, brought about crucial changes in the political life and socio-economic conditions of India. For the Indian revolutionaries it was at the same time a signal and a hope. For years, like Irish revolutionaries, "They had believed that England's difficulty is India's opportunity."<sup>2</sup> Mahendra Pratap heard the news of outbreak of the first world war on train, when he was going from Dehradun to Brindaban to attend annual function of Prem Mahavidyalaya. This war changed his political thinking considerably. He also wanted to encash this opportunity. In August 1914, the Commissioner of Agra division came to preside over the annual function and distribute the prizes to the students of Prem Mahavidyalaya Brindavan. Mahendra Pratap in the course of his address said that he want to "dethrone injustice and crown justice in its place."<sup>3</sup> This bold assertion of Mahendra Pratap annoyed him. At the end of the function, the Commissioner asked Mahendra Pratap to visit him next morning at Mathura, where he was staying with the Magistrate. Next day, Mahendra Pratap found commissioner rather unfriendly and stern. The Commissioner complained to him about his unwanted behaviour and feelings. He asked the Raja to be careful in future. The incident proved very decisive in his life. Herein after, he began to feel sympathetic for Germans, who were fighting "this dirty British Empire."<sup>4</sup> Then influenced by the Kamagatamaru incident of Nov. 1914 at Budge-Budge, he made a plan to go outside India and make attempt to liberate his motherland with outside help.

To hoodwink the government he planned wisely and executed it boldly. He applied for issuance of passport forgoing to Europe to study the war conditions there and also sought permission to go to the USA for an exhibition. The Government could not understand the real motive of the 'Raja' and issued him the necessary papers. The members of his family and other relatives also could not imagine as to what he was going to do. Therefore, without letting anyone to know his plan, he left for Europe. To be precise, on December 20, 1914 he left for Switzerland with Mr. Harishchandra.<sup>5</sup> When Mahendra Pratap had reached Geneva, he came into contact with Shyama ji Krishan Verma and Lala Hardyal, the famous revolutionaries. In fact nationalist revolutionaries, who were active in different countries striving for independence, the war seemed a heaven sent opportunity draining India of white soldiers and bringing the possibility of financial and military help from the German and Turkish enemies of Britain. At this point of time, Indian revolutionaries in Non-Entente Europe, who had responded to the call to serve their motherland like M. Prabhakar, Abdur Rahman, A. Siddgi, Virendera Nath Chattopadhyaya, Muhammad Mansur and other grouped together at Berlin. These revolutionaries in Germany therefore planned to approach the German Government for helping them on the following basis:



- 
- (a) That they should accept the money from the German Government as a national loan to be repaid when India will attain Independence.
  - (b) That the German will supply arms and their representatives in all the countries will help the Indian revolutionary movement.
  - (c) That the Turks will help the movement and Sultan will declare Jihad against the allies in order to induce the Indian Muslim's to fight against the British.<sup>6</sup>

After the long conversation between the Indian revolutionaries and the Foreign office of Germany, a committee was formally constituted with the name *Deutscher vereinder Freunde Indian* (The German union of friendly India).<sup>7</sup> Later in the middle of 1915, it was thoroughly modified and it was called 'Indian Independence committee' popularly known as 'Berlin Indian Committee'. Its explicit object was to "take care of Indians living under the central powers, establish contacts with Indian revolutionaries elsewhere and to advise the German Government on Indian affairs."<sup>8</sup> The Berlin Indian committee planned to establish a Provisional Government.<sup>9</sup> However it was felt that before doing so they must make the committee more representatives of the Indians. "The presence of some well known figure among them, they thought would strengthen their moral position raise their bonafides above doubt and convince their countrymen that the Germans could be trusted as their sincere friends."<sup>10</sup>

As soon as it was known that Raja Mahendra Pratap of Hathras had reached Switzerland, Virendera Nath Chattopadhyaya<sup>11</sup> hurried down to Geneva and literally hustled him to Berlin. Mahendra Pratap was no well-known figure there, but as a feudal chief with a commanding presence, he could be impressed both the Germans and the Indian princes and landlords.<sup>12</sup> Mahendra Pratap insisted upon meeting the German Emperor William Kaiser after reaching Berlin. Chattopadhyaya said "What! Kaiser will see you hundred times."<sup>13</sup> He meant that when Mahendra Pratap was going to make so much sacrifice, risk everything, the Kaiser would surely receive him. When the condition of meeting was agreed upon, he along with Virendera Nath Chattopadhyaya reached Berlin on 10 February 1915. He was received in audience by the Kaiser himself,<sup>14</sup> who conferred on him the order of Eagle (2nd class). In fact, he was always shown special courtesy and consideration due to a prince Raja Mahendra Pratap had an interview with the Emperor, William Kaiser. Mr. Zimmerman was also present at that time Kaiser began to speak of some prophesy that the English rule must come to an end in India, during these years Kaiser talked something about his relation with the Phulkian states of Punjab and of their strategic position in case of a military move from the side of Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> With the help of the German high officials, Mahendra Pratap succeeded in getting the German government interested in India's struggle for freedom.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the huge distances involved and the complete British mastery of the seas, a direct attack of Germans on India could not obviously materialize in the foreseeable future. So, it was decided that an indirect offensive should be taken by inciting the Amir of Afghanistan and the frontier tribes to attack India at that opportune moment and by assisting the Indian revolutionaries with money and munitions to raise the standard of revolt.<sup>17</sup>



Many prominent leader of the Ghadar party and of other organizations of Indian emerges had converged in Berlin. Efforts were made to get as many well known nationalist leaders to join them in Germany as possible. More than once, Lala Lajpat Rai was requested to come and accept the leadership of the Indian revolutionaries in Germany but he refused to do so. In due course of time the Berlin Indian committee was not wanting in men of stature as it had the services of persons like Mahendra Pratap, Hardyal, Virendera Nath Chattopadhyaya, Jitendera Nath Lahiri, Bhupendera Dutt, Dr. Jnan Chandra Dasgupta, Baraktulla Khan and others. Since the German scheme to spread disaffection among the Muslims of Constantinople and Baghdad against the British and Enver Pasha's plan to organize revolutionary movements by sending German officers to Afghanistan had earlier miserably failed, it was known for the Berlin Indian Committee to show its worth.<sup>18</sup>

The revolutionaries like Mahendra Pratap and others were also interested in going to Turkey to reach the Indian frontier from the west. They thought, that, apart from their influence in the court of Kabul, it would be relatively easy to get into contact with their Comrades in India and to send them arms from there. Baraktulla, a renowned Ghadar revolutionary and Lala Hardyal too were interested in revolutionary works in west Asia and came in Berlin in January 1915. On 21 Feb, Mahendra Pratap personally called at the German foreign office and suggested that he, Baraktulla and few Indian prisoners of war should be included in the mission that was to leave shortly for Kabul. The idea was even supported by well known industrialist of Germany like Albert Ballin and Mannesmann. "They all felt that the fact that Mahendra Pratap was a well known Landlord of the Kshatriya caste and Baraktullah, a renowned revolutionary would inspire enthusiasm in Indian princes and Muslims alike."<sup>19</sup>

The Indo-German mission which was well known as Hentig-Pratap mission consisted of the Raja Mahendra Pratap, Maulana Baraktullah Bhopali, W.O. Von Hentig of the German Diplomatic services holding the rank of Legations- secretary and other few Indian prisoners of war. A number of Afghan Afirdi Soldiers accompanied the mission.<sup>20</sup> It was further decided obviously with an eye on Indian sentiment, that Mahendra Pratap would be the formal head of the mission while W. O. Von Hentig would be in actual in charge of its affairs. The German chancellor Bethman-Hollweg gave them official letters, addressed to twenty six Indian princes and one for the king of Nepal, professing German friendship and exhorting them to rise in revolt against the British. The German government was requested to sanction \$ 100,000 for this mission and to deposit it in Hentig's account with the Deutsch Bank at Istanbul.<sup>21</sup> On the eve of the departure of this mission, the chancellor Bethman-Hollweg gave him (Raja Mahendra Pratap) a letter with his signature promising him German support in his work for India.<sup>22</sup>

The mission left Berlin on 9th April, 1915. The mission, on its way through Turkey reached Istanbul. At there, the Indians were honorably received. Mahendra Pratap had an audience with the Sultan of Turkey and also had meetings with Hilmi Pasha, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and the Sheikh-ul-Islam. The Sultan and his officers issued special orders to their military officers about ensuring safety and security to the mission through Asia Minor to Persia and also to provide all necessary facilities. The Turkish Sultan also gave a letter of introduction to Mahendra Pratap for the Amir of Afghanistan. The Prime Minister of Turkey gave him seven letters for the Indian princes professing Turkish friendship and a call to



rise in revolt against the British. The Sheikh-ul-Islam gave them a written fatwa urging Hindus and Muslims to work together against the British.<sup>23</sup> The Turkish authorities also agreed to Mahendra Pratap's request to send one Turkish official with the mission. Turkey High official showed great sympathy for the object of the mission, namely conquering India from the Britishers.<sup>24</sup>

The Mission left Istanbul on 20th April and reached Baghdad on 27th May and Kermanshah on 7th June. While the party rested there for two weeks Hentig alone went to Tehran for discussions with Prince, Rues and Niedermeyer. Others left Kermanshah on 20 June and reached Isphan on the 28th. Hentig joined them there and the entire group moved from Isphan on 1, July. They advanced towards Kabul via Amrak, Nain and Rabatgur. It was at last named town that Niedemeyer too joined them on 22 July."<sup>25</sup>

Harishchandra who had accompanied Mahendra Pratap to Switzerland was instructed by Mahendra Pratap to return to India and send revolutionaries to Kabul. He, however, revealed the entire plan to the British authorities in London.<sup>26</sup> He was planted by Cleveland the Director of criminal intelligence, who claimed that he was working for him in Europe. Even before the Turco-German mission had set out, Delhi had obtained all details and informed the Amir of Afghanistan about the Turco-German parties and agents. the Amir affirmed his neutrality and assured the Viceroy that the German parties would be disarmed and interned till the end of the war.<sup>27</sup>

British and Russian governments received regular reports about the mission's advance towards Afghanistan. The News was passed on to the Amir of Afghanistan and the East Persian cordon was alerted and strengthened to prevent the mission from getting through it. The members of this mission too had learnt that both the roads leading to the east were being guarded by the Russian soldiers. So, from Church a small group under Dr. Becker, including three Afridi prisoners, was sent towards Turbat as a decoy party to attract the Russians to the south. By 3 August, the Russians had been successfully misled and the main body of the mission reached Bushrujeh.<sup>28</sup> Several of the Indian revolutionaries connected with this mission were captured and executed by the British and Russian military, without any proper trial. This was preferred by the Director of criminal intelligence as their trial in India would have been trouble some.<sup>29</sup>

After having braved the hazards of the journey and dangers of the enemy activities the mission entered into the Afghanistan on 9th August 1915. On 2nd October 1915, they ultimately reached Kabul. The members of the mission were accommodated at the Bagh-i-Babar (The garden of Babar). The real intention of the Amir, Habibullah remained obscure to the mission and he did not show any interest in its arrival. Chances of Mahendra Pratap, Baraktulla and Von Hentig to seek an audience with at first, seemed bleak. For a few days they lived in a kind of uncertainty. They could see and enjoy the green valley below and high mountains in the distance but as Mahendra Pratap himself write "We were not allowed to go out of the four walls of the Bagh-i-Babar."<sup>30</sup>

However, the presence of a pro-Turkish and anti-British opinion among certain sections of the Afghan people and also sympathetic attitude of the crown prince, Inayatullah Khan and the brother of the Amir, Nusrullah Khan. The Amir of Afghanistan, Habibullah had to grant to the members of the mission an interview on 24th October 1915. There, in the presence of the Amir's Ministers, "It was agreed that the German would train the Afghan army, and that the blue-print





of a German-Afghan treaty would be prepared in time.<sup>31</sup> The Government appointed Haji Abdula Razak of liaison work with the Indian revolutionaries there. There after a separate meeting was arranged for Indian delegates on the mission with the Amir, Habibullah. In the meeting Mahendra Pratap raised the issue of Indian interned and Indians in prison of Afghanistan. The Amir promptly acceded to the request to grant guest status to the Indians interned and set free the revolutionary prisoners. Among the persons so set free were Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi, Mathura Singh and others.<sup>32</sup>

In the mean time, Muslim Pan-Islamities with in India were also busy establishing contacts and discovering possibilities across the western frontiers. The frontiers tribesman were almost perpetually restive and the declaration of Jihad. There was also among them the colony of Indians Mujahidins (Commonly known in English as the Hindustani Fanatics) in the chamla-Amazai border known for their zealous hatred for the British. In January 1915, Abul Kalam Azad, the well known editor of Al-Hillal of Calcutta, and Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi of Dar-al-Ulam at Deoband had secret meeting at Delhi with Abdul Ahmad, the leader of these Indian Mujahidis. Soon afterwards contact was established with Kabul, Early in "February 1915. Fifteen Lahore students left their colleges and joined the Mujahidins, subsequently proceeding to Kabul, where they were placed in strict detention and afterwards released and allowed some freedom of movement under surveillance."<sup>33</sup> In August 1915, Obeidullah Sindhi crossed the North west frontiers with his three companions Abdullah, Fateh Muhammad and Muhammad Ali and formed the nucleus there.<sup>34</sup> He was however, a zealous Pan-Islamite, but in those hectic days of adventure and hope, "it was quite common for fanatic Pan-Islamites and virulent nationalist to work together against their common enemy." <sup>35</sup>

The presence of so many Indians revolutionaries and the friendly environment in Kabul inspired Mahendra Pratap to take a rather bold decision considerable symbolic value.<sup>36</sup> This was the announcement of a Provisional Government of Free India at Kabul in the evening of December 1, 1915 on his Birthday. This evening he gave a party and announced, "Now friends, we must tell you why we have given you all this trouble. I do not believe in any personal birthday rejoicing. Life is a constant without a beginning and end.... We are going to establish this night the first provisional government of India. I am to take the oath of the office of its president and here our Honourable friend Maulana Baraktulla will swear before you as the First premier."<sup>37</sup> The following members hold the ministries mentioned against their names in the provisional government of free India:

Name	Office
Raja Mahendra Pratap	President
Prof. Maulana Baraktulla 38	Prime Minister
Moulvi Obeidullah Sindhi	Minister for the Interior
K. Mohammad Wali	Finance Minister
M. Basheer	War Minister
M. Pillai	Foreign Minister
Mohammad Ali	Assistant Minister for the Interior
Mohammad Shafique	Secretary Interior. <sup>39</sup>



Bagh-i-Babar was the central head quarter of the 'Provisional Government of Free India'. In the secretariat of that government twenty two persons were working as secretaries Those Indians who were under detention in Afghanistan were now released and "some of them took up various secretarial jobs under this government."<sup>40</sup>

The composition of the newly established organization "attested to a radicalization of the Indian national liberation movement and a unification of its revolutionary forces of diverse orientations. The Provisional Government of India in exile was made up not only of representatives of the Ghadar party and the Berlin Committee but also some leading members of the Muslim movement and extreme left wingers of the Indian National Congress."<sup>41</sup> In February 1916, Mahendra Pratap and Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi sent a secret invitation to Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad<sup>42</sup> to join them at Kabul to wage their fight against British but he did not go.<sup>43</sup>

In the mean time the provisional government of India issued its manifesto listing there in the promises of the Turko-German help. It also spoke very high of the efforts of the Ghadarites by employing armed resistance against the British. The provisional government of India exhorted the Hindus and Muslims of India to maintain unity and also called upon the Rajas and Nawabs (ruler of the Indian Princely states) to rise against the alien rule. They also appealed the army men to rise in revolt against the British imperialism.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Object of Provisional Government of Free India was:**

"To create an indigenous Government in India instead of the present alien English Government. The Provisional Government will... cease to exist in the sense that it will hand over its portfolio to the body-polite of India formulated by the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League, the two well known representative bodies of India."<sup>45</sup> To accomplish this object they had adopted the following line of actions:

1. To invoke the sympathy and moral support of foreign Government for the emancipation of India from foreign yoke.
2. To determinate revolutionary propaganda among:
  - (a) The princes and ruling chiefs of Indian states by inviting them to join our cause.
  - (b) Leaders of public opinion and captains of industry.
  - (c) The Indian soldiers, dissuading them from fighting against any foreign power.
3. To obtain arms and ammunition with a view to supply the revolutionary forces and to store them for emergencies, that is the general war of Independence.<sup>46</sup>

With a view to achieve its objectives, the provisional government of free India swing into action. Provisional Government dealt directly with Afghan Government and a treaty was drawn up between the two.<sup>47</sup> According to the agreement, the Amir of Afghanistan allowed the establishment and functioning of Provisional Government from its head quarters at Bagh-i-Babar and also permitted it to establish diplomatic relations with other countries.<sup>48</sup>

Mahendra Pratap and his associates were restless souls of indomitable energy and adventurous temperament. All of them possessed anti-British nationalism in abundance and wanted to use any sort of support from the foreign countries which could be used to promote the cause of Indian freedom. In march 1916, with a view to explore the possibility of securing



Russian assistance, Mahendra Pratap, in his capacity as the President of the Provisional Government of Independent India, dispatched a letter on a plate of solid gold to the Czar through Mathura Singh alias Shamsher Singh and Mirza Muhammad Ali But contrary to the expectations, they were arrested and handed over to the British and Mathura Singh was executed at Lahore.<sup>49</sup> Undeterred by this turn of events, Mahendra Pratap made another efforts, and sent Kal Singh alias Gujar Singh to Russo-Turkistan to solicit the help of the Czar in August 1916. But he was told by the local authorities that it would not be safe for Indian revolutionaries to enter Russian territory.<sup>50</sup>

It would be pertinent to ask as to why the Provisional Government of Independent India was so eager to get Russian military and financial support. The reason for looking to Russia for help was twofold: "Russia's central Asian possessions lay close to the borders of India and the Anglo Russian contradictions in the East had come to a head."<sup>51</sup> Under such circumstances, Mahendra Pratap's Government strove hard to organize with a Russian and Afghan support an all out uprising in India. But the response of both the Czar and the Amir was not up to the expectations of Provisional Government of Independent India and the same was the response from within the India due to the impact of congress policies and lethargic attitude of the native rulers. The members of the Turco-German-Indian mission after having stayed in Afghanistan for over eight months failed to wean away the Amir from the Pro-British policies, the German delegate left for their country in May, 1916 but were captured by the British in Iran. In September, 1916 the Provisional Government of Independent India sent a mission to the capital of Turkey. However, the Czar's officers in Persia arrested this third mission and handed it over to Britain.<sup>52</sup>

In the mean time, soon after Turkey had entered the World war, a Mohammedon educational conference was held at Rawalpindi. It was attended by Abdul Kalam Azad and Mohammad Ali, who after the conference was over, lectured to young and impressionable Muslim students at tea-parties in some Lahore colleges and elsewhere. As stated above. In February 1915, a batch of 15 students from Lahore and some students from Peshawar disappeared as a result of this and got into touch with the Indian revolutionary leaders Mahendra Pratap and Baraktullah Khan President and Prime Minister of Provisional Government of India at Kabul. Some of these students from there were sent on mission to Persia, central Asia, Japan and Russia. From some of these students the British got in August 1916, the information regarding the 'silk letter' plot which had originated in Kabul in 1916

Raja Mahendra Pratap and his cabinet colleague Obeidullah with the help of Muhammad Hassan and Muhammad Mian Ansari, had tried to solicit help of the Pan-Islamite revolutionaries.<sup>53</sup> They sent letters on silk clothes and sewn with the bearer's coat for the princes and people of India, exhorting them to rise in revolt against the Britishers. This resulted in the famous conspiracy case known as the 'silk letter' plot. It was designed to unite all the forces of Islam, the Turks, The Afghan, the Arab's, the frontier tribes and Mohammedons of India, against the Britishers. The plan was that the frontiers tribes of India would start with an attack and it was hoped that the revolutionary Hindu and the Sikhs in India would at once join in the conspiracy which was organized with some skill in central Asia, Hejaj, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan and India, and when the start was made much help was expected from all these quarters.<sup>54</sup>





In the mean time, Mohammad Hassan went for Jedda, enroots to Istanbul with his followers, including Muhammad Mian Ansari to attend the Hajj festival. At there he met Enver and Jemal Pasha and managed to get a few appeals to Indian Muslims signed by them and Ghalib Pasha, The Governor of Hajaj, with a declaration of religious war.<sup>55</sup> These appeals were known as the Ghalibnama a translation of its prominent passage runs as follows:

“The Muhammadons in Asia, Europe and Africa adorned themselves with all sorts of arms and rushed to join the Jihad in the path of God. Thanks to Almighty God that the Turkish Army and the Mujahidin have overcome the enemies of Islam Oh Moslems, therefore attack the tyrannical Christian Government under efforts with bondage you are. Hasten to put all your efforts with strong resolution, to strangle the enemy to death and show your hatred and enmity for them. It may also be known to you that Maulvi Muhammad Hassan Effendi (formerly at the Deoband Madrassa India) came to us and sought our counsel. We agreed with him in this respect and gave him necessary instructions. You should trust him if he comes to you and help him with men, money and whatever he requires ”<sup>56</sup>

Muhammad Mian Ansari came to India with these and a few other propaganda leaflets, which were distributed among pan-Islamite groups and the frontiers tribes. Then early in 1916, he went to Kabul. There his comrade felt it necessary to reestablish contact with Istanbul and in order to accomplish this object Obeidullah addressed a letter to his old friend, Maulana Muhammad Hassan. This together with another letter dated the 9th July 1916 written by Mian Ansari on yellow silk in Persian sent by a special messenger Abdul Haq to be handed over to Sheikh Abdur Rahim of Hyderabad (Sind) For onwards transmission through someone or personally by him. Abdul Haq inadvertently showed them to a loyalist Khan Bahadur Rao Nawaz Khan, whose two sons Allah Nawaz and Shah Nawaz had crossed over to Kabul. This gentlemen got hold of the silk letter and handed them over to the commissioner of Multan.<sup>57</sup>

In these letter, it was described, the progress of the movement in Kabul, Distribution of Galibnama, arrival of the Turco-German mission, the runaway students, formation of Provisional Government of Free India etc, and a plan for the organization of an At-Janud-Al-Rabbnis or 'Army of God' against the British. The letter to Muhammad Hassan was given a suggestion to carry his preparation a step further. The chief head quarter of the 'Army of God' was to be Madina and Muhammad Hassan was to be its Al-Kwaid or commander in chief. Other head quarter was to be established in Constantinople, Tehran and Kabul.<sup>58</sup> Obeidullah was to be its commander or General at Kabul. The table contains the names of three patrons, 12 field marshals and many other high military officials. On the Lahore students, one was to be a major-general, one was a colonel, and lieutenant colonel.<sup>59</sup> But in August, 1916, Sheikh Abdur Rahim was unfortunately caught by the British police, and their plans regarding an understanding with Turkey and a Pan-Islamic rising in India fell into British hands. Since these letters and a few other instructions for their comrades in North India were sewn with the yellow silk lining in Persian language of the bearer's coat the whole affair thus brought to light came to be known as the 'Silk Letter Conspiracy Case'.<sup>60</sup> Later on several revolutionaries were nabbed and severally punished in this case. Obviously, this affected quite seriously the morale and organization of Pan-Islamites in India Individuals and small groups, however still moved across the frontier from time to time.<sup>61</sup>

This plot had been directed towards one objective to overthrow by force of the British rule in India with foreign aid. The conspiracy was conducted by the Provisional Government of free India at Kabul and some Pan-Islamite leaders of India with the strong support of the Germans. Though this and other conspiracies had failed yet they alerted the British Government. British Government decided to appoint a committee under the Presidentship of Justice Rowlett on 10 the Dec. 1917.<sup>62</sup>

1. To investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India.
2. To examine and consider the difficulties that has arisen in dealing with such conspiracies and to advise as to legislation if any, necessary to enable Government to deal effectively with them.

After the investigation and examination of this type of conspiracies committee presented some recommendation to prevent the recurrence this type of conspiracy On the basis of these recommendations Govt. passed Rowlett Act in March 1919. The people strongly opposed this Black Law.

In spite of the repeated failure, Mahendra Pratap desperately tried to make some useful contacts with anti-British powers. He managed to send Bethman Hollweg's letters and the Turkish Sultan's letters along with his own notes to India urging the Indian princes to declare their independence from the British yoke and constitute a common wealth of India. But the British authorities had prior information about this and had taken adequate preventive steps. Hence the move proved futile.<sup>63</sup> Raja Mahendra Pratap also sent Kal Singh alias Gujar Singh to Nepal, possibly in June 1917 with Bethman-Hollweg's letters. Helped actively by the Governor of Khanbad Kal Singh could secretly enter India and reached Nepal and delivered the letter to the King of Nepal but he remained unmoved.<sup>64</sup>

Raja Mahendra Pratap and fellow revolutionaries were not made of the stuff that easily melts due to slightest heating. They continued their efforts for searching new avenues from where they could get help. The March revolution had taken place in Russia and Kerensky had come to power. Once more Mahendra Pratap tried to explore that quarter for a friendly response. But in reply to his query he was informed that there would be no change in Russian foreign policy under the new regime, and that India revolutionaries should not expect any help from Russia.<sup>65</sup>

By then the tide of war had definitely turned in Britain's favour, and with in India revolutionary activities had been more or less suppressed. To the Indians at Kabul it was clear that though their personal relations with the Amir were excellent, and had been given even Afghan citizenship, their stay in Afghanistan could no longer be of any use and that they should look elsewhere for aid and intervention.<sup>66</sup>

The October revolution in Russia inspired Indians for freedom struggle. "The revolution in Russia was regarded as a triumph over despotism It has given an impetus to Indian political aspirations."<sup>67</sup> It was the so called Provisional Government of India in Kabul "that was the first of the politically organized group of Indian revolutionaries to come into contact with the



Russia.”<sup>68</sup> However following the victory of the October Revolution Mahendra Pratap wrote to Lenin that now, "The final obstacles has been removed, and I have been glad to find out from the latest news papers appearing in India that the Russian Government is now led by the noble sons of Russia. English present them as traitors, but in actual fact they are true friends of Humanity He went on to say that he was anxious to see close friendly relation between Russia and India because we trust that nothing but a partnership of Russia and India will make possible India's true liberation and an equilibrium in the universe"<sup>69</sup>

Lenin's inspiring message to the Indian revolutionary association of Kabul (headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap) shows his keen study of the Indian situation and desire to help India's freedom struggle. In this message he said: "The toiling masses of Russia follow the awakening of the Indian worker and peasant with unabating attention.... We welcome the close alliance of Moslem and non Moslem elements. We sincerely want to see this alliance extended to all toilers of the world. For only when the Indian, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Japanese, Turkish workers and peasant join hands and march together in the common cause of liberation, only then will the decisive victory over exploiters be ensured. Long live free Asia."<sup>70</sup>

Accordingly, Lenin's Government, soon after assuming power, invited Mahendra Pratap to visit USSR. In March 1918 he reached Petrograd (Leningrad) and met Trotsky in the war office. And on finding the Russian pre-occupied in their fight for survival, Mahendra Pratap left for Germany. He arrived at Berlin on 28 march 1918 and handed over to the Kaiser William II, the letter of the Amir of Afghanistan. During the course of his talks with the Emperor of Germany, he suggested to Organize an international socialist army, comprising of the German, Austria, Bulgarian, Turkish and Russian and help India to gain her freedom. The Idea was accepted by the imperial Germany. Undeterred by it, Mahendra Pratap repeated the suggestion before Enver Pasha at Constantinople about a month later, but in vain.<sup>71</sup> He tried his level best to present the case of the independence of India before the American Ambassador at Bern. However he did not listen to him.<sup>72</sup>

In the mean time Mahendra Pratap read in London times that King Habibullah, the Amir of Afghanistan was murdered. Mahendra Pratap thought that under the changed circumstances there seemed better prospect of the soviet and Afghan aid for India's struggle for freedom as the Government in both the countries seemed to be friendly towards the Provisional Government of Independent India. Mahendra Pratap Came back to the Soviet Union from Germany and met Lenin on 7 May 1919, along with Moulana Baraktullah, Tirumal Acharya, Abdur Rab Peshawar), Dalip Singh Gill and Baraktulla's personal attendant Ibrahim.<sup>73</sup> They strive hard to get Russian recognition to their Government and Russian military and financial support for their revolutionary activities. But no recognition and concrete support could be enlisted from outside.<sup>74</sup> Soon thereafter Mahendra Pratap and some others left for Kabul.

By 1918 the political scenario radically changed in favour of the Entente powers and no foreign country seemed interested in directly supporting the Provisional Government of Independent India. At first," The new Russian Government of Lenin showed some interest in the affairs of this Government led by Mahendra Pratap but gradually it also tried to utilize the service of the members of his Government to further consolidate the position of Bolsheviks in



the central Asia.”<sup>75</sup> In view of it, the first provisional Government of Independent India in Exile established on Dec 1, 1915 at Kabul gradually became inactive and was ultimately defunct by 1922. Several nationalist revolutionaries, connected to this Government had either been captured by the British or shifted their loyalty to other groups engaged in carrying out their liberation struggle from other places than Kabul.

Mahendra Pratap had a totally feudal background. It is indeed strange that a man with such a background could have anything to do with any revolutionary movement. But his intense patriotism and the desire to see his motherland free made him tread the dangerous path of rebellion.<sup>76</sup> Due to his involvement in the revolutionary activities from abroad, he had suffered a lot. His estate in India were confiscated on July 1, 1916 under the regulation no-3 of 1818 as revealed by the reply of a question in Central Legislature Assembly in 1922.<sup>77</sup> He was denied entry into India till the Second World War was over. Admittedly Mahendra Pratap and his Provisional Government failed to garner enough support in India and also from abroad due to inherent short comings of the nationalist struggle and contradictions in the objective of the foreign governments promising support to them. The government also failed due to the involvement of fundamentalist Islamic forces and Pan-Islamites groups. The strong and active spy system of the Britishers failed to revolutionaries in India and abroad. However, taking a cue from the experiences of the First Provisional Government of independent India headed by Mahendra Pratap, the Indian revolutionaries led by Subhash Chander Bose established the Indian National Army and the Second Provisional Government of India successfully focussed the attention of Indian's, both inside and outside India, towards the need of liberating their motherland. This is not, in anyway an insignificant achievement of Mahendra Pratap and his Provisional Government in Exile.

### References:

1. Persits, MA., Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia, Moscow, 1973 p. 18.
2. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, Patna, 1971 p. 82
3. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, Delhi, 1947 pp. 35-36
4. Ibid.
5. He was the eldest brother of Mahatma Shradanand (Munshi Ram) of Gurukul Kangri , Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p. 36
6. Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India. Vol II, Calcutta, 1963 p. 405
7. Ibid pp. 405-406
8. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, Patna, 1971 p. 91-92
9. Trivedi, Raj Kumar, Turco-German Intrigue in India during the world war-I,LH.C. (43rd session) Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982 p. 655
10. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, p. 93
11. He was the brother of Famous Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.
12. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad. p. 93
13. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p. 39
14. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, pp 38-42, According to MN Roy, he was received by the crown prince and not the Kaiser (see) M N Roy. Memoirs, Delhi, 1964, p. 99
15. Ibid



16. Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India. Vol 11, p. 434
17. Statement of Bhattacharya, Herbert Mueller and Glasenapp quoted by Bose, A.C., op. cit., p.86
18. Trivedi, Raj Kumar, op. cit, pp. 656-657
19. Bose, A.C., op.cit.p.106-107
20. Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India. Vol II. p. 434.
21. Statement of Hentig, quoted by Bose, A.C., op,cit, pp. 107-108
22. Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India, op.cit., p. 434
- 23 Bose, A.C., op.cit., p.108
24. Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India, op. cit., p. 434.
25. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p. 45-47
26. Foreign office No. 371/3067/1917, PRO quoted by Trivedi, Raj Kumar, Turco German Intrigue in India during the world war-1, I.H.C. (43rd session) Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982, p. 657
27. Trivedi, Raj Kumar, Turco-German Intrigue in India during the world war-I, I.H.C. (43rd session) Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982, p. 657
28. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, p. 109
29. Trivedi, Raj Kumar, Turco-German Intrigue in India during the world war -1, I.H.C (43rd session) Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982 p. 658
30. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p. 49
31. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p 49-52, Bose, A.C., op.cit., p. 109-110
32. Ibid.
33. Sedition Committee Report Calcutta, 1918, p. 124.
34. Ibid p. 125
35. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, p. 111
36. Ibid
37. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, pp. 53-54
38. He was the native of Bhopal and born around the year 1870, In 1909 he became Professor in Tokyo University and started a paper Islamic Fraternity after a very active career as a revolutionary leader in Japan, Germany, Soviet Russia he died in California in 1926.
39. "Introduction ("Official Representation" of April 6, 1920) from the Provisional Government of India in Tashkent, signed by Mohammad Ali and Shafique (CPNIML) Quoted by Persits, MA., Revolutionary of India in Soviet-Russia. Moscow, 1973, pp 21-22
40. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad. p. 111
41. M.A.Persis, Revolutionary of India in Soviet Russia, Moscow, 1973 pp 22
42. Maulana Azad a famous nationalist leader of Indian National Congress and published 'Al-Hilal' and 'Comrade', he became first Education Minister of free India.
43. Reports by C.E.W Sands cited in Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad. p. 111
44. Tilak Raj Sareen, Indian Revolutionaries abroad. 1905-1920, Delhi, 1979, pp 274-275
45. "A short account of the history of the Indian revolutionary committee." (OR CSA, S. 5402 rlf 486 pp. 1-2). quoted by Persits, MA., Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia. Moscow, 1973 pp 42-43
46. Ibid.
47. RC Majumdar, History of Freedom Movement in India, op cit., p. 434, also Persits, MA., Revolutionary of India in Soviet Russia, p. 22
48. Tilak Raj Sareen, Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, Delhi, 1979, p. 180
49. Pratap, Mahendra, My life story of fifty five years, pp. 55-56, Bose, A.C., op.cit, p. 113
50. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story. p. 56





- 
51. Persits, MA., Revolutionary of India in Soviet-Russia, Moscow, 1973 p. 22
  52. Records of Central State Military History Archives of USSR quoted by Persits, MA., op.cit., p. 23
  53. K.K.Sharma, Saharanpur Sandarbh, (Saharanpur, 1986) pp. 135-137 also see Bose, A.C., op.cit., pp. 113-114
  54. Sedition Committee Report Calcutta, 1918 pp. 125-127
  55. Ibid.
  56. Sedition Committee Report. Calcutta, 1918 p. 127
  57. Dwyer, M.F.O., India as I Knew It, 1885-1925 London, 1925 p-178 Quoted by Trivedi, Raj Kumar, Turco- German Intrigue in India during the world war-1, I.H.C. (43rd session) Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982 p 659
  58. Sharma, K.K., Saharanpur Sandarbh. (Saharanpur, 1986) pp- 135-137 also see Sedition, op.cit, p-126-127
  59. Ibid, Sedition Committee Report, Calcutta, 1918 p 126-127: Singh, Gurumukh Nihal, Land marks in Indian Constitutional and National Development, Vol 1, 1600-1919 (fifth edition)Delhi, 1963, p. 241
  60. Ibid, and also Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, pp. 113-114
  61. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad. p. 114
  62. Sedition Committice Report, Calcutta, 1918.
  63. Sareen, Tilak Raj, Indian Revolutionaries Abroad. 1905-1920, Delhi, 1979, pp. 183-184
  64. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, p. 114-115, Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, pp. 56-57
  65. Persits, MA., op. cit. p. 22, Mahendra Pratap, op.cit. p. 57, Bose, A.C., op. cit. p. 114
  66. Bose, A.C., Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, p 115
  67. Montage-Chelmsford Report of 1918 as quoted by Desai, Batuk, Indian Independence struggle and October Revolution, October Revolution and India's Independence. (ed) Ali, Ashraf Delhi, 1979 p. 127.
  68. M.A. Persis, Revolutionary of India in Soviet-Russia, Moscow, 1973 p. 38
  69. Letter of Mahendra Pratap, quoted by Persits, MA., op.cit., p. 38
  70. Lenin, V.I., The Awakening of Asia, selected Essay New York p-50 quoted by Batuk Desai, Indian Independence struggle and October Revolution, October Revolution and India's Independence (ed) Ali Ashraf Delhi, 1979, p. 123-124
  71. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story. p 58-59, Majumdar, R.C., History of Freedom Movement in India, op.cit, p. 435
  72. Pratap, Mahendra, My Life Story, p. 59
  73. Chimohan Sehanavis, Impact of Octobers Revolution on Indian Revolutionaries abroad, October Revolution and India's Independence, (ed) Ali, Ashraf, Delhi, 1979 p. 158
  74. Persits, MA., Revolutionary of India in Soviet Russia. Moscow, 1973 pp. 39-41
  75. Singh, Raj Pal, Study of the role of Mahendra Pratap and the first provisional government of independent India, the paper was presented in the seminar on "The life history of Jats" from Dec 08 to 10 1995 held at Maharaja Surajmal Institute, New Delhi pp. 8-9.
  76. Schanavis, Chimohan, Impact of Octobers Revolution on Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, October Revolution and India's Independence. (ed) Ashraf, Ali, Delhi, 1979 p. 163
  77. Sharma, Nand Kumar Dev, Prem Pujari Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, Calcutta, Vikrami 1980, pp. 93-94
-