

RIN Mutiny 1946, Background, Factors, Events, Failure, Aftermath

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The RIN Mutiny or **Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Mutiny** of 1946, often referred to as the “**Last War of Indian Independence**” was a significant uprising by Indian sailors against British colonial rule. It began on February 18, 1946, in Bombay with sailors protesting poor working conditions, racial discrimination, and inadequate food. The mutiny quickly spread to other naval ships and establishments, with over 20,000 ratings from 78 ships and shore bases across India.

The mutineers demanded better treatment, raising nationalist slogans like "*Jai Hind*" and adopting the Indian National Congress's tricolor flag. Despite its wide reach, the RIN mutiny was not supported by the Congress or Muslim League, and it was suppressed by British forces. However, it contributed to the weakening of British control, hastening India's independence.

RIN Mutiny Background

During the **Second World War**, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) underwent rapid expansion, evolving from a small force of sloops into a full-fledged navy. This expansion occurred on an ad-hoc basis, driven by wartime operational

needs. Recruitment for the RIN expanded beyond the traditional "martial races," drawing in diverse ratings from rural backgrounds.

Many recruits, facing economic hardships like rising prices and famines, joined the Navy out of necessity. Their experiences during the war, along with exposure to global events, significantly altered their worldview and contributed to the growing **dissatisfaction** with British colonial rule.

RIN Mutiny Factors

The seeds of the RIN Mutiny (or 1946 Naval Uprising) were sown early, during the recruitment of Indian sailors. Despite being sent to fight in **World War 2** and other battles for the British Crown, Indian ratings (meaning: junior enlisted sailor who is below the military rank of warrant officer) were never given fair compensation. Many were lured into the profession with false promises of better opportunities and secure jobs, only to face overcrowded facilities, poor training, and abusive treatment by British officers. This disparity fueled discontent among the ratings and contributed to the mutiny:

- **Discrimination:** Indian sailors faced discrimination, poor-quality food, and limited opportunities to voice grievances, as they were not allowed to complain against European officers.
- **Poor treatment:** They were also relegated to menial tasks and had inadequate access to medical facilities compared to their British counterparts.
- **Racist leadership:** The appointment of **Arthur Frederick King**, an openly racist officer, as the Commander of **HMIS Talwar** further inflamed tensions.
- **Inspiration from movements:** The Quit India Movement and the **Indian National Army's** struggles inspired the ratings to take action.
- **INA Trials:** The trials of **Indian National Army** officers in late 1945, seen as symbols of resistance, ignited nationalist fervor among the sailors, who identified with the INA's anti-colonial stance.

RIN Mutiny Events

The RIN mutiny began on February 18, 1946, when the ratings of **HMIS Talwar**, a shore establishment in Bombay, went on strike, protesting the poor quality of food and their discriminatory treatment by British officers. The ratings, who had already been dealing with harsh conditions and poor treatment, decided to strike, adopting the slogan "**No Food, No Work**." Key leaders of the mutiny included Salil Shyam, B. C. Dutt, Madan Singh, Rishi Dev Puri, and M. S. Khan, who organized and inspired the striking sailors.

Key events during the mutiny included:

- **Slogans:** The mutineers raised slogans of "**Jai Hind**," '**Inquilab Zindabad**,' and "**Quit India**," indicating their desire for Indian independence.
- **Demands:** They also adopted the **tricolor flag** of the Indian National Congress and demanded the release of imprisoned nationalist leaders.
- Food was brought to the ratings by the crowds, and store owners welcomed them to take as much as they wanted.

- The strike quickly escalated as sailors from other ships and naval establishments joined in. Over the next few days, the mutiny spread to ships and bases across the Indian subcontinent, including Karachi, Calcutta, and Cochin.

RIN Mutiny Failure

Despite its widespread impact, the RIN Mutiny failed to achieve its objectives due to a lack of political support and leadership. The sailors, though motivated by genuine grievances, were largely leaderless, and their revolt did not receive backing from the national political leaders.

- Mahatma Gandhi strongly condemned the mutiny, criticizing the strikers for acting without the call of a prepared revolutionary party and the guidance of recognized political leaders.
- Similarly, the **Muslim League** disapproved of the mutiny, arguing that street protests were not the appropriate way to address grievances.
- Both major political parties, focused on constitutional negotiations, saw the mutiny as a potential disruptor to political consensus.
- In contrast the **Communist Party of India**, fully supported the naval ratings and rallied workers in their favor, aiming to overthrow British rule through revolution rather than negotiation.

RIN Mutiny Aftermath

The mutiny concluded when the rebellious RIN sailors surrendered to British authorities. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League played crucial roles in persuading the sailors to lay down their arms, recognizing the political and military dangers of such unrest just before India's independence.

The revolt was officially halted after a meeting between **M. S. Khan**, the President of the Naval Central Strike Committee, and **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** from the Congress, who assured that no sailor would face persecution. Following the surrender, there were arrests, and 476 sailors were dismissed from the Royal Indian Navy and subjected to court martial.

RIN Mutiny UPSC PYQs

1. **Q)** With reference to Indian freedom struggle, consider the following events : (**UPSC Prelims 2017**)
2. Mutiny in Royal Indian Navy
3. Quit India Movement launched
4. Second Round Table Conference

What is the correct chronological sequence of the above events?

- (a) 1-2-3 (b) 2-1-3
(c) 3-2-1 (d) 3-1-2

Ans: (c)

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