the Red Fort who were shot or hanged, most of the King's sons were killed by the British. The beautiful city of Delhi with its history, traditions, monuments, gardens, schools and colleges were systematically destroyed even after the battle was won. Readers may detect in Dalrymple's writing a soft corner for the Mughals and an admiration and respect for Mughal India's culture and civilisation. Those interested in the history of this period would be well rewarded by a reading of this wonderful and well-researched book.

Based on this book, an account is given here of the trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar, which was of interest to me and which perhaps is not known to many people. It was the end of January 1858- most of the noblemen of his durbar prosecuted by Major Harriott had already been tried and hanged. It was then the turn of Zafar himself to face trial. Preparations were made in the winter of 1857 for the historic trial. Papers retrieved from the Palace chancellery and the rebels' camp were translated. Meanwhile the binding nature of the guarantee of life given by Major Hodson to Zafar's at the time of his surrender at the Humayun's tomb was examined and the charges to be brought against Zafar were considered. In the end, Hodson's guarantee was found to be legally binding and it was decided to charge the King with "rebellion, treason and murder" by a Military Commission. Major Harriott was also to be the prosecutor in this case.

Whether the East India Company had at all the legal authority to try the Emperor of India was a big question. Its authority to govern in India legally flowed from the Mughal Emperor, who had appointed the Company in 1765 as his tax collector in Bengal in the years following the battle of Plassey. Up to 1832, the Company had acknowledged itself as the Emperor's vassal on its coins and even on its great seal. Zafar could be tried as a defeated enemy king. However, he was never a subject and could not be called a rebel guilty of treason. In fact, a good case could be made that the East India Company was the real rebel, having revolted against a feudal superior to whom it had sworn allegiance for nearly a century.

The Times correspondent, Russel expressed his opinion on the subject thus: "[The King] was called ungrateful for rising against his benefactors. ...to talk of ingratitude on the part of one who saw that all the dominions of his ancestors had gradually taken from him until he was left with an empty title, and more empty exchequer... is perfectly preposterous." Russel felt that the British perhaps could make 'the right of conquest' argument that the Mughals had made for their sovereignty over Hindustan. But he found a difference-the British "did not come into India, as the Muslims did, at the head of great armies, with the avowed intention of subjugating the country. We came in as humble barterers, whose existence depended on the bounty and favour of the lieutenants of the Kings of Delhi."

The trial started on January 27, 1858. The King had to be assisted to walk to Diwan i-Khas, his hall of private audience. He was sick, could not understand what was going on and had to be persuaded to plead not guilty. During the trial, seized manuscripts were read out. While most of the time the King seemed uninterested, at times he would declare himself innocent of everything he was charged with. Zafar gave a short written defense in Urdu. He denied any connection with the Mutiny and stated that he had all along been the helpless prisoner of the sepoys. He pleaded that he had no intelligence on the subject previous to the day of the outbreak and "all that has been done was done by the rebellious army. I was in their power, what could I do?" Zafar did not cross-examine any of the witnesses.

The prosecutor maintained that Zafar was the evil genius and had the intent to subvert the British Empire and put the Mughals in its place. Major Harriott ignored the distinctions between the sepoys, the jehadis, the Shia Muslims and the Sunni court of Delhi, and argued that the Mutiny was the product of the convergence of all these forces around the dynastic ambitions of Zafar. He said, "To Musalman intrigues and Mahommedan conspiracy we may mainly attribute the dreadful calamities of the year 1857. The Mutineers were in immediate connection with the prisoner at your bar," The trial went on for many weeks, often adjourning for Zafar's illness.

On March 9 at 11 a.m., Hariott made his final speech repeating his theory of the Uprising being an international Islamic conspiracy. He stated that, "the prisoner, as the head of the Mahomedan faith in India, has been connected with the organization of that conspiracy, either as its leader or its unscrupulous accomplice..." At 3 p.m. that day, the judges unanimously declared Zafar guilty "of all and every part of the charges preferred against him." The presiding judge noted that such a verdict would have resulted in the penalty of death as a traitor and a felon. Because of the guarantee of his life given by Major Hodson, that sentence could not be given.

Bahadur Shah Zafar was sentenced "to be transported for the remainder of his days, either to one of the Andaman Islands or to such other place as may be selected by the Governor General in council." There was a seven-month delay in arranging for Zafar's exile due to the time needed to select a suitable place and the fact that fighting had not completely ceased in the eastern part of the country. Even though his final destination had not yet been decided, on October 7, 1858, 332 years after Babur's conquest of the city, the last Mughal Emperor left Delhi on a bullock cart, accompanied by his wives, his two remaining sons and servants. Bahadur Shah Zafar's twomonth long journey by land, river and sea ended in Rangoon, where he lived in captivity until his death in 1862.

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