PREFACE

Several authoritative works have been published on the role of the Indian National Congress in the country’s struggle for freedom. A comprehensive history of this premier organisation has also been sponsored during the centenary celebrations of the Congress. However, there have been only stray attempts to evaluate the contribution of other political organisations or movements to free our country from foreign rule. The need for a comprehensive work on the subject has been greatly felt. It was in pursuance of this long-felt need that the Centenary Celebrations Committee of the Indian National Congress under the dynamic leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi felt that a comprehensive work on the subject might be brought out. A sub-committee with Shri G.S. Dhillon as Chairman, Shri Xavier Arakal as Convenor and Dr. P.N. Chopra as the Project Director was set up for the purpose.

It was no easy task to prepare an exhaustive list of these movements, some of which preceded the Congress while many of them were its offshoots at one stage or the other. But the leaders and members of these movements who belonged to every corner of the country made immense sacrifices for the liberation of the country. They did not belong to one religion or one caste. They rose above these narrow considerations and intense love for their motherland and a keenness to see it free permeated all their existence. That was the single thread of unity that bound them all. Their methods and means of struggle might have been different but over the decades these freedom fighters worked hard with the same dedication, singleness of purpose and solidarity. This is one chapter of our history which will inspire the generations to come.

It was a difficult task to find competent scholars to whom this work could be entrusted and completed within the stipulated period. In spite of these handicaps, I am glad to say that we were able to complete the work much ahead of schedule, thanks to the cooperation of distinguished scholars who had lent to these volumes the benefit of their profound scholarship.

It was indeed a challenging task for the Editor to scrutinise the contributions of over two dozen scholars, verify the facts, introduce uniformity and also avoid overlapping as far as possible. I have tried to make the minimum possible alterations in the original write-ups. The
views expressed are, therefore, naturally of the authors and not of the Editor or of the Centenary Celebrations Committee of the Congress.

This work is being published in four volumes. The present volume, the Third in the series, deals with the Santal Movement, Rampa Rebellion Chair and other Tribal Movement, Indian National Army, Kumaran Asan and the Social Reform Movement in Kerala and All India Depressed Classes League. It is hoped that these volumes written in a lucid and readable style will acquaint our younger generations with the heroic deeds of our patriots and inspire them.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to our Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi without whose patronage and keen interest this work might not have been completed. He has very kindly spared time to write a foreword to the work. I am also grateful to Smt. Sheila Kaul, former Education Minister, now Convenor of the Monitoring and Implementation Committee of the Congress for her valuable suggestions for the improvement of the work. I am grateful to my younger colleague Dr. T.R. Sareen for assisting me in the preparation of this volume. My thanks are also due to Dr. Agam Prasad, for the expeditious publications of this work.

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