5. Prelude to the Stormy Thirties

After the din and dust of the Congress at Calcutta had settled down, the bickering that had been going on between the Shree Sangha and Benu Group of Hemchandra Ghosh’s party for sometime past led to a formal split. The numerically larger group owing allegiance to Anil Roy and Leela Nag continued to function under the banner of Shree Sangha. The rump or the Benu group clung to Hemchandra Ghosh qualitatively strengthened by the adherence of all the founding members. This group came to be known as the Bengal Volunteers (or simply B.V.), thus implying that it was the permanent successor organization to the ad-hoc Congress Volunteer corps by all consent. The B.V. for their part took up the volunteer movement in right earnest and started recruiting volunteers throughout Bengal, holding regular drills, parades and training them for participation in an armed struggle for national liberation. The exceptionally capable guidance from (Major) Satya Gupta and Jyotish Joardar made possible the success the movement achieved.

Shree Sangha stressed the importance of constructive work like women’s education, social reform and philanthropic work. About B.V.’s insistence on immediate militancy Shree Sangha protested that there was no short cut to freedom. The Benu Group’s contention was that before the final stage of a countrywide revolution was reached, self-immolation, individual actions against aggressive officials, local skirmishes, regional insurrections were necessary steps in preparing for the zero hour. These intermediate stages could not be wished away. Apart from this difference of emphasis, some resentment against the style of functioning at the leadership level precipitated the split.

8 April, 1929 witnessed a thrilling event. The Legislative Assembly in Delhi was debating the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, both designed to clothe the government with extraordinary powers. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutta stood up in the visitors’ gallery and hurled bombs on the Assembly floor purposely aiming to cause minimum harm to the persons present which included the Hon’ble Sir John Simon and his colleagues of the Simon Commission. They did not try to escape, but shouted slogans, scattered propaganda leaflets and waited to be arrested. In the words of Bhagat Singh:
It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear... We wanted to emphasize the historical lesson that Letters de Cachet and Bastille could not crush the revolutionary movement in France. Gallows and Siberian mines could not extinguish the Russian Revolution. Could Ordinances and Safety Bills snuff out the flame of freedom in India?

In the Lahore Conspiracy Case instituted by the Government, Bhagat Singh, Sukdev and Rajguru were sentenced to death and others to varying terms of R.I. There was such a popular outcry over the death sentence on Bhagat Singh and his two accomplices that Gandhiji was moved to request the Viceroy for commutation of the death sentence on them to one of life imprisonment. The Government remained adamant and the execution of the three national heroes took place on 23 March, 1931, arrogantly ignoring the pleadings of Gandhiji. It was an affront to Indian National Congress on the eve of its Annual Session at Karachi. The Congress passed a resolution in which for the first time the fearless idealism of a violent revolutionary was eulogised from the Congress platform. Subhas Chandra raised the slogan:

India needs a thousand Bhagat Singh.

Chandra Sekhr Azad after eluding attempts to capture him was ultimately killed in a shooting encounter with the police in Alfred Park, later renamed Azad Park, at Allahabad on 27 February, 1931. Chandra Sekhar as a boy when taken to a trying magistrate nonchalantly said:

My name is Azad (free), my father's name is Swadhin (free) and my residence is in prison.

This in a crisp manner enunciated the creed of the revolutionary youths in India.

On the morning of 13 December, 1929 Yaspal and Bhagavati Charan of the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association attempted to blow up the train in which Viceroy Lord Irwin was travelling on the outskirts of Delhi. The train was damaged but Irwin escaped injury.

The Lahore Session of the Congress in December, 1929 gave a voice to the new militant spirit. Rather late than never, it passed a resolution declaring Poorna Swaranj to be the Congress objective. 26 January, 1930 was fixed as the First Independence Day which was to be celebrated every year with the
people taking the pledge that it was a crime against man and God to submit any longer to British rule.

Irrepressible freedom fighters of any country do not turn meek and submissive once put inside prison walls. Explosive patriotism under constraint has its way of expressing itself. But hunger strike as a weapon of struggle to wrest concessions from prison authorities is a typically Indian practice. Many revolutionary prisoners died in India, the Andamans and Burma by hunger strike. Parallel occurrences can hardly be found in other countries. Terence Mc Swiney is perhaps the single instance in Europe.

All was not quiet inside the Lahore Jail with the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case lodged there. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukdev, Jatin Das, who was a Major in the Bengal Volunteers Corps at the Calcutta Congress, and others began a hunger strike demanding an honourable and decent treatment for political prisoners. The political prisoners, they argued, were entitled to the status of prisoners of war as recognised under international law. While the others were persuaded to discontinue, Jatin Das carried on his epic fast to record 63 days and achieved martyrdom on 13 September, 1929. Pandit Motilal Nehru, leader of the opposition in the Central Assembly, moved an adjournment motion on 14 September with this indictment:

It is said, Sir, that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning,
our benign Government has gone one better than Nero.

Mrs. Mary Mc Swiney of Cork (Ireland) sent the following message:

Family of Mc Swiney unites with India in grief
and pride of Jatindranath Das. Freedom will come.

During the last journey of the valiant fighter to his native Calcutta in a special train, a huge crowd of mourners waited for hours at the intermediate stations. Some offered flowers, some were loudly crying, many kept on kissing the coffin and others had to be content with a mere "darshan". They burst into spontaneous cries of 'Bande Mataram' and 'Jatin Das Ki Jai'.

The government had to yield. The demand for classification of political prisoners was at long last accepted. Many ameni-
ties were henceforward sanctioned for such prisoners. Yet it
would be foolish to expect that the prison authorities had all
at once discarded their archaic stance and become angelic to-
wards political prisoners. The political prisoners still had to
continue their fights and sometimes die in different jails for
enforcement of their rights.

On 16 September, 1931 Santosh Kumar Mitra and Tara-
keswar Sen were gunned down by random shots of the police
warders inside the Hijli Detention Camp. Rabindranath Tagore
came out of his peaceful Santiniketan to the foot of the Octer-
loney Monument amidst heat and dust to condemn the shocking
Hijli firing as most revolting and violative of all canons of civi-
lized conduct.

A similar brutal death inside the Dacca Central Jail await-
ed Anil Das of Shree Sangha, a victim of the hated third degree
method of torture outlawed by international practice. He died
on 17 June, 1932. Anil Das was a typical example of the true
revolutionary who would rather give up his life than give out
the secrets of his party.

Writing of this time, Lord Irwin, the peace-loving Viceroy,
recalled that “some new force was working of which even those
whose knowledge of India went back to 20 or 30 years had
not yet learnt the full significance”.

The threat of armed revolution, it cannot be denied, con-
stantly haunted the British rulers. To isolate the extremists it
was their constant endeavour to win the support of the more
moderate Indian nationalists. To this end they tried to appease
the moderate demands by granting the Morley-Minto Reforms
of 1909, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and subse-
quently the Constitution of 1935.

The revolutionary movement because of its extent and in-
tensity would appear also to have forced Congress policy to-
wards an increasingly activist and militant direction. Gandhiji
for one noted that the party of violence was gaining ground
and commanding respect. He felt that only a non-violent mass-
movement under his leadership could check both the growing
violence of the revolutionaries and the organized violence of
British Government.

The failure of Gandhiji’s efforts to bring “a change of heart”
of the British Government even going to the extent of partici-
pating in the London Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Congress underscored the justification of confrontation through direct action. While Gandhiji planned a new phase of mass movement of Civil Disobedience, the revolutionaries started on a new round of violent activities with renewed vigour and greater determination.

At 10 P.M. on 18 April, 1930 the skyline of Chittagong of the eastern coast of India was lit by intermittent flashes of gunfire. The youths of Chittagong led by Surya Sen (Masterda), Ganesh Ghosh, Ananta Singh, Lokenath Bal, Ambika Chakraborty and others had raised their standard of revolt calling themselves the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch. It was the closest thing to a true revolutionary uprising. One company of rebels captured the police armoury. A second contingent had seized the Auxiliary Force H.Q. A third group successfully carried out destruction of telecommunications and uprooted railway lines. There was no resistance from the enemy. Masterda hoisted the national flag at the police armoury grounds amidst shouts of ‘Bandemataram’. The formation of a Provisional Revolutionary Government with Masterda as the president was proclaimed to continue the holy war of liberation.

Because of some flaws in the execution of their plan the achievement of the revolutionary army fell short of their potential. For instance, in looting the armoury they took the weapons but neglected to collect the ammunition; they left untouched another armoury in the city; finally they could not prevent the news of the uprising from being broadcast. Police reinforcement arrived and the authorities counter-attacked. In the fight on Jalalabad Hill where the rebels had concentrated, the British force suffered heavy casualties. The revolutionaries ultimately withdrew from the Jalalabad Hill and spread out inside the city and adjoining villages to carry out guerrilla type of warfare.

For full four years, defying extremely trying conditions, Masterda and his band of stalwarts kept up the challenge. Non-descript sleepy villages like Kalarpole, Barama, Dhalghat leapt into prominence as sites of brave skirmishes between the Davids of liberation and the Goliaths of oppression.

On 24 September, 1932 the first Indian woman martyr, Kumari Pritilata Waddedar swooped down on the exclusive European Club at Pahartali. After the victorious operation,
while the rest moved to places of safety, Pritilata quietly stood at the gate. She kissed the ground as her last respect to the soil of her motherland where she was born and where she perhaps longed to return in her rebirth. Then she took potassium cyanide and fell into eternal sleep. She was not weary of breath but bursting with idealism. In this striking fashion she intended to effect a “revolution in the minds and hearts of the people”. In her last message addressed to the women of India she made an impassioned appeal to them to join the war against the national enemy in large numbers and fight shoulder to shoulder with their brother-crusaders.

The end of Masterda came in February 1933 at a small village shelter of Goirala. A few days later the other leaders Tarakeswar Dastidar and Kalpana Datta were nabbed at Gahira. After a so-called trial “Masterda” and Tarakeswar Dastidar were executed in the Chittagong Jail at the stroke of midnight on 12 January, 1934. The whole town was then clamped under a 24-hour curfew. The hangman’s noose had not closed on mightier and nobler necks. In his farewell message Masterda urged his fellow travellers:

Onward my comrades, onward—the dawn of freedom is rushing in. Be up and doing...Ideal and unity is my farewell message.

6. B.V’s Big Offensive

The echo of the Chittagong’s defiance of British rule was almost immediately heard at the distant North West Frontier Province. In Peshwar city, Abdul Gaffar Khan’s (Frontier Gandhi) disciplined volunteers—Khudai Khidmatgars—were peacefully picketing liquor shops according to the programme of Gandhiji’s C. D. Movement then in progress. While the volunteers were mostly Muslims, the shop owners were mostly Hindus. The British commander told the Garhwali soldiers on duty that Muslim rowdies were harassing the Hindus and the latter had to be protected. This nefarious attempt to rouse communal passion proved futile. As soon as the Company commander ordered firing on the unarmed picketers, Havildar Major Chandra Singh of the Garhwal Rifles immediately countermanded the order by shouting “Cease Fire”. For ten days there was no military or police personnel at Peshwar. The military
reoccupied the city on 4 May, 1930. Many sepoys were court-martialled and Chandra Singh was condemned to death but afterwards the sentence was commuted to transportation for life because of public pressure. This refusal of the Garhwali soldiers to suppress the national movement was a significant development in India’s freedom struggle.

The spectacular lead given by Chittagong was soon followed by violent actions in other parts of Bengal and elsewhere. On 25 August, 1930 Anuja Sen of Jugantar Party threw a bomb at the passing car of the Commissioner of police, Sir Charles Tegart, who must have led a charmed life. In two previous attempts on his life wrong persons had been shot at. Anuja was killed on the spot by the premature bursting of the bomb. The other accomplice, Dinesh Majumder, escaped and after taking part in several other actions was eventually arrested, tried and hanged in the Alipore Central Jail on 9 June, 1934.

The tempo picked up when the B. V. opened its Big Offensive with a dazzling double target hit. Benoy Bose, all by himself, shot dead Mr. Lowman, the I. G. of Police, Bengal, and wounded grievously Mr. Hodson, the Superintendent of Police, Dacca, and managed to walk away from the Dacca Mitford Hospital. This and other operations to come were planned and executed by the Action Squad of the B. V. composed of Hari das Datta, Prafulla Datta, Rasamoy Sur, Supati Roy Choudhuri and Nikunja Sen.

Just 100 days after, on 8 December, 1930 the same Benoy Bose along with Badal Gupta and Dinesh Gupta successfully stormed the Writers’ Buildings, seat of the alien government and symbol of imperialism. They gate-crashed into the chamber of the I. G. of Prisons, Col. Simpson, and made short shrift of him. The trio then came out in the verandah and indulged in a shooting spree. The scene was one of panic and utter confusion. Red faces of officials became white in fright. Some of the secretaries suffered minor injuries caused by flying bullets. Mr. Prentice, a strong pillar of the administration, clumsily retreated into the safety of a bath-room. The moral fibre of the rulers was beginning to sap under the hammer blows of the revolutionaries.

Reinforcement arrived from Lal Bazar, a stone’s throw away. The unequal combat that followed between three youths
armed with revolvers at one end and more than a hundred police men equipped with rifles and machine guns at the other has gone down in history as the Verandah Battle. When their ammunition was almost spent they were ready for self-immolation, the highest ideal of a revolutionary, clearly demonstrating that brute force can never conquer those who have themselves conquered the fear of death. Badal Gupta died instantly, Benoy Bose breathed his last on the 5th day in Medical College Hospital, Dinesh was assiduously nursed back to life only to be ceremonially hanged later on. The execution took place at the Alipore Central Jail on 7 July, 1931. So 8 December, 1930 was a day of preformance as well as of promise, the promise of eventual occupation of the seat by a national government which was not long in coming.

"Dinesh's letters from his condemned cell have given him immortality of a different kind. The literary outpourings as they were, they enbalm the inner workings of a remarkable mind, excitable, passionate but serene." Consoling his mother he wrote that Death was not destruction but a fulfilment of life's mission:

Death we have to embrace, all of us, today or tomorrow. Why should there be grief if it comes a few days earlier or comes by giving notice?

In another letter he wrote:

It pains me to think that we brothers are quarrelling over trivialities like cow or the playing of music and killing each other.

To this boy of twenty the truth occurred that nationalism does not merely mean liberation from foreign yoke, but that it also means liberation from loyalties to locality, sect or religion that interfere with the emergence of true nationalism.

The pretence of a rule of law put up by the British judiciary in India received a good shaking from the revolutionaries when on 27 July, 1931 Mr. Garlic, District and Sessions Judge of Alipur, while presiding over his court was transported to the other world by Kanailal Bhattacharya. Earlier, Garlic had sentenced Saheed Dinesh Gupta to death. After shooting Kanailal swallowed potassium cyanide. Strangely, Kanai had no craving for public acclaim as a result of dying in action against the British. He carried a slip in his pocket giving out his name as Bimal Das Gupta, the suspected assassin of Peddie, the murdered
District Magistrate of Midnapore, just to put the police off their hunt for Bimal.

Hardly had the administrators the time to overcome their shock and surprise, the B.V. activists at Midnapore were on the assertive. On 7 April, 1931 the Magistrate Mr. Peddie had to answer with his life for his haughtiness against the people of Midnapore. Bimal Das Gupta and Jyoti Jiban Ghosh made no mistake in carrying out the revolutionary orders and then vanished in thin air.

The next Magistrate Mr. Douglas started counting his days almost from the day of his assuming charge of the district. His end came on 30 April, 1932 at the hands of Provangsu Pal. Provangsu could not be held but his companion-in-arms Prod-yot Bhattacharya was captured by the armed guard after a chase. He was hanged in the Midnapore Central Jail on 12 January, 1933 on a charge of constructive murder, under the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act though the bullets that killed Mr. Douglas were not fired by him.

The third District Magistrate of Midnapore, Mr. B.F.J. Burge, with all imaginable security arrangements geared up for his safety, was no better than a sacrificial lamb before the point-blank shots of Anath Panja and Mrigen Dutt on 2 September, 1933 at the Police Football ground. It was a superb action by Anath and Mrigen who had cleverly mixed with football players to gain the vantage point for the shooting. They died smiling when the out-witted guards poured their fire and wrath on the two teenage boys.

So all the resources of the Empire could not keep the three white Magistrates in succession safe at their post against the challenge of the revolutionaries. A native Magistrate was sent to fill the vacancy after Mr. Burge. The frustrated administration to satisfy their vanity held a faked-up trial and cut short at the gallows the lives of a few promising boys—Nirmaljiban Ghosh, Brajakishore Chakraborty and Ramkrishna Roy at the Midnapore Central Jail on 25/26 October, 1933.

Mr. Villiers, President of the Calcutta European Association, was persistently urging the Government for exemplary punishment against the nationalists. So the B.V. guns were trained on him and, though he escaped the bullets fired by Bimal Das Gupta on 29 October, 1931, his voice was silenced
as he took the first available boat for return to England.

The same afternoon a group of Calcutta Europeans calling themselves the "Royalists" circulated an inflammatory leaflet demanding action to crush what they called "Congress Terrorism". They threatened to go on a rampage.

The sisters of Bengal had stolen a march over their brothers. They had stepped into the firing line braving all the hazards of the war of liberation. Two Bengal Amazons, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chaudhuri, on 14 December, 1931 under the direction of Akhil Nandy blazed a new trail by their sure, unfaltering aim of the revolvers at the British Magistrate at Comilla, Mr. C.G.B. Stevens. On 6 April, 1932 the Senate Hall of the Calcutta University resounded with the shots fired by a woman graduate Bina Das at the convocation ceremony. It was sheer luck that the target, Governor of Bengal, Sir Stanley Jackson, lived to tell the story of his "providential escape" to his countrymen on his return to England soon. Very young Ujjala Majumder had no eye-catching role tailored for her. But with courage and coolness she fulfilled her difficult assignment in B.V.'s Operation Anderson with their base camp at Darjeeling.

The mothers of Bengal too gave their unstinted support to the revolutionaries. This rather elderly generation of women, prototype of Gorky's mother, rose to the occasion in providing shelter to those on the run, secretly storing arms and ammunition, nursing the sick and wounded among the revolutionaries and facing police interrogation with aplomb—Damoceles's sword hanging over their heads all the time. The ordeal that Srimati Suhasini Ganguly, for instance, had to undergo for providing safe shelter to the absconding leaders of the Chittagong Uprising can better be imagined than described. It needed a lot of mental discipline to keep up for days together the near perfect pretence of being the married wife of a brother revolutionary, Sashadhar Acharya, who secured the tenancy of the hide-out at Chandannagore by thus giving it the appearance of family quarters.

An equally important contribution made by women was that they also helped to replenish party funds. Though habitually fond of ornaments, Indian women of that memorable age got rid of their attachment for jewellery and most readily gave their gold when they felt that this could be used in the service of the
country.

On 23 December, 1930 the Chancellor of the Punjab University, the Governor De Montmorency, was shot in the University Convocation Hall by Hari Kissen, who had to pay the extreme penalty at the scaffold at Mianwali Jail, Punjab, on 11 June, 1931. Yet another Governor, E. Hotson, the Governor of Bombay, while visiting the Fergusson College on 22 July, 1931 was fired upon by a student, Basudev Balabant Goet. But the bullet hit the steel jacket worn by him and grazed past harmlessly.

*The Statesman*, as the stout defender of British rule in India, was indulging in venomous writings and provoked the revolutionaries. Alfred Watson, Editor of *The Statesman* survived two attempts on his life in August and September, 1932. The Police Chief of Comilla, Mr. E. B. Ellison was fatally wounded in broad day-light on 29 July, 1932, the assassin could not be apprehended. A few days later on 22 August an ineffective attempt was made on the life of C.G. Grassby, the Additional Superintendent of Police, Dacca, at a railway level crossing. Kamakshya Sen, a dark skinned Deputy Magistrate posted in the district of Dacca, carried his subservience to the white masters to an extreme length by his merciless beating of unarmed civil resisters and was promptly dealt with by revolutionary sharp shooters. The alleged assassin, Kalipada Mukherji, was executed in Dacca Central Jail on 16 February, 1933. Such hit and run actions continued to happen here and there at regular intervals, not to speak of armed robberies and daring hold-ups of government money to strengthen the sinews of the armed revolution.

For the British Raj, the administration was a bed of nails. The Government became alarmed; they started to rule by ordinances, assumed powers to detain persons indefinitely without trial, gagged the press, imposed collective fines, used the police as an engine of torture and took recourse to the use of military forces. A new category of Military Intelligence Officers were super-imposed to work independently of constitutional machinery of the Government. Worst of all, the institution of Special Tribunals was devised to try political cases by a select panel of politically reliable judges. The renewed pilgrimage to the Andamans across the "Kalapani" of revolutionary convicts
began. The prison-ship *Maharaja* plied trip after trip.

British officials in Bengal turned their quarters into "Small Forts" surrounded by barbed wire and heavily guarded by sentries. The atmosphere was too tense with hostility and suspicion. The strain on British bureaucracy may be illustrated by the warning that a senior judge gave that if he were put on the tribunal which was to try Peddie's Murder Case, he would leave the country as soon as the trial was over, with leave if he could get it or without it if he could not.

That the revolutionary thrusts made themselves felt is revealed by secret British documents recently released. After the series of assassinations of senior British officials, the Government of Great Britain found it difficult to arrange replenishment for carrying on the administration, the British elite being reluctant to become the "fodder of the terrorist guns in Bengal".

It is an unpleasant truth that the British Government took mean advantage of the poverty of Indians which was their own creation. They freely scattered money to raise a host of spies and informers who sold the interests of the country for a mere pittance. The revolutionaries had to be on guard against these prowling enemies around. Whenever one was spotted as having harmed the cause of the revolution by passing on vital information to the authorities, one was not spared. The fear of retribution sometimes acted as a deterrent to the kissing Judas.

On 9 November, 1932 at Bettiah in Bihar, Phani Ghosh, an approver in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, was fatally stabbed by two teenagers, Baikuntha Sukul and Chandrana Singh, members of the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association. Baikuntha was sentenced to capital punishment and Chandrana Singh to 12 years' R.I. While on the death row inside the Gaya Central Jail, Baikuntha Sukul touched the hearts of his co-prisoners as well as sentries by his courage and infectious cheerfulness. From a side cell in the same yard of the Jail, Bibhuti Bhusan Das Gupta, an eminent Civil Disobedience prisoner, on the night before the execution, sang patriotic songs one after another to fulfil the last earthly desire of this revolutionary before he kept his date at the gallows on 14 May, 1934. That was the mettle a revolutionary idealist was made of.

At the beginning of 1934 British imperialism in India was in one of its most aggressive postures. The Civil Disobedience
Movement of Mahatma Gandhi had petered out. The Government thought they had been able to ride out the revolutionary storm. John Anderson's administration in Bengal was emitting fire and brimstone to crush the extremists. Anderson excelled his Black and Tan record in Ireland by inducing the ruffians and the hoodlums as so called "vigilance guards" to snipe at the activities of the youths of Bengal and terrorise the countryside. On 10 April, 1934 at Deobhog, a suburb of Narayanganj town in Dacca district, a batch of such "vigilance guards" fell upon three young men going around at night. Some of them were armed and in the encounter that followed one of the guards was shot dead. While two of the youths escaped under cover of darkness unarmed Moti Mallick was caught, sent for trial and sentenced to death, though his involvement in the incident was minimal, at least not warranting the extreme penalty. The hanging took place on 15 December, 1934 in the Dacca Central Jail.

The defiant revolutionaries of Bengal though disarrayed were not to be dismayed. They chose to strike the lion in its own den. Jatish Guha of the B.V. master-minded the daring "Operation Anderson". The so-called "Chastiser of Bengal", John Anderson, was enjoying the "summer cool" at Darjeeling surrounded by an impenetrable security ring. Almost half the population of Darjeeling consisted of police spies and hirelings. With their long ears and big eyes they kept a round-the-clock vigil so that not even flies could touch the Governor or disturb his sleep.

For Bhabani Bhattacharya and Rohi Banerjee, the spearhead of the attack, no obstacle was too great to overcome, no danger too frightening to face. At the Lebong Race Course on 8 May, 1934 Bhabani and Robi launched the attack with roaring revolvers. The Governor's lady stenographer, more by instinct than by intent, flung herself in between and miraculously saved the Governor's life at the expense of some injury to herself. The Governor escaped physical wound but his imperial pride was humbled.

Sentenced to capital punishment, Bhabani stubbornly refused to file any appeal against the sentence. Unrepentant Bhabani mounted the gallows on 3 February, 1935 at the Rajshahi Central Jail, now in Bangladesh, and became a martyr.
bequeathing to posterity his burning love of country. Only a steadfast revolutionary soldier like Bhabani could greet death with such stirring words (written in a letter to his younger brother a few hours before the execution):

A coward trembles at the sight of a blood-soaked battle field, but heroes are born here.

One should not imagine that to kill or destroy was either a pleasure or a passion of the revolutionary. To usher in the highest happiness for the greatest numbers, he has through the ages resorted to killing and destruction only as an unavoidable evil. The last words of Prodyut Bhattacharya, scribbled on a torn piece of paper, from his condemned cell in Midnapore Central Jail while awaiting the rope for his complicity in the Douglas shooting, touchingly reflect this sentiment:

As the day dawns near I am full of joy; without being a murderer I am going to become a martyr in full glory. Even the gods will envy me my rare luck.

7. The Liberation Movement Ascends the International Plane

There was a lull in revolutionary activities and on the Congress front also all was quiet during 1935. The initiative passed to the British Government and the Government of India Act, 1935 was enacted by British Parliament for "better governance of the country". But it was "totally disappointing" from the Indian point of view. It was neither fish nor fowl, not even a red herring. Foreign rule was to continue as before except for the addition of a few elected ministers as ornaments to the administration. The bait of the All India Federation was the shadow of a constitutional device without much of a substance. There was no real devolution of power. Moreover, the princes were to be used to check and counter the nationalist elements.

Bitterly opposed though to the Act, the Congress decided to contest the elections held under the new Act of 1935 and swept the polls in July 1937. The Congress formed ministries in 7 out of 11 provinces and coalition governments in 2 others. Only Bengal and the Punjab had non-Congress Ministries. Within the narrow limits of the power given to them they tried to improve the conditions of the people and promote civil liberties.
The involvement of the masses in the nationalist movements had already commenced. Socialist and communist-minded groups to work among them came into existence. The colourful revolutionary personality, M. N. Roy, was drawn to the Socialist ideology and became the first Indian to be elected to the leadership of the Communist International. The imported seeds of Communism began sprouting on the Indian soil. After dabbling in international communism for a number of years, Roy arrived in India in 1930 and organised a small Marxist group from among Congress nationalists. It was a non-comintern Communist Party within the Indian National Congress. It was known as the Roy Group, the members calling themselves simply “Royists”.

The Comintern affiliated official Communist Party of India also started functioning. In December 1928, contemporaneous with the Calcutta session of the Congress, all leading communists in India met and organised the All India Workers’ and Peasants’ Party with about the same membership.

The phantom of the Russian Bear descending on the Indian Empire through Afghanistan had vexed British diplomacy at a particular period of history. The magnified threat of Russian Communist infiltration possessed the Government of India once again: the first symptom was the Peshwar Conspiracy Case of 1923. In 1924 the Government arrested Muzaffar Ahmed, S.A. Dange and Nalini Gupta; accused them of spreading communist ideas and tried them along with others in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case.

Yet another and the most important of all was the Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929 in which three British communists figured among the accused. The case dragged on for four years and some of the accused were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment which were reduced on appeal followed by the release of all of them by the end of 1933. In the name of containment of communism these conspiracy cases were an exercise in shadow fighting.

The advance of industrialisation in the country had swelled the numerical strength of the working class. So trade unionism registered a rapid progress during this period under the auspices of the All India Trade Union Congress with Lala Lajpat Rai as the President. Many strikes occurred between 1924 and 1928, the one that attracted world attention was the Bombay
Textile Mills strike. Nearly 1,50,000 workers downed their tools for over five months. The solidarity of the workers won in the end.

India being a dependency of Britain, the political or national struggle overshadowed the economic struggle of the working class. But a close alliance was automatically evolved between the two movements and they together pushed the country forward on the road to freedom.

By the late 1930s the left political spectrum in Bengal had been complicated by the proliferation of a number of Marxist parties: The Communist Party of India, The Roy Group, The Communist League of Soumyendranath Tagore, The Labour Party of Niharendu Datta Majumdar, The Bolshevik Party, The Kishan Sabha, The Congress Socialist Party. Whatever ideological niceties might have divided them, all these fronts represented the rapid crystallization of the Indian unrest so fiercely fanned by the revolutionary upsurge of the period.

Discontent with the programme and leadership of the Congress Party which was suspected to be in alliance with big business, particularly its lack of positive policy of social and economic reforms for the benefit of the peasant and working class, led to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. It was a ginger group within the Indian National Congress. It was sponsored by leading lights like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Jai Prokash Narain, Ram Monohar Lohia, Achut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani and others. The Gandhian ideal of non-violence was their hobgoblin which prevented the mini-party from functioning healthily and, time and again, made it a prisoner of indecision at crucial times.

Inspired communist propaganda had found its way into the camps and jails where revolutionary detainees were confined. Marxist literature was found in plenty and study circles were organised inside by the early converts to communism. The authorities by that time came to consider the spread of communist doctrines as a lesser evil and hoped to wean away the nationalist revolutionaries by this new exotic faith.

The Indian National Congress with its feet firmly on the Indian soil prevented any defection in the national movement for political freedom. It absorbed the shocks of new political ideologies and claimed the adherence of majority of earnest
freedom fighters. But the "authoritarian tendencies" in the Congress leadership of the old guards posed a big problem reminiscent of the conflict between the moderates and the extremists in the early part of the century. Gandhiji had manoeuvred himself back into a position of firm control over Congress politics, thus regaining the position he had given up in 1922 when he abruptly called off the non-cooperation movement.

The opportunity for a grand alliance of the revolutionaries, leftists and other critics of Gandhiji leadership was provided by the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as President of Congress in February 1938 (Haripura Session). The Left appeared united as never before. But the opposition of Gandhiji to re-election of Bose in 1939 (Tripuri Session) and the subsequent conflict between the Left and the Gandhian wing of the Congress led to the break-up of the coalition.

Though elected by a convincing majority over the Gandhiji-picked candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramaya, Bose was unable to choose his own Working Committee because of G. B. Pant's resolution to the effect that President Bose be required to form his Working Committee in conformity with the wishes of Gandhiji. All his attempts to reach a compromise with Gandhiji over the matter having failed, Bose had very little choice but to resign.

On 29 April, 1939 Subhas Bose organised the Forward Bloc which attracted the support of Marxists and non-Marxists. The revolutionaries of B. V., Shree Sangha, R.S.P. (former Anushilan), the Madaripur Group of Purna Chandra Das and others stood by Subhas, now majestic in his isolation. Subhas called the F.B. a "bolc" rather than a party to overcome the sensibility of some of the groups which allied with him. But the tenuous coalition of the leftists in the Left Consolidation Committee formed by Bose broke up under pressure from moderate elements in the Congress.

The guns of the World War II began booming in September 1939. The Congress sat on the fence. While its heart ached for the victims of Fascist aggression, it could not think of actively participating in the defence of the forces of democracy abroad in the absence of democracy at home. So the Congress demanded immediate transfer of real power to the Indian hands. On refusal by the British Government the Congress ministries en-
bloc quit office. But the Congress could go no further. The principle of "Ahimsa" to which it was bound hand and foot, enjoined that there should be no embarrassment to England in her distress.

Subhas Chandra Bose as the Congress President at Tripuri had clearly foreseen this eventuality. His pragmatic approach was that England’s difficulty was India’s opportunity. He pleaded with the Congress that in view of the gathering war clouds India should deliver an ultimatum to England to grant independence or face the all-out hostility of the Indian people through a Congress sponsored movement. But his was a voice in the wilderness.

The inexorable process of history throws up its man of destiny at the needed hour. The believe-it-or-not disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose from India came on 17 January, 1941. Leaving the Congress to wallow in its policy of inaction, Subhas crossed the rugged hilly borders into Afghanistan disguised as a Pathan named Ziauddin on 26 January, 1941. He was on his way to the cockpit of the great powers' struggle for world hegemony. The Indian Liberation Movement ascended the international plane and became inter-linked with the global war.
CHAPTER XI

NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

N. N. BHATTACHARYA

1. The Coming of War: Gathering Clouds

On 3 September, 1939 when the war broke out between Britain and Germany, India was made a party in the war by a proclamation of the Viceroy who did it without any consultation with the national leaders. This created a feeling of ambivalence among the Congressmen since many of them looked upon Fascism as the enemy of freedom, peace and progress and did not wish Britain to lose, but the British attitude towards India marked by contemptuous treatment, ruthless repression and absolute indifference to the political aspiration of the people had created in them an adverse reaction. Gandhiji expressed his sympathy in favour of Britain and its allies in an interview with the Viceroy on 5 September.1 Jawaharlal Nehru said on 8th September: “In a conflict between democracy and freedom on the one side and Fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of democracy.”2 But the Congress High Command refused to be led by the approach of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal. As early as 1936 Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President had declared that the Congress must keep itself out from every imperialist war. At the Haripura Congress in February 1938 Subhas Chandra Bose concluded his presidential address with the remark: “The clay feet of a gigantic empire now stand exposed as they have never been before.”3 At the Tripuri Congress in 1939 the British foreign policy was declared as purely imperialistic and anti-democratic and it was resolved that Indian wealth and man-power would not be allowed to be used for British imperialistic designs.4

Among other political parties, the Muslim League expressed its willingness to support the war-efforts on condition that no constitutional arrangements, temporary or permanent, was acceptable which was not approved by it.5 The National Liberal
Federation and the Hindu Mahasabha offered unconditional support to the Government. M.N. Roy's League of Radical Congressmen, a sub-group within the Congress, also offered unconditional support to the Britshers declaring that since it was a war between Democracy and Fascism the Indians should mobilise behind the democratic forces. The Communist Party of India, against the backdrop of the Russo-German pact of mutual non-aggression, concluded that it was an imperialistic war and had taken an anti-British stand in the line of the Congress. The Communists, however, reversed their attitude when Russia was attacked by Hitler on 22 June, 1941. Subhas Chandra Bose and his Forward Bloc openly declared that they did not want British success and that the freedom of India could be achieved only on the ruins of British defeat. England's difficulty was India's opportunity. In more than one thousand public meetings Bose repeatedly urged that India should not cooperate with Britain's war efforts.6

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha from 8 to 15 September, and asked the Government to define and clarify its war aims and especially proposals about India's future in unequivocal terms, for if the war to be fought for the maintenance of the status quo India would have nothing to do with it.7 The Viceroy issued on 17 October a statement to the following effect: "I am authorised by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian princes, with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in the framing of such modifications as might seem desirable."8 He announced also the immediate establishment of a consultative group, representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian princes, which would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the questions relating to war activities.9

Gandhiji characterised this declaration as 'profoundly disappointing'. "The Congress asked for bread" he said, "and it has got a stone." Jawaharlal Nehru and Moulana Azad in a joint statement said: "If it is the final answer of the British Government to the people of India, then, there is no common ground between the two and our paths diverge completely."10
On 22 October the Working Committee passed a resolution calling upon the Congress ministers to resign. A week later the resignations started and by the middle of November the Congress ministers were out of office. Whether this decision was prudent is a matter of controversy. As a result of this resignation the administration of eight provinces went directly under the Governors, and taking advantage of their special power they worked openly in favour of the Muslim League. Muslim militant organisations like Muslim League Volunteer Corps, Muslim National Guard, Khaksar Regiment, etc., were set up. They were given arms and trained in art of killing in Fascist technique under direct encouragement of the Government. In frequent interviews with the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, Jinnah not only received the hacking for his plans and objectives, but also the commitment that no declaration would be made, either in principle or otherwise, or any constitution be enacted by His Majesty’s Government or the Parliament without the approval and consent of the Muslim League. 22 December was observed by the Muslim League as the day of deliverance and thanksgiving.

In March 1940, during the Ramgarh session of the Congress, Bose organised a protest meeting which was known as Anti-compromise Conference and raised the question that when India’s self-respect was disregarded and its aspirations trampled upon why should India be expected to aid England in waging its war? In a letter to Gandhiji in June 1940 Bose wrote that it was high time that the Congress should launch a mass movement.11 On 2 July he was arrested which caused great excitement among many congressmen. The Working Committee which met at Delhi from 3 to 7 July resolved that if the British Government guaranteed complete freedom of India at the end of the war and if as interim step a National Government constituted of representatives be set up, India was ready to participate most actively in the war-efforts. But the British view-point was that no settlement would prove possible without real reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims. In response to the proposal of the Congress Working Committee the Viceroy announced on 8 August that an immediate expansion of the Viceroy’s Executive Council would be made by appointing a number of representative Indians, that a War Advisory Council
consisting of representatives of British India and the Indian States to meet at regular intervals would be established and that practical steps would be promoted to arrive at an agreement among the Indian "on the form of which the post-war representative body should take and the method by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and, secondly, upon the principles and outlines of the constitution itself."\

The Viceroy's proposals, commonly known as the August Offer, could not satisfy anyone. It was a flat denial of the aspirations of the Congress. Hence there was no other way before the Congress than to launch an anti-British movement. But Gandhiji had ruled out mass civil disobedience, for he did not wish to embarrass the Government. He announced instead a programme of Individual Civil Disobedience as a purely moral gesture which was not meant to challenge the authority. From 17 October, 1940 to December 1941 the movement passed through four phases. In the first phase, only a few selected leaders were asked to offer Individual Civil Disobedience. In the second phase which covered the period from the middle of November 1940 to January 1941 participants were chosen from the Congress Working Committee, the All India Congress Committee, the Central and Provincial Legislatures. During the third phase from January to April 1941 local leaders and members of the Congress, about 2200 in number, courted arrest. The last phase was characterised by a wider mass participation and by the middle of the summer of 1941 more than 20,000 persons were arrested.

In a long speech in the House of Commons on 22 April, 1941 the Secretary of State of India, Mr. Amery, blamed the Congress for creating a deadlock insisting on the apathy of the Muslim League and the princes of the native states towards the Congress policy. At this Gandhiji commented: "Mr. Amery has insulted the Indian intelligence by reiterating ad nauseum that Indian political parties have but to agree among themselves that Great Britain will register the will of a United India. I have repeatedly shown that it has been the traditional policy of Great Britain to prevent parties from uniting. 'Divide and Rule' has been Great Britain's proud motto. It is the British statesmen who are responsible for the division in India's ranks...I admit that there is unfortunately an unbridgeable gulf
between the Congress and the Muslim League. Why do not the British statesmen admit that it is after all a domestic quarrel? Let them withdraw from India and I promise that the Congress and the Muslim League and all other parties will find it to their interest to come together and devise a home-made solution for the Government of India.”

2. **Subhas Chandra’s Escape In Search For Independence**

While the Individual Civil Disobedience was on the move, Subhas Chandra Bose on 17 January, 1941 befooled the Government Intelligence and left for Europe in disguise. His followers in India had taken a purely anti-British move. But the British Government was able to have full support from other parties in its war efforts. The Liberals and the Radical Democratic Party of M. N. Roy offered their full support. So did the Muslim League which welcomed the August Offer of the Viceroy, though with certain reservations. The Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of V. D. Savarkar came in support of the Britishers with its professed purpose of enhancing the number of Hindus in the army. The Communists came to the British side when Russia was invaded by Germany on 22 June, 1941. The Executive Council of the Viceroy was expanded on 22 July. Among the 13 members of the expanded Council, 8 were Indians, but they were given no significant portfolio. The Defence Council, composed exclusively of the Indians, was also a mere eyewash. The cooperators were not happy.

The Atlantic Charter, issued in August 1941 jointly by the Governments of Great Britain and the U.S.A. as the declaration of the war aims of the Allied Powers, were welcomed by the Indians, because in Article 3 of the Charter “the right of all people to choose their form of government” was categorically recognised. Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State of the U.S.A., held that the principles of the Charter were universal in practical application. But on 9 September, 1941, Winston Churchill in the House of Commons poured cold water on the aspirations of dependent nations. He said: “At the Atlantic meeting, we have in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe now under Nazi yoke, and the principles
governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have to be made. So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown.”

By December 1941, the world situation had taken a new turn when Pearl Harbour was bombed by the Japanese and the war was rapidly approaching the eastern borders of India. The Congress Working Committee declared its disagreement with Gandhiji’s line and wished to cooperate in the war-efforts. Gandhiji resigned his leadership of the Congress movement. The Government also released the prisoners including Nehru and Azad with the hope of receiving Congress support, since many of the Congress leaders like C. Rajagopalachari were in favour of supporting the English against the background of the Japanese aggression. But the British attitude was in itself a bar to a genuine understanding with the Congress, since it was always insisting that the Congress should make compromise with the Muslim League demands, knowing fully well that it was impossible for the Congress to do so.

On 17 February two days after the fall of Singapore, the Assistant Secretary of State of the U.S.A. requested President Roosevelt that in order to resist the Japanese aggression he should coerce Churchill to come to a political agreement with India. On 25 February Chiang Kai-Shek sent the following cable to the President: “In a word, the danger is extreme. If the British Government does not fundamentally change their policy towards India, it would be like presenting India to the enemy and inviting them to quickly occupy India.” Said Eisenhower: “Aside from preserving lines of air and sea communications to Australia, we had to hold the Indian bastion at all cost, otherwise junction between the Japanese and German forces would be accomplished thorough the Persian Gulf.” Yet Churchill was unmoved. But after the fall of Rangoon on 7 March, Roosevelt sent Churchill a long letter on 11 March saying that for the sake of war interest the solution of Indian problem was “part and parcel of the successful fight you and I are making.” This American red light was responsible for sending the Lord Privy Seal, Sir Stafford Cripps, to talk with the Indian leaders. Cripps arrived at Delhi on 22 March, 1942.
3. *Cripps Mission: Crisis Deepens*

Although Sir Stafford Cripps was a man of vision having his own ideas about the Indian situation, his wings were clipped. "He did not go as a plenipotentiary to negotiate the terms of an agreement; he went as a British Cabinet Minister to explain and clarify the terms of a statement of policy that could not be altered." The Indian leaders had wide divergence of opinion regarding the nature of the proposed Dominion Status and the formation of the constitution. In fact the insatiable demands of the minority groups and the separatists, hitherto encouraged by the British government, went beyond credibility, since all of them, even the smallest minority group, demanded right of exercising veto-power against the decisions of the majority. Cripps gave the Muslim League widest concession saying that the federated provinces (by which he meant the Muslim-majority provinces) had the right to secede and to make constitutions of their own. In spite of this the League raised objection on the ground that when the British would be no more on the scene, it might be difficult for them to secede. In other words, it wanted advance-guarantee of Pakistan. The Congress did not reject the Cripps Mission downright. It raised valid objection on two points that the proposals senselessly encouraged separatism and that in the proposed constituent assembly the princes of the native states were given power to nominate representatives ignoring the aspirations of their subjects.

Churchill blamed the Congress and Gandhiji for the failure of the Cripps Mission. He wrote: "The majority of the Congress leaders reverted to the total pacifism of Gandhi who wrote on his newspaper on 10 May: 'The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal would remove the bait. Assume however that it does not, Free India would be better able to cope with invasion. Unadulterated non-cooperation would then have full sway'." But Sir Stafford Cripps himself had a different opinion. At least a functional agreement in regard to the war-efforts was possible by the interference of Roosevelt's personal envoy Louis Johnson who suggested that instead of a sham war-council composed of the Indians under the Viceroy, there should be an in-
terim national government with full responsibility of war-affairs. This Johnson Formula was recommended by Cripps to the British Government but the Viceroy rejected it downright and cabled the Home Government urging not to change the status quo.\textsuperscript{24} The U.S. Government was not satisfied with the British way of handling the situation as had been categorically stated by Harry Hopkins who talked with Churchill on behalf of Roosevelt. Gandhiji was blamed by the British authorities for the failure of the Cripps Mission, but Gandhiji had nothing to do with it.\textsuperscript{25}

4. The Quit India Movement

After the failure of the Cripps Mission Gandhiji wrote that for the safety and interest, both of Britain and India, the British should quit India. Under the existing circumstances there was no question of India’s cooperation with Britain.\textsuperscript{26} But Nehru was still in favour of supporting the Britishers in their war against Fascism. The line of Nehru was accepted in the meeting of the Congress Working Committee. Azad was of the opinion that the Congress should organise the people to resist the Japanese aggression.\textsuperscript{27} But in the All India Congress Committee which was held at Allahabad from 29 April to 2 May, 1942, Gandhiji sent a proposal in which he advised the Congressmen to demand the withdrawal of the British and to resolve to resist the Japanese with non-violent non-cooperation.\textsuperscript{28} There was a hot debate, but Gandhiji’s view was accepted notwithstanding the opposition of Nehru, Azad and Rajagopalachari.\textsuperscript{29} On 6 July at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Wardha Gandhiji voted for Quit India movement. The Quit India Resolution was adopted by the Congress Working Committee on 14 July and it was ratified by the All India Congress Committee on 7 August, 1942 at Bombay.\textsuperscript{30} Said Gandhiji: “Every one of you should from this moment onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free...I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. We shall do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt.”\textsuperscript{31}

The Government took a stern attitude and made elaborate preparations to nip any active rebellion in the bud. Early morn-
ing on Sunday 9 August Gandhiji was arrested. All the members of the Working Committee in Bombay were taken into custody. Even before the movement had started, or a programme of action adopted, the Government arrested all the Congress leaders, even those belonging to the Taluka or subdivisional level. The Government thought that the sudden removal of all types of leaders would leave no responsible man to guide the mass movement and that by this means it would be able to crush the movement. It also rallied anti-Congress parties to make propaganda against the movement. The Muslim League came in support of the Government. Jinnah had given the following statement: "The latest decision of the Congress Working Committee on 14 July, 1942 resolving to launch a mass movement if the British do not withdraw from India is the culminating point in the policy and programme of Mr. Gandhi and his Hindu Congress of blackmailing the British and coercing them to concede a system of a government and transfer power to that government which would establish a Hindu Raj immediately under the aegis of the British bayonets, thereby throwing the Muslims and other minorities and interests at the mercy of the Congress Raj." The Communist Party of India also came to support the Government. Puckley, the Director General of Information, issued a circular to the local governments to mobilise public opinion against the Congress.

Despite all these, the Government made a profound miscalculation about the state of popular feeling and the hold of the Congress on the people of India. There was spontaneous mass upsurge all over India which ceased to remain non-violent. The outbreak started simultaneously in widely separated areas. The first wave of violent disorders subsided by the sixth week, but there was a drift towards terrorism. On 10 September, 1942 Churchill said in the House of Commons: "The Congress Party has now abandoned the policy in many respects of non-violence which Gandhi has so long inculcated in theory and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote disorder, looting of shops and sporadic attacks upon the Indian police, accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having the intention or at any rate the effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese
invader who stands in the frontiers of Assam and also upon
the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal." But in reality it was
a spontaneous outbreak. Nehru wrote: "Neither in public nor
in private at the meeting of the Working Committee did he
(Gandhiji) hint at the nature of action he had in his mind except
a one-day general strike. So neither he nor the Congress Work-
ing Committee issued any kind of directions, public or private,
except that peoples should be prepared for all developments
and should in any event adhere to the policy of peaceful and
non-violent action." According to Jayprakash Narain a small
group met at Calcutta and laid the foundation of the so called
"Illegal Congress Organization" which functioned throughout
the struggle. But the fact was that this group was active and
resorted to terrorist activities from underground only when the
first wave of the movement was exhausted.

It is not possible to present in this chapter details of what
happened all over India during the Quit India movement. We
shall only refer to those places where British Government was
completely paralysed for some time. The people declared the
establishment of National Governments in North Bhagalpur,
Sultanpur, Madhipur, Manjhi, Ekma, Dighwara, Darauli, Sarwan
and a few other places in Bihar. In Ballia district of Uttar
Pradesh the British rule ceased to exist. In Garhwal and Almora
there was People’s Raj for some time. A parallel Government
called Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar was set up on 17 December,
1942 in Midnapore in Bengal. It was here that the British
forces failed miserably. In the Government Report we have the
following statement in regard to the functioning of the National
Government of Tamralipta: "In Midnapore in Bengal, the
operations of the rebels indicated considerable care and plan-
ing: effective warning system had been devised, elementary
tactical principles were observed, for instance, encirclement
and flanking movements, clearly on pre-arranged signals. The
forces of disorder were accompanied by doctors and nursing
orderlies to attend to the casualties and the intelligence system
was efficient." This National Government was dissolved on
1 September, 1944 due to Gandhiji’s statement regarding nature
of the movement published after his release.

The outbreak of 1942 was destined to be a failure because
of the lack of leadership, but its great impact and historical
consequences cannot be ignored. The main cause of its failure had been attributed by Jayprakash Narain, for whom Gandhiji had the highest admiration and who was the real leader of the revolt, to lack of co-ordination and organisation. He said that the Congressmen, even the leaders, were not aware of the progress of the revolt and that when the first phase of the rising was over, there was no further programme placed before the people. Moreover, the activists lacked in proper propaganda. The Congress Radio broadcasts made by Usha Mehta and her friends from Bombay for a few months in 1942 could not produce any tangible result. But as Linhithgow had observed, the Quit India Movement had drastically crippled the British War effort. In addition to the disruption of communications which threatened the Eastern region, the movement was able to cause a break down in the supply of essential commodities to the army.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A short account of this interview was published in The Harijan, 9, 9, 1939.
5. R. Coupland, op. cit., II. p. 216.
8. Ibid. p. 387.
10. Indian Annual Register. 1939. II. p. 304.
15 House of Commons Debates, CCLXXIV. 5th Sr., Col. 69.
21. For details see The Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Cripps Mission,
CHAPTER XII

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

SISIR K. BOSE AND KRISHNA BOSE

1. Politics Of No Compromise: Prospect of Direct Confrontation

In order to place the role of the Indian National Army in India's struggle for Freedom in the proper historical perspective it is necessary to study and understand the evolution of political ideas of its architect Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Netaji based his politics and programme of action on a searching and scientific analysis of Indian history since ancient times and particularly, an objective study of British conquest and rule. Among the general conclusions he arrived at on such study and analysis were: first, that every new epoch in our history had been heralded by people possessing greater intellectual power and superior military skill; second, national decline from time to time had been due to physical and intellectual fatigue; third, the British constituted the only foreign element in the entire history of India who failed to be absorbed into the Indian social framework and thus for the first time since the dawn of civilisation the Indian people felt that they had been conquered in every sense of the term; and fourth, any forward movement in India during the past two centuries was organically connected with upheavals in other parts of the world.

On the basis of his understanding of the nature of British conquest and rule of India Subhas Chandra Bose came to the firm conclusion that there was no community of interest whatsoever between the British Empire and resurgent Indian Nationalism—historically, politically, economically, culturally or otherwise. Therefore no conciliation or compromise between these two forces of history was possible. One had to die in order that the other may live. Further, if by any chance or for purposes of convenience, a compromise was effected, the result would not only be of no lasting value to Indian aspirations but in fact would irretrievably damage the ultimate purpose of the Indian