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YASHPAL LOOKS BACK

yashpal Looks Back

selections from an
autobiography

Edited and Translated from the Original Hindi
with a Commentary by

CORINNE FRIEND

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*Dedicated with love to
Zachariah, Ryan, Eric, Cynthia and Peter*

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Publisher's Note

The text of this book consists of passages of translation from Yashpal's *Sinhavalokan* interspersed with the translator/editor's commentary and connecting narrative. These and the direct translations have been clearly distinguished by setting the translator/editor's contributions with less interlineal spacing than the translated portions. An exception has been made in the case of Chapters 11 and 12, which consist largely of material contributed by the editor. In these chapters, the translated portions have been indented.

References to the three volumes of *Sinhavalokan* are indicated at the ends of the translated passages in square brackets thus: [III: 186], the roman figure indicating the volume and the arabic figure the page of the original Hindi work. The edition referred to is the one listed in the Bibliography.

All footnotes have been added by the translator/editor.

Introduction

Yashpal (1903-1976), author of the prize-winning novel *Jhutha Sac*, decorated with Padma Bhushan for his contribution to Hindi literature, writer of more than fifty books of short stories, essays, novels, a play and his autobiography, exercised a profound influence on Hindi literature and social and political philosophy in India.

He was born in a tiny village in the Kangra Hills and grew up at a time of ferment and agitation for Indian independence. He was drawn at first to Mahatma Gandhi and the non-cooperation movement, but later felt that the Congress Party was unresponsive to the needs of the poor and that non-cooperation was ineffective. He joined the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (or Association), which engaged in terrorist activities in the 1920s and 1930s to overthrow British rule and to inspire a people's revolution which would culminate in a socialist state. In 1932 he was elected Commander-in-Chief of the HSRA.

The HSRA performed a number of dramatic exploits, and although its moment on the Indian stage was brief, increasingly historians have felt that its actions aroused the pride and consciousness of the people, and resulted in concessions from the British government coming more quickly. Most of the HSRA's members were killed, hanged or jailed, and Yashpal, too, was captured in 1932 and sentenced to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment. After serving six years, he was released under the amnesty for political prisoners won by the Congress. In 1938 he began his career as a novelist, short-story writer, social critic and political commentator.

Long after India achieved independence, Yashpal wrote *Sinhavalokan* in Hindi. The power and importance of *Sinhavalokan* lie in Yashpal's unique knowledge. Not only did he participate in events, he helped to lead them. He knew intimate-

ly the men and women who took part. They depended on one another for their very lives. The charm of *Sinhavalokan* lies in Yashpal's candour in recounting these events. Unlike most other memoirs of this kind which are often simply polemics of self-justification and self-aggrandizement, Yashpal does not give himself the benefit of hindsight nor spare us the knowledge of his less attractive qualities. We know he was brave and dedicated, but he tells us further that he was also reckless, touchy, selfish, and insensitive. All of which adds immeasurably to the credibility and appeal of his reminiscences.

C.F.

1 Purpose: To Tell the True Story of How We Tried to Organize a People's Revolution

For a long time, our countrymen have been demanding the true story of how armed revolution was attempted in India. To tell it accurately poses many problems. The greatest obstacle to collecting material or writing is that everything was done in secret. Indeed, such activities had to be secret. Whenever any of these efforts were effective, the British government called them detestable crimes. When the great men of the Congress had the opportunity or felt the compulsion to express themselves on this subject, they spoke of the immature diversions of young men who, blinded by the passion of patriotism, were treading a road to ruin. When the revolutionaries themselves had a chance to speak, they adorned themselves with the mantle of self-sacrifice, complaining that they were criticized and denigrated by others who claimed for themselves the leadership of the freedom movement. As a result, events were never presented to the people in their proper perspective. I want now, therefore, to describe them as they really happened.

The story I tell is a personal one. It cannot be called history—no individual's recollections can. But the relationship between the experiences of individuals and the history of society is the same as that of beads to a necklace or bricks to a house. The beads cannot be called the necklace, but without them the necklace cannot be made. While these reminiscences cannot be called history, they do offer profound insights into the events of the revolutionary movement and the thinking which led to the events [1 : 6,7].

In his Introduction to the first volume of *Sinhavalokan*—literally, "The backward glance of the lion"—Yashpal has given

the rationale for his autobiography—to look again at where he has been and to get another view of what he has already seen. The best justification for this autobiography, so far as the readers are concerned, is that he is uniquely qualified to illumine an important and neglected corner of India's history.

The first question Yashpal considers is why those young men did not follow Gandhi's leadership and join the Congress movement which functioned openly and enjoyed public approval, even acclaim. Although demonstrators were often jailed, they usually spent only a short time in prison. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, worked in secret, constantly hunted by the police. When caught they were executed or sentenced to long terms in prison. People were usually afraid to help them in any way. Why then did they choose this life?

Yashpal suggests that the young revolutionaries were products of home environments where tradition played a relatively unimportant role and further that the revolutionaries had a different psychological makeup from the average person. Their willingness to sacrifice stemmed from a keener sense of national pride and greater sensitivity to the suffering of the people. They were humiliated by India's impotence when Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten by police as he demonstrated against the Simon Commission's appearance in Lahore in November 1928. They found it intolerable to endure this without reprisal—therefore the murder of J.P. Saunders, Deputy Superintendent of Police in Lahore. It was not because they personally felt any great affection for Lajpat Rai—indeed, by that time their political philosophy was opposed to his—but their national pride was outraged that a man of his stature could be beaten with impunity by the British. [1 : 15-6] Furthermore, the revolutionaries felt that the Congress programme did not address itself to the needs of the poor.

Yashpal explains the revolutionary temperament in Hindu terms; just as the ascetic desires union with God by total submergence of his identity in God, so does the revolutionary wish to become totally submerged in the cause he believes in. [1 : 19] However, the objects of his devotion are his country and people. [1 : 18]

The British recognized this psychological difference and tried to analyze it by conducting a study of the revolutionaries in jail. Since they used a questionnaire approach and the revolutionaries were uncooperative, it is doubtful whether they discovered anything of value.

2 Yashpal's Early Life and Education

Yashpal's memories of his resentment against the British go far back and bite deep. In his own words:

It is not irrelevant here to comment on my own state of mind when I entered National College. Why was I drawn towards armed revolution? The answer is both obvious and complex. Several factors and circumstances affected me, among which were my feeling of social consciousness, my family and economic situation and the atmosphere all around us—the interplay of all these factors provided the motive force.

I don't consider it possible to separate a feeling of hostility and hatred of something from the desire to rebel against it. Scraping my memory to recall when I first felt the desire to be rid of foreign rule, my recollections come in the form of loathing, antagonism and resentment towards the British. There was no personal reason for it, but rather seeing their power and their sway, I wanted to be like them. Since there was no possibility of that, but only the experience of fear and subjection, it was natural to hate and resent them.

I do not count it as a personal failing that I detested and felt animosity towards them ever since I was a child. I believe the reason was my natural inclination not to accept an inferior position passively. And I believe that if one does not feel hatred and revulsion against force and oppression, one cannot be fired with the will to stand against them. I was not the only one who reacted that way.

The old revolutionary, Dr Bhupendra Dutt, supported this feeling of mine in his memoirs. Dr. Bhupendra Dutt who was relating to Baijnath Singh "Vinod" the story of how the revolutionary movement in Bengal was born, recounted events which occurred almost fifty years earlier. When he was a young man,

the young Bengalis who hated the British would jump onto the horse-drawn trams in Calcutta, beat up the Britishers seated there and then run away. This growing feeling of hatred towards the British in Calcutta and Bengal later developed into a feeling of national self-respect and gradually culminated in a drive towards national independence through armed revolution.

The British who had come and stayed in India resolved to maintain their own personal and social status at a superior level and to keep the people of this country low. Each Englishman viewed himself as his country's representative here. Their arrogance took the form of contempt for this country and resulted in insulting conduct and attitudes towards Indians. This may seem strange to young readers today.

Britain, with America's help, was ultimately victorious in World War I, but for a time it was widely publicized that the Germans were pressing them hard in Europe. The British Government appealed to the people of this country for financial aid and manpower. How could this fail to have an effect on the minds of the people? Having been conquered by the British, crushed by them, enslaved by them, the British were stamped in their minds as invincible, superhuman, supreme—but from that moment the lustre of their invincibility began to dim. The movement against the Rowlatt Bills and, after that, several movements demanding the right of self-rule had the effect of tempering British haughtiness, and as a result, the newcomers who came to India to stay adopted a somewhat more courteous and humane attitude. The Second World War, of course, completely changed their conduct.

Fifty years earlier, the English behaved quite differently. At that time every Englishman, a simple trader, a railway clerk or a plain white "tommy" expected every Indian to salute him on the road.

The English were based mainly in Lahore, Delhi, Mussoorie, Simla and Nainital. Even now some of the old men from there tell stories of the peculiar conduct of the English back in those days. Then, no matter how hard it was raining or how fiercely the sun shone, no Indian dared to carry an open umbrella over his head while passing an Englishman on the road. The Mall Road ran along the bank of the lake in Nainital. (It has been re-

named "Gandhi Marg", and nowadays every Congress minister in his Gandhi cap speeds by in a motor car, and is a nuisance to the ordinary pedestrian on the road.) But at that time only the English could walk on that road. Indians had to use the kaccha road which ran beneath the Mall Road. I might mention that during the British Raj, only the Governor went by car. The minister of the Raj and the legislators walked like ordinary people, but now our "Servants of the People", the Congress ministers, dash about on the roads in their automobiles. These are the rewards of self-government to the pedestrians who suffer this inconvenience and annoyance.

I myself don't recall such conduct on the part of the English because even before I was an adult the sparks of opposition to British power had been ignited and several movements were challenging the imperious English ways. But I remember many such incidents in my childhood. I saw the common people on the road saluting the English. I saw Indians grovelling before them and, seeing this, I felt degraded, and this fueled my opposition to them.

My earliest memory concerns an incident when I was about four years old. A relative of ours was a manager of a cotton ginning factory in the United Provinces. I don't remember why my mother and I were staying with him. The factory was near the railway station. Also near the railway station were several bungalows of English people who worked for the railways. Everyone was terrified of them. The people in one of the bungalows raised their own chickens and the chickens sometimes wandered on the road outside. I was walking on the road one evening and saw a chicken and started teasing it. The mem-sahib in the house scolded me for this mischief. She called me an idiot or an ass, and I called her those names right back. When she threatened to beat me. I repeated the same words to her and ran into the factory.

A complaint about me, Heaven knows how described, was made to our relative, the manager. I well remember the fear and anger in his eyes as he reported me to my mother. The atmosphere was such that, because of the great mischief I had done, the people in the house or factory felt themselves to be in mortal danger. My mother took a stick and beat me hard. Even when I fell down on the ground, she continued to beat

me. It isn't hard to guess what emotions were produced in me towards the English by this incident.

I remember another incident when I was about six years old. At that time that relative of ours was managing a cotton ginning mill in Kashipur in Nainital District, and my mother was Principal of the Arya Kanya Pathshala in Kashipur. My relative was considered an important person there. We were living in the factory which was quite a distance from the city.

With my chalk and writing board in hand, I was walking to school. The women in our household sometimes strolled to the gardens or tanks nearby in the afternoon. There is an artificial lake called Drona Sagar in a charming forest some distance from Kashipur. A temple was built on its banks—it's still there. One afternoon the women were strolling around the lake and, thinking themselves all alone there, decided to take a dip in it. While they were bathing, two Englishmen, probably soldiers, suddenly appeared on the opposite side of the lake.

How they happened to be there, I don't know. Perhaps they were part of a terai surveying team or a regiment of soldiers who had made camp there. The women started screaming with fear and holding tight to one another, grabbing their clothing and running. And of course I ran with them. They were as frightened of those Englishmen as a herd of goats confronted by a tiger. In other words, the English could do whatever they wanted, but there was nothing anyone could do about it other than weep and shriek in fright.

Also, when I was going to school in Ferozepur Cantonment, the Englishmen at the railway station or in the market—straight and tall in the manner of masters—gloating, it seemed to me, at the sight of the common men, the Indians, whose heads were bent as they walked. Whenever I saw this, it added another insult to my feeling of injury.

When I was seven years old, my mother enrolled me in Gurukul Kangri, hoping I would turn into a brilliant and celibate proponent of the Aryan religion, modeled after Swami Dayanand. Far away from my family, and I only a child, subject to the harsh routines imposed by the Arya Samaj teachers, I still have many memories—some of pleasure, some of pain. Walking barefoot or in wooden sandals, sleeping on hard wood planks, bathing in cold water before sunrise in the dead

of winter. And never seeing a shop or the face of a woman.¹

My clearest memory of gurukul was its atmosphere of hostility to British and foreign rule. Even at that age—Heaven knows what inspired it—we firmly believed we would be able to drive the British out of our country. . . . Not only that, we also assumed that Indians would go to England to govern there. The basis for our naive assumptions was what we learned in gurukul, the substance of which was that the Vedas were the source of the world's entire knowledge. No race of any country could be greater than the chanters of the Vedas, the Aryans of India. There was a time in the past when the whole world was under Aryan rule. Laxity crept into the Vedic religion causing the downfall of the Aryans. That is why first the Muslims and now the British ruled our country. But the Aryan people would soon arise and again rule the world.

¹Valentine Chirol, writing of his concern that the Arya Samaj was subversive of British rule, in his book *Indian Unrest*, (pp. 144-5), says:

What makes the question of the real tendencies of the Arya Samaj one of very grave importance for the future is that it has embarked upon an educational experiment of a peculiar character which may have an immense effect upon the rising generation. One of its best features is the attention it has devoted to education, and to that of girls as well as boys. But it was not until 1898 that the governing body of the Samaj in the Punjab decided to carry into execution a scheme for restoring the Vedic system of education which Dayanand conceived but had never been able to carry out. Under this system the child is committed at an early age to the exclusive care of a spiritual teacher or *guru*, who stands to him *in loco parentis* : . . . In the gurukuls or seminaries founded by the Arya Samaj, pupils or *chelas* are admitted between the ages of six and ten. From that moment they are practically cut off from the outer world during the whole course of their studies, which cover a period of sixteen years altogether—i.e., ten years in the lower school and six years in the upper, to which they pass up as *Brahmacharis*. During the whole of that period no student is allowed to visit his family, except in cases of grave emergency, and his parents can only see him with the permission of the head of the gurukul. . . . There are at present three gurukuls in the Punjab, but the most important one, with over 520 students, is at Kangri, in the United Provinces, five miles from the sacred city of Hardwar, where the Ganges flows out of a gorge into the great plain. . . . Life in the gurukuls is simple and even austere, the discipline rigorous, the diet of the plainest, and a great deal of time is given to physical training.

In my view the objective of the revival of the Vedas was political as well as spiritual. What could we understand of spirituality at that age? We could certainly understand fighting our enemy the British, but how can spiritual feelings be dissociated from the circumstances of our lives?

I can remember clearly even now the absurd fantasies of my immature mind because I had no exposure to reality. Every morning and evening we had to sit in a circle or in a row to say our prayers. We sat cross-legged, eyes closed, reciting mantras aloud. We did not know the meaning of those mantras which we spoke in Vedic Sanskrit, but we earned merit by chanting them like parrots.

I remember how little boys fell asleep while they were chanting their mantras and how they were awakened with a slap on the face by the Superintendent and, weeping, had to begin their recitation all over again. While we were parroting our prayers, my child-mind wandered off into fantasy. Probably because of the constant talk against the British, I would see with my eyes closed the reign of the Aryans in England. In those days I imagined England to be a place which looked very much like the gurukul. In my daydreams the English had to wear kurta and dhoti. English brahmacharis went about in sandals and topknots and wore the sacred thread and I ruled over them as their Principal. What was especially noteworthy about this was that I saw the English in kurta and dhoti and myself in trousers and a jacket. The only way to explain this is in terms of the respect we felt for the attire of the reigning and all-powerful British, and thus the desire to adopt it, and further in retaliation for our own servitude, to see them in a subject position.

I can give an example of the way we spoke out against foreign rule in my young days. This was during the first World War. It wasn't possible to study at night during the rainy season and in the summer. During these seasons we generally took long walks after dinner. One evening while we were walking, I said to a classmate of mine that I hoped the Germans would defeat the British. Suddenly I felt a hand on my back. Turning around, I saw Acharya Ramdev. After Mahatma Munshi Ram became a sannyasi, Acharya Ramdev was the Principal of the gurukul in his stead. He was one of the promi-

nent leaders of the Gurukul Party in the Arya Samaj. One of the books he wrote, *The History of Aryan Civilization*, was a textbook in the gurukul. It was difficult to understand that book when I was in Fifth Class, but one thing we certainly understood was that our Aryan ancestors were world-conquerors; they had airplanes and all other scientific paraphernalia. A society which was in possession of the authority of the Vedas inevitably conquered the world.

I was startled when Acharya put his hand on my back, but was reassured when he asked, "Why do you want Germany to win?"

"If the British were defeated, our country would be free."

"Our country would not necessarily be free if the British were defeated. Germany would rule here. And German rule is harsh and strict," Acharya explained.

"If the Germans ruled us harshly, our country would prepare itself to fight them. If they repressed us, there would be a revolution," I said, speaking with the knowledge I had at the time.

"No, it isn't inevitable that repression results in revolution. Look at how great the repression and injustice were under Nadir Shah and Aurangzeb. And there was no revolution. You shouldn't talk about things you don't understand. You have to study and learn in order to understand," Acharya said but he did not rebuke me for my anti-British sentiments. In those days, if a student in any school or government university in Lahore spoke that way, the consequences would have been very grave.

I was constantly ill in gurukul. When I entered Seventh Class, I became seriously ill with dysentery. Every possible remedy was tried. I was even sent to Dehra Dun in the hope that a change of climate would cure me, but it didn't help.

I paid nothing in gurukul. All the students were treated the same, but nonetheless even there money earned respect. When my schoolmates found out that I paid no board or tuition they began to taunt me. That experience, even at that age, was unbearable. Because I was very weak on account of my constant illness, in the winter I was given extra clothes for warmth and more nutritious food than the others, in the form of butter, cream and other foods. When my classmates taunted me saying, "O look at him. He doesn't pay a paisa and he gets more

butter and cream than anyone else," I found it impossible to eat the extra food. I refused it, saying: "I really don't like butter and cream." Then I had to hear, "If he had ever eaten that kind of food at home, he would like it."

My family was poor indeed since all my mother, brother and I had to live on were the wages my mother earned in the teaching profession. In those days she earned twenty to thirty rupees a month. I suppose that if we had had an independent source of income, my lower-middle-class feelings of self-respect would not have been so easily wounded, but after experiencing the feeling of equality of rights and status in gurukul, that I should arouse contempt on account of my poverty, made a profound impression on my mind. I couldn't consider myself responsible for the "crime" of my poverty. Nor could I remedy it. I saw boys treated with respect because they came from wealthy families. And I would think, if only I had a wealthy family, how respected I would be, how happy I would be! The effect of this was that I could never be indifferent to the humiliation of poverty.

My intractable illness in gurukul proved to be a boon to my future life. I had to leave gurukul in Seventh Class because of my illness and was enrolled in the DAV School in Lahore. Had I remained in gurukul and completed the fourteen-year course of study, I would have become a *Snatak*. I do not mean to imply that the gurukul's standard of education was low. On the contrary, gurukul graduates (*Snataks*) learned far more than university graduates as far as studies were concerned, but after fourteen years of "living in the woods", they were alienated from the real world. There was a peculiar harshness in their conduct. They did not seem to be part of this society or culture, but rather like ancient manuscripts in a modern bookshop. I've seen *Snataks* adopt completely European dress and manner, but after exchanging two words with them, the "*snatakness*" comes through. I am happy that I left the gurukul, but I feel only respect for the gurukul authorities. They spared no effort in trying to cure me of my illness and to keep me there, and especially so since I was a non-paying student. It may have been that they were so kind to me because I was considered very bright and promising.

I started talking about the studies in gurukul in the context

of my leaning toward revolutionary sentiments; therefore I want to say a few more words in that connection.

The gurukuls did not use the same textbooks as the government universities and schools. The gurukul university usually prepared its own textbooks for its use. That affected history more than other subjects. The history texts were written with an eye on British government wrath, but it was different in oral presentation and discussion. For example, nobody there believed the "Black Hole of Calcutta" incident, but rather that the British living in India fabricated the entire story as an excuse to have the government send in the army. We were courageously told the true stories about the deceit practiced on Seth Uttam Chand of Bengal, the execution of Nand Kumar, the injustice suffered by Chetram and the outrages perpetrated by Warren Hastings. The feeling that prevailed in gurukul was that what we learned was free of the influence of foreign rule and the English viewed the gurukul with concern and suspicion. From time to time it was rumoured that a spy had gained entry to the school in disguise and that one of the authorities had found him out, beaten him and thrown him out.

The gurukul authorities were very sensitive to the government's suspicion of them. . . they tried to convince the government of their loyalty by inviting government officials, governors, and even viceroys. Everything was beautified for their visits and the pupils lined up at attention on both sides of the road to greet them, but even this did not arouse in the students any respect for the British. Rather they looked upon it as a matter of compulsion and policy of the school administration.

I mentioned earlier that the Gurukul Kangri prepared and published its own texts. They did that for several reasons: first, they were not inclined to teach history by British writers, which portrayed history in a way that was hateful to Indians; second, they tried to teach geography, maths, science, etc. in Hindi; third, and of very great importance, was that they had to teach literature to brahmacharis deleting all reference to love and sexuality.

Tremendous importance was attached to celibacy in the gurukul system. From the standpoint of reviving Aryan culture the study of Sanskrit literature was unavoidable. Sanskrit literature was replete with love themes. Therefore it was neces-

sary to fashion special texts for the brahmacharis. Special editions of the *Hitopadesha* and *Panchatantra*, etc., were prepared, deleting all references to the character and sexual conduct of women. Descriptions of love scenes from Sanskrit poetry and drama were also removed to make them usable by the brahmacharis.

With the object of protecting celibacy, the course of instruction and the life of the students were moulded in such a way that insofar as possible they would remain unacquainted with women and love. It was as unusual to see a woman in the hostel or the campus grounds as it is to see a forest deer in Connaught Circus in New Delhi or the Fort area in Bombay, or a herd of nilgai running about. The brahmacharis were not allowed to see a woman even once a year. On the annual festival day of the gurukul, women were allowed to inspect the places where the brahmacharis lived. And on that occasion, the brahmacharis were given their lunch and sent out into the forest. If a woman happened to cross their path, the brahmacharis hid themselves. Plays were produced for cultural development but they had no female characters. A society and a play were created where women did not exist.

In spite of the constant vigilance maintained to keep the students ignorant of women, love and sex to protect their celibacy, the students' curiosity led them to gain their knowledge in a perverted form. The boys in the gurukul from eight to thirteen years old developed curiosity as to how they were born. Some among them enlightened the others on the subject. The reality was a mental shock. One would ask another how could Swami Dayanand and the Lord Ram Chandrajī have been born through such a disgusting and sinful act?

Since their child-minds considered relations between men and women to be sinful, how could they believe that the Lord would grant life to great men created in this sinful way? In this crisis of faith, their child-minds fantasized that in order to consider the great men to be pure, they had to be created without intercourse. The taboo simply heightened their curiosity concerning sex. Among them there was some evidence of perverted sexual practices. It is also true that there were probably fewer examples in the gurukul of this sort of thing than in other schools. Two reasons might account for it. One was that it was

considered an awful crime and the punishment was exceedingly severe. The second was that, because of the severity of the punishment, the boys lacked courage to commit it. For society and the individual, the importance of restraint and celibacy to mental and physical health cannot be denied, but the methods used in the gurukul were not appropriate psychologically or physically. They were simply repressive. And it may be that the result was to intensify these tendencies. How these matters are treated in the gurukul today, I cannot say.

I was fourteen years old when I left the gurukul. I had an accident on leaving. Now the gurukul is on this side of the Ganges in Hardwar, but in those days one had to take the road to Kankhal for three miles on the other side. The flow of the Ganges contracted in the winter and shrank into three separate streams, and over these streams a bridge of boats was fashioned. In the summer months, as the snows on the mountain were melting, the streams enlarged and converged into one, and the bridge of boats was dismantled.

In the summer and rainy months, when the Ganges was widening and the currents of water were moving swiftly, *tamers* were the only means of transportation between the gurukul and Hardwar. The *tamer* is a peculiar kind of boat. Empty petroleum barrels were sealed with strips of wood or bamboo, then tied together with rope and bamboo twigs into a raft the size of a large cot. Both the passengers and their luggage were loaded onto this raft of cannisters. The boatmen rowed the *tamers* with oars from one bank of the river to the other. Sometimes, when the wind and currents were strong and the waves were high, the *tamer* overturned the way *puris* pop over when they're fried in hot ghee. To prevent the *tamers* from overturning, three or four were tied together. At the time I was leaving the gurukul, the rain was beating down hard and the Ganges was rising to flood stage.

My mother came from Lahore to take me home. A *tamer* was provided for the journey, and because I was ill a canvas chair was placed on it to protect me from the rain. Another person was with us—someone who [had to leave the gurukul for family reasons. We were all on the river crossing over to Hardwar when, just as we reached the middle of the stream, the *tamer* overturned.

As I rose to the surface, I saw my mother going under. Almost every student in gurukul learned how to swim. I swam a few strokes and grabbed my mother's arms. Just then the *tamer* overturned again and touched my body and I seized it with my other hand. Mother's eyeglasses floated away in the water. For her it was just like being blindfolded. It was not a usual event for her to fall into a river and she started to call out frantically, "Save the boy! Save the boy!"

The other person travelling with us caught my mother's other arm with one hand and held on to the *tamer* with the other. The boatman also helped to steady the *tamer*.

It wasn't possible to jump onto the *tamer* or to lift someone onto it. We were holding onto it, floating, while the boatman was propelling it toward the riverbank. When we saw what he was doing, we tried to help him push it as we were swimming against the powerful current. We pushed it while we were swimming and finally reached the shore about four miles below Kankhal. Our luggage was gone, but our lives were saved.

I was very weak on account of my illness and, therefore, when I came out of the water I found it difficult to stand. There was no help for it but to walk three miles to Mayapur. Mother was fearful of the possible outcome of the soaking I endured and the overexertion. But in Lahore, I soon recovered with just ordinary treatment and the change of climate. My sensitive stomach, though, has been with me all my life.

After seven years of "living in the woods", I did not know how to function in society and I was fearful of it. I felt out of place and subdued in my conduct and conversation. And added to other difficulties, I found that I did not have the same freedom to talk against the government in Lahore that I had in gurukul. I must have done some talking because Mother forbade me ever to talk like that again.

The political imprisonment of Bhai Paramanand, Bal Mukund, Balraj and others, created an atmosphere of terror. I had read books like *Ananda Math* and *Andaman Ki Goonj* when I was in the gurukul and that was why I felt especially suffocated in the Lahore atmosphere. In addition, because I had been taught in the gurukul, I knew no Urdu whatever and very little English. I was having difficulty in school too. The medium of instruction in the DAV school was Hindi, but without Urdu

everything was a problem. No newspaper was published in Hindi at that time and none of the shop signs were in Hindi. I quickly acquired a working knowledge of Urdu. That brings us up to the end of 1918. In 1919, some days after the suspension of the movement protesting the Rowlatt Bill, we left Lahore for Ferozepur Cantonment. My mother was teaching in the primary grades of Arya Kanya Pathshala. We were living in the cantonment. I was admitted into the Government Middle School. The atmosphere of the cantonment was one of total silence, where social and political activity were concerned. People were frightened because the magistrate could expel them from the cantonment on 24-hour notice.

I started going to the Arya Samaj temple in the cantonment with a view to participating in community work. I knew many mantras by heart. I could also give lectures in the Arya Kumar Sabha; therefore it wasn't difficult for me to make a place for myself there. [I: 37-49]

Yashpal volunteered to teach untouchables to read and write. Every evening he walked two miles to the Arya Samaj school, taught the boys and walked the two miles home—without pay. A number of others volunteered to teach too, but in time they dropped out. The Arya Samaj administration decided that it would be impossible to run the school with volunteers, and to reward Yashpal for his service and to help him financially, appointed him head of the school and paid him a salary of eight rupees a month. He went to high school during the day and worked at night for about a year. This was the first money he earned.

These were exciting times politically in the Punjab. Mahatma Gandhi had promised the people of India that by 31 December 1921 they would have swaraj. Although no political action was permitted in Ferozepur Cantonment, in the city of Ferozepur three miles away, the Congress party was active. Gandhi launched a Civil Disobedience campaign urging students and teachers to leave the schools and universities to work for a better India. In the Punjab, which had been outraged by the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh and oppressed by the Rowlatt Acts, enthusiasm for the Civil Disobedience movement ran high. In 1921, Yashpal was seventeen years old and still in high school, but he too wanted to participate. Gandhi had urged the spinning of handloom cloth and the boycotting of mill cloth. Yashpal delivered speeches to the people urging them to wear khadi to bring the country closer to freedom. As he spoke

to larger and larger crowds, he was not content merely to repeat himself or to quote Gandhi. He began reading Indian history and economics to give his talks greater factual content.

I read a book called *Desh Darshan* which gave figures on India's trade with foreign countries. It also discussed the [East India] Company's intrigues and schemes to ruin Indian industry. I remembered the prices of grain and ghee in Mughal times. I compared them with 'prices now in order to arouse resentment against British rule. . . I kept trying to explain to the people, based on my economic and political knowledge, how our country had been exploited and that our situation could be improved only after we had freed ourselves from Britain. [I: 53]

Yashpal wanted to join the Congress movement as a volunteer before he finished high school. However, his mother did not permit him to leave school and insisted he take the matriculation exams. Others left their families, schools and jobs to participate in the Civil Disobedience movement. On account of the outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura, Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement.¹

This brake, applied to the rising momentum of enthusiasm, resulted in frustration and disquiet everywhere. Workers had left their homes and had come together drawn to the struggle—now that was taken away from them. With this development,

¹Mahatma Gandhi, leading the Congress Party, had launched a Noncooperation Movement in 1920 to protest the new constitution of 1919. He called on the people to boycott foreign cloth and to wear instead handmade Indian cloth. He urged students to leave the government colleges and the lawyers, the courts. He preached Hindu-Muslim unity.

The great significance of the movement was that for the first time Indian nationalism gained mass support. However, the momentum of nationalism which grew during all 1921 was stopped in its tracks when Gandhi called off the Civil Disobedience movement in February 1922 because of an incident in Chauri Chaura in U.P. where a mob burned and beat to death 22 Indian policemen. Gandhi believed in nonviolence above all else and took this incident as a sign that the people were not as yet able to conduct civil disobedience peacefully. When he called off the movement, his supporters were disillusioned and disappointed.

the Congress movement took the general form of advocating nonviolence and the wearing of khadi. The workers were ordered to go among the people and promote the Congress principles: wear khadi; put all your faith in Gandhi and the Congress; stand firm on Hindu-Muslim unity. Become true Hindus, true Muslims, true Sikhs. And when the people followed these commandments to the letter, then freedom would come automatically. [I: 62]

Yashpal still kept faith in the movement although many others left it. In fact, he urged his mother to come to work for the Congress and to leave her job as head of the Arya Samaj orphanage. He felt that the work of the Congress was more vital to the country than the Arya Samaj. That he was convinced and he convinced her was a measure of his commitment to the Congress movement.

Yashpal took his matriculation exams and then went directly to the villages to speak to the people of freedom in the spring of 1920. Going from village to village, he began to realize that the promise or even the fulfillment of independence was meaningless to the villagers as long as there was no programme in the Congress which addressed itself to their needs. When the villagers asked Yashpal how independence would benefit them, he could not answer because Congress had no programme to alleviate the ills of the peasantry. The reason for this was, according to Yashpal, Gandhi's innate conservatism and unwillingness to threaten vested landed interests.¹

Yashpal's tour of the villages disappointed him in another respect. He quoted statistics, explained economics, showed how the country had suffered under the British, but he felt that his message was not getting through to the people. The villagers were far more responsive to the other two Congress volunteers

¹Concerning the suspension of civil disobedience by Gandhi in February 1922, T. Walter Wallbank in *A Short History of India and Pakistan*, p. 159, says:

There has been much conjecture about the motive behind the cancellation of the Congress campaign against British authority. Was it because Gandhi, as a pacifist and believer in non-violence refused any longer to tolerate bloodshed? Undoubtedly this explanation has relevance, but there are some authorities who find the solution in the bourgeois character of the Congress. The middle-class leaders of the nationalist movement, including wealthy landowners and industrialists, were fearful of a genuine popular movement that might become an attack on all property, privilege and power—Indian as well as British.

who travelled with him. They were Pandit Tota Ram who spoke on the necessity for prayer, marital fidelity and the religious life, and Mohammed Din Marasi who preached the strength of unity with the following example:

"If the 320 million people of India all urinated together, the power of that stream would wash away all the Englishment in the country." The audience would applaud him wildly. [I: 68]

Yashpal realized that his own approach was too sophisticated for the villagers and he returned to Ferozepur from his several months tour of the villages thoroughly discouraged, although far more knowledgeable of village needs. On his return he learned that the matriculation examination results had been published. He had passed in the First Division and stood first in his school.

My mother felt very strongly that I should apply for admission to college since a two-year college scholarship had been established at the school for the student who stood first in the class. At just about that time, a college was started in Ferozepur called, I think, Ram Sukhdas College. To enhance its standing, it encouraged promising students. My mother was highly respected in Arya Samaj circles. . . They wanted the best for her and her sons. They advised her that, in addition to the scholarship from the school, the college would be able to offer a scholarship also. In that case, she would not have to bear any of the burden of her son's education. In fact, not to enter college would mean giving up income. An education would be absolutely free. After all, what good was it just to be a matriculate?

My mother launched on a kind of *satyagraha*. She did not want to see me ruin my life. Her greatest wish was to see me established. Others had told her too that noncooperation with respect to education was unwise. Most of those thousands of students, who had left school to join the noncooperation movement at the call of Congress, realized their mistake and were now returning to those institutions in order to salvage their future. It was explained to me that I would realize my mistake some day, but when I did, a scholarship would no longer be available to me. [I: 69]

At the suspension of the noncooperation (Civil Disobedience) movement, Congress went into a temporary decline. Yashpal's mother returned to her job at the Arya Samaj school because she felt she had done nothing useful in the Congress job. Yashpal felt there was nothing worthwhile he could do in the movement. Congress was in a kind of limbo—its work suspended, most of its leaders arrested and in jail, and many of its followers returning to the schools and law courts they had left. Yashpal refused to enter a government college under any circumstances, although he was more receptive to the idea of further education now. He told his mother that, if she wanted him to go on with his studies, he would attend National College in Lahore, which had been founded by Lala Lajpat Rai.

An education at National College was not useful for the purpose of entering a profession. Therefore my mother was not very enthusiastic about it. She wanted me to become a lawyer. Furthermore, it was not possible to get a scholarship or any financial assistance to study at National College. Mother had saved a little money from her thirty years of work. When she saw that I would not study anywhere else, she gave me permission to seek admission there, stipulating that she would pay as much of my expenses as she could, but I would have to manage the rest. Since I was willing to work hard, I felt confident that I would find a way. [I: 70]

3 National College

National College had been established for the purpose of training young men for work in the Congress movement. Government colleges, on the other hand, were geared to training students to pass examinations to qualify for government jobs and the professions. National College emphasized learning for the sake of knowledge rather than for the purpose of passing qualifying exams. Great emphasis was placed on the teaching of history, political thought and economics.

The professor who exerted the greatest influence on the students was Jaichandra Vidyalkar who taught Indian history and political science. He encouraged his students to read, inquire and think logically. He attracted a group of young men, including Yashpal and Bhagat Singh, who became the nucleus of revolutionary activity in the Punjab.

One of the topics the class discussed was the noncooperation movement of 1920-22. The class concluded it was a failure and discussed alternative ways to achieve freedom. This quest for alternatives led them to read Rousseau, Voltaire, the life of Mazzini and the life of Garibaldi, the history of the French Revolution, the Irish struggle for freedom—and with reference to India, Sachindranath Sanyal's *Bandi Jiwan* (Life in Jail) and the Rowlatt Committee Report. The Rowlatt Committee Report portrayed the Indian revolutionaries as criminals. However, the students at National College saw them in a different light.¹

¹The Rowlatt Committee Report was published as *The Sedition Committee Report* (Rowlatt Report), Calcutta: Government of India, 1918. The Committee was appointed "to investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India" and to examine the difficulties that have arisen in dealing with such conspiracies and to advise as to the legislation necessary to deal effectively with them. The Report details the revolutionary movements in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, U.P., Punjab, etc. The Report concludes that extraordinary legislation is required to deal with the movement because of shortage of policemen, intimidation of witnesses by terrorists, extraordinary length of trials, etc.

Yashpal says:

We came to the conclusion that in the circumstances they had taken the natural course, and also that there was a wide scope for these activities. We also learned something about the ways and means of revolution. [I:81]

During his college years, Yashpal was torn by a number of conflicting goals. He was drawn to revolutionary work which Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev, his schoolmates, had already chosen for themselves. He wanted his college degree, but knew that his mother could not finance four years of studies, and therefore he took extra courses to complete the work of two years in one. Most of all, he wanted to write, and in this he was encouraged and helped by his Hindi teacher, the author Uday Shankar Bhatt.

I wrote a story and showed it to Uday Shankarji Bhatt. It was published in the Bareilly monthly magazine, *Bhrama*. I don't remember another thing about that story, except that it acted on me like a shot in the arm. I started writing short pieces of blank verse and sent them to Kanpur to *Prabha* and also to *Pratap* which was a weekly. I probably did this because Bhattji sent his recommendation along with my early contributions. . . . In those days they [the magazines] encouraged new authors: By encouragement, I don't mean money, only publication. No one then dreamed of being paid for anything he sent in.

There was a small column in *Prabha* and *Pratap* headed, "Will Not be Printed". It listed those works which the editor would not publish because there wasn't space or because he considered them worthless or contrary to policy. Our college library subscribed to *Pratap* and *Prabha*. For weeks after I sent something in, as each new issue of *Pratap* came, with my heart pounding, I would look first in that column. If my poem was not listed there, I looked for it in the Table of Contents. Even if it wasn't included there either, at least I had the heart to wait until the next issue.

I had such a fierce, awful dread of my work being rejected that now almost twenty-five years later, I can still remember how it felt. . . . *Prabha* and *Pratap* never sent back my little poems. One reason may have been that they were in harmony with the spirit of those magazines in that, through satire and symbolism, they called for the liberation of the country, even at the price

of bloodshed. [I:83-4]

Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and another schoolmate Bhagvati Charan, comprised the group at National College which took the initiative in both secret and open political work. Jaichandra Vidyalankar was the original force which drew them together through his teaching and organizing. In 1925, Jaichandra, Bhagat Singh and Bhagvati Charan organized the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS)—an organization of young men in the Punjab with socialist leanings. This was the Punjab youth response to its dissatisfaction with the political conservatism of the Congress. The Sabha also took radical measures to break down inter-caste and religious barriers by introducing community dining where all ate together, irrespective of caste and religion, and where pork—taboo to Muslims—and beef—taboo to Hindus—were served.

Bhagat Singh was General Secretary of Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Bhagvati Charan was Propaganda Secretary. The Sabha was sponsored and headed by Jaichandra. However, in a short time, the young men wanted to take a more activist role and to recruit others from the NBS for secret revolutionary work. Jaichandra would not permit this. As a result, the young militants grew impatient with what they regarded as Jaichandra's timidity and inaction, and Bhagat Singh went to Kanpur to make contact with the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA). He arrived in Kanpur shortly after the Kakori dacoity was committed in August 1925.¹ He was advised to

¹“The Kakori dacoity was an exploit of the Hindustan Republican Association, a revolutionary group in U.P. led by Ram Prasad Bismil. The organization tried to solve its financial difficulties by robbing the government rather than individuals. On August 9 1925, about ten young men stopped a railway train going from Kakori towards Alamnagar. Alamnagar was the station before Lucknow on the Northern Railway. They held the guard at gunpoint and fired shots into the air to keep the passengers in their compartments. They broke open a large safe in the mail van and got away with a large sum of money. The Government searched intensively and arrested 44 persons, tried 29 of them by a Special Magistrate, who found 27 guilty. These 27 were tried by a Special Sessions Judge. Two more persons were arrested afterwards and tried. Four of the defendants were sentenced to death, four were transported for life, four (including two approvers) were acquitted. The rest received sentences ranging from five to fourteen years. Ram Prasad Bismil was hanged, his last words being ‘I wish the downfall of the British Empire.’ His colleague Roshanlal bravely went up to the gallows with a copy of the Gita in his hand and Bande Mataram on his lips. Ashfaqulla stepped to the gallows with a copy of the Quran tied round

leave Kanpur immediately since the police were searching intensively for anyone who might have been connected with the robbery.

During this time, Yashpal had a part-time job teaching Hindi in the newly-founded National School (not National College) while he studied for the B.A. exams. While working and studying, he was able to participate in only a limited way in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. After he received his degree, National School was closed and he no longer had a job. Dr Gopichand Bhargava, a member of Congress and of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, offered him a job as his secretary. Yashpal had some misgivings about working for Dr Bhargava because the latter had Hindu communalist leanings and was supported by the Hindu business community.

Dr Bhargava founded a Hindu social organization which had a social service function and in addition taught the use of weapons to Hindu youths. One aspect of the social service function was the protection of Hindus in communal riots. Yashpal was assigned to planning for defenses such as barricades, providing for alternative water supplies, fire control, etc., in the Hindu neighbourhoods which were vulnerable to attack from Muslims. In addition, he taught youngmen how to use the lathi and other weapons, and finally, he served as Dr Bhargava's private secretary in the Punjab Legislative Assembly work.

Yashpal found it difficult to reconcile his own political views, based on mutual trust between Muslims and Hindus, with those of the organization, predicated as it was on mutual antipathy. He consulted with Bhagat Singh and Bhagvati Charan, both of whom advised him to accept the position. As it turned out, he was able to help Bhagat Singh later because of it.

In 1927, during the Dusserah celebration in Lahore, a bomb was exploded near Roshani Gate, injuring a number of persons. The culprit was not found, but in the general roundup by the police, Bhagat Singh was arrested. He was held in jail for two weeks.

His lawyers demanded that he be brought before the court. However, the police could not make a case against him. He was released on bail without being brought into court, but the amount of bail was 50,000 rupees. Because of this heavy burden

his neck. Just before the noose was put around his neck he said, 'I tried to make India free and the attempt will not end with my life,' and died with a smiling face."

R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement*, Volume 3, pp. 494-5.

of bail, he had to stay confined to his house so that those who had put up his security would not get into trouble. . .

I gave notice in the Punjab Assembly of a question to be raised by Dr Gopichand Bhargava concerning the harassment of Bhagat Singh held under bail without cause. Dr Bhargava trusted me completely. He never questioned me. His practice as a physician and his Congress responsibilities kept him working as late as 1 a.m. As soon as the notice for the question was given in the Assembly, the bail requirement for Bhagat Singh was withdrawn. [I:123]

The years 1926 and 1927 were quiet ones for the revolutionaries of the Punjab. Jaichandra, who was regarded outside the Province as their leader, had a personal disagreement with Bhagvati Charan. According to Yashpal, he circulated rumors to the effect that Bhagvati was a member of the secret police, thus justifying his own inactivity. In addition, as a result of the Kakori dacoity and the mass arrests which followed, the Hindustan Republican Association was decimated, and the contacts that Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Bhagvati Charan had wanted to make with this organization were now impossible.¹ The

¹"Probably the most persistent terrorist organization outside Bengal is the Hindusthan Republic Association: subsequently styled the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association or Army. This was originally started, after the failure of Gandhiji's first mass civil disobedience campaign, by two Bengalis in the U.P. The rules of the Association stated that 'the object of the Association shall be to establish a federated republic of the United States of India by an organized and armed revolution.' . . . This Association has since its inception been very loosely knit; at times it has almost ceased to exist."

Great Britain: Parliament, "A Note by the Secretary of State for India (30 November, 1933) on Terrorism in India," Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform. Records, Volume II, 1934, 320.

Also see R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Volume 3, pp. 511-2:

The police terrorism that followed the train dacoity at Kakori—imprisonment of most of the leaders, general round-up, searches and arrests, harassment of suspects—had a very adverse effect on the revolutionaries. It is thus described by one of them. "Men who had professed sympathy with our cause would now avoid us. Boys who had talked tall began now to leave the gymnasium we had started in Kanpur for physical culture and as a recruiting centre. The whole province was in the grip of panic." The sense of frustration was heightened by the practical cessation of all political activities by the Congress.

people were further alienated because a number of persons charged in the Kakori case had turned informer and implicated those who had helped them.

Jaichandra conceived a plan to try to help Ram Prasad Bismil escape from jail. In this connection, Bhagat Singh made a number of trips to Kanpur. Although the plan was not carried out these trips resulted in contacts between the Punjab and U.P. revolutionaries.

4 The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army

The efforts of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Vijay and Shiv Varma resulted in a meeting in Delhi of representatives of the revolutionaries of the North Indian provinces. It was held on the eighth and ninth of September 1928 in Ferozepur District. This meeting was attended by Sukhdev and Bhagat Singh for the Punjab; Kundanlal for Rajputana; Shiv Varma, Brahmdukt Mishra, Vijay Kumar Sinha and Surendranath Pande for United Provinces; Fanindranath Ghosh and Manmohan Banerji for Bihar. Azad was unable to attend. Bhagat Singh and Shiv Varma had already met the others and Azad assured them that he would support any decision reached by the majority. Bengal did not send any representatives to the meeting. When Shiv Varma went to Calcutta earlier to establish contact with them, the revolutionary leaders of Bengal set formidable conditions as the price of their cooperation. The first condition was that the revolutionary movements of all the provinces were to come under the direct authority of the individual who was then heading their organization—*Anushilan*. The second stipulation was that for the present their only activity would be to collect men, money and arms. Nothing else should be done which might arouse the suspicion of the government.

The first condition alone was unacceptable to the newly emerging organization. The earliest revolutionary organizations were still run by *dada* (elder brother) types of men. Although Jaichandraj in the Punjab and J.N. Sanyal of the United Provinces did nothing they were nonetheless authoritarian because of the tradition of *dadaism*. We were fed-up with that tradition. A feeling for democracy had grown among us. We wanted to centralize the provincial organizations, not subject to the dictates of one individual, but rather based on collective leadership and responsibility.

The leader of Anushilan demanded exclusive authority, but the measure of his administrative capacity was such that, when Shiv Varma was in Calcutta, he showed him four or five secret hideaways, but could not provide one place for him to stay overnight. Based on Shiv's experience and counsel, we abandoned all hope of cooperation from Bengal.

At the Delhi meeting the groundwork was prepared for the first time for an inter-provincial base for armed revolutionary activity. Jaichandraji and J. N. Sanyal were excluded from this meeting because our companions wanted to abandon the old traditions and set the goals of the movement and the organization on a new path. At that time every revolutionary party in each of the different provinces had a different name: Bengal and Bihar had the Anushilan Samiti and the Yugantar Samiti; The Hindustan Republican Army and the Banaras Revolutionary Party were in the U.P. A branch of the United Provinces group was being set up in the Punjab through Jaichandraji. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev at the Delhi meeting proposed the formation of a Central Committee composed of representatives of all the provinces and naming the organization the Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sena (The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army).

Our wish to make the word "socialist" a part of our organizational name does not prove that we really understood Marxist scientific theory and revolutionary method very well, but there is no doubt that we were headed in that direction, limited only by our knowledge and understanding. The main thing was that we understood the basis of class exploitation and that rule by the peasants and workers had become our goal. But we hadn't reached the stage of organizing the strength of the peasant-worker class scientifically so that it could liberate them. We did not know this scientific truth of Marx, Lenin and Stalin: that no power or superman other than the people themselves could break their chains and give them the rights of freedom and self-determination. This could be achieved only by the people themselves through their collective strength. And the members of the body politic who were aware had the task of enlarging the focus of power among the people. We wanted to sacrifice ourselves for the mute, downtrodden masses, but we could not become part of them in the same way as Gandhiji, or

some others like him, who wanted to bring salvation to the people through personal spiritual power.

One could not say that all our companions who were disgusted by the inactivity of the old revolutionaries were all equally attracted to Marxism. Azad, Rajguru and some of the others considered the idleness of the Old Guard cowardly and were simply fed up. They felt sympathy for the oppressed masses, but for them it was only a feeling. Within the movement itself, however, the Punjab led all the others. One reason was that the Punjabi Communists had earlier brought and widely distributed underground socialist literature. The Kirti-Kisan Party (Workers and Peasants Party) was also influential and the latest socialist literature was available in the Dwarkanath Library of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev suggested adding the word "Socialist" and Shiv Varma and Vijay Kumar Sinha strongly approved it. They were influenced by the organized labour movement in Kanpur and by their contacts with the workers' associations in Kanpur. And the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy of 1924 must certainly have affected them. But around 1928 widespread strikes were the most important factor in demonstrating the power and rising consciousness of the working class. The HSRA comrades were becoming aware of the revolutionary strength of the working class.

There is a difference between a revolutionary and a terrorist. The British Government deliberately ignored the difference. It may be that the Congress people did not understand the difference at all. The feelings and policies of the Indian revolutionaries were not spiritless and narrow, but rising, flourishing and changing every day. Bhagat Singh made it quite clear in his statement before the Court: "*To end the exploitation of man by man.*" We expressed our goal in the clearest terms in the HSRA declaration under the signature of Commander-in-Chief Yashpal: to establish a democracy of peasants and workers. I admitted earlier that we did not yet know the scientific method of class struggle. The extent of our understanding in 1928, how close or how far we were from the people—all this is clear by our conduct at that time.

The revolutionaries' representatives who met at the Ferozeshah ruins in Delhi established an inter-provincial association

and made a number of specific decisions. Money was an unavoidable necessity on the march to armed revolution. However, a secret organization cannot raise money through subscriptions. Therefore it would be necessary to commit dacoity, but as far as possible the targets would be government banks, treasuries and post offices. If the rich men of the villages were robbed, the organization would earn the hatred of the people, and thereby be harmed.

Currently a good part of the revolutionaries' strength was being dissipated in executing police informers or minor police officials. At the Delhi meeting it was decided to take a hand in such matters only when they were of overriding political importance. With this in mind, the first target chosen was the Simon Commission. The British Government had scorned the Indian people's demand for self-determination and sent the Simon Commission to India to burden the people with new legislation. The Indian people felt a fierce and rising surge of dissatisfaction toward the Simon Commission. The Commission's arrival in Bombay set off widespread workers' strikes, and the organization felt it necessary to demonstrate their solidarity with the workers.

It was established in the clearest terms at the Delhi meeting that the leadership of the organization would not be the prerogative of one individual. All arms and money the organization acquired would reside in the hands of the Central Committee. The seven-man Central Committee would deliberate on every matter before any action would be taken.

At this meeting, Bhagat Singh and Vijay Kumar Sinha were given the responsibility for maintaining inter-provincial contact. Representatives from the provinces to the organization were Sukhdev for Punjab, Shiv Varma for United Provinces, Kundanlal for Rajputana and Fanindranath for Bihar. They had so little money that what there was would be held entirely by the Central Committee. There was really hardly any money at all. They had very few arms as well and decided that arms would be sent to the provinces as needed and returned to the Central Committee.

Chandrashekhar Azad was the only man in the earlier organizations who could relinquish the privileges of seniority and take new directions with new people. Other than Azad,

none of the new people knew how to use arms. Therefore he was put in charge of the army and the arms and designated Commander-in-Chief of the HSRA.

Chandrashekhar Azad

Even when Azad was in the Kakori group, he was considered a brave and dependable young man, although he was not a very important member of that group. Azad occupied the most important place in HSRA but that doesn't mean he was the sole leader of the HSRA. There was no place in HSRA for exclusive leadership. Azad's ideological position has been subject to an ongoing controversy. Manmath Gupt called him a Communist. Sukhdevraj said that ideology had no meaning for Azad. I knew Azad as well as I knew the clothes on my back. We went through thick and thin together. Azad's ideological stance kept pace with the feelings and policies of the HSRA. He was not the party's leader where policy out ideology were concerned, but he was neither uninformed nor unconcerned.

People are very curious as to whether Azad was highly educated or illiterate. Azad did not attend college, but it is not credible that everyone who has not graduated from a university is either a fool or ignorant. In this regard, what would one then say of Akbar, Ranjit Singh and Shivaji? They, like the Prophet Mohammed, were spared the sin of the knowledge of the letters. Would you consider them fools or ignorant? Azad was that kind of man. When the group set up camp in different places and our comrades had the benefit of living together, Azad would get books on current problems and ideology which he heard praised. He would have them read out loud and translated and would try to take part in the discussion about them.

At that time money problems were so great that, when the provincial representatives came to Delhi for a meeting, they could barely raise the railway fare home. Once at a Central Committee meeting when they needed eight or ten rupees, Vijay Kumar sold Fanindranath Ghosh's return ticket to Bihar. Therefore, solving the money problem had to take precedence. Fanindranath Ghosh (who later turned informer in the First

Lahore Conspiracy Case) suggested that they try a robbery in Betia. Bhagat Singh and Azad went to Betia for several days looking over the Marwaris' shops, but they could not come up with a plan that was certain of success, and they returned disheartened.

A number of plans were proposed to the group. The Simon Commission had already arrived in India. Bhagat Singh's motion to bomb the Commission to demonstrate the dissatisfaction of the Indian people was carried, but how could it be carried out without money? In the midst of all this, Kailashpati, with the Party's consent, took eighteen hundred rupees from the post office in Gorakhpur where he was employed at that time. He grabbed the money and ran. With this modest sum, the work was launched.

The Naujawan Bharat Sabha was directed to hold as impressive a demonstration as possible together with all other political parties when the Simon Commission arrived in Lahore. The Congress's only complaint against the Simon Commission was that despite its hundreds of acts of sycophancy, no Congress representative was chosen for the Commission. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha took the stand that "The British Government does not have the right to decide our destiny. Who are they to send a Commission?" The NBS saw the example of the huge demonstration and strike of the workers in Bombay who shouted, "Go back Simon!" The Sabha was leading the procession to boycott the Simon Commission in Lahore. A total *hartal* was in effect. Black flags and bared heads were seen everywhere. When they were faced with so huge a demonstration, the Congress leaders had to take a lead in the procession.

To protect the elderly "Lion of the Punjab", Lala Lajpat Rai, from the shoving of the crowd, the young men of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha accompanied him to the station. They held an umbrella over his head to protect him from the sun. The men of the Sabha were at the head of the crowd. Despite police threats they refused to clear the way for the Simon Commission. They were determined that the Simon Commission would be greeted with black flags and shouts of "Go back Simon" in their ears. The men of the Sabha tried as hard as they could to prevent the people from being pushed back. This was a good opportunity to rouse intense hatred of the British

government in the hearts of the people. The crowd behind Lala Lajpat Rai was so huge that he couldn't move back. The police were beating down with their lathis right in front of him. The young men surrounded Lalaji completely to protect him from injury. In spite of the police beating on them they did not break ranks. Bhagvati Charan, Sukhdev and I held fast on our side. Dhanvantri and Asan Ali were on the other. Police Superintendent Scott was standing nearby. Seeing that the group protecting Lala could not be broken up, he ordered an attack on us. Deputy Superintendent Saunders himself led the attack. He slammed his lathis down onto the opened umbrella over Lalaji, breaking it into pieces and injuring Lalaji's shoulder.

We took a beating in Papar Mandi that day also. When Lalaji ordered a halt to the demonstration, the crowd started moving on towards the bazaars, waving black flags and shouting, "Go back Simon!" Whenever they saw an open shop belonging to a super loyalist of the Raj, they would force it to close by demonstrating before it. Bhagvati Charan and I were tagging behind the crowd on the way to Papar Mandi. At its head was the nationalist Muslim leader Maulana Zafar Ali. There was only one shop open in that bazaar—the one belonging to Rai Bahadur Lachmandass. The gate to the bungalow of his commission agency was open and the crowd insisted that the gate be shut.

The Rai Bahadur was a leader of the Hindu Sabha and passionately loyal to the British Raj. Now he is loyal to the Congress government. Whenever there is a wedding in his household, Congress ministers are invited and garlanded with flowers. The Congress ministers have a great deal of respect for him. He ran an organization which was renowned throughout Lahore. This organization's reputation and influence was not insignificant. They had a gymnasium within the four walls of the building itself where men were taught to wrestle and to use a lathi.

The Rai Bahadur refused to yield or submit to the crowd's insistence on closing the shop. . . . Enraged, they started pressing through the gate. As they were caught up in the gate's narrow entrance, about 15 to 20 armed men poured out from inside the house, set upon them and proceeded to beat them

with lathis and other weapons. The majority of the crowd were simply spectators and when they saw people being beaten, they fled.

Bhagvati and I had been walking together somewhat behind the others. We felt ashamed when we saw some flee like that and we ran ahead trying to rouse their courage, shouting to them not to run away. Rai Bahadur's men then came at us with lathis and one hit me on the head with full force. What a blessing it was that I was wearing a turban over my cap. Nonetheless I fell down stunned. It was probably about half a minute before I regained my senses. My cap and turban were on the other side of the bazaar. I looked for Bhagvati Bhai. He was standing a few steps away, holding onto a shop's pillar for support. Blood was flowing from his forehead. I examined his wound. It did not appear serious, but his eyeglasses had fallen somewhere, and without them he couldn't find anything. I searched all over but couldn't find them. Now there wasn't a single member of the crowd left in the middle of the bazaar.

Congress sponsored a public meeting that evening on the maidan outside of Mori Gate protesting the Simon Commission. Lala Lajpat Rai addressed it. Today's readers are probably amazed to know that although there had been a lathi attack on the demonstrators in the morning, that very evening those same demonstrators were permitted to hold a public meeting. But that was under the alien rule that we risked our lives to be rid of. Now we live under the rule of Rama (Ram Raj). Today, if you want to produce an ordinary play, you must first ask the government's permission, and before you receive permission you must show the play to the police. So be it. . . .

Sukhdev and I were standing at the back of the enormous crowd in the meeting at Mori Gate. Deputy Superintendent Neal was just a few steps away from us. With brilliant eloquence, Lalaji referred scornfully to the incident of the morning, saying, "A government which brutally attacks unarmed people cannot be considered civilized and cannot survive. I predict that the police of that government who struck me today will one day bring it down into ruins." And then he expressed the same idea in English, saying, "I declare that the blows struck at me will be the last nails in the coffin of British rule in India." When Neal heard Lalaji's prophecy, he burst out laugh-

ing. His laughter was like a spike driven through my heart. I told Sukhdev, "This is intolerable."

Sukhdev smiled and said, "Lalaji threatens, but so what? He called off the protest demonstration. Now if he gets angrier, he'll show his wrath by shutting up completely."

The matter did not end there. We decided among ourselves that this incident would not be allowed to pass.

Lalaji passed away on 17 November 1928. His death aroused passionate reverence for him and a tide of opposition to foreign rule. Between 100,000 and 150,000 people walked in his funeral procession. Dr Gopichand Bhargava was grieving bitterly. Virtually all the Hindus and Muslims in Lahore were in mourning. All the volunteer organizations in Lahore took part in the funeral arrangements but the responsibility fell upon us of the Seva Samiti most heavily. Lala's funeral procession started from his house at ten in the morning but it was five in the evening before it reached the Ravi river only four miles away. Lalaji was covered with such a heavy burden of flowers that the more than twenty men carrying his body had to be relieved at every ten steps. Night came, and with it darkness, but it would still be many hours before the enormous pyre burned itself out. The crowd had all gone. Dr Bhargava, weeping, told me that he did not want the pyre to be left unattended. He was concerned that someone might dishonour it in some way. I assured him I would stay there all night. Bhagvati Bhai asked me how I planned to spend the night in the bitter cold on wet sand. "But I've already promised," I said helplessly. "All right," he said, and left. I sat down all alone not far from the pyre. The moonlight shone weakly and a sharp cold breeze started blowing from the Ravi. I was enveloped by the heat of the funeral pyre and started feeling very sleepy.

About an hour later, I heard someone shouting my name. I recognized the voice—it was Bhagvati Bhai. He had been calling to me from the other side of the sand bank far away. I went over to him and saw that he had come by tonga and had brought a cot and bedding and something to eat. We made our bed near the pyre and went to sleep. We were wakened by the bright rays of the sun in the morning. We had slept so soundly, we hadn't even turned over. Anyway when you shared a bed with Bhagvati, there wasn't room to turn over. In the

underground days, we often had to sleep sharing one blanket for weeks on end—and then we didn't even have a cot.

Even with my tasks in the Seva Samiti of the political Hindu Sangathan in addition to Dr Bhargava's work, it was a simple matter to carry on my work in the revolutionary movement by the "back door". Sukhdev had been appointed leader of the revolutionary programme in the Punjab. We no longer had any contact with Jaichandraj. No one was suspicious of Bhagvati Bhai any more. Bhagvati, Dhanvantri and Ahsan Ali bore the Naujawan Bharat Sabha responsibilities on their shoulders. At about this time, people were being arrested in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy. Bhagvati's house was searched repeatedly because of his old connections with the Communists. He stayed away from home most of the time for fear he might be arrested too.

The pace of revolutionary activity accelerated with an established relationship among Punjab, Bihar, United Provinces and Rajputana. New people came to Lahore. They dressed as Punjabis, but their conduct and accent made it clear that they were not Punjabis. Some of them were my guests. Kailashpati and Mahabir Singh were among the first. Mahabir Singh later died in prison in the Andaman Islands. Kailashpati was later arrested in the Delhi Conspiracy Case and turned informer. He is a very good example of the influence of circumstances. I observed his changing mental states at close quarters. I understood very well the purpose of my guests' visits. They knew that I knew the real reasons, but none of us said a word about the party's programme. This was necessary for the security of a secret movement.

Several comrades came from the United Provinces. We had to find them separate, safe places to stay. Sukhdev gave me one strange task which I did not understand the reason for at the time. He told me to find several places where thousand rupee notes could be changed easily. I told him I was unable to do that because I did not have entree either to the market or a business. I was astonished that a situation had arisen where thousand rupee notes had to be changed. We were in bad financial straits in those days. Sukhdev was always borrowing a couple of rupees from me. Bhagvati Bhai was our best source of support. He was underground on account of the Meerut

Case, but Bhabhi was even more generous. Whatever Sukhdev asked for, she gave without saying a word. The mystery was cleared up for me a few days later. Our money problems were so acute that plans were being made to rob the Punjab National Bank in Lahore. After the robbery, we would have to address ourselves to the problem of changing large denomination notes. Sukhdev was concerned about that.

One day early in December, Sukhdev told me to look over the Punjab National Bank very carefully with the robbery in mind—how in my view it should be planned and what the pitfalls might be. I went to the bank with a ten-rupee note to be changed. On returning I reported that it would not be easy to rob the bank because the clerks sat very close to where the money was kept. Therefore a large number of armed men would be required to commit the robbery. I estimated that about thirty armed men would be needed in addition to a transport for all of them after the robbery. How could we arrange for so many autos? Sukhdev argued that we could reserve taxis and get rid of the drivers. I countered that it was a matter of chance whether one could get a taxi just at the right time. And if not, then what? Sukhdev did not reply.

I found out later that Sukhdev had also asked Bhagvati Bhai's opinion on the bank robbery. Neither of us knew about this. Sukhdev's practice was to pick everyone's brains, while keeping the purpose a great mystery. Bhagvati Bhai opposed the project as a matter of policy. Lahore people, especially those of the Arya Samaj world, considered the Punjab National Bank a national institution. Bhagvati Bhai told him, "If you have to rob, rob some other bank."

Azad, Kailashpati, Bhagat Singh, Mahabir Singh, Kundanlal and Rajguru came to Lahore for this robbery. Bhagat Singh had cut his hair short and was wearing a hat. Bhagat Singh and Mahabir Singh dressed up as men of substance and went to the railway station to hire a taxi. The plan was for Sukhdev to disarm the sentry guarding the bank gate and hold a gun on him. Bhagat Singh and Mahabir were to stand guard over the other people in the bank. Hansraj and Kailashpati were to cover the cashiers while Jaigopal and Kishorilal filled the bags with currency. They were not to take any coins. Azad was to oversee the entire operation, and on the way back with the booty, to

push the driver aside and drive the taxi himself. After Azad went underground in 1926, he learned how to drive and repair cars when he was in Jhansi and Bombay.

By the time we reached the bank, we were drenched in sweat, and still Bhagat Singh and Mahabir Singh hadn't arrived by taxi. It was getting close to the bank's closing time. Finally Mahabir Singh arrived by tonga and told Azad that they couldn't find a taxi. At Azad's signal, everyone left the bank. This failure was not a big thing. Such failures occur from time to time when the means are not available.

The very stumbling block mentioned earlier to Sukhdev had been encountered. Bhagat Singh and Mahabir could not find a single taxi at the station. Lahore had very few taxis in those days. The main reason was that the time they went to the station to hire the taxi did not coincide with any train arrival time. The robbery was set for 3 p.m. Banks did not stop transacting business until 3 or 3:30 in those days unlike today when they close at 1:30 or 2. Therefore the banks held the largest amount of money around 3 p.m. Even though we could not arrange for a taxi that day, we knew we could another day. As a precautionary measure we could hire the taxi several hours earlier and simply hold on to it pretending to be tourists who wanted to go to Shalimar or to Jahangir's Tomb. But in fact, after we saw the bank from inside, Azad decided it would not be wise to try it.

Azad was renowned for his feats of military daring. In his personal capacity he certainly was very daring, but when he was responsible for leading a project, he became very methodical and went over each step with the utmost caution. He took every factor into consideration in assessing a situation. At such times, circumspection prevailed over impulse. In such matters, our comrades had confidence in me too, but not to the degree they had in Azad.

The day we tried to arrange Bhagat Singh's escape by attacking the Borstal Jail gate, I went almost mad with anger and kept insisting again and again that I wanted to jump inside, but Azad gritted his teeth and finally said, "Stop!" After about ten minutes I cooled down sufficiently to realize my mistake. If my recklessness had prevailed, five or six of us certainly would have been killed, including Bhagat Singh and Dutt. It was this

quality in Azad which led to his being chosen Commander-in-Chief in spite of the fact that he couldn't speak English.

The Saunders Murder

Azad felt that since so many preparations had been made in Lahore, they ought not to leave without accomplishing anything. Lala Lajpat Rai had been dead less than a month. Bhagat Singh proposed that they avenge the country's humiliation inflicted by the attack on Lalaji. In the first week in December in a house in Lahore's Majang, the Central Committee made a decision with a majority of the Central Committee members present. Shiv Varma and Fanindra were far away at the time and a great deal of time would have been lost in sending for them.

When Jaigopal testified as an informer in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case he gave the incorrect impression that the HSRA had first decided to kill Scott, but killed Saunders by mistake. That was not so. In connection with the protest demonstration against the Simon Commission, I have already mentioned that Scott ordered the lathi attack on Lalaji, but that it was Saunders who actually struck him. The HSRA was not partial to either of them. Both deserved killing equally, and there was no reason to mistake one for the other. Scott rode in a blue motor car and Saunders on a red motorcycle. Scott did not come to the office at regular times. Therefore it was proposed to kill him in his bungalow and to kill Saunders in the police station facing the DAV College.

For several days we observed the routes Saunders and Scott took. Sometimes Saunders rode right through the middle of Gol Bagh and at other times he took the Town Hall Road skirting Gol Bagh. He always parked his motorcycle in front of the office in the same spot. Scott had been out of Lahore for several days. There was therefore no possibility of making a mistake.

On 17 December 1928, in the afternoon, Jaigopal was first sent to the police station to see if Saunders was there or not. Jaigopal had been keeping Saunders under surveillance for several days, but he thought Saunders was Scott. He probably never saw Scott at all. Rajguru saw the place also. Since he did not know how to ride a cycle, he started walking leisurely

but in plenty of time to arrive at the police station. Azad and Bhagat Singh followed on their bicycles. They had come there two days earlier to decide who was to stand where, what to do if they encountered opposition, and by what route to flee if they were pursued.

Rajguru and Bhagat Singh were to shoot Saunders the moment he emerged on his motorcycle from the gate of the police station. Jaigopal was posted nearby, pretending to see what was wrong with his bicycle. The purpose of the bicycle at that spot was that if Rajguru and Bhagat Singh missed their target on their first attempt, Bhagat Singh would pursue Saunders on the cycle so that he could shoot at him again.

Azad posted himself inside the DAV compound facing the police station on the path that Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were to take after the shooting. The rationale for this was that if the police pursued the men, Azad would hold them at bay, giving Bhagat Singh and Rajguru the chance to get away. Azad had a Mauser pistol with a butt end which fitted on it so that it could be aimed from the shoulder like a rifle. A Mauser pistol has a longer range than an ordinary rifle and it has ten bullets in a magazine. Azad had two full magazines in his pocket.

In order to avoid drawing attention to themselves before the incident, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru waited on the road quite a distance away from the open police station gate. At Jaigopal's signal, they started towards the gate. When Saunders started his motorcycle, smoothly and slowly riding towards the gate, Jaigopal signalled to Bhagat Singh and Rajguru. The very moment Saunders reached the gate, Rajguru rushed up to him and shot him in the head. Saunders fell alongside his motorcycle and shrieked once. To be certain, Bhagat Singh shot him in the head and shoulders four or five more times. Then they both ran into the college compound. When Saunders fell, a sepoy on the veranda of the police office raised the alarm. Traffic Inspector Fearn and two sepoys ran towards Bhagat Singh and Rajguru. Bhagat Singh turned around, raised his pistol and took aim at Fearn. Fearn dropped to the ground to protect himself and the shot missed him. The two sepoys wavered.

Azad called out to Bhagat Singh and Rajguru to get going. They ran on and he backed them up. In the meantime, Head Constable Chandan Singh shouted and, with two other constables

bles, started chasing them. Azad aimed his Mauser warning Chandan Singh to get back. The two constables stopped in their tracks, but not Chandan Singh. Azad fired and Chandan Singh fell on his face, arms outstretched. After that no one followed them. With Azad leading, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru crossed the college compound and ran into the hostel. There Azad and Rajguru jumped onto one bicycle and started off towards Majang by way of Gol Bagh. Bhagat Singh followed on another bicycle.

The murder of the English Deputy Superintendent created a sensation in Lahore, but no one understood the mystery surrounding the event. There was much speculation about it. Some thought that a gang of thieves had revenged themselves on the police. On the very next day posters in English appeared in several public places. The posters read:

THE HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN ARMY

NOTICE

THE MURDER OF LALA LAJPAT RAI HAS BEEN AVENGED
BY THE DEATH OF J. P. SAUNDERS

How sad it is that at the wicked hands of a common policeman like J. P. Saunders, Lala Lajpat Rai, a leader honoured by 300,000,000 of his countrymen, has lost his life. This national humiliation was a provocation to Indian youth.

Today the world has seen that the people of India are not supine, nor has the blood congealed in their veins. They risk their lives for the honour of their country and the self-same youth who have been criticized and denigrated by the country's leaders have furnished the proof of this.

BEWARE RULING DESPOTS

Beware of flogging the emotions of the suffering and oppressed people! Desist from your wicked mischief! In spite of all your vigilance and all your laws forbidding us to possess arms, we are amassing pistols and revolvers. Even if they are not enough to carry forward an armed

revolution, they are sufficient to avenge a national humiliation. No matter how our own may criticize and denigrate us, as much as the alien rulers may oppress us, we are always prepared to protect our national honour and teach our alien oppressors a lesson. Despite all opposition and all repression, we will raise the banner of revolution and cry out even to the gallows, **LONG LIVE REVOLUTION!**

We regret the necessity for killing a man, but this person was part and parcel of a cruel, depraved and unjust system which must end. This man died because he functioned as an agent of British rule in India. That government is the most despotic on earth.

We regret the necessity for shedding blood, but it is a necessary sacrifice on the altar of revolution. We aim to work for the revolution to end the exploitation of man by man.

LONG LIVE REVOLUTION!

H. Balraj

Commander, Punjab HSRA

December 18, 1928

(I: 132-48)

The murder of an English Deputy Superintendent of Police electrified the country, especially when the reason for the murder was publicly proclaimed in this way. Yashpal felt that the people took pride in the incident and derived satisfaction from it. Jawaharlal Nehru corroborates this impression in his autobiography.¹

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Autobiography*, pp. 174-6, refers to the assault on Lala Lajpat Rai and the reaction of the nation as a result:

It was this sense of national humiliation that weighed on the mind of India, and when Lalaji's death came soon after, inevitably it was connected with the assault, and sorrow itself gave pride of place to anger and indignation. It is well to appreciate this, for only so can we have some understanding of subsequent events, of the phenomenon of Bhagat Singh, and of his sudden and amazing popularity in north India. It is very easy and very fatuous to condemn persons of acts without seeking to understand the springs of action, the causes that underlie them Bhagat Singh thus did not become popular because of his act of terrorism, but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment, the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation. He became a symbol; the act was forgotten; the symbol

The police arrested great numbers of young men, especially those who were associated with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, workers' organizations or political work of any kind. Houses were searched, but nothing was found. Although the police appeared to be making little progress in finding the culprits, a number of constables had seen Bhagat Singh when he turned around to shoot at Fearn, and therefore it was imperative that he leave Lahore. They needed money for transportation and Sukhdev suggested to Yashpal that he ask Dr Gopichand Bhargava for help. Dr Bhargava gave Yashpal 200 rupees, but the knowledge that Yashpal was involved in revolutionary activities made him so uncomfortable that Yashpal left his employ and took a job as clerk with the Lakshmi Insurance Company.

Bhagvati Charan's wife, Durga (Bhabhi), contributed 500 rupees of her own money, but more important, she and her three-year old son accompanied Bhagat Singh on the train journey out of Lahore, posing as his wife and child. Rajguru rode along as far as Lucknow, acting as the family servant. Bhagat Singh, Durga and the child continued on to Calcutta where they were met by Bhagvati Charan and Sushila. Sushila, a young friend of the revolutionaries, earned her living by teaching the daughter of a millionaire industrialist in Calcutta and lived in his home. Bhagat Singh stayed there, posing as her nephew. With this house as a shelter, he attended the annual meeting of the Congress, which was held in Calcutta that year. At those meetings, he sought other young revolutionaries to enlist their cooperation. There he met Jatin Das, a young Bengali,¹ who knew how to manufacture bombs and agreed to teach the art to the members of HSRA.

remained, and within a few months each town and village of the Punjab, and to a lesser extent in the rest of northern India, resounded with his name. Innumerable songs grew up about him, and the popularity that the man achieved was something amazing.

¹"Jatin Das died on 13 September, 1929 as a result of a hunger strike he undertook to protest prison conditions during the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The manner and reason of his death so captured the public imagination that, when his body was sent from Lahore to Calcutta for cremation, thousands of persons lined up at each railway stop along the way to pay him homage. The family of Terence McSwiney, the Irish patriot who died fighting the English for the freedom of Ireland, sent a telegram to the family of Jatin Das saying, Family of Terence McSwiney have heard with grief and pride of the death of Jatin Das. Freedom will come. As a result of public reaction to his death, the government promised improvement in prison conditions. (From R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., Volume 3, p. 319.

Jatin Das came to the HSRA central headquarters in Agra to set up a bomb factory. One representative from each province was sent to Agra to learn the method of manufacture. This also gave the revolutionaries an opportunity to exchange ideas.

Guncotton, which required a reliable supply of ice, was manufactured in Calcutta, since Agra's ice supply was not reliable. However, picric acid was prepared in Agra. The ingredients for it were purchased in Calcutta, and two by two, members of the HSRA who were to learn bomb manufacture came to Agra, each carrying with him some portion of the needed chemicals. First the picric acid was manufactured in Agra, and then it was converted to chloropicrate. Large quantities of bombs were made there. The bombs which were later used in the Assembly Bomb incident in April 1929 were manufactured at that time in Agra.

The bomb factory and teaching centre in Agra was a success. The one problem which arose and could not be solved within the organization involved the preparation of the bomb cases. To prepare bombs of maximum effectiveness and minimum risk to the user, explosive material had to be encased in metal. The metal case had to be turned on a lathe. Sukhdev made a mould of the bomb case and to avoid suspicion, had it manufactured in Lahore. He then brought the case to a lathe operator in Lahore, telling him that the case was part of a new invention for a gasoline engine. When the cases were finished and filled, the bombs were taken to Jhansi to be tested. They worked well. About ten bombs were prepared and set aside to be used in the HSRA's next project. In the meantime, bomb factories were set up in Saharanpur under Shiv Varma and in Lahore under Sukhdev.

5 The Assembly Bomb Explosion, April 1929

In early 1929 the government, concerned about growing trade unionism as well as the possible appeal of Communism, tried to pass through the Central Assembly two bills intended to restrict the workers' right to strike and to discourage the growth of the Communist Party by cutting it off from external help of any kind. These were the Trades Disputes Bill and the Public Safety Bill.¹ Both bills were defeated in the Assembly. Nonetheless the government intended to enact them into law through

²In discussing the background for this legislation, Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Bombay: Perennial Press, 1960, p. 124, write:

Growing unrest among the industrial proletariat, too, was impressively shown in the phenomenal rise in strikes during 1928-1929; there were 203 strikes in that year as against only 129 during the previous year. More than 506,851 people participated, and 31,647,404 working days were lost. Of greatest importance was the general strike in the Bombay textile industry, which lasted from April 26 to October 6, 1928, and caused shutdowns in fifty mills. The Communists were active in the leadership of the Bombay strike, but many non-Communist trade unionists also took part.

Additional evidence of the growing radicalization of Indian politics was provided by nationalist reaction to the Public Safety Bill. Introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly by the government of India in September, 1928, the bill was an anti-Communist measure designed to provide the legal means for expelling foreign agitators from India. There was little doubt in anyone's mind that it was aimed specifically at Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley, the British Communists who were the actual leaders of the Indian Communist movement at the time and who had accomplished so much in the field of trade-union organization.

Despite the government's attempt to raise a Communist bogey, nationalists of all shades vigorously opposed the legislation. Lala Lajpat Rai declared that the purpose of the bill was 'to frighten away people who want to investigate into labour conditions in this country.' . . . Also active in the debate against the measure were. . . Motilal Nehru, the conservative father of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the right-wing Congressman Madan Mohan Malaviya.

the special powers of certification by the Viceroy.

The HSRA decided to make the event of the Viceroy's certification the occasion for their protest and to bring their programme before the people. The members of the HSRA voted that when the announcement of the certification of these bills was made in the Assembly, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt would each throw a bomb in the Assembly chamber, scatter leaflets explaining their action, and then offer themselves for arrest.

According to Yashpal, the bomb explosion would have a twofold purpose. First, it would indicate to the British rulers of the country that coercion is double-edged. If the country is ruled by force, the people will respond with force. Second, they wished to emphasize to those who believed that freedom could be won by constitutional means how the government flouted the constitutional process.

It was neither an idle whim nor an opium "high" that inspired us to throw a bomb in the Central Assembly. It was simply a demonstration of the stated policy of HSRA. The British government was trying to have the Central Legislative Assembly pass two repressive laws at that time. One was the Public Safety Bill and the other was the Trades Disputes Bill which related to the workers' demands and strikes. The HSRA knew that the Congress and the Liberals, who together had a majority in the Assembly, opposed these bills. The government realized that these bills could not be passed with a majority in the customary way. It was also realized that even if the Legislative Assembly did not pass them, the bills would become law by the Viceroy's special powers of certification. Both Bills were being promulgated to crush the people's drive for freedom and their rising dissatisfaction.

After the bills were voted down by the Legislative Assembly, the Central Committee of HSRA decided that at the moment they were given the status of law by the Viceroy's special certification, HSRA would explode a bomb to demonstrate its opposition to the government's repressive conduct. There were two objectives to this demonstration of opposition by throwing a bomb—one was to challenge the government by demonstrating that if they ruled against the decisions of the people's representatives by force of arms, we were prepared to respond with the force of arms. The second was directed to the representatives

of the people themselves who were trying to oppose the government by means of a legal movement. This was to emphasize to them that their legal opposition was a failure, that despite their legal opposition, repressive measures could become law. What was the use of this sham of a Legislative Assembly? We had to tear away the veil of legality which masked the repressive rule of the alien government.

The only realistic way to oppose the alien government was to declare war on it. The HSRA expressed its policy clearly when it threw its Proclamation leaflets into the Assembly chamber at the same time as it threw the bomb. I will quote from this Proclamation later.

To implement the plan, the HSRA established a centre in Delhi and appointed Jaidev Kapur to investigate everything pertaining to the layout and routine of the Legislative Assembly. Then too we needed passes to gain entry into the Assembly. We had to be able to get several passes at a time easily, whenever we wanted them. Jaidev introduced himself to the Assembly's Watch and Ward staff as an economics student at Hindu College in Delhi in order to have ready access to the Assembly's library. After he earned the confidence of the staff he could slip into the Visitors Gallery and watch the proceedings when the Assembly was in session. When he became better acquainted with the Chief of the Watch and Ward Office, he had no difficulty obtaining two or three passes. Ordinarily a note from a Congress member was required in order to get a pass to the Assembly. From time to time other comrades came to the Assembly to look it over thoroughly.

Bhagat Singh went to the Legislative Assembly with Jaidev a few times. Once when he was there, his eyes met those of Dr Kitchlew. Dr Kitchlew was surprised to see him clean shaven. The Saunders incident was still very fresh in everyone's mind. At first Bhagat Singh tried to conceal his face behind a newspaper, but when he realized that Dr Kitchlew recognized him, he greeted him confidently as Dr Kitchlew was leaving the Assembly. Dr Kitchlew assured him most affectionately that he would help him in any way possible. And he always helped Bhagat Singh in Delhi.

There were many decisions to make in connection with the Assembly. The first question was: After our comrades threw

the bombs, should we try to get them out of the chamber or not? Azad himself came to the gallery of the Assembly one day to watch the proceedings and inspect the site. He came to the conclusion that it would not be difficult to get our comrades out of the Assembly chamber safely, but we would need a car to transport them to a safe place.

We arranged for a car at the appropriate time and decided which of our comrades would take part in this affair. Then Bhagat Singh and Vijaya Kumar Sinha insisted that to throw a bomb and toss some leaflets about in the Assembly were not sufficient to present our objective clearly before the people. The people would consider HSRA a band of egotistical, arrogant, bloodthirsty young men. It was essential that the comrades who threw the bomb make no attempt to escape. When they threw the bomb, they should also proclaim their opposition to imperialism and declare and explain their policies in open court. We could present our programme and objectives to the people that way. Our comrades viewed this case as the ideological battlefront of the HSRA.

Usually, whatever we said or wanted to say to the people was considered seditious. No paper dared to publish these ideas, nor could we express them from the platform in a meeting. However, as a defendant's statement or as a description of the charges of which the defendant was accused, they could be published. Later on the government realized that the revolutionaries had been using the courts to promote sedition and it became illegal to publish the statements of the HSRA defendants in the papers.

It should be kept in mind here that the HSRA did not consider the throwing of a bomb into the Legislative Assembly as its aim, but rather throwing the bomb was a device to give them the opportunity to say what they wanted to. If bombing had been their aim, what sense would it have made to sacrifice their men when they had the chance to get them out safely? If the purpose were merely to throw a bomb, then any courageous individual could have done it. The reason for sacrificing the most capable individuals was only this: that throwing the bomb created an atmosphere in which our policies and objectives could be brought to the people. By this, the HSRA wanted to make it plain that those who were trying to organize an armed

revolution attached greater value to mobilizing the people's strength and public opinion than to instilling terror.

Having decided that the bomb in the Assembly was to be our ideological battlefield, there now arose the question of choosing those comrades who could best present our policies and objectives to the people. We discussed several names again and again.

In the meantime, debate on the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Bill rose to a new intensity in the Legislative Assembly. The Central Committee of the HSRA was also engaged in discussion concerning the bills. In addition to Bhagat Singh, sometimes Jaidev Kapur was mentioned and sometimes Rajguru. Vijay Kumar and Shiv Varma insisted that neither Azad nor Bhagat Singh should be sent to the Assembly because they were indispensable to the future of the organization.

Batukeshwar Dutt, who had been with the movement since the Kakori days, had left Kanpur for Bihar when the organization became dormant. He took part in the active work of the organization only occasionally. When he learned of the prospective bomb throwing in the Assembly, he complained that he had not been given a chance to participate even though his association with the organization was of long-standing. He was annoyed and threatened to sever his connection with the organization if not given an active role. Then and there Dutt and Vijay Kumar Sinha were chosen to throw the bombs in the Assembly.

The Public Safety and Trades Disputes Bills were voted down in the Legislative Assembly. Now it was only a question of the day the Viceroy would choose to certify them into law.

In the meantime our comrades who were together in Delhi were finding their idleness frustrating. We learned one day that the top government officials in New Delhi and Legislative Assembly members had invited the Viceroy to a banquet to celebrate Holi. We resolved immediately to use this occasion to attack the Viceroy, and we chose Shiv Varma, Rajguru and Jaidev for the job.

A pilot on a motorcycle always preceded the Viceroy's vehicle so that the people would know he was coming. It wasn't difficult to identify the Viceroy's car—it bore the emblem of the Raj. Nonetheless an attack could succeed only if the person throw-

ing the bomb at the moving car had a few seconds to prepare himself before the car appeared. Rajguru was on the auto route in readiness to signal. A short distance behind him was Jaidev Kapur and Varma was another twenty paces behind. Each of these two men had two bombs ready to go.

If Jaidev missed with his first bomb, Shiv Varma would throw his, giving Jaidev another chance with his second bomb. Even if Jaidev's bomb hit the target, Shiv's orders were to finish the job with his bomb. Special care was to be taken not to hit any car other than the Viceroy's; therefore Rajguru was to signal only when he saw the Viceroy in the car. Shiv and Jaidev both had loaded pistols as well so that they could shoot the Viceroy if he escaped the bombs. When the police tried to arrest them, they were to let themselves be killed.

As soon as they saw the pilot, Varma and Kapur grasped the pin of their bombs and looked toward Rajguru. But Rajguru did not give them a signal. They both gasped in amazement. When the Viceroy's car passed by them, they saw that the driver was the only man in it; the passengers were three women.

It was a very good thing that Rajguru was posted on ahead. Otherwise Kapur and Varma would have bombed the car with the Raj emblem, and that would have given Gandhi and the Congress an opportunity to pass a resolution condemning the HSRA and express sympathy for the Viceroy. Two cars followed the car bearing the Raj emblem, but the Viceroy was not in either of them. Later we found out that he had been on a fishing trip before attending the banquet and had taken a different route to the party!

Sukhdev was unable to attend the HSRA Central Committee meeting where, not Bhagat Singh, but two other comrades were chosen to throw the bombs in the Assembly. Sukhdev was notified of the decision immediately and came directly to Delhi. Before I go on, I must mention that Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev were very close friends. Each would have given his life for the other. Sukhdev took Bhagat Singh aside and said, "You were supposed to throw the bomb in the Assembly. Why were those other men chosen"? Bhagat Singh probably replied that the Committee felt he had to be spared for the future of the organization.

Sukhdev protested in his blunt, crude way, "That's plain non-

sense. You are cutting yourself off from your roots. I can't be silent. Don't you see where you're going? Your conceit has really grown! You're starting to consider yourself the total mainstay of the organization. You're getting to be like Sanyal Dada and Jaichandra. Do you know how it will all end? One day you'll be like Bhai Paramanand. . . ."

Sukhdev was referring to the High Court Judge's decision in the Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1914-15. The Judge said, "Bhai Paramanand is the brain and the leader of this organization, but as a man he is a coward. Where there was danger, he pushed others to the forefront and always tried to save his own neck." Sukhdev went on, "You won't always be able to spare yourself. One day you will come before the Court. And when that day comes, the same judgment will be made of you as was made of Bhai Paramanand."

Bhagat was not lacking in strength or temper, but he just stared at Sukhdev without saying a word. Even so, Sukhdev did not stop there. He went right on with, "You want to say that you are sacrificing the honour of being a martyr for the sake of the organization. Look at yourself honestly. You don't want to face death. You want to be warmed by the flame of 'that woman's' love and you are using your responsibility to the organization as a pretext. You can say what you want to others, but you and I cannot hide from each other. You're sliding downhill."

Bhagat Singh could not say anything for a long time. He simply fixed his eyes on Sukhdev, with the expression of a caged lion staring at his attacker. When he finally spoke, he said, "I will throw the bomb in the Assembly. The Central Committee will have to accede to it. As for your insults, I'll not even reply to them. And now, don't speak to me."

Sukhdev replied in his same blunt way, "I've done my duty towards my friend." After this exchange, each went separately to the organization's headquarters.

Sukhdev's eyes were swollen when he returned to Lahore from Delhi. He looked like he had been crying a great deal and he would not speak to anyone.

Sukhdev looked for Bhagvati Bhai in the afternoon of April 7, 1929. He told him, "If you want to see Bhagat Singh for the last time, come to Delhi with me by the night train. . . . And

bring Bhabhi along."

Sushila, who was on vacation at that time, was staying in Lahore at Bhagvati Bhai's house. She came along too. Sachi had become very fond of his 'tall uncle' (Bhagat Singh) on the journey from Lahore to Calcutta and back; he too was brought along. When they all arrived in Delhi on the morning of 8 April, Bhagvati told them to wait for him in Qudesia Gardens and he went away.

Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev came to the Gardens after a while. No mention was made at all of what was to happen. Bhabhi and Sushila had brought quantities of rasgulla and oranges because Bhagat Singh was very fond of them. They fed him with great affection. Bhagat Singh said goodbye to them at about 10.30. Bhabhi and Sushila knew this much—that they were saying goodbye to him for the last time. But they didn't know why. Such was the discipline of the organization. They painted a tilak on his forehead with red powder and rice.

On 8 April 1929, the announcement was to be made in the Assembly certifying the Public Safety and Trades Disputes Bills into law despite Indian public opinion. There were questions and answers before the regular Assembly proceedings just as there are today. Bhagat Singh, Dutt and Jaidev Kapur chose a location to sit where the members of the Assembly were seated directly before them on the floor below.

We had thought a great deal about the placing of the bomb in the Assembly Chamber. The Home Member of the English government and leader of the government party at that time, Sir George Schuster, and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the opposition party, were sitting very close together, one in front of the other. If the bomb were directed at Sir George, not only government members but many Congress members would be injured, as well as Vitalbhai Patel who was in the Speaker's chair. Therefore we decided that the bomb should be aimed at the wooden wall behind Sir George's couch to avoid injury to Congress members.

Aiming the bomb there meant that its main force would be absorbed by the heavy wooden furniture. There would be very little likelihood of injury to government members, and no possibility at all that Congress members would be hurt. We also

considered warning the Congress members not to attend the Legislative Assembly that day, but, fearing that the plan might somehow leak out prematurely, we didn't warn them.

When Sir George stood to announce the Viceroy's certification of the Bills, the remaining members of HSRA left the Assembly building. They had already taken the passes from Bhagat Singh and Dutt which had allowed them entry into the Assembly chamber. This precaution was necessary for if the passes were found on Bhagat Singh and Dutt after they were arrested, the member through whom the pass had been issued would be identified. He would certainly be harassed by the police since he would be thought to have a connection with the revolutionaries.

The moment Sir George declared the Bills law by special powers of the Viceroy, Dutt and Bhagat Singh stood up. Bhagat Singh threw a bomb behind Sir George's seat. There was a terrifying, deafening explosion. The people sat stupefied in their seats. Dutt then threw a bomb in that same direction. The people panicked. The room filled with blue smoke. All the members and visitors started fleeing in terror. Only three or four people seemed to keep their wits about them. Vitalbhai Patel, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Jinnah remained in their seats. Sir George Schuster, who had been standing as he read the certification, continued to stand where he was. Bhagat Singh fired two shots at him, but they missed and hit his desk. Realizing that he was the target, Sir George slid under his desk. Bhagat Singh had six more bullets in his pistol and eight more besides in reserve, but he did not shoot at anyone else. Bhagat Singh and Dutt shouted out: "Long live revolution! Down with Imperialism! Workers of the world, unite!" While shouting they tossed their leaflets in all directions in the Assembly hall. The leaflets were in English. This is what they said:

HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN ARMY

NOTICE

"It takes a loud noise to make the deaf hear." With these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Vaillant, the French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this act of ours.

Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the Reforms, and without mentioning the insults hurled down upon the head of the Indian nation through this House, so-called the Indian Parliament, we want to point out that while people are expecting more crumbs of reform from the Simon Commission, and are even quarreling over the distribution of the expected bones, government are thrusting upon us new repressive measures like those of the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Bill, while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session.

The indiscriminate arrests of Labour leaders working in the open field, clearly indicates as to which way the wind blows.

In these extremely provocative circumstances, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association in all seriousness and realizing its full responsibility, has decided and ordered its army to do this particular action so that a stop may be put to this humiliating farce, and to let alien bureaucratic exploiters do what they wish but to make them come before the public eye in their naked form.

We are sorry to admit that we who attach so great a sanctity to human life, we who dream of a glorious future when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood. But the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of the Great Revolution that will bring freedom to all, rendering the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.

Long live the Revolution!

Balraj
Commander-in-Chief

The explosion so stunned not only the Assembly members but also the security guards in the chamber that no one dared to approach Bhagat Singh or Dutt even when the visitors' gallery had emptied.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt could have walked out with the crowd. They had more than enough time even afterwards to

have got away. They still had their pistols and cartridges. On the basis of police testimony in court, the judge said in his decision that if the accused had wanted to flee they had ample opportunity to do so.

The decision had been made that they would not try to save themselves but use this opportunity to say what they wanted to say. It is not irrelevant to point out that when they shouted slogans, they did not say, "Down with British rule", but rather "Down with Imperialism", and "Workers of the World, Unite." These two slogans are significant in illustrating the political viewpoint of the HSRA at that time.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt waited motionless in the gallery until Sergeant Terry came up to them and asked, "Have you done this?"

Bhagat Singh said yes. He still held a loaded gun. He could have shot the white sergeant in cold blood if he had wanted to, but the HSRA's war was not against British people but against British imperialism. Bhagat Singh had completed his task for the time being. If Sir George Schuster had not hidden underneath his desk, he would certainly have shot at him again, the reason being that Sir George was in the Legislative Assembly as the principal representative of the British administration.

When Bhagat Singh and Dutt surrendered, the armed police seized them and surrounded them. Vigilant and careful, the police drove them in separate automobiles to the Delhi Police Station.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt passed a tonga on the street. Bhagvati Charan, Bhabhi and Sushila were in it and Sukhdev on his bicycle propped against the tonga. When the heavily guarded police cars passed, they all looked at one another, but gave no sign of recognition. What great self-control they demonstrated! It would have been easier for them to lay down their own lives for Bhagat Singh. Such control and discipline would not have been possible for people of unbalanced mind or cowards. Mature and wise people remain silent just as Panna Dai who watched her own child being murdered and was silent from a sense of duty. But Sachi on Bhabhi's lap called out "*Lambe chacha!*" (Tall Uncle) and held out his arms as Bhagat Singh passed by in the police car. Bhabhi pressed Sachi to her

body, his face in her lap to keep him quiet. She almost strangled on the cry that rose from her heart and had to be suppressed . . .

The bomb explosion in the Assembly shook the entire country. The British government police panicked. Delhi immediately called the Special Terrorist Police of Calcutta. All telephone and other wire services from Delhi to the other provincial capitals were reserved for official messages. Lala Durga Dass was *The Statesman's* special representative in Delhi at that time. He tried to send the news of the explosion to his office in Calcutta by telephone or telegraph, but all means of communication were reserved for the Government. Instead he sent the news to *The Statesman's* London office, and from London it was telegraphed to Calcutta! By the time the Associated Press of India's other newspapers received the news in Calcutta, *The Statesman's* special edition was already on the street.

The police made every effort to trace the threads of the conspiracy behind the explosion, but they were unsuccessful. Until then they had no clue in the Saunders shooting. When Jaigopal was later arrested in the Lahore bomb factory, he turned informer, and that was how the police established the connections among the Saunders shooting, the Assembly bomb incident and the Lahore bomb factory.

The HSRA had decided to sacrifice Bhagat Singh and Dutt in order to be heard in the forum of the Court. How else could they present their principles before the people? They were charged with violating Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code (attempt to murder) and the Explosive Substances Act. The Sessions Judge sentenced them to life imprisonment.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt did not deny in court that they had thrown the bombs, but they did deny that they intended to commit murder. They asserted that their purpose was to call attention to the wretched conditions which prevailed in the country. They emphasized that their act of throwing a bomb into the Assembly could not be judged separately from their motives and intentions. And they asked the court and the people to consider those intentions and motives.

The Sessions Judge, who viewed motive as secondary, ruled that in law motives customarily have no effect on the legal

standing of a crime; it was the crime that had come before the court and it was only to the crime that attention should be given. In Bhagat Singh's appeal to the High Court, he gave illustrations which demonstrated his keen intellect and vision in rebutting the judge's decision. In support of his argument that the intention could not be separated from the deed, he said on the question of taking human life that killing one man or killing thousands with machine guns and cannons produce the same results, but society and the world do not brand military leaders and warring nations as murderers. A person who robs another by threatening him has the same effect as the tax collector; yet the robber and the tax collector are not put in the same category.

Bhagat Singh cited King Solomon: Arsenic can be added to flour to kill rats or to kill people. Whether the act was good or bad had to be viewed in the light of the intention. He emphasized to the High Court that the Sessions Judge himself had asserted that they could have escaped if they wanted. Bhagat Singh pointed out that they did not flee because they intended to stay and point out the miserable conditions in the country, and by aiming the bomb in places enclosed by wooden barriers of desks and benches, they indicated their intention not to kill. He also pointed out that if bomb-throwing alone had been their aim, they would not have stayed to be produced before the court, but would have escaped.

Bhagat Singh told the High Court that he and Dutt were not objecting to the sentence they received. What they were objecting to was being branded as murderers and having their motives misinterpreted. Bhagat Singh was asked what he meant by "revolution" and he responded that those who oppose revolution equated the word with pistols, bombs, swords and bloodshed. These do not define the revolution, he said. These are the implements of the revolution, but behind these implements is the desire of the people to change the economic and political arrangements of society. He declared that the aim of revolution was not to shed blood, but to end the exploitation of man by man and to establish the right of self-determination in the nation.¹

¹The entire text as published in the *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1929, Volume 1, pp. 78-80 is reproduced in the Appendix.

6 The Lahore Factory

While the Assembly bomb incident was being planned by the Centre in a house Jaidev Kapur rented in Bazar Sitaram in Delhi, in Lahore too the HSRA organization was gaining public support.

I had been working for almost a year. I urged my mother to quit her job in the Arya Kanya Pathshala in Lyallpur. Sukhdev suggested we ask Sister Premvati to come to Lahore from Lyallpur to help us. I arranged a job for her in the Arya Kanya Pathshala in Bacchovali in Lahore through Dr Gopichand Bhargava.

Sister Premvati's father died while she was at Lyallpur. She came to Lahore with her mother and my mother. We rented a house in Bacchovali Gali in Lahore. It was an excellent idea to have her come to Lahore. Her nature was such that she devoted herself wholeheartedly to everything she undertook. About five years earlier, her husband had died. She attempted suicide when he died but was saved in the nick of time. She had gone into a room all alone and poured kerosene on her hair and on her clothes. The other people in the household smelled the kerosene and rushed into the room just as she was about to strike the match. Her husband's elder brother seized her and pinned her arms back. But she was mute for the next three years. To rouse her out of her depressed mental state, her father arranged for an honorary teaching job in a girls' school. When her father died, she accepted wages to help the family. I encouraged her to take the Hindi examinations in Punjab University in order to advance in the teaching profession. I tutored her for the *Bhushan* examinations when I was in Lyallpur. As we talked about our country and revolution while we were studying, Premvati felt that her aimless life had now found its purpose.

Premvati was a special teacher of Hindi at the Bacchovali Girls School. Within two months she established a fairly good nucleus of an organization among the girls and young women. She collected over one hundred rupees for the organization every month. She used some of the money to buy propaganda literature in Hindi and Urdu for the girls and gave the rest to Sukhdev. It wasn't difficult for her to collect extra money for special occasions. The girls had so much confidence in her that they did not consider it too much to sell bits of jewellery at her merest hint; they even stole money from their homes. The girls knew what they were doing and why. During the Lahore Conspiracy trial, about ten of the especially trustworthy girls posed as sisters 'or nieces of the accused men and visited them regularly carrying messages to and from them.

Premvati's very favorite pupils were Prakashvati and Swadesh, who was the daughter of the old revolutionary Punjabi leader Lala Pindi Das. Later Prakashvati left the shelter of her home to join the HSRA. During the Delhi Conspiracy Case, informers testified that, when the bomb factory in Delhi was set up, Prakashvati was appointed to manage it. The Government offered a reward for the arrest of three of the girls—Prakashvati, Durga Bhabhi and Sushila. Prakashvati was caught in 1934, after all the others had been arrested.

Bhagvati Bhai was under suspicion in the Meerut Conspiracy Case and as a result his house was subjected to repeated search. One day Sukhdev brought some bomb cases he had manufactured and left them there while he went elsewhere. As luck would have it, the police arrived that afternoon, at about four o'clock, with a search warrant. Bhabhi was certainly very frightened, but she gathered courage and told the policeman, "My husband is not at home and there is no man in the house. I cannot let you search the house without a trustworthy man here. I must have a witness. What if you brought something with you and then claimed you found it in my house?"

The police were searching for illegal Communist literature. Their reaction to a suspect depended on the impression that was made on them. They agreed on condition that nothing would be removed from the house in the meantime unless they inspected it. They would continue to surround the house

until Bhabhi brought a "trustworthy man".

Bhabhi was in great distress as she arrived at my house and related the situation to Premvati and me. We immediately took her to Swadesh's house which was in Gwalmandi, only a short distance from Bhabhi's. Bhabhi stayed with us while Swadesh went to Bhabhi's house.

Swadesh went in, telling the police that she had come to look in on Sushila's sick infant. She found the bomb cases and hid them in her clothes. She told the police she would return soon with medicine for the baby, and she brought us the bomb cases. Now that the cause for fear was removed, Bhabhi and I went to her house. I glanced at the search warrant nonchalantly and invited the police to "search with pleasure".

The day after the Saunders murder, when I told Dr Gopichand Bhargava the entire story and he handed me 200 rupees without a word of comment, I was very encouraged, thinking that the movement had found in him an influential helper and supporter. After that I noticed that Doctor Sahib stopped speaking to me about his work in the Legislative Assembly or any other work. In my excess of zeal I thought at the time the reason was that he wanted me to have the chance to devote myself exclusively to my work. Soon enough I realized that Doctor Sahib, far from wanting to encourage me, now considered me a dangerous man and wanted to keep me at a distance. How could I continue to work for him under these circumstances? I even had to leave the Hindu Sangathan office in Maccihatta which he had rented for me.

Doctor Sahib still owed me wages for three months. I reminded him very discreetly a few times and he always answered with a smile, "Oh, it will be taken care of." What more could I say? And he did recommend me to the Lakshmi Insurance Company.

I should have been grateful to Doctor Sahib for this recommendation, although perhaps he found it a good way to get rid of me. The salary at Lakshmi Insurance Company was far too low, but I was helpless since my mother had left her job in Lyallpur to come to Lahore. I had to work at something. My bitterest memories are associated with the job as clerk in the Lakshmi Insurance Company. Before this no one had ever been dissatisfied with me; in fact I was always praised for

my hard work and ability. But I proved to be totally incompetent as a clerk. I found the work so distasteful, I couldn't apply myself to it. I made one mistake after another and was constantly reprimanded. Where were my lofty aspirations to be a successful lawyer or professor or effective political figure, sitting all day in my clerk's seat, sending interim receipts and writing dunning letters to clients to pay up their overdue premiums?

The worst was when I had to ask for leave in order to do a job for Sukhdev. The Head Clerk would give me a hard look and he would sneer, "Leave! Every day, leave! . . . If your other responsibilities are so important, why don't you just leave us? The company has no shortage of applicants. To the company its own work is the most important." I would feel like I was choking to death. Is this all I was to be in life—a clerk? I felt like I was sealed up inside a box, helpless, unable a break out. I felt this was not my individual misfortune, but the lack of opportunity because of the way our society was managed. I felt that a change in the way the country and society were run was the only remedy. Then I saw the revolution, not only as a beneficence, but as a cry for my very existence.

With the transfer of the Central Committee's headquarters from Agra to Delhi, plans were made to set up bomb factories at Lakarmandi in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh and in the Kashmiri Building in Qila Gujjar Singh in Lahore. Bhagvati Bhai had rented rooms in the Kashmiri Building several months earlier. I don't know why, but he rented them under his real name. Sukhdev put up people from Delhi or U.P. there when it was necessary. After the bomb factory was raided I asked Bhagvati why he had to be so truthful as to rent in his own name. He replied, "The fact is that I took those rooms to have some place where I could study away from home."

Bhagvati wasn't putting on airs either. In those days his house was the principal meeting place for Naujawan Bharat Sabha work and for plans for armed revolution in Lahore. Whatever irritation Durga Bhabhi may have felt in her heart at the crowds of people arriving at all hours, only one expression came from her lips, "Do come in." If the servant wasn't there, she herself would prepare a second tray of chapattis

when the first was gone. Others came for musical evenings too since Bhagvati had cultivated a taste for music. The good aspect of having these kinds of people visit was that the secret police assigned to keep an eye on the house would not feel that only suspicious types with political leanings came here. A few others visited on account of Sachi. Sachi was everyone's darling in those days; he was the universal nephew. Everyone loved him for his sweet ways and he was so friendly he would go with anyone. Sometimes people would take him out without telling Bhabhi and she would be upset and anxious for hours.

One day this prank was carried too far. I went to Bhagvati's house after sunset and found Bhabhi very distressed. She had been looking for Sachi for hours. She tried to compose herself, but after all she was a mother, and he was her only son. She looked for the undercover policemen who usually stood in the street watching the house, to ask him if he had seen anyone take Sachi away. But he had disappeared too. Bhabhi mentioned the names of a few people who might have taken him, but they should have told her! I didn't know where those people lived. I asked if Dhanvantri might have taken him because Sachi was very fond of him. Dhanvantri often brought *jalebis* for him and Sachi called him "Uncle Jalebi". Sachi gave each of his "uncles" a different name. Bhagat Singh was Tall Uncle. Sukhdev was Uncle Music. The reason for that was that, when they were alone, Sukhdev took his pistol out of his pocket and showed it to Sachi. When Sachi asked, "What is that?", Sukhdev replied, "It's an instrument. It makes music." I was not very fond of children. I would tease him and he called me "Dirty Uncle".

I rode over to Dhanvantri's house on my cycle. Sachi wasn't there. I went to several other places too. By that time a number of people had gathered anxiously. In the meantime, I contacted the police station and gave them a description of the boy. We had no leads at all and Bhabhi was making a great effort to suppress her tears. Just then I saw Sachi with the undercover policeman riding towards me on a cycle. "Where were you?" I asked the policeman in anger. "I took him home to show him to my wife. Such a lovable child," he said, and he grinned.

Bhabhi grabbed Sachi by the arms and dragged him into the house. "Come on, I'm going to skin you alive. You wretch, you go with anyone who'll take you," and slapping him, she said, "Why did you go? Will you ever do it again?"

"I went to eat *rasgulla*," Sachi answered, the tears welling up in his eyes. Well, what could anyone say after that?

With the constant crowd in the house, as I mentioned before, how could Bhagvati Bhai write his *History of the Indian Revolution* or his poems? He certainly needed some place to be by himself. But who could stop Sukhdev from going there? The needs of the revolution took precedence over all other needs.

Bhagvati stayed out of Lahore at that time, sometimes staying in Allahabad and sometimes in Agra because he was concerned about the warrants in the Meerut case. Sukhdev was setting up the bomb factory in the Kashmiri Building. I had been there a few times, but only to drop a companion there. I never went there except at Sukhdev's express instructions. I was delivering some scientific apparatus there which I had bought at Sukhdev's request, when I met Shiv Varma for the first time. I saw that some scientific paraphernalia were already there and I wasn't so simpleminded as not to understand the significance of buying this kind of apparatus.

When Sukhdev arrived, we discussed which of our companions should be invited to work on the experiment. Shiv Varma advised us not to organize a whole crowd for this kind of work, but that the most useful people would be those who had studied chemistry in college. Of us all, only Bhagvati Bhai had studied chemistry. I had studied economics and political science in college. Since Bhagvati was not in Lahore, Sukhdev wanted to teach me the job. Mercury fulminate was to be prepared to be used as a detonator. Perhaps the reason was that picric acid and guncotton had to be brought from Agra—or perhaps that mercury fulminate was the easiest of all to make. Anyway we hadn't yet bought the chemical equipment needed to manufacture picric acid.

One afternoon Sukhdev put some mercury on a large china platter and gradually added drops of acid to it. Thin streams of smoke started rising from the plate making us cough, choking us. We covered our noses and mouths with handkerchiefs and continued the experiment. The mercury had to be stirred

constantly with a glass rod while the acid was being added to it. It could not be left unattended. When we saw the procedure one time through, we started to mix a second batch. No sooner had a few drops of acid fallen on the plate than the entire room was enveloped in a thick, blue cloud of smoke, so dense that we could hardly see the acid and mercury on the plate. At that stage it was imperative to stir continually until all the remaining acid was mixed with the mercury. We were coughing and gasping so violently that I could not even speak to say that two of us ought to go outside and each take turns relieving the third person who was mixing. We were all writhing in pain, but Sukhdev was the first to run out into the courtyard and the two of us followed. There we decided that we would take turns mixing the formula in small batches, keeping at it as long as we could breathe. And that was the system we used.

As we ran out, I told Sukhdev that we were behaving very foolishly. The houses on either side of our double-storied house were empty, but the stench carried for at least two hundred yards. Sukhdev replied contemptuously, "What must be done will be done." I insisted that even though he wasn't concerned about his discomfort, he still should not attract attention to himself.

After about two hours of this head-splitting activity, a dark gray substance, mercury fulminate, was formed—all of which could be contained on the top of an eight-anna coin. I've deliberately not named the acids we used so as not to give any young men ideas on how to embark on an adventure of this sort. Later, after I researched the field, I concluded that mercury fulminate was not indispensable as a detonator for a bomb. There were many other chemicals which could be used as well.

I slept in the factory that night and had to sleep there several other times too. We brought *dal* and *roti* from a nearby tandoor. One big mistake I made was to bring clothing and utensils which bore my name from home. That was how the police connected me with the factory when it was raided.

On 4 or 5 April 1929, Sukhdev gave me a negative of a photo of Bhagat Singh and Dutt. He didn't think it necessary to inform me whose photos they were. I did not know Dutt then. Sukhdev said, "I want a picture made to show both these

figures against the background of an exploding bomb." I didn't ask any questions—I set out to carry out his orders. I drew a picture from my imagination of an exploding bomb and attached the negative of Bhagat Singh and Dutt to it. Then I brought it to a photographer to make six copies of it.

The bomb was exploded in the Assembly on the 7th. The photographer kept putting me off each day. When finally I went to the shop on 11 April to pick up [the photos, a man in a turban was sitting there gazing at me very intently. It did not take long for me to realize what had happened. Bhagat Singh and Dutt's photos had been published in the Lahore newspapers earlier as a result of the Assembly bomb explosion. Of course, if the photographer had done his job on time, there would have been no danger of my being involved, but after Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's photos were published in the papers, anyone who wanted that kind of photo prepared was inviting the attention of the police. The wisest thing I could have done was not to pick up the photos. But I was inexperienced then.

I had this much going for me—I had come to the shop on my cycle. No sooner did I leave the store after paying for the pictures than the man who had been staring at me and who looked like a sub-inspector of the Punjab secret police, started to unlock his bicycle. It just happened that I had not locked mine, and I took advantage of that to speed off as fast as I could. I rode a long way before I turned around and saw him in the distance in the midst of a small noonday crowd in the market. He was still following me. If he had called out, "Seize him! Seize him!" I would surely have been caught, but whether he didn't because he was proud of his ability to ride fast or whether he was prudently following me to discover where I lived and who my associates were, I don't know. I rode into the narrow lanes as fast as I could. Twice I stopped to see if I was being followed.

When I arrived at the bomb factory, I related the entire incident to Sukhdev. He ordered me not to go out at all for two days so I couldn't be followed and the location of the bomb factory wouldn't be discovered. I sat reading all day and thinking that I really ought to fabricate some excuse to the Lakshmi Insurance Company about my leave-taking.

Sukhdev went out and now I was all alone in the factory.

I was getting bored and looked out of the window into the wide street below. I wandered around the room a bit and then glanced out again. After looking out a few times, I saw a man in the street gazing up at our window. When Sukhdev returned I expressed my concern that the secret police were suspicious of this house. We were well acquainted with the methods of the secret police. We had seen them watching Bhagvati Bhai, Dhanvantri and Bhagat Singh's houses and often following them too.

"It's all in your head," Sukhdev taunted. I countered that he raised so much smoke and stench making the mercury fulminate that suspicion was drawn towards this house. I did not know at the time that the source of suspicion was Ghulam Rasool's lathe shop. When Kishorilal picked up the bomb cases at Ghulam Rasool's shop, the secret police followed him to the house.

As I recall, I slept at the factory on 13 April 1929. I woke up early in the morning and went to my house to see how things were and also to the Lakshmi Insurance Company to smooth things over concerning my absence. The policeman at the photo shop might recognize me, but I wasn't taking a great risk in a city as large as Lahore if only one person recognized me. That morning I went to the office and that evening visited Sukhdev again. Now that the mercury fulminate was prepared, we were going to prepare picric acid, another main ingredient of the bomb. I asked Sukhdev if he needed me in the factory that night.

"Some other men will be coming in from outside today. We won't start making picric acid for a couple of days," Sukhdev replied.

That night Jai Gopal and Kishorilal went to the factory. They didn't know until then that I was taking an active part in the work. I hadn't mentioned it because there was no reason to mention it. At about 7:30 in the morning I rode over to Bhagvati's house on my bicycle to ask Bhabhi if Sukhdev had left any message for me. He usually left messages for me there because Gwalmandi was halfway between Bacchovali and Qila Gujjar Singh.

I saw that Bhagvati Bhai's house was surrounded by police, but they hadn't started searching yet. They were especially

strict and weren't letting any of the men leave the house. A sub-inspector of police was stationed right in front of the house. I approached him, blustering, "If you're going to search, then search! Why are you pestering these people? There's a sick child in the house and they want to take him to the doctor." Satish, the Bengali boy Sushila had adopted, was ill then.

The sub-inspector replied, "I can't proceed myself. I'm waiting for Khan Bahadur Sahib. The search will begin when he arrives."

Just at that moment, a constable rode up on his bicycle. The sub-inspector was bored with just sitting and asked, "What's delaying Khan Bahadur Sahib? How long can they search over there after all?"

Hearing this shocked me. I realized that they were searching elsewhere too. First, I thought they might be at the houses of my companions in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha—Dhanvantri, Ahsan and the others. I asked Bhabhi if there was anything incriminating in the house. "I don't really know," she answered, "Sukhdev was here last night but he didn't say anything. How can you depend on him? He never says anything." I thought I had better go and tell Sukhdev the news.

I rode from Gwalmandi towards the Kashmiri Building. The Kashmiri Building was in a lane which led from a small road off the main road of Qila Gujjar Singh. The moment I turned into the lane from the small road, I saw a cluster of policemen facing the staircase below the factory. To backtrack immediately would have aroused their suspicion, but I hesitated to go right through.

I cycled through the cluster of police and over to the other side of the street without betraying any haste or confusion. From there I returned to Gwalmandi, looking back all the while to see if anyone was following me. I took Bhabhi and Sushila aside and told them, "It's all over. The police are searching the bomb factory. I was right at the bottom of the stairs and managed to escape." "Where was Sukhdev?" they asked. "I can't say for sure. He was talking of staying overnight at the factory. If he did, then it's all over for him."

"You must save yourself, however you can," they both urged. "Where can he [Bhagvati] be? He might even go there

absentmindedly and get caught," Bhabhi said in distress. I reassured her, "If he wasn't there today, he won't be caught. This incident will be reported in the morning papers."

I went directly to my house in Bacchovali from Gwalmandi and told Premvati and Mother, "I'm leaving now. I may be back in a couple of months or maybe not."

I've already mentioned that the financial state of our household was not good. I took whatever little money they had and told Mother to ask Dr Gopichand for the Rs 240 he owed me for three months salary. I found out later that after Mother asked him repeatedly, he gave her only Rs 40, saying that he had given me the other Rs 200 earlier. And if she didn't believe him to ask Yashpal when he comes back. Doctor Sahib knew I had run away and the reason why.

Considering the circumstances under which Doctor Sahib gave me the 200 rupees, I naturally felt he was giving it as assistance because he was pleased that Lala Lajpat Rai's death had been avenged. It was only later that I realized that he was simply paying my salary and that the responsibility for avenging the affront to Lalaji was ours alone. Leaders behave in ways that are different from the ways of ordinary people. Two hundred rupees was not a large sum for Doctor Sahib. And he honoured Lalaji too. Perhaps he was farseeing enough to anticipate my arrest and, if so, I could not declare that Dr Gopichand Bhargava had aided the terrorists financially. I thought of this because the principal leftist leader of the Punjab, Dr Satyapal, behaved in an even more curious fashion in similar circumstances. One of our comrades went to him for financial help in a situation very much like the Saunders case. Doctor Sahib seemed to panic as he said "I know very well that you are a member of the secret police. Leave my house immediately or I'll call the police and have you arrested."

If Dr Satyapal's flight of imagination could carry him so far, then he should have asked himself why the police would arrest one of their own and how they would punish him. The reason for his caution was that he wished to assure the police that he had no connection with revolutionaries.

Well, that is how it was with the provincial leaders. Even Gandhiji himself considered Dhanvantri an agent of the secret police. Dhanvantri did not go to him for financial help. He

went to Sabarmati solely to ask of Gandhiji the great favour of refraining from publicly criticizing our activities. If he did not have sympathy with our methods, he should have kept silent. Gandhiji said, "I think this man is from the secret police," and he refused even to speak to him. I myself had the courage to speak out boldly only with Acharya Juggal Kishore, Pandit Nehru and Acharya Kripalani. I met these men and will discuss what they said in the proper context. On the other hand, when Netaji Subhas Bose saw us, his entire countenance lit up!

I left Lahore before the afternoon was out. I took a train to Amritsar. It was on the route to Kangra. My instinct for self-preservation drove me to leave Lahore any way I could. I changed my mode of dress. I dressed like an ordinary student in Lahore. On the way to the railroad station I bought a sola hat and shaved off my moustache.

That was my first experience with running away and my heart was pounding with fear. I had a feeling of crisis, that everyone's eyes were following me, searching. After that I learned the secret that self-confidence was the key to successful flight, and I went everywhere in Lahore discreetly in spite of the fact that huge posters displayed all over Lahore offered a reward for my capture. Even when I once carelessly exposed the pistol in my pocket in the Lahore railway station, I behaved in a totally unconcerned manner and even played with the cartridges in my hand. What better way was there to allay suspicion?

In the beginning, because I had no experience of running from the police before, I was like a wild animal fleeing the hunter. When an animal in the jungle is frightened, he usually runs to his cave to protect himself. So I fled to Kangra. I stayed there with a relative of mine, a trusted friend, the lawyer Divan Ram Chandra. I did not want to deceive him, and I told him the circumstances under which I had run away.

One thing kept running through my mind, ceaselessly troubling me. I saw with my own eyes the police surrounding the bomb factory. The police evidenced no fear or tension. I knew that the bomb made from the components manufactured in Agra lay on the upper shelf of the almirah. I also knew that Sukhdev had a revolver and ammunition. How did Sukhdev act when the police came? How did he confront them? I was trembl-

ing with excitement and anxiety to read the account in the newspaper. I saw the newspapers in Kangra one day later. I read that Sukhdev did nothing when the police came, but with trembling hands surrendered everything. I couldn't believe it. I was anxious to know the real truth of what happened and how. Later, when I had to accept the truth, I was very depressed. Sukhdev did not confess in order to save his own life; that much is true. I think rather he confessed because of his arrogant and capricious nature.

The seizure of the Lahore bomb factory was not a particularly remarkable event; nonetheless it was important in our history. By this raid the police were able to establish the connection between the Assembly bomb incident, the Saunders case and other events. And after this seizure our movement took a new turn.

Divan Ram Chandra explained to me, "You cannot spend your whole life running away. By fleeing you only arouse the suspicion of the police even more, and in the eyes of the court it serves as proof of your feeling of guilt. You would be better off if you turned yourself in. Then we will use every legal device to help you. But if you see this differently, if you want to stay in hiding and continue your work, you would know better, but Kangra is not a good place for this. This is a tiny village with 25 households. Everyone knows everybody else. A stranger cannot go unnoticed. An unfamiliar face is a rarity here and curiosity is tremendous. A person who runs away and tries to hide in the hills is caught like a fish in a net. How politically aware are the people here, and what are their views? These people know only one profession—to serve in the army."

As I sat among the ruins of the old Kangra fort, thinking... I realized how foolish it was to dream about making revolutions and bombs in these isolated hills. . . . Revolutions can be made only where there are people, not in empty lands. On the very next day I left for Punjab to hide out in these jungles of humanity known as big cities, to join my friends or on my own to try to carry forward the work of the revolution. (I: 161-89)

At this time Yashpal's political thinking led him to the conclusion that the purpose of the HSRA was to awaken the political

consciousness of the people, and that to this end young men would have to sacrifice their lives in terrorist activity. He regarded the establishment of a socialist state to be of equal importance, but one that could not be realized until the first goal had been accomplished—that of freeing India from British rule. Therefore he concluded that he would have to renew his contacts with the Party. If any were left who had not been arrested, he would find them. He knew that there were other members in Delhi and in the United Provinces, but he did not know where they were. Only Sukhdev knew, and he was in prison in Lahore.

Thus, less than a month after he had fled Lahore in panic, he returned to Lahore deliberately. He read in the newspapers that Sukhdev was on a hunger strike to protest prison conditions. He felt he would have to see Sukhdev soon, and therefore would have to see him in prison.

Here again, the network of women who were in sympathy with the revolutionaries helped him. Sushila gave him clothing. Sushila's younger sister, Shakuntala, posing as Sukhdev's sister, accompanied him on his visit to the prison. Yashpal pretended he was a lawyer who had just come back to India from England.

I was very well dressed in a suit with a shirt and tie, and eyeglasses (that I had to take off all the time because the prescription was all wrong for me). Shakuntala and I entered the prison together. I introduced myself to the authorities as a barrister from Lyallpur who had just returned from England. I spoke in English in a very precise way, just like young men do when they have just returned from abroad. I took out a cigarette, and to show my regard for the law, asked first if smoking was permitted under the rules, and then I said, "Lala Achintram, Sukhdev's uncle, has been very worried and upset that his nephew has been fasting for a week. I want to impress upon the defendant that his family is very angry and overwrought at the way he is conducting himself. When Sukhdev's mother heard about this, she decided she would fast too. It is a very troublesome situation. Furthermore, I wish to consult with him concerning his defence."

Then Shakuntala, to show her concern for her brother, started to wail. She was dressed in typical Lyallpur dress and behaved like an ignorant village girl. I said to Shakuntala in front of the jailer, "What good will your crying do? Just tell your brother to stop this nonsense." That convinced the jailer.

He had Sukhdev brought from the cell to the prison office. His clothing was filthy and he looked sick because of the fasting. I pointed to Sukhdev and asked Shakuntala, "Is he your brother?" Shakuntala, out of sisterly love, burst into tears. Sukhdev grasped the situation, and as though we had never seen each other before, asked me my name. I berated him in the presence of the jailer for his foolish conduct and urged him to respect and honour the law. Then I asked him why he had been arrested. And finally I turned to the jailer and smiling, said, "How can the accused speak freely in the presence of a government official?" [II : 16-7]

The jailer stepped away, and Sukhdev gave Yashpal the information he needed—the address of Shiv Varma in Saharanpur.

Yashpal planned to go to Saharanpur on 15 May. On 14 May, he read in the papers that Shiv Varma and Jaidev Kapur had been arrested in the Saharanpur bomb factory. Dr Gaya Prasad, who was arrested later, was not in the factory at the time. He was returning from Kanpur. When he arrived, the police were waiting and arrested him also.

As a result of these arrests, as well as those in the Lahore bomb factory on 15 April and the Agra bomb factory on 4 May, and with the help of those who became approvers, the government instituted the Lahore Conspiracy and Saunders Murder Case on 10 July, 1929¹

1 "The case opened before Rai Saheb Pandit Srikishen, Special Magistrate in the Lahore Central Jail. 32 persons were accused. Of this number, 7 turned approver, 9 absconded and the remaining 16 were tried. The 16 who were tried were: Sukhdev, Kishorilal; Shiv Varma; Gaya Prasad; Jaidev Kapur; Jatindranath Das; Bhagat Singh; Kamalnath Trivedi; Batukeshwar Dutt; Jatindranath Sanyal; Agyaram; Desraj; Premdutt; Surendranath Pandey; Mahavir Singh; Ajoy Kumar Ghosh.

"The absconders were Bhagvati Charan; Yashpal; Vijay Kumar Sinha; Chandrashekhar Azad; Raghunath; Kailashpati; Satgurudayal Avasthi.

"The approvers who were granted a Crown pardon were: Jaigopal; Hansraj Vorah; Ramsharan Das; Lalit Mukherji; Brahmdudd; Phanindra Ghosh; Manmohan Mukherji.

"The defendants were charged under Section 121, 121-A, 122 and 123 of the Indian Penal Code that they had been engaged in a conspiracy to wage war against His Majesty the King Emperor and to deprive him of the sovereignty of British India, and to overawe by criminal force the Government established by law in British India and collect men, arms

Jaigopal and Fanindra (Phanindra) Ghosh were the informers who established the connection between the Saunders murder and the Assembly bomb incident, and the Lahore, Agra and Saharanpur bomb factories. As a result, Bhagat Singh who had been sentenced in June for his part in the Assembly bomb incident, was now again a defendant in the Saunders murder case.

The usual hazards of revolutionary activity were compounded by those who turned informer (approver) in exchange for a pardon. Although it was not surprising that so many did, especially in view of the youth of the defendants and their lack of experience with police methods; nonetheless public sentiment turned against them when this happened. Yashpal observed wryly: "The public took its own cowardice for granted, but it demanded higher standards of the revolutionaries".¹

However, those who did not inform and took enormous risks to protect others, of course, received no publicity. Moreover, many Congress members felt great sympathy for the revolutionaries. Yashpal recounts the experience of Gaya Prasad who was arrested when he returned to the Saharanpur bomb factory from a journey to Kanpur where he had tried to raise money. The two policemen who arrested him handcuffed him and were walking him to the police station. He suddenly remembered that there were papers in his pocket which would incriminate two famous Congress lawyers who were helping the revolutionaries. Handcuffed, he could not reach the papers to destroy them. He said to one of the policemen.

"I have to urinate."

The policeman said, "You can go when we get to the police station."

The doctor answered, "I have to go when I have to go, not when you feel like it", and he stopped on the road. The policeman felt he had no choice, and he released one of the doctor's hands from the handcuffs and held the handcuffs on the chain. Gaya Prasad squatted at the kerb, stuck his free hand in his

and munitions to make war for this object and purpose. With these objects in view the accused along with others formed a party known as the Hindusthan Republican Association and the Indian Republican Army with a view to overthrow by force the Government established by law in India and to establish a Federated Republican Government in its stead."

The Indian Quarterly Register, Volume II, July December, 1929, op. cit., pp. 25-7.

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume 2, p. 31.

pocket, took out the papers, put them in his mouth and chewed them as well as he could. But when he swallowed he began choking and his eyes started to pop. He didn't say a word, but pointed to his mouth indicating he wanted water. The policeman did not know the reason why the doctor was in distress, and he sent the other one to a nearby shop for water. The doctor drank, washed down the paper and saved his life. Those papers which would have spelled prison for two famous persons—Shri Chandrabhanu Gupta and Mohanlal Saksena—Gaya Prasad swallowed at the peril of his own life.¹

With Shiv Varma in prison, Yashpal did not know where to turn. Sukhdev had also mentioned Ramsharan Das and Jaichandra Vidyalkar as persons Yashpal should contact. However, the former had been arrested (and turned approver); and the latter he did not trust because of his attitude toward Bhagvati Charan.

Yashpal joined Bhagvati Charan who was hiding in Calcutta. Bhagvati had not been idle. He had sought out the Bengali revolutionaries in Calcutta but found them unwilling to share plans and work. When Yashpal came, the two decided that they would have to work on their own for the time being. One of them would have to learn to make bombs.² Bhagvati financed Yashpal for a journey to Kashmir to enlist the help of Devdutt Sharma, a chemistry teacher in Government College in Lahore, who was in Srinagar for the summer.

Yashpal bought clothing appropriate to the occasion—"a camera slung from the shoulder and a raincoat." He had become accustomed to living under assumed names and identities, and as a fugitive. He was no longer frightened and he no longer hid. With the assurance that his new, expensive clothes and Bhagvati's money gave him, he lived an upper-class life in Kashmir. It was grating to him to see how everywhere life was geared to the comfort of the European community.

* Srinagar lies along the banks of the Jhelum River. *Bastis* crowd the banks on both sides of the river all the way down to the water's edge. There is not an empty space nor even sand on the banks. Bridges span the river at regular intervals. Transportation is provided by tongas and motor cars, but the

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²With Jatindranath Das, Sukhdev and Shiv Varma in prison, no one of the organization was left who knew the manufacture of explosives.

main mode of travel is by shikara. Tiny streams lead from the Jhelum to almost everywhere. The little boats topped with varicoloured umbrellas, look like an array of butterflies as they rise and dip on the waves of the river.

Srinagar's main bridge is Mirakdal. The beautiful clean homes on one side of it are owned mainly by Europeans. The filthy shacks of the Kashmiris are on the other side. The Europeans are everywhere. Numerically they are as insignificant as a pinch of salt in a bag of flour, but their influence is as great as the taste of salt which pervades the entire bag of flour. It appeared as if the purpose of a Kashmiri's life was to serve the rich and idle sahibs who were mainly European. The idle rich class appeared to be the masters and the local people their slaves. [II : 45-6]

It was not only that the Indians fetched and carried for the Europeans that galled Yashpal, but that they did so gladly. He felt the bitterness of Indian subjection more keenly because the poor Kashmiris themselves did not resent it. However, the young Indian tourists in Kashmir felt British arrogance keenly. The Britons' bland and unquestioning assertion of dominion over the land and the people in addition to their racial arrogance were almost more than Yashpal could endure.

When Yashpal found Devdutt and told him he wanted to learn to make bombs, Devdutt said he would need a few days to gather the information. In the meantime, Yashpal enjoyed an enforced vacation. He rented a houseboat on deep, clear, lotus-filled Dal Lake. During this period of leisure and serenity, he made plans to blow up the Viceroy's Special Train and kill the Viceroy. He expected that he himself would have to die for this—and the contrast between his anticipation of imminent and violent death and his present peaceful and beautiful surroundings made his stay in Srinagar all the more poignant. In a matter of days, when Devdutt gave him the information he needed to make explosives, Yashpal returned to Delhi where Bhagvati was waiting. It was early June, 1929.

In Delhi the atmosphere had suddenly changed to one of great sympathy for the revolutionaries. The reason was that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt on trial in the Assembly Bomb Case had explained the philosophy of the revolutionaries in a statement before the court on 6 June. Their statement was widely reported in the newspapers. The revolutionaries who were still at large were the beneficiaries of the impression the

defendants made on the public. In the eyes of the people, the men associated with them suddenly became national heroes, and Yashpal and Bhagvati found that it was easier for them to get money now and a refuge if necessary.

Yashpal and Bhagvati were confident that they could manufacture bombs—that is, they knew how to—but the problem was—where? The smoke and odours attendant upon bomb manufacture made it difficult to escape detection for long. For this reason, Bhagvati felt they would be safer in a small town than in a big city. He enlisted the help of his friend, Lekhram, who was a *vaid* in a small town in Rohtak District (U.P.). Lekhram mixed his own medicines, and his place of manufacture offered an ideal cover for the manufacture of explosives.

When the chemical ingredients and equipment were gathered together, the question arose as to who would go to Rohtak. Bhagvati Bhai wanted to be the one. The reason was very simple. Devduttji plainly said that the project imperilled one's health when it was carried out over a protracted period and on a large scale. We already had some experience with that in Lahore. When these materials are handled in great quantity in large factories, the workers are protected from the vapours. In addition to the health hazard, if we were caught, we would go straight to jail, or if the police seized us and a fight ensued, there is no doubt at all that we would be killed.

In the midst of all this, Bhagvati went to Calcutta and brought another pistol from Kiran. Now both of us were armed. I insisted that I wanted to manufacture the bomb. Perhaps there was in this a certain pride in my cleverness, but my argument was that whoever manufactured the bomb would have to stay in Rohtak anywhere from three weeks to three months. At that time Bhagvati was trying to contact Chandrashekhar Azad and his old companions in the Party through Ganesh Shankarji Vidyarthi in Kanpur.

I said, "You'd have to stop your essential work, and in the second place, either you or I would have to work as a servant in Rohtak. You don't look like a servant. Furthermore, you can't take a step without your eyeglasses." And my final argument was that if the police caught him, that would harm the Party more than if I were caught.

Finally Bhagvati agreed. He went to Rohtak and brought Vaid Lekhram to Delhi so that we could get acquainted and

decide on how to work in Rohtak.

Lekhram was astonished when I told him I would work as a servant. He was a tall and lean, but sturdy young man, fair in colour. Although Rohtak was more a village than a city, he was dressed very fashionably—a fine-spun dhoti, silk shirt, coat and a turban. When he saw me in Delhi, I was wearing a suit and collar and tie, eyeglasses and a hat—and a butterfly of a mustache. He scoffed, "How can you pass yourself off as a servant?"

According to Bhagvati Bhai, Lekhram had built a *kaccha* house separate from his house and shop just to manufacture his medicines. He told his neighbours and friends that very shortly he would begin to manufacture an excellent medicine made of quicksilver, iron, silver, gold and the ashes of coral, etc. Lekhram was to take half the materials with him to Rohtak and then come back for me several days later. I didn't shave for several days, and when I did I let my moustache grow long and droop down. Bhagvati Bhai had a well trimmed half-moustache in Lahore. But in Delhi he let it grow long and curled it. How could the neighbours not notice the change in my moustache! When they indicated their surprise at the change, Bhagvati Bhai said, "It is not becoming for Thakurs to wear moustaches like eunuchs wear."

Several days later Lekhram came from Rohtak to take me back there. He brought a thick and dirty *dhoti*, a coarse *kurta* and a long green *pagri*. We decided to leave at night to avoid attracting the neighbours' attention. At about nine at night I changed into the *kurta* and *dhoti*, wrapped the *pagri* like a Haryana Jat and took my glasses off.

"You look just like a villager now!" Lekhram laughed. And we decided on a name for me—Kisna.

Lekhram's apothecary shop was in a bazaar in the middle of Rohtak. I arrived very early every morning, swept the ragged floor mat and laid it out in front of the shop on the road, spread out a sack and pounded the medicinal herbs with mortar and pestle or ground them up and mixed them together. These were the hot months of July and August. When patients or friends came to talk, Lekhram called, "Come on Kisna, we're sweating—pull the *punkah*." And I had to stop pounding the medicines and start pulling the *punkah*. In the midst of all

this, we were searching for a new house. The hut Lekhram provided was not good enough for our work.

When the new house was ready I started manufacturing the "medicine", that is to say, manufacturing the bomb. I worked according to the process that Devdutt had explained to me. To the first strong acid which I kept boiling on the stove, I added a second acid drop by drop, stirring all the time. To this, I added a third acid little by little. Then the boiling acid in the pot would turn bright yellow and produce great clouds of yellow vapour. You could not leave the pot unattended because it had to be stirred constantly. In a day or two the effect of that yellow smoke on my *kurta* and *dhoti* was that when you touched them, pieces of the cloth came off in your hand. I couldn't possibly get a new *kurta* and *dhoti* every other day, so I didn't wear a *kurta* and *dhoti* at all when I worked, but tied a *langota* around my waist instead. Since I wore nothing else, my skin absorbed the smoke, and my whole body turned as yellow as turmeric. After four or five days of this, my skin peeled off in layers when I took a bath. . . This gave me no discomfort, but I got terrible headaches and coughing seizures from the smoke. When picric acid crystals formed from the chemical mixture, these crystals had to be washed. I wore rubber gloves for this, like doctors when they operate. Nonetheless the palms of my hands still became stained. First they turned yellow; then they turned a kind of red like fresh henna.

Every morning I put together a batch of explosives and cooked it over the fire. This took about four hours. After that I had to let the chemical solution cool off to crystallize. While waiting, I went to the shop to work, mixing medicines, pulling the *punkah* for Vaidji, or drawing cold water from the well when his friends came. People in the shop remarked on how red my hands were. I would answer, abashed, "Oh sahib, it's just a little henna." Whereupon Lekhram would speak up with "Take a look at that faggot! Paints his hands with henna like a woman! Is he vain! Aren't you ashamed, Kisna?"

The well I had to draw cold water from for Vaidji was in the Arya Samaj temple of Rohtak. A swamiji was staying in the temple those days. Every night he recited stories from the *Ramayan*. When he saw me he would call, "Hey Kisna, what

are you doing here?" "I'm getting cold water for the Vaidji, Maharaj," I would answer. At that he would tell me to pull up a bucket for him too. I did everything I was told. In the bazaar the word got around that Kisna, the vaid's servant, was a goodnatured man, but a bit simpleminded.

When I went to draw water, I knew that as soon as I returned, I'd either have to pound medicine or pull the *punkah* for Lekhram, so I would sit and chat with Swamiji for about five minutes. I said to him, "You've gone to all the great holy places, haven't you Maharaj?" Swamiji, bored, sitting there all alone, would begin to tell me stories. One day after I had drawn a bucket of water for him at his request, I saw that he was reading a book with large letters that he usually kept hidden under a stone. I was standing facing the book but I could read the title, *Tales of A Harlot*, "Is that the holy *Ramayan* you are reading, Swamiji?" I asked as I poured the water from the bucket into his wooden pot. "O yes, it is like one of the *Shastras*; it is like the *Ramayan*," Swamiji answered. "You can't read, can you Kisna?" he asked. "No, Maharaj, how would I have such good fortune?" And Swamiji very sympathetically promised to teach me to read.

Whenever Lekhram went from the shop to the house or the house to the shop, he would have me carry some kind of load on my head—a box or sack or canister. I was walking behind him one day with a canister on my head when he met a friend of his in the market. His friend was sitting on a chair in front of the soda shop, drinking. He had Lekhram pull up a chair and ordered some lemonade or soda for him. I was left standing on the road with the canister on my head.

Lekhram turned to me and said, "Say Kisna, you want some soda too?"

"Oh yes Maharaj, I'll have some."

"You'll have some eh? Ready and willing, aren't you? Did your father ever have soda to drink?" Then to the shopkeeper, he said, "OK, give him a bottle of soda."

The shopkeeper served the two friends their soda in ice-filled glasses, but for me he just opened a small bottle of soda and handed it over to me. I stood on the road, holding the canister on my head with my hand, tipped my head back and began drinking from the bottle. Lekhram turned around and started berating me. "Just look at yourself. You stand and gulp like

an ox. Why don't you at least sit down when you drink?" And I sat right down on the road.

When we reached the factory, I locked the door and punched him half a dozen times to get back at him. In the bazaar he was the master and I was the servant, but in the factory I was the teacher and he was the pupil. Whenever we got near the house he would promise never to tease me in the market or the shop, but the minute we were outside, he would do it again. Inside the house, his conduct changed completely and he would flatter me and call me "Elder Brother".

Lekhram usually did not have his noon meal at home. He had his younger brother bring it to the factory. Lekhram's wife sent a platter of fried *paranthe* and spiced dal and vegetables filled with ghee for her husband, and for me some dry bread and a bowl of dal. We would fasten the chain on the door of the house and share our food. Lekhram was greatly concerned about the bad effect the poisonous vapours from the boiling acids might have on my health. Every morning, when he came to the factory on his rounds, he brought a potful of milk or yogurt for me and we sat together and read that morning's *Hindustan Times*.

At that time, Bhagat Singh and our other friends were in the midst of their trial in court. Their case was temporarily suspended because the revolutionary prisoners were fasting. They were fasting to demand proper treatment. Earlier an agreement had been reached to differentiate political prisoners from common criminals by putting them in different classes. The British government treated rich people and leaders very well in jail. They allowed them every manner of comfort in terms of food and clothing, but poor prisoners were treated contemptuously and given very bad food and clothing.

There was a great difference in the treatment given rich and poor political prisoners as well. Jawaharlal Nehru described the treatment his father Motilalji received in Poona Jail, in his autobiography. He wrote very proudly that because Motilalji was a great man, he was asked to list what he required by way of food. When the English Jail Superintendent saw how simply he ate, his mouth fell open in astonishment. I don't know whether Pandit Motilalji or Pandit Nehruji ever opposed this kind of discrimination.

The British government viewed only the Congress people as political prisoners, not the revolutionaries. Gandhiji called them violent too. The revolutionary prisoners argued: We are not common criminals. We are political prisoners—in the manner of prisoners of war. We should be treated as respectable people. We want the same clothing, food and treatment as they receive. The government did not accede to their demand, and therefore the political prisoners went on a hunger strike.

Not all political prisoners could remain steadfast in their hunger strike. In our minds fasting was not a means of acquiring spiritual strength or changing anyone's heart. We considered our fast a means of exerting pressure on the government through the sympathy of the common people. Therefore, it was decided that the first two prisoners, as representatives of all the people, would fast unto death. When they died, two more companions would start to fast. In that way the movement would be carried forward because of the hunger strike, and the case would be stalled for months because two of the defendants could not appear in court.

This hunger strike was a most important feature of our party's programme. It was something we learned from the results and effects of Gandhi's fasts. I am not saying that Gandhi fasted for reasons other than spiritual aims. Jatindra's long fast, in view of his illness, was a matter which produced the greatest concern.

When revolutionaries fasted, they were fed milk by inserting a rubber tube into their stomachs through their noses. The revolutionary prisoners fought this. Four or five men held the prisoner down and the rubber tube was forcibly pushed through his nose into his stomach, and in all the struggling and pushing, the tube was frequently pushed into the wrong place in the body, and dreadful pain and illness resulted. It was in this way that milk was forced into Jatindra's lungs and he developed pneumonia. His condition was extremely grave. A powerful movement arose among the people to face the government to accede to the revolutionaries' demands, and hatred grew toward the tyrannical conduct of the British government.

One day we read in the newspapers that Jatindranath had

died.¹ His "Defence Committee" demanded that his body be given to his brother Kiran Das who was in Lahore. A great procession followed his corpse. According to the description in the newspapers, hundreds of thousands of people took part in the procession, and so many flowers were thrown on his body and trampled underfoot that the road beneath turned to mud. His body was carried from Lahore to Calcutta. Durga Bhabhi, Bhagat Singh's father and Kiran accompanied Jatindranath's body to Calcutta. Huge crowds gathered at every station on the route to take a *darshan* of the corpse.

I experienced two curiously opposite feelings when I was in the bomb factory at Rohtak reading of the great honour and respect the people paid to Jatindranath's memory at his funeral. As a member of the Party, I felt a kind of pride at Jatindra-nath's sacrifice. The respect paid by the people reflected a political victory of our Party and a condemnation of the British, but at the same time it seemed to me that the people felt that by honouring him in this way they had paid the price of his sacrifice. We were cognizant of our duty, sacrificing ourselves silently. We did not call attention to ourselves. In my heart I felt that we did not want any price paid for our sacrifice because the price paid by the people seemed to me a kind of slap. It appeared to me that it was the people who broke our vow to make a sacrifice without receiving any price for it. I saw no difference between myself and Jatindranath.

I was supposed to be illiterate in Rohtak and therefore I had to hide to read. I was reading the newspaper one day when Lekhram's brother came with the noon meal. He was standing looking right at me before I saw him. He called out, greatly amused, "Look, brother, look. Kisna is reading the newspaper."

"I'm only looking at the pictures," I said with a silly grin on my face, and pointing to a picture in the paper, I asked, "Isn't that Mahatma Gandhi, brother?"

"Of course not, idiot. How can that be Mahatma Gandhi?"

In addition to Lekhram's servant and his younger brother, there was one other person in that household. She was the water carrier. Young and well-built, she carried the large pitcher of water on her head confidently. We needed a great

¹On September 13, 1929.—*Trans.*

deal of water to wash the components of the bomb; therefore she had to bring several pitchers to fill the large tub. The *paniharin* would fill her pitcher with water, empty it into the tub and go back to fill it again. She earned about a *paisa* for each large pitcher. She too knew that Kisna was amiable and simpleminded. When she came bearing a full pitcher of water on her head she would call out, "Hey Kisna, help me take the pitcher off my head."

When I mixed the bombing ingredients, I wore only a loincloth. By middle-class standards, it would be very embarrassing to come before a woman dressed that way, but the *paniharin* would shout in irritation, "Are you dead? Run and get it before my neck breaks." And I had to go and help her. When she poured two pitchers into the tub, she wanted to count it as three. If I insisted it was two, she would flutter her hands coquettishly and scold me affectionately, "Can't you count?"

It was she who couldn't count. She marked one stroke on the wall for each filled pitcher. When I saw her marking four strokes for three pitchers, I would rub out the fourth with red clay. After she finished, she sat down and rested awhile and asked me about my wife and children. I deliberately answered like a fool, and she would burst her sides laughing.

I made a large quantity of chloropicrate and guncotton and was getting ready to return to Delhi. I washed the last batch and set it aside. That evening an acquaintance of Lekhram's came to the shop. He mentioned the areas where our factory was and said something to the effect that he wondered why the police were smelling around there again today. When Lekhram and I heard that, our hair stood on end, but we reacted not at all in front of him. His name was Lakshmandass and he was the Secretary of the Congress Committee of Rohtak. When he left, Lekhram, very worried, asked, "What now?" I answered, "We'll pack the prepared mixture, both wet and dry, and leave immediately. We can lock up the rest. If anything happens tonight, then at least we and the mixture will be saved."

I packed the mixture and bound everything up. I said to Lekhram, "Tell Lakshmandass you were suddenly called to Mathura on urgent business. Have him tell your wife she is not to worry nor to tell anyone you have left Rohtak. Have

Lakshmandass meet us in the House of Gupta in the Delhi Cloth Market at 3 p.m. the day after tomorrow. If he asks why, say you'll tell him then."

It was sunset before we packed, locked up the rest of the ingredients and started on our way to Delhi. Lekhram dressed like a Rohtak villager too. We each carried a sack on our head. When a bus came by on its way to Delhi, we hailed it. It stopped and we saw three constables sitting inside. The thought of sitting next to the constable with the bomb mix in our sacks agitated us very much, but we had called to the bus to stop. We started an argument with the driver about the price and he refused to let us sit down. The people in the bus berated us for our idiotic conduct, and finally the driver let us sit down at our price. So we sat. The constables ignored us. A young woman was in the bus also and the policemen were singing, "Slow down driver. My breasts are bumping up and down."

And I, pandering to the constables to amuse them, spoke up like a simpleton. "If they're shaking, let them shake, *jamadarji*. They won't flow away like ghee. Why tell the driver to slow down?" "Well spoken!" the constables said, delighted, and they clapped me on the back. We laughed and talked the whole night through until almost nine o'clock when we arrived in Delhi.

Bhagvati Bhai had approved of our leaving Rohtak. And I was anxious to know what was happening there. When Lakshmandass met us two days later, he told us that the reason the police were searching was that they were looking for a Jat woman who had run away from her husband. So we had nothing to worry about on that score, but Lakshmandass told us something else that did make us worry. Lekhram's wife had collapsed at his sudden departure without letting her know, and she had vowed to fast until he returned.

Lekhram had taken Rs. 250 from his wife to buy the chemicals for the bomb and to help support some other aspects of the organization's work. He certainly couldn't tell her why he had taken the money. Besides that, he made several last-minute trips to Delhi. In the past months, there were nights that he didn't go home at all, but stayed all night with me in the factory. And even the money he made he did not put into his wife's hands lovingly, but entrusted it to us instead. So his wife sus-

pected that her husband who, until now would have given his life for her, had fallen into the clutches of another woman.

We met Lakshmandass at Khayaliram Gupta's house. He smiled in recognition at Lekhrām but he certainly did not say anything. Lekhrām, realizing why he hesitated said, "It's OK. This is Kisna." But Lakshmandass did not know what he was talking about and he remained silent. Lekhrām said it again. Lakshmandass looked at me, but he could not comprehend. Clean, neat suit, a properly fitted collar and a tie, eyeglasses, hair nicely combed and a well-trimmed moustache. He could not even imagine what Lekhrām meant when he said, "This is Kisna."

Lekhrām had told me that Lakshmandass was a very trustworthy man and that he could be useful. We decided to trust him. When I saw him hesitate, I put on Kisna's manner and said in Kisna's voice, "I am your Kisna, Maharaj."

Lakshmandass looked me over from the top of my head to the tip of my toes, down and up, not once, but three or four times. Lekhrām explained to him that my name was really Jagdish and I was a very important man in the Party. In the future If I called him or gave him an order he was to carry it out. Lakshmandass became a very trusted friend too.

As soon as the bomb mixture was prepared, the problem of fashioning a very large casing for the bomb arose. It had to be large enough to accommodate 2 *seers* of the mixture. It was decided that in order to avoid suspicion the cover should be fashioned out of ready-made material. The plan was simple. We bought three large brass *lotas* and iron covers to fit over the mouths of the *lotas*. We made holes in the covers to accommodate electrical wire. We bound the *lotas* with iron wire to keep them closed. We did all this in a lane behind the Shrad-dhanand Bazaar. However, to our neighbours we praised the governance and excellent management of British rule, while inside our little hut we were preparing a bomb to explode under the Viceroy's train. [II: 63-74]

While Yashpal was at Rohtak, Bhagvati in Delhi tried to enlist Azad's cooperation to unite the scattered Party. However, since Jaichandra had spread the false rumour that Bhagvati was a CID agent, Azad refused to meet him. The project of blowing up the Viceroy's train was thus left to a relatively

few men.

In this connection, they faced a number of problems. First, in choosing the site of the explosion, they tried to find a place from which escape would be possible, even if not likely. They chose a spot near Tehkhand on the Mathura-Delhi line since a motor road ran parallel to the railway line there. Therefore, theoretically, one could escape by road after setting off the explosion on the railway line.

Second, since the railway line was carefully patrolled whenever the Viceroy's train was expected, the bomb would have to be buried under the line well in advance of the train's arrival. It would have to withstand the shock of passenger trains travelling over the track before the Viceroy's train arrived, and detonated at the exact moment the Viceroy's train reached that point. For this purpose, a long cable would have to be attached to the bomb, and at the other end of the cable an electric battery. The person who detonated the bomb would set off for Delhi immediately by road. He would require a motorcycle, and would wear an army officer's uniform so that his presence on the road would not be questioned.

The Delhi-Mathura road was well patrolled, and it was essential therefore to know the routines of the area, the train schedules, the times of patrol, etc. in order to plan a successful bombing and escape. For this purpose, Yashpal sent for Indrapal from Lahore.

In September I wrote to Indrapal asking him to come to Delhi. I told him to meet me at Mansrover, a modern restaurant in Chandni Chowk, an hour after his train arrived. I arrived there somewhat earlier so that he would not become anxious. We had tea, and as we walked together to a *dharmshala* in Fatehpuri Bazaar, I told him he would have to live as a sadhu for a month and a half or two in order to gather intelligence for me. Bhagvati Charan or I would come to see him from time to time. Indrapal agreed and we mounted our bicycles and rode along the Delhi-Mathura road. Nine miles from Delhi, at the edge of the road near the railway line, I pointed out a broken-down *serai* which had been standing there since Mogul times and said, "You can stay here. There are villages on both sides. You'll have to beg alms to keep yourself alive. When Bhagvati Charan or I come, we'll bring you something."

Indrapal was willing to stay alone in this wilderness. And even then we did not tell him the reason why he should stay. We decided he would become a sadhu on the very next day.

The next afternoon Bhagvati Bhai and I went to the Kaurava-Pandava Fort on the Mathura Road. Indrapal had already arrived. He had shaved all the hair off his head and face. We brought everything a sadhu needed—a saffron-coloured old *dhoti*, a black blanket, a water pot, a *chilum* and half a pound of tobacco. Indrapal changed his clothes in an isolated part of the Fort and sat down to practice austerities at the edge of the road to Tehkhand in the broken-down *serai*. We assured him we would return to see him in two days and took his bundle of clothing away with us.

Three days later I rode over on my bicycle to see Indrapal. There was still some time before sunset. He was sitting on the platform of the well, dressed in only a small loincloth. He wasn't looking well. Some men from the nearby villages were sitting and smoking at the foot of the platform. Conspicuously I touched Indrapal's feet and addressed him as "Babaji." Indrapal blessed me, then asked, "Tell me, *seth*, why have you come?"

When I came for a *darshan* of the "sadhu," I dressed like a shopkeeper in a jacket buttoned up to the neck, a *dhoti*, and a blackboat-shaped cap. To demonstrate to the people sitting nearby the honour and respect in which I held Indrapal, I sat on the ground at his feet and said to him, "Yesterday a Senior Clerk returning from Mathura told me that Maharaj was here, so I came for a *darshan*. Now, thanks to Maharaj's grace, my family is in good health. Please visit our humble home, Maharaj, to give your blessing."

I said to the people sitting nearby, "Maharaj does not wish to stay in the tumult of the city. All the great, important people in Delhi crave the chance to take the dust from Maharaj's feet. In the bloom of his youth, he left the illusion of the world, but God has given him such insight that whatever he says, happens just as he says it. His pinch of ash performs miracles. For four years my wife was so ill, she could not even keep water down. With three pinches of Maharaj's cowdung ashes, she became well." Then I joined my hands and pleaded, "Maharaj, please give me one more pinch of ash to put strength in my body."

Indrapal answered gravely, "In five to ten days, you will see, you will get well."

As I was sitting there, I said to Indrapal, "Maharaj, prices in the market are very low. Business is bad. If Maharaj will tell me something, this poor man will do better." I was waiting for the people who were sitting right near us to get up so that we could go about our business. But they stayed there until sunset. As soon as they left, Indrapal told me that he was having a hard time of it. He had eaten nothing since he arrived. He went to the village nearby to beg, but it shamed him to ask, and he couldn't do it. He only went to one house and stood at the door and called out. No one else paid any attention to him. At that one house where he announced himself, the housewife put only one fistful of flour into his begging pot. In full view of the village people, he took that one fistful of flour and threw it to the ants. Next day he went to another house. And again, in response to his call, he received only one fistful of flour. Again he fed the ants. The only thing he had to sustain him was smoking. He smoked his chilum constantly to kill the pangs of hunger, and it had given him an awful headache. So he hadn't gone anywhere.

I was very sad to hear this. I rushed back to Delhi and told Bhagvati. We went immediately to Paranthevali Street and bought a dozen *paranthes*, vegetables, a pot of yogurt and some dried sweets which would last awhile. Then Bhagvati cycled to Tehkhand and feasted Indrapal. For several days afterwards, Indrapal fed to the ants the flour he received from begging.

The villagers were astonished. "Maharaj," they said, "you have eaten nothing." And Indrapal answered magnanimously, "They are God's creatures also. They too have to be fed. When there is only a little food, it can nourish the small creatures; when there is more, then big creatures can be satisfied too."

This had a profound effect. He held firmly to his vow to beg from only one household at a time, but when he did he was given ample food. In fact, sometimes people even brought the food to him in his hovel.

We brought Indrapal a rope to draw water from the well, some aspirin tablets, a bottle of Amritdhara, a Hindi *Ramayan*, a book on palmistry in Hindi, and a tiger skin. And Bhagvati Bhai and I went there often, dressed as *lalas*, to pay our respects to Babaji in front of the villagers.

In Tehkhand and Madanpur, Indrapal started reading aloud

the story of the *Ramayan* in Hindi. People were coming to him for medical treatment. Some asked him to read their future for them. He never asked for anything from anyone. At his request, people brought pitchers and put them under the tree on the well. He himself or a villager then drew water from the well and offered it to people passing by.

The railway line gate was close to Babaji's *serai*. Two animals had been run over on the line because of the negligence of Chetram, the chowkidar. Chetram ran weeping and wailing to Indrapal. Indrapal shut his eyes for a minute and advised him, "Sit at the *pyau* and recite the name of Ram. Do not leave until you have served water to ten thirsty people. Everything will be all right." The chowkidar followed his instructions faithfully, and by luck he was fined only eight annas.

People came to Indrapal complaining of pain in their ears, teeth, head and body, and Indrapal gave them ground-up aspirin tablets mixed with ashes. He accompanied this with some nonsensical instructions like, "First close your eyes. Then shake the patient's head" or "Look at the sky, snap your fingers and say 'Ja'."

In the beginning Indrapal was very uncomfortable on the *pyau* in Tehkhand. He was hungry; the mosquitoes were biting. Most of all, he was afraid of snakes in the ruins and in the wild undergrowth. He stepped on a snake once and we brought him some snakebite medicine from a doctor we knew. Indrapal endured every discomfort without complaining, nor did he ask why he should stay there and suffer for no apparent reason. People from neighbouring villages were coming to honour him. The villagers themselves were keeping the area around the *pyau* clean. No matter what the food supply in the village, Indrapal was suffering no deprivation. [II: 79-82]

In the meantime, Yashpal learned that the Viceroy planned to come to Delhi by train from Bombay on 24 October. He and Bhagvati set that date for the train explosion. Each wanted to be the one to detonate the bomb. Bhagvati argued that to do so would clear his name by proving to all that Jaichandra was lying when he accused him of being a government agent. Yashpal argued that Bhagvati's life was more important to the Party than his own. Both agreed that they did not want the incident to be considered an act of individual terrorism, but

rather a blow by the Party against government oppression of the people. They wanted to publish a proclamation to this effect to be signed by Azad as the Commander-in-Chief of HS RA. Bhagvati sent a message to Azad through an intermediary that he would like to meet him.

At the same time, Yashpal went to Tehkhand with the bombs and digging equipment. He told Indrapal that they would bury the bombs under the railway line that night. Yashpal arrived in Tehkhand at 9:30p.m. A passenger train was due at 11:00p.m. but after that they would have four uninterrupted hours for digging until 3:00a.m., at which time two freight trains were scheduled to pass by. It was a warm October evening, and the two friends went up to the roof of Indrapal's *serai* to talk and spend the time. They started talking and laughing over old times.

Suddenly they were surrounded by a group of policemen who, hearing laughter as they patrolled the road, and seeing a stranger, concluded that this situation had possibilities. The *jamadar* threatened Yashpal with arrest on suspicion of theft. Yashpal pleaded that he was a poor, simple *bania* from Mathura who was seeking Babaji's counsel. Indrapal supported him, but the *jamadar* was adamant. He would have to take Yashpal to the police station and have him identified. Indrapal saved the day. He took the *jamadar* aside to confer with him, then said to Yashpal:

"All right, get it out. How much money do you have? Give it to *jamadar* sahib. Otherwise you'll go to the police station and they'll whip you till you die." I fished into my pocket and took out a ten-rupee note, one rupee and four annas and handed them to Indrapal. At that very moment one of the soldiers glanced at my pocket. Pointing at it, he said, "You must be a big man in the village. How come you have a fountain pen?" The soldier's question made me very tense. The story I told the police didn't jibe with carrying a fountain pen. It was a Waterman pen a friend had given me. But I continued to play my part, saying, "Oh, that, *huzoor*, I bought it at the Hindola Fair for nine annas and two paisa." Actually the pen was worth twelve rupees. It was a good thing I said what I did because it put a different idea in his mind. He laughed mockingly, "Sonuva bitch can't read or write but he has a fountain pen like a regular *munshi*."¹

To make his plight seem even more authentic, Yashpal pleaded with the *jamadar* to return a little of his money so that he could get home.

It all came to a satisfactory conclusion. The policemen had Yashpal's money; Yashpal had his freedom; all were grateful to Indrapal. When the policemen left, there was still time for Yashpal and Indrapal to bury one bomb under the railway line.

Indrapal enjoyed excellent relations with the policemen who patrolled the road. The *jamadar* who was the beneficiary of Yashpal's visit returned to Indrapal's *serai* a few nights later telling him

"It was by your grace, Babaji, that ten rupees fell into my pocket that night. Winter is coming; it's a stone on my head. I have to have a quilt for the children. Perhaps, with your blessing, God may bring a gift of another traveller. Otherwise, it will be a hard winter. Please keep that in mind, Babaji, and hold on to anyone who comes by."¹

Indrapal, of course, agreed.

On 21 October, Bhagvati again tried to get in touch with Azad in order to send him Rs 500 through Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi.² Azad refused the money since he was still suspicious of Bhagvati and sent a message that he wanted to have nothing to do with him. Bhagvati told Vidyarthi that he was sending the money because he was planning to blow up the Viceroy's train on the 24th, and the explosion would result in a massive manhunt by the police. Since Azad was wanted by the police and was also in financial difficulties, he wanted to forewarn him to find a safe place to hide and to help him financially. Vidyarthi was astonished. He protested to Bhagvati that an assassination attempt at that time would harm the country and the Congress since the Viceroy was coming to Delhi to announce new political reforms. He insisted, therefore, that the explosion be postponed at least until the Viceroy had an opportunity to make the announcement. Bhagvati could not refuse

¹II: 93.

²Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was a renowned member of the Congress Party and President of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee. He believed in nonviolence, was himself a *satyagrahi*, and in March 1931, was killed during a communal riot in Kanpur while trying to bring peace to the rioters. The Congress passed a resolution mourning his death. See Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* Vol. I. p. 458.

since Vidyarthi had always helped the revolutionaries, financially and otherwise, even though his own ideology was totally opposite from theirs. He promised, and Yashpal and Indrapal, disappointed though they were, dug up the bomb again, and went to Delhi to await their next opportunity which was to come at the end of November.

Indrapal's two-month career as a sadhu provided him with many examples of the corruption of government officials. He described to Yashpal and Bhagvati the extreme poverty of the peasants and the arrogance and callousness of the government officials who theoretically were appointed to help them. Recounting his experiences, remembering them, made him so angry that he pleaded to be allowed to kill the Viceroy immediately and, as Bhagat Singh did, use the court as a forum in which to tell the country of the people's suffering.

Indrapal was not needed in Delhi since the train explosion had been postponed until the end of November. He left for Lahore, promising to return when the Party called. Yashpal remained in Delhi, rehearsing over and over again the various possibilities for escape after the train explosion. On one such occasion at night on the Delhi-Mathura road, his motorcycle collided with an oxcart and he was thrown from the cycle and knocked unconscious. When he regained consciousness he was bleeding profusely. His motorcycle was totally wrecked in the accident. He found his way back to Delhi, but he was badly hurt and ran a high fever, and had to stay in bed for about ten days. During the period of recuperation he concentrated his thoughts on how the bomb action might be simplified. If only the bomb did not have to be buried under the railway line! If the bomb could be detonated without an electric battery! He sought the help of his younger brother Dharmpal.

Dharmpal had been trained as an electrician. However, he too had become involved in political work and was under constant police surveillance. He suggested that Yashpal seek the help of Hansraj "Wireless", an able electrician and a childhood friend. Perhaps he would find a way to detonate the bomb without the use of wires.

Hansraj was not only willing to cooperate but also promised results which far exceeded Yashpal's expectations. He claimed he could manufacture a small device which would be incorporated into the bomb and governed by another small device unconnected with the bomb by wires or anything else, and at a great distance from the bomb itself. A man could sit two miles from the railway line at the crest of a hill, watch the approach of the train, and at the right moment press the button which would explode the bomb on the railway line. No risk, no need to flee the scene, and best of all no opportunity for the British Government to learn how it was done.

The possibilities of a weapon like this were intoxicating. Victorious revolution was within the grasp of the Party! Then Hansraj went a step further. It was not necessary to watch the approach for the Viceroy's train from the crest of the hill. They could all remain in Delhi, safe and comfortable, and watch the approach of the train on a kind of television screen he had invented. At the proper moment, they could press the button on the machine and the train would be blown up.

Yashpal and Bhagvati had read of the invention of television. They so much wanted to believe Hansraj that they were easily convinced by him. However, Hansraj refused to explain how he would manufacture the various devices, but said only that the necessary components were in Lyallpur and that he required ten days to manufacture everything. In the meantime, he performed a number of electric magic tricks, earning the admiration and respect of all who realized they were in the company of a bona fide genius—one who would make the revolution riskless and imminent.

During this time they did not abandon their efforts to secure Azad's cooperation, and with the good offices of Vishvanath Vaishampayan,¹ who was Azad's trusted friend, they succeeded. Azad met Yashpal and Bhagvati in the second week of November and gave his permission as Commander-in-Chief of the HSRA to proclaim the train bombing an act of protest against the alien government.

Hansraj's ten days had passed, but he did not deliver the "television". He changed his mind, giving as the reason that the government would become suspicious of him since it knew that only he could have invented such a device. However, instead, he would furnish the Party with a "fainting gas" which when released would cause everyone within 500 yards to fall unconscious with the exception of the Party men who would have the antidote to the gas. Hansraj would produce the gas and the antidote too.

Yashpal indicates that their overwhelming desire to believe Hansraj robbed them of their judgment. Hansraj was optimistic, enthusiastic and did marvellous magic tricks with electricity. What he promised was worth waiting for. By the time they realized their mistake, November had gone and the Viceroy's train had come and gone safely.

¹He was called "Bacchan" by his friends. Not to be confused with the Hindi poet, Harivansh Rai, who writes under the pen name of Bacchan.

7 Baba Savarkar's Proposal

There was not only one revolutionary movement in India in the pre-independence decades of the twentieth century. There were many different movements, some with religious inspiration, others secular. While the HSRA was inspired by a Western economic and social ideology, others sought a return to ancient Hindu ideals. However, all revolutionary movements had in common the goal of overthrowing British rule and brought forth many dedicated and courageous men and women. Those who came later and had different aims revered the earlier revolutionaries for their courage and dedication. The Savarkar brothers, particularly Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, were leaders of a revolutionary movement in Maharashtra in the first decade of the twentieth century. When V. D. Savarkar's elder brother, affectionately called "Baba", came to Delhi, Yashpal and Bhagvati paid their respects to him and sought financial help for their work.¹

¹Baba's younger brother, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Vir Savarkar), founded a secret society in 1904 in Maharashtra named *Abhinav Bharat*. Its members were taught physical fitness, the manufacture of explosives, the collection and use of arms and the history of other countries which had gained their freedom through revolution. Savarkar himself translated into Marathi the autobiography of Mazzini, the Italian patriot. *Abhinav Bharat* expanded all through Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Vinayak went to London in 1906 and was associated with India House. He inspired young Indians to think in terms of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence. In 1907 he sponsored a secret celebration of the fiftieth year of the war of Indian independence. He tried to smuggle arms into India and to send material on bomb manufacture there. He was believed to be the inspiration behind the killing of Curzon Wylie on 1 July 1909 in London. Madan Lal Dhingra, the young Indian who shot Wylie to death, declared that he had done so to protest the inhuman transportation and hangings of Indian youths. Madan Lal Dhingra was hanged and Savarkar was deported to India.

Although the Mahasabha and HSRA had widely divergent views, Baba Savarkar did not discourage them when they sought his help. He suggested that Yashpal come to see him in Akola in Maharashtra to talk the matter over. At the beginning of December 1929, Yashpal went to visit Baba who was living in a small rented room.

Baba lived in a tiny corner room on the second floor of a small house in Akola. There was no table or chair or cot in the room. On the floor there was a blanket in a holdall which served as his bedding—he lived like a traveller who was waiting at a railway station. In front of the bedding, there was a packing case uncovered, with books and other little things in it. The box served the function of a shelf.

It was a cloudy day early in December. I rode in the train all night and by the time I reached Baba's place at almost seven in the morning, it was very cold. Baba was wearing a quilted jacket which had strings for ties instead of buttons. He was sitting on his bedding, wearing a *dhoti*. Above his bedding, hanging from a nail on the wall, was his entire and peculiar wardrobe. It consisted of a pair of earth-brown jodhpur breeches and a black hat, and at the foot of the bed were a pair of thick, heavy country shoes of leather. I couldn't take my eyes away from this collection of clothing: the string-tied jacket, the tight khaki breeches, the leather shoes and the black hat.

Baba welcomed me very affectionately. He made me sit down on a bedding he spread out next to his. He had warm water brought for me to wash; he ordered hot tea for me and he wrapped a blanket around me as I sat. He himself wore only that quilted jacket with no other covering, and he sat with his back straight as a ramrod. At that time I supposed he could be no less than fifty. It was really cold, and it embarrassed me

to stand trial for his alleged part in the killing as well as in the Nasik Conspiracy Case. He was sentenced to transportation for life on both counts. He served 13 years in prison on the Andaman Islands, after which he was allowed to return to Maharashtra but barred from political activity. In 1937, this restriction was lifted and he served as President of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1942.

For a detailed account of his life see Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 1966.

to be wrapped in Baba's blanket while he was doing without. But he insisted, "No, no. You are the one who has been travelling. It's very cold. You must cover yourself. After all, I live here." And at mealtime he prepared a dinner for me as though I were his younger brother just returning from a foreign land.

It was so cloudy and cold that day that Baba caught cold. The lady of the house brought him a glass of hot tea every two hours or so from a large pewter or brass bowl. He offered me that glass of tea and, in spite of my refusal, made me drink it. And he ordered more tea for himself. The tea did not taste like tea. When I asked Baba admitted, "That is made from the leaves of tulsi and ginger. Those are not tea leaves." I surmised that he was drinking this brew as a remedy for his cold, but he said, "I always drink this kind of tea and it's very beneficial." I was embarrassed as I asked him, "Are you drinking this brew because of its own merits or are you opposed to tea drinking because you consider it a foreign custom?" The reason I asked this question was the strange way Baba dressed. It seemed to me that he insisted on maintaining the country's ancient appearance coupled with a kind of military readiness and dash. I saw another example of this. . .

At about noon, a group of his young disciples came to tell him about sports in their gymnasium. They spoke in Marathi, but I understood that it was about a football match. We learned all these games from the English—football, cricket, hockey, etc.—therefore we all used English terms in describing them, such as Centre, Forward, Back, Halfback, Goal, Out, Penalty—we said them in English. But these people rejected the use of English and instead substituted Sanskrit words. I found no fault with their effort to utilize their own language exclusively in order not to depend on a foreign language—but all the same it sounded very peculiar.

Baba answered my question without a trace of embarrassment, "I am opposed to tea drinking because it is a foreign custom." Even though I revered Dada for his loyalty and his sacrifice, nonetheless it seemed to me that he lacked balance and practicality in his cultural outlook.

There was no hypocrisy in Baba's warmheartedness or in his forthright declarations. He regarded the Congress policies

of non-cooperation and non-violence as worthless, and he certainly did not need to be taught the principles of revolution. He guided us to awareness in our revolution against slavery to foreigners. Therefore, as soon as we were alone, I asked for his help in money, arms and connections. Based on our conversation in Delhi, Baba knew why I had come.

He did not refuse my request, but expressing his own viewpoint and purpose, he said, "Our aim is to free the country from servitude to foreigners. Progress towards our nationhood is the purpose of freeing the country—that must be assured. Aside from the British government, our country has another enemy opposed to national unity, and since it is on the side of the English, it strikes at our efforts towards freedom. That is the Muslim. He considers himself separate from the Hindu community and from the traditional culture of the country. The culture is what gives it its life and strength. Cultural unity is the basis for national unity.

"With this and the power of *shakti*, we can fight foreign domination and gain our independence. But first, in order to establish our cultural unity, we must get rid of the enemies who are against us. Otherwise, fighting the English is like ignoring the tree of slavery and just cutting down the branches. We are in complete sympathy with your aims, but we can cooperate with you only if there is unity in the programme . . ."

Baba interpreted my silence as assent. He continued, "At this time the most insidious influence on the nation is Muslim opposition to Indian nationalism under Jinnah's leadership, with the policy of making two nations out of one. Jinnah is the symbol and representative of that policy. If you will take the responsibility of finishing him off, then the greatest obstacle on the path of freedom will be removed. And for this, I can arrange a payment of 50,000 rupees."

I smiled politely to Baba but made it perfectly clear that I rejected his proposal. At that time we were in very difficult financial circumstances—and 50,000 rupees was not an everyday sum of money. One could view killing Mr Jinnah as one way out of our financial problems. We did not hesitate to rob for political purposes nor to manufacture counterfeit coins to further our political aims. In robbing, there was always the possibility that someone would get killed. We felt no sympathy

towards Mr Jinnah's politics, but to commit murder because of communal differences would deal a blow to the country, to all the people, and to unity. To me it was simply blind communalism.

I prepared to return to Delhi that very evening. A few minutes before I was to leave, someone came and left a long, narrow bundle wrapped in cloth for Baba. When he left, Baba said to me, "You've come such a long way, but on short notice I could get you only one of these."

Shortly after the person left, Baba unwrapped the bundle and a long, heavy pistol emerged. The way it was fashioned and the way it looked, I knew it to be something made by the village ironmonger. Instead of a barrel for cartridges, there was a hollow tube which had to be filled with gunpowder and plugged with a yard-long stick. I looked at Baba again and asked, "And where is the ammunition?"

"That is its unique feature," Baba explained, "you don't have to waste time looking for cartridges. It can be filled with whatever you want."

I thanked Baba but refused to lift that burden and instead took out my Colt revolver and showed it to him, and I said, "This is the kind of thing we need to protect ourselves—something that can be concealed on the body."

"As you wish," Baba said in hurt tones, "but how can you get those foreign things in any quantity?"

As I was leaving, Baba put a ten-rupee note in my hand and said, "Your coming here was a waste of time. This is all I have, but it will help with the train fare and something to eat."

Even though we had political differences, that was a sign of Baba's personal affection, and I accepted it as a blessing.

Baba's proposal concerning Mr Jinnah was not a matter which could be dismissed with a smile or a frown, but one which had a very profound influence on the politics of the entire country. It could mean that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Hindus and Muslims would be set at each other's throats. I kept thinking of this all night long on the train. I could not disregard the national unity of the country. What was of particular concern was that Hindu-Muslim enmity was already increasing. I and people like myself rejected the communal viewpoint and considered it total nonsense; nonetheless this was the greatest pro-

blem of our country. It seemed to me that differences in religious belief was no necessary reason for enmity. I have already mentioned that, in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha meetings in Lahore, we used to arrange dinners where all castes of Hindus and Muslims ate together in order to end communal tensions.

On returning to Delhi I reported the results of my trip to Bhagvati Bhai and Azad. Azad burst out in irritation when he heard Baba's proposal concerning Jinnah Sahib, "What does he think we are—assassins for hire?" Then I told him about the *deshi* pistol as long as your arm and we had a good laugh about that. But it wasn't just a laughing matter. In Baba's mind that *deshi* pistol was a symbol of his passion for Indian culture. There was no doubt in my mind of Baba's dedication and the firmness of his resolve, but the differences between the Savarkars and us in national viewpoint was as great as the difference between the pistol fashioned by the village ironmonger which had to be stuffed with a yard-long stick and the pistol which shot eight bullets automatically.

The Savarkars always based their nationalism on a platform of the preservation of Hindu culture and they never changed in this respect. Not only the Savarkar brothers, but in earlier times other young men as well attempted armed revolution, inspired in their nationalism by their communal or religious beliefs.

When Khudiram Bose and Kanai Lal Datta stood on the gallows, they felt they were sacrificing themselves for Mother India or Mata Radha—in other words, in Hindu terms. The Kuka Mutiny and Wahabi Mutiny against the British were led by Sikhs and Muslims, also for religious reasons. We of the HSRA were proud of those who had preceded us in the struggle against foreign rule. We revered them, but we distinguished between communalism and nationalism, and we rejected the communal viewpoint. The reason was that the progress of Ireland, Italy and Turkey and the Russian Revolution of 1917 affected Indian thinking and we were attracted to Marxist scientific materialistic philosophy and rejected communal philosophy. That is why we did not invoke the name of Ram either on the gallows or in our jail cells. When Bhagat Singh was hanged, his last words were, "Long Live Revolution!" and "Down with Imperialism!"

Concerning communalism I will say only this about the beliefs and conduct of our companions in the HSRA—we made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Brother Azad was a Brahman. His nickname in the organization was “Pandit ji”. He could perform all the religious rites properly, from beginning to end, if he had to. But *puja* and *sandhya* and sacred thread, etc. irritated him. He considered dependence on them to indicate a lack of self-confidence and good sense. He questioned the sincerity of people who were always performing *puja*. Bhagvati Bhai was not irritated by things like this, but he considered them a waste of time. [II : 111-22]

8 The Bombing of the Viceroy's Train

On 23 December the Viceroy was scheduled to travel by train to Delhi from Kolhapur for a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi on the eve of the Congress annual meeting which that year (1929) was to be held in Lahore. At the Calcutta session of Congress in December 1928, a resolution was passed to launch a non-cooperation movement by the people if certain Congress demands were not acted upon by the British government during that year. The year had passed and the government had ignored the resolution. The purpose of the projected meeting between Gandhi and the Viceroy was to achieve some kind of understanding before the Congress session in Lahore.

Yashpal and Bhagvati chose 23 December for the train bombing. Hansraj had promised his "fainting gas" would be ready on the 18th. On the 20th, Hansraj came to Delhi at Indrapal's insistence, with the excuse that the vial of fainting gas he had prepared had broken in a tonga while he was en route to Delhi. He said that the other passenger in the tonga, the tonga driver, and even the horse had fallen unconscious, but he, because of the antidote, was able to get away. He had wanted to return to Lyallpur to make another batch of gas, but Indrapal had insisted that he come to Delhi to help the Party find another way. That night Lekhrām and Bhāgrām, Bhagvati and Yashpal all went to the railway line near the Kaurava-Pandava Fort and buried a bomb beneath the line. They realized that the original method of detonating the bomb would have to be used—a coil of electric cable and a battery.

Next day a new complication arose. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi urged Azad to postpone the explosion for a while since the Congress hoped that real concessions would result from the meeting between Gandhi and the Viceroy. Bhagvati and Yashpal protested to Azad, pointing out that the ultimatum the Congress had given the government a year earlier had been totally ignored. Furthermore, the bombing would not interfere with the Congress non-cooperation movement. In fact it would serve to impress upon the government the serious consequences of ignoring the people's demands.

If Congress really wanted to start a movement, this incident would not dampen the people's enthusiasm; it would fuel it. The people's demands have been ignored and Gandhi had to plead for an audience with the Viceroy, both of which were affronts to the country and the Congress. Therefore, we wanted to put an end to the Viceroy on the morning of the meeting. For our part, we were opposed to the Congress' policy of compromise, Congress always slinks away from a declaration of war. When, because of us, it becomes impossible to compromise with the government, then the struggle will begin.

Bhaiya had someone new with him—Virbhadra Tiwari, a very important United Provinces organizer. He had a way of looking at you searchingly and gave the impression of great thoughtfulness.

Virbhadra discussed our problem at great length, indicating that he was in complete agreement with us, but that squandering the sympathy of Vidyarthi and the other Congress leaders wouldn't be good for the Party. Therefore, he urged, the incident should be postponed for seven days. Let's first see the results of the Viceroy's and Gandhiji's meeting. That would satisfy the Congress leaders. He said he learned from knowledgeable sources that under Pandit Jawaharlal's leadership, this time the struggle would certainly begin. Gandhiji too was agreeable to this and that was why he chose Nehruji who represented the left as the head of Congress. Then at that time, the efforts of our Party would be far more highly valued.

Kailashpati, the Delhi representative, concurred in this. The argument he made was that the Party was not strong enough to attack the government now. The government would retaliate by tracking down the revolutionaries ruthlessly, and the Party could be greatly injured. We reasoned and argued and repeated ourselves and so did they—four hours were spent that way. Neither Bhagvati Bhai nor I was convinced by Virbhadra and Kailashpati—nor they by us.

Azad expressed the opinion that we should not be puppets in the hands of others. We had already postponed the action once on the advice of others, but, on the other hand, to take a step thoughtlessly was not good either. This was not a game. The nonviolent, conciliating policy of Congress and our policy

were poles apart. "You will have to decide according to your feelings and understanding," he said. "It will have to be your own decision. . . ."

That didn't end the discussion. I couldn't think of anything else in my eagerness to buy the electric wiring for the battery. Since there was no end in sight to the arguments back and forth, I got up, said I would be back later, and left. I bought 250 yards of ordinary flexible electric wire at the market, and, with Hansraj's help, connected the wire to the battery. I fastened a bulb at the other end of the wire and began testing to see whether the wire was properly connected.

It was almost six o'clock before Bhagvati Bhai returned, looking dejected. He took me aside and told me that the decision had been made to postpone the explosion.

"No, it won't be postponed," I said firmly.

"How can that be?" he protested.

"I don't agree with what those people say and neither do you. Therefore it is our political duty to oppose the decision, no matter what the cost."

"That's not the right thing to do," Bhagvati disagreed.

"I'm going to blow it up this very night," I insisted. "If I don't get back alive, I won't have to make any explanations. Afterwards you can tell the Party that Yashpal just wouldn't obey. If I do come back, the public will admire us so much that we will be vindicated. Furthermore, if the Party still considers it a crime, I'll accept whatever punishment it chooses to mete out. If the Party wishes, it can shoot me dead then for the crime of disobedience."

Bhagvati Bhai was silent for a while, then said, "We're in this together. Whatever will be will be. And we won't postpone the explosion."

Since the Party had postponed it, we could not use the proclamation we had intended to publish under the name of Kartar Singh, Commander-in-Chief (which was the name Bhaiya used). Bhaiya had given us the seal of the Party to be used on the proclamation. Since the incident was to have been postponed, Bhaiya asked Bhagvati to return the seal and the proclamation which was stamped with the seal. The seal was in the form of an arch fashioned by two crossed swords which enclosed the letters H S R A. And below it were two hands

clasped in friendship. This seal symbolized the unity of all the people in our war against the foreign government.

Virbhadra Tiwari had advised us to postpone the action for one week only. The Viceroy customarily went to Calcutta at the end of December to celebrate the incoming new year and we could blow up his train then. But we would not accept a postponement. We felt it would be more useful to carry out our action before the Congress took any action on the theory that what we did could affect the Congress decisions. Another reason was that if Congress were to adopt some compromising policy and we bombed the train after that, it would demonstrate our opposition to the Congress. We didn't want to come before the people in opposition to Congress, but we did want to come before them independently as an organization in sharp opposition to foreign rule.

It may appear that I was pursuing this policy objectively, but I wasn't thinking of the problem only from an objective point of view at that time. I had a personal reason for wanting to do it immediately. When we had completed all our preparations for this event in October, Bhagvati Bhai had Dhruvji take a photo of me in officer's uniform—helmet on my head, army jacket and army belt, breeches and high boots—I wore the insignia of a Major in the Cavalry. He took this photo in the thought that, after my imminent and certain death, he would have it to remember me by. When we thought a friend of ours was about to die, we always took a photo of him for remembrance. Before Indrapal had his head shaved to become a sadhu in Tehkhand, we took a picture of him in his customary clothes. Hence, after that photo had been taken of me, I considered myself sacrificed already. It was an offence to me that I was still alive—and I was embarrassed by it. I was therefore insisting on exploding the bomb on 23 December.

* Bhagvati Bhai returned the seal and the proclamation which bore its imprint, and was back at about half past eight. At nine-thirty, not to put it off for another moment, we left for the Kaurava-Pandava Fort with the battery, a roll of wire and a shovel. We didn't even stop to eat.

With Lekhram, Bhagram, Indrapal and Hansraj staying with us, we were a big crowd. Our neighbours remarked, "Thakur Sahib, it's like a fair here every day. What's going on?" "The

fair will be over today," I smiled, and to pacify them, I added, "I'm going to England tonight. These people are from my home and my village."

My friends were hungry. We bought puris and sweets on the road near Kharibavali. We arrived too early at the place where we intended to bury the electric wire. We had to wait for the passenger train to pass by and, while waiting, they were all sitting and eating. I was hungry too, but I couldn't eat a thing. I hadn't been able to eat anything all day long and the night before, and I was nauseous. Indrapal saw I wasn't eating and broke in with, "Let's feed the sacrificial goat. You stuff the goat well when you take him to the temple. If he's hungry when he dies, his soul is restless." And while looking at me, he kept on eating and eating and eating.

"Do you think I will leave you in peace?" I answered, "I shall become a ghost and ride on your skull," I said laughing. What I didn't know then was that I would outlive most of my friends assembled there. Bhagvati Bhai, Bhagram and Indrapal all went before me . . .

When the train came and passed by, we started burying the wire. It had rained very heavily two days earlier and the ground was still damp and yielding. We buried 250 yards of wire in two hours.

There were almost 200 yards from the end of the wire to the road. The earth was sandy and soft and we would have to leave the motorcycle on the road itself. That worried Bhagvati Bhai. "You'll have to leave the motorcycle on the road until you can push the switch on the battery. You're coming from a distance and must wait for an hour or more. In the meantime, the motorcycle unattended on the road is bound to attract attention. The police might make their rounds just at that time. You have to have a man near the motorcycle who can answer for it. He could say that he was on his way to Delhi when the cycle broke down or ran out of petrol and that was why he was stuck there. Another thing is that the cycle can be stolen if no one is watching it. If it is stolen, you won't have any chance at all to save yourself."

We returned to Naya Bazaar from the railway line at about two in the morning and gathered all our equipment together. I changed into my officer's uniform and gave Bhagvati my

other clothing. At first it was decided that Indrapal, Hansraj and Bhagram would return to Lahore by the four o'clock train. Lekhrum would return to Rohtak and Bhagvati Bhai would go to Ghaziabad Station to wait for me.

The Viceroy's train was due to arrive in New Dehli at 6 a.m. Six or seven minutes before that it would pass Kaurava-Pandava Fort. If I could get out after the incident without being arrested, I would go directly to Ghaziabad by motorcycle. I would leave the cycle at Ghaziabad Station and, with Bhagvati Bhai, go on to the teeming city of Calcutta to hide. Calcutta had unusually large crowds at that time of year on account of the horse races. Everyone was about to go his own way when Bhagvati Bhai said, "I'll go with you to watch the cycle." For Bhagvati to be placed in danger just to watch over the motorcycle didn't seem right to me. I was against it, saying, "Let Bhagram come with me. If I catch a bullet in my hand or shoulder, I can sit in the back of the cycle and Bhagram can drive me to Ghaziabad. . ."

Bhagram started getting ready immediately. I've often been considered a very brave man because I set off the bomb under the Viceroy's train, but Bhagram's bravery is more to be respected than mine. In my case, I not only had prepared for this for several days, but had battled to do it. I only mentioned Bhagram's name and in a second he agreed to come with me. Bhagram was dressed in ordinary clothes. Because he was in poor health he had bought a second-hand Army overcoat to protect him from the winter's cold. Now it came in very handy. He was given a pistol with the thought that he would precede me on the road and be able to face any danger that might come—and if we were both in danger, we could both fight back. Fine—now Bhagvati Bhai could proceed to Ghaziabad.

After everyone else had gone, at 4.30 a.m. we left the house very quietly. The motorcycle was on the street. We pushed it onto the road so as not to shatter the silence and I started it when we were on the road. Bhagram sat behind me as though he were my orderly, and off we went to the appointed place. It was cold and foggy that night because it had rained for two days. The strong, bright headlamp on the cycle gave a dim spot of light in the thick fog and could not penetrate it for any distance. Outside the city the fog was even denser. We

stopped at the Kaurava-Pandava Fort.

Before we crossed the road to the buried wire, I explained to Bhagram that a pilot engine always preceded the Viceroy's train. The pilot engine goes some miles ahead in order to protect the Viceroy's train, so that if there is any irregularity on the line, the train can be stopped before it is endangered. The sound made by a single engine on the track is quite different from the sound made by an entire train. I told Bhagram that I would first let the pilot engine pass. There would be ten or fifteen minutes before the Viceroy's train came and in that time I would set up the bomb. I told him that if there was a fight or the sound of shots after the explosion, and I was delayed, he was to get on the motorcycle and ride back. If the police made their rounds before the explosion and started asking questions, he was to tell them, "Major Sahib was making his rounds when his motorcycle broke down. He went ahead and is sending a car for me."

I searched for the wire we had buried near a dry well and, when I found it, attached it to the light battery I had brought with me. Then I started waiting for the train. One way to pass the time is to count off the minutes on your watch. There is a certain satisfaction in counting: so much time has passed, so much time remains. But I had given my watch to Bhagvati Bhai. In the biting cold and thick fog, I started walking all around the battery to keep myself alert. As I was waiting, anticipating the first glimmer of light in the sky, it actually got darker and the fog grew even denser. Vapour was rising from the drenched earth, thickening the air. After quite a long wait, I heard the sound of the train coming from Mathura. It was passing right in front of me. I remembered that the pilot engine had to go by first. The sound was coming from the spot at which the "incident" was to take place, but I could not see any light on the face of the pilot engine. I thought perhaps there is no searchlight on the face of the engine, or perhaps I can't see it because the fog is too thick.

The Viceroy's train was due in less than fifteen minutes now. Some of the blackness of the night had lightened, but the atmosphere was all white fog, like puffs of cotton. Bushes ten feet away were not visible. I thought, if I can't see the beam on the face of the train, how will I know when it has reached

the right spot? I realized that I would have to make a judgement on the basis of sound alone.

We had planned that the bomb would explode on the face of the engine just as the train reached a certain place. The engine would be derailed and roll over and over, just as in a head-on collision of two trains. Again I heard sounds on the line from the direction of Mathura going towards New Delhi. My eyes strained to pierce through the fog for the engine light. But I could not see it. Now I had to judge when to push the switch on the battery on the basis of sound alone. The train was very close now. I held my breath, gathering all consciousness into my ears, waiting with my hand on the switch to judge the location of the train by the sound. Now! I pushed the switch. An instantaneous, awful burst of explosion!

I waited to hear the next sound—the crash of the train falling down the steep bank and turning over and over. But, contrary to all my hopes and expectations, the train sped on to New Delhi in its customary way.

I was stunned with disappointment and defeat. I suspect that people's hearts stop beating from shocks like that. I, failed, crushed, helpless and astonished, only stood there.

Even though the train proceeded safely and soundly on its way after the explosion, I expected the police who were stationed on either side of the line would certainly be running towards me. I drew my pistol out of my shoulder holster and held it ready. My body tensed, my eyes straining for the sight of those who were coming to seize me. About a minute passed that way. Then I realized how foolish I was to be waiting to be picked up. I had better get going!

As I was running towards the motorcycle the thought came—it isn't possible that no one is coming to arrest me. But if I run, I'll catch a bullet in my back. If I have to die, it is a disgrace to be shot in the back. So I stopped where I was standing and I remember quite well that I smiled to myself and silently taunted the police with, "Come on! Here I am!" Another two minutes passed. There was no sound of anyone coming, nor did I see anyone.

I started walking towards the motorcycle. After every other step, I stopped and looked back, but no one was in sight. Going forward and looking back again and again, I finally

reached the road. When Bhagram saw me, he asked, "Nothing?"

I waved my hand to indicate my ignorance and failure.

"Maybe there wasn't enough explosive?" Bhagram offered an explanation.

"Maybe," I answered.

"It took you so long to get back, I was really worried," Bhagram said, "I didn't hear any shot and I didn't see you coming"

I couldn't think of a proper response, so I avoided it by saying, "I was just looking to see if anyone was coming." I mounted the motorcycle, and kicked down on the starter once, twice, ten times. . . twenty times—pushing down on the starter with all the strength in my leg—until I was gasping for breath. Still the engine would not start. I moved over to let Bhagram try; he couldn't start it either.

Bhagram was sure that the motor was jammed because of the cold weather. He thought if we gave it a push, it would be all right. We put the engine in gear and together pushed the cycle quite a distance—almost two furlongs. And still it wouldn't start.

Bhagram noticed that the mudguard and the tank were soaking in dew, and he suggested that water might have got into the plug. "If we don't clean out the plug," he said, "the cycle won't go." In all this commotion and frustration, twenty minutes had gone by. It didn't occur to either of us that it might be a good idea to hide the motorcycle in the bushes and flee for our lives. Each additional moment we delayed nudged us nearer to an encounter with the police or our arrest.

The Viceroy's train would have arrived in the New Delhi station only about six minutes after the explosion. An immediate police investigation would be launched, speeding them to where the explosion took place. And that is what happened. As we were pushing the motorcycle in the dense fog, we heard the steps of a troop of marching men.

"All right, just leave it here," I said to Bhagram, "it's either the police or the army coming. Go over to the other side of the motorcycle and get down. If bullets start flying defend yourself. Try to shoot down as many as you can. First, I'll get in front and start shooting."

The sounds of marching grew louder. From out of the fog and mist, the dim outline of the Guard emerged. The Officer of the Guard marched two steps ahead of the others. The soldiers bore rifles on their shoulders. I was standing straight and tall at the side of the road waiting for the Guard to pass directly in front of me so that I could begin shooting, and shooting first, kill two or three of them. As I think about it now, I realize that the simplest way would have been to have hidden quietly in the bushes, and when the Guard went by, to have gone on to Delhi. Anyway, what happened was this. . .

The soldiers of the Guard were only about two steps away. The Officer of the Guard, marching a few steps ahead, saw me. I grabbed the pistol in my pocket. The officer took two more steps toward me and called out in a sharp commanding tone, "Eyes right!" I was drawing the pistol out of my pocket when my hand stopped right there. I realized that the order was not to shoot, but to salute. In a moment I understood the situation. The officer did not see me as a questionable or guilty person, but as a superior officer. And he thought Bhagram was my orderly. This was not surprising since I was wearing the insignia of a Major. With official gravity and a stiff chin, I acknowledged the salute. And the Guard marched on.

"That was a close call," I said to Bhagram, "let's push on and see what happens."

We took turns pushing the motorcycle on to Delhi. We finally reached Faiz Bazaar. There right next door to the police station was a repair shop for cars and motorcycles. A man was sitting on the veranda with a blanket wrapped around him. Bhagram called out to him imperiously. "Major Sahib's cycle is broken. Fix it. A man will come to pick it up."

The sun had risen but the bazaar wasn't crowded. We started walking toward Chandni Chowk. Now Bhagram and I were both exhausted. We had pushed the motorcycle for four miles. We hadn't slept all night. As for me, I hadn't slept or eaten for 48 hours. Now just putting one foot ahead of the other was a supreme effort. I realized I had to get something to eat to restore my strength.

We went to the Mansrover, which was a very decent hotel. Just by luck Bhagvati Bhai had insisted on putting 15 rupees in my pocket. Bhagram advised me to order raw eggs and

warm milk. We sat down at separate tables because an orderly and an officer just don't sit and eat together. Somehow I still wasn't hungry. My head was whirling and I tasted something bitter in my mouth as though I had drunk wormwood. I broke six eggs raw and poured them down my throat, following them with very warm milk. I sat a while resting, but how long could I stay in the hotel?

We got up and started making our way to the station. We had no place to stay in Delhi. I knew if I were to go to anyone's house it would upset them very much when they realized the situation. Bhagvati Bhai was waiting for us at Ghaziabad Station, how could I get there? The motorcycle was broken. The impediment to going there by railroad was that I would have to travel from Delhi station in a Major's uniform. Both the uniform and my hat bore the emblem which could plunge me into disaster. It was the symbol of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army in the form of an arch, within which were clearly written the letters HSRA. Our purpose in attaching the symbol to the uniform was that we did not intend to hide ourselves like frightened outlaws, but to fight against the alien government in the war of independence. We had already extricated ourselves from one perilous situation. Now this very symbol was a cause for apprehension. But there was no other way. We walked on to Delhi station.

I acted cool and superior as Bhagram went to buy me a first-class ticket and himself a third. With every step I took, I was fearful that the police were coming to shoot me. But I behaved very naturally.

The last hurdle was to enter the compartment of the train to Ghaziabad. A white soldier was lying on a berth with his newspaper spread out on a table. How could he fail to notice the peculiar badge on my uniform? The moment I stepped into the compartment, he saw me from the corner of his eye, jumped up and snapped to attention. He saluted, and then frightened and embarrassed at having been caught in the first-class compartment, cast his eyes down and left.

Not until the train left Delhi station did I feel safe, for the moment at least. We arrived at Ghaziabad Station at about 10 o'clock. When Bhagvati Bhai saw me, he was dumbstruck. I should have been there hours earlier, at 7 o'clock. All during

the journey there, I worried that Bhagvati Bhai would wait until perhaps 8 o'clock and then have to leave. But there he was reading a newspaper in the waiting room as I arrived.

His eyes asked the question, "How did it go?"

I made a negative sign with my hands to show that nothing had happened.

Bhagvati Bhai suspected that Hansraj's battery may have been defective. I told him there had been a powerful explosion, but that I doubted that any harm had come to the train; that the motorcycle had broken down and we had to walk to Delhi; and that we had come from Delhi by train. Bhagvati Bhai had thought I was dead; he looked grief-stricken; but now, with the reality that I was alive, his sadness evaporated. He slapped me on the back and smiled and said, "Never mind, we'll try it again."

Bhagram had caught a cold and was feeling miserable. We sent him directly to Lahore to Indrapal's house to recuperate there. Bhagvati Bhai and I took a passenger train to Moradabad which crept along and waited at every station. Bhagvati was wearing an ordinary suit, and I changed from army clothing to regular clothing. Both of us sat in the train dejected and silent. When it reached Moradabad Station we heard a newspaper vendor shouting, "Latest news! Bomb explosion under Viceroy's train! Railway track blown up! One compartment destroyed! One man killed!"¹

We were thrilled! The express train from Delhi started an hour and a half after ours, but carried the latest newspapers published after the explosion. It arrived in Moradabad before us. The express train passed our train on the way.

It appeared from that Special Edition that the bomb had exploded under the Viceroy's dining car on the train. Only the iron base remained intact in that car; everything else was blown up—and shattered. Almost six feet of rail were destroyed. Because the train was travelling very fast at the time, its momentum carried it across the broken tracks. The Viceroy's secretary was sitting in the car adjacent to the dining car. He was knocked unconscious by the explosion. A bearer who was

¹Either the newsboy was in error or the newspaper. No one was killed in the explosion.

looking out of the window, watching as the train approached Delhi suffered burns on his face. The Viceroy's car passed over before the explosion. The blast threw him out of bed on to the floor. The train was covered with a tarpaulin when it arrived in New Delhi so that people would not see how badly it was damaged.

When the Viceroy left that train, he went directly to church to thank God for his deliverance before he went home to Government House.

When the realization of what had happened dawned on us, our spirits rose. And we had pleasure in telling each other that if there had been no fog, if we could have seen the light,—how successful the explosion would have been! We could have set the bomb off right on the face of the engine and the whole train would have been destroyed! From Moradabad, we left the train and boarded the Dehra Express to Calcutta.

News of the incident arrived in Calcutta before us. When Sushila met us, her eyes sparkled with pleasure, knowing that we had accomplished something. We heard that at the Congress session in Lahore the delegates went wild with joy at the news of the explosion under the Viceroy's train. [11 : 127-39]

A later and fuller version appeared in *The Pioneer Mail* and *Indian Weekly News* in its issue of 27 December 1929. The news story appears with a short summary and headlines preceding it. It is reproduced here in part as follows:

ATTEMPT TO BLOW UP VICEROY'S SPECIAL LORD IRWIN'S NARROW ESCAPE

Bomb Exploded by a Concealed Cable

A dastardly attempt was made to blow up the Special Train in which His Excellency the Viceroy was returning to Delhi from his South Indian tour near Nizamuddin Station about six miles from Delhi. No one was injured.

The bomb which was buried between the rails exploded when the fourth coach was passing over the point, while the Viceroy's saloon was two coaches behind.

A concealed cable running to a small battery about three hundred yards from the railway line was subsequently discovered. According to a report current in New Delhi, one

arrest has been made in connection with the outrage.

Delhi, December 23

It was exactly seventeen years ago that a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge, then Viceroy of India, when he was making his state entry into Delhi, which had been made the capital of India on his recommendation, and today by some mysterious coincidence, an attempt to blow up Lord Irwin's special train was made on an almost equally important occasion, fortunately with much less success.

Lord Irwin was returning from a strenuous tour of South India, and New Delhi, in spite of a thick fog and mist, was expecting to see His Excellency make his first entry into the new Viceregal house, . . . close to the Nizamuddin Railway Station (six miles off New Delhi) arrangements to blow up the train had been made with considerable skill and secrecy . . .

Authentic information is to the effect that an infernal machine was buried beneath the ballast between the rails and was fired by means of a concealed cable attached to a small battery, which was subsequently discovered at a distance of about 300 yards from the railway line.

Whoever did it seems to have acted with great skill and care so as not to be suspected by those in the pilot engine, although he was largely helped by the presence of an exceptionally thick fog. Fortunately, the bomb was only touched off and exploded at the vestibule of the fourth coach from the engine while the Viceroy's saloon was only two coaches further behind. There were all together thirteen coaches, the third of which from the engine side was the dining car. The explosion occurred first as the dining car had passed and the fourth coach was running over the point. It blew up solid pieces of the steel rail two feet in length and smashed part of the wooden sleeper into splinters. It tore up the flooring of the vestibule to the ceiling of which also some damage was done. The window panes of the dining car as well as of the coach in question were badly smashed.

The Viceroy's saloon passed untouched and the train pro-

ceeded without stopping and reached the New Delhi Station punctually to the accompaniment of booming guns. . .

In the same issue of *The Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* an editorial on Page 3 deplored the "diabolical outrage" and expressed happiness that the Viceroy was spared.

Gandhiji presented a motion¹ at the very beginning of the Congress session condemning the Viceroy's attackers, expressing sympathy for the Viceroy and offering thanks to God for sparing the Viceroy's life. Gandhiji called the Viceroy's attackers cowards and after censuring us, spoke to the delegates in honeyed words, praying and entreating them to pass the motion unanimously and without discussion.

In spite of the blind adoration in which people held Gandhi and their boundless respect for his personality, and in spite of many appeals by the Congress leadership to protect his prestige, the people were furious at his appeal. Although 1,731 delegates were present, the motion was passed by a majority of only 81. And even in this majority of 81, how many were really against the work of the revolutionaries? That would be hard to guess. The well-known Punjab leader Shrimati Sarala Devi Chaudharani said that it was universally agreed that scores of those who voted for the motion did so simply to avoid angering Gandhi.²

¹The resolution presented by Gandhi on 31 December 1929 to the Lahore Congress was as follows:

This Congress deplores the bomb outrage perpetrated on the Viceroy's train, and reiterates its own conviction that such action is not only contrary to the creed of Congress but results in harm being done to the national cause. It congratulates the Viceroy and Lady Irwin and their party, including the poor servants, on their fortunate and narrow escape. (*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Volume II, 1929, p. 298.)

²"Swami Govindananda opposing the resolution said that the creed of non-violence should not be forced on those who were not Congressmen and believed in different means to achieve the freedom of the country. The Congress should not therefore condemn those who did not believe in the Congress creed. It was very difficult to say which party was serving the country better. The time for pronouncing any judgment would be when India was free. He further deplored that while the resolution condemned the outrage it did not say a word against the Government for having arrested several innocent young

Now again we were faced with the necessity of contacting the other Party members and establishing ourselves elsewhere. In this connection, I stayed at Shri Surendra Vidyalankar's house on Central Avenue in Calcutta. The moment I saw Surendraji, I remembered him. He had been several classes ahead of me at Gurukul Kangri. I didn't consider it necessary to introduce myself by my real name, but told him only that I was a revolutionary and had to flee because of an incident in Delhi. Several days later, Bhagvati Bhai left Calcutta for Lucknow. Our thought was that now we would transfer our operation to Lucknow. Planning the explosion of the Viceroy's train imposed a great strain on my health. Bhagvati left me to rest in Surendraji's house for about five days.

I went to Lucknow on the day and by the train we had prearranged. Bhagvati Bhai met me at the station. He had rented a room on the second story of a building next to Salomon Company's store. At that time Lucknow wasn't the crowded city it is today. We rented the room for about ten rupees a month then.

As soon as I came to Lucknow, I had a signboard painted with SANITARY SUPPLIERS, and we hung it in front of our room on the second story. The neighbours and the shopkeepers downstairs had no notion of what the signboard meant. They asked us what kind of work we did. We explained that our product was generally used in hospitals, factories, colleges and

men at Lahore who had nothing to do with the outrage.

"Mr Abdur Rahaman, supporting the resolution, said that he honoured everyone who worked for the cause of the country, yet, as the perpetrator of the outrage in question had gone against the Congress creed, it was the duty of the Congress to maintain its dignity by passing this resolution. He therefore supported the resolution. (Cries of 'Sit down.' 'Go back.') Concluding, the speaker said that if any one of those who made such cries and considered himself capable of leading the country in place of Gandhiji would come forward to lead them, then the speaker would oppose the resolution.

"Dr. Ansari supported the resolution calling the bombing a cowardly outrage. Dr Purushotamdas Tandon disagreed with Dr Ansari that the bomb thrower was a coward for he had risked his life. Dr Tandon said that the question was rather whether such brave acts were in the country's interest. He supported Gandhi's resolution as truthful and politically expedient."

(From *The Indian Quarterly Register*, Volume II, 1929, p. 299.)

in the houses of the very rich. We even showed them an illustrated catalogue of our sanitary equipment. For the people of Lucknow's Aminabad in those days, a flush system and a washbasin were fantastic things. I acquired those catalogues in Calcutta from the companies that sold sanitary equipment.

After we settled down in our new place, the question was what excuse could we give Bhaiya and the organization for having disobeyed their decision? We were not ashamed of having disobeyed the organization, but we knew from our experience two months earlier that Azad had a very explosive temper. The question was: would it be possible to set matters right without recrimination over the past so that we could work together in the future? One thing was certain: that when we first met again, Azad's temper would flare up. So Bhagvati Bhai and I decided that instead of both exposing ourselves to that, it would make more sense for me to go alone and report to Bhagvati just how things stood.

I arrived in Delhi on the 2nd of January and went directly to the New Hindu Hostel to get Kailashpati's address from Professor Nand Kishore Nigam. Just by chance, Bhaiya was there. He spoke to me in a formal way in front of the other comrades, which was how I knew he was furious. Ordinarily he would smile and speak to me affectionately when we met. He wanted to speak to me alone and we walked to the bank of the Jamuna River. He asked, "Why did you explode the bomb contrary to the decision?"

I told him right out, "I'm guilty of the sin of going against the decision of the Party. In this matter whatever punishment the Party decides is mine to bear. Bhagvati Bhai opposed me in this, but I wouldn't listen to him either. My idea was that the political importance of this incident required that it occur before the Congress session. The effect of the incident on the people in the Lahore Congress has been just as I predicted."

"What do you mean by 'your idea'?" Azad bit his lips to control his anger as he asked, "Are your ideas more important than the Party's decisions? If you feel you have to do things your way, what use are you to the Party? Go, do whatever you want! And furthermore, another reprehensible action on your part was that while we were discussing the matter you made some trumped-up excuse to leave. As though we were fools and

talking nonsense. . . ." And his eyes became bloodshot with anger.

I responded very gently, "I didn't leave the meeting in order to run away from the discussion. The simple reason was that I went to buy the electric wire. Later the shop would have been closed." And I went on, "And the reason was that we had already postponed it twice. I was also concerned that aside from Bhagvati Bhai, our other companions might think that I was seizing on any pretext to save my life. If you feel you can forgive me and trust me in the future, then please do. But if not, then whatever you and the Party think is right. . . ." And I took the pistol out of my pocket and handed it to him and said, "I give myself up to the Party."

Whenever Bhaiya was angry, he bit his lips and tears came to his eyes. Now he took out his handkerchief and was wiping away the tears. He handed my pistol back to me saying, "Put it away. Put it away." Bhaiya's nature was such that when he suppressed his anger towards his own men, the tears would flow from his eyes. I made it perfectly clear that I had to respond to the criticism Gandhi and the Congress made of the attack on the Viceroy. Here was a highly appropriate occasion in which to place our programme before the people. The Congress had proclaimed the 26th of January as Independence Day. We too would publish a proclamation the same day and we had to plan how to distribute it throughout the country. Bhagvati Bhai and I had discussed it. I told Azad that if he approved, Bhagvati Bhai and I would write it up in detail. Then if he and the other companions were satisfied with it, we would print it. Bhaiya gave his approval with alacrity and agreed to go to Lucknow with me.

In the house in Aminabad we all gave a great deal of thought to deciding what the main thrust of the proclamation should be. Earlier (2 January 1930) Gandhiji wrote an article in his weekly paper, *Young India*, which he called, "Cult of the Bomb". We entitled our proclamation "The Philosophy of the Bomb". Our purpose was to place our viewpoint before the people and to answer Gandhi's article. We wrote it in English under Bhaiya Azad's pen name. This is what we said in essence [II: 140-43]:

*"The Philosophy of the Bomb"*¹"THE HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN
ASSOCIATION*"Manifesto"*

"THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BOMB

"Introductory"

"Recent events, particularly the Congress resolution on the attempt to blow up the Viceregal Special on the 23rd December 1929, and Gandhi's subsequent writings in *Young India* clearly show that the Indian National Congress, in conjunction with Gandhi, has launched a crusade against the revolutionaries. A great amount of public criticism, both from the press and the platform, has been made against them. It is a pity that they have all along been, either deliberately or due to sheer ignorance, misrepresented and misunderstood. The revolutionaries do not shun criticism and public scrutiny of their ideals or actions. They rather welcome them as chances of making those understood [by those] who have a genuine desire to do so, the basic principles of the revolutionary movement and the high and noble ideals that are a perennial source of inspiration and strength to it. It is hoped that this article will help the general public to know the revolutionaries as they are and will prevent it from taking them for what ignorant and interested persons would have it believe them to be.

"Violence or Non-Violence"

"Let us, first of all, take up the question of violence and non-violence. We think that the use of these terms, in itself, is a grave injustice to either party for they express the ideals of neither of them correctly. Violence is physical force applied for committing injustice, and that is certainly not what the revolutionaries stand for. On the other hand, what generally goes by

¹This is an exact copy of the original which was written in English and given to me by Yashpal.

the name of non-violence, is in reality the theory of soul-force as applied to the attainment of personal and national rights through courting suffering and hoping thus to convert your opponent to your point of view. When a revolutionary believes certain things to be his right, he asks for them, pleads for them, argues for them, wills to attain them with all the soul-force at his command, stands the greatest amount of suffering for them, is always prepared to make the highest sacrifice for their attainment and also backs his efforts with all the physical force he is capable of. You may coin what other word to describe his methods but you cannot call it violence because that would constitute an outrage on the dictionary meaning of that word. *Satyagrah* is insistence upon Truth. Why press for the acceptance of the Truth by soul-force alone? Why not add physical force also to it? While the revolutionaries stand for winning independence by all forces, physical as well as moral, at their command, the advocates of soul-force would like to ban the use of physical force. The question really, therefore, is not whether you will have violence or non-violence, but whether you will have soul-force plus physical force or soul-force alone.

"Our Ideal

"The revolutionaries believe that the deliverance of their country will come through revolution. The revolution they are constantly working and hoping for will not only express itself in the form of an armed conflict between the foreign government and its supporters and the people, it will also usher in a new social order. The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges. It will bring joy and prosperity to the starving millions who are sweating today under the terrible yoke of both foreign and Indian exploitation. It will bring the nation into its own. It will give birth to a new state—a new social order. Above all, it will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and will forever banish social parasites from the seat of political power.

"Terrorism

"The revolutionaries already see the advent of revolution in

the restlessness of youth, in its desire to break free from the mental bondage and religious superstitions that hold them. As the youth will get more and more saturated with the psychology of revolution, it will come to have a clearer realisation of national bondage and a growing, intense, unquenchable thirst for freedom. It will grow, this feeling of bondage, this insatiable desire for freedom, till in their righteous anger the infuriated youth will begin to kill the oppressors. Thus has terrorism been born in the country. It is a phase, a necessary, inevitable phase in the revolution. Terrorism is not the complete revolution and revolution is not complete without terrorism. This thesis can be supported by an analysis of any and every revolution in history. Terrorism instils fear in the hearts of the oppressors, it brings hope of revenge and redemption to the oppressed masses. It gives courage and self-confidence to the wavering. It shatters the spell of superiority of the ruling class and raises the status of the subject race in the eyes of the world because it is the most convincing proof of a nation's hunger for freedom. Here in India, as in other countries in the past, terrorism will develop into the revolution and the revolution into independence—social, political and economic.

“Revolutionary Methods

“This, then is what the revolutionaries believe in. This is what they hope to accomplish for their country. They are doing it both openly and secretly and in their own way. The experience of a century long and world-wide struggle between the masses and the governing class is their guide to their goal and the methods they are following are never known to have failed.

“The Congress and the Revolutionaries

“Meanwhile what has the Congress been doing? It has changed its creed from swaraj to complete independence. As a logical sequel to this, one would expect it to declare a war on the British Government. Instead we find it has declared war on the revolutionaries. The first offensive of the Congress came in the form of a resolution deploring the attempt made on the

23rd December, 1929 to blow up the Viceroy's special. It was drafted by Gandhi and he fought tooth and nail for it with the result that it was passed by a trifling majority of 81 in a house of 1713.¹ Was even this bare majority a result of honest political convictions? Let us quote the opinion of Sarala Devi Chaudharani who has been a devotee of the Congress all her life, in reply. She says—"I discovered in the course of my conversation with a good many of the Mahatma's followers that it was only their senses of personal loyalty to him that was keeping them back from an expression of their independent views and preventing them from voting against any resolution whatsoever that was fathered by Mahatmaji." As to Gandhi's arguments in favour of his proposition, we will deal with them later, when we discuss his article, "The Cult of the Bomb", which is more or less an implication of his speech in the Congress. There is one fact about this deplorable resolution which we must not lose sight of. And that is, in spite of the fact that the Congress is pledged to non-violence and has been actively engaged in carrying on propaganda in its favour for the last ten years and, in spite of the fact also that the supporters of the resolution indulged in abuse, called the revolutionaries "cowards" and described their actions as "dastardly" and one of them even threateningly remarked that if they wanted to be led by Gandhi they should pass this resolution without any opposition—in spite of all this the resolution could be adopted only by a dangerously narrow majority. That demonstrates beyond the shadow of doubt how solidly the country is backing the revolutionaries. In a way Gandhi deserves our thanks for having brought the question up for discussion and thus having shown to the world at large that even the Congress—that stronghold of non-violence is at least as much, if not more with the revolutionaries as with him.

"Gandhi on Warpath"

"Having achieved a victory which cost him more than defeat, Gandhi has returned to the attack in his article, "The Cult of the Bomb." We will give it our closest attention before proceed-

¹The number was actually 1731.

ing further. That article consists of three things—his faith, his opinion and his arguments. We will not discuss what is a matter of faith with him because reason has little in common with faith. Let us then take such of his opinions as are backed by arguments and his arguments proper against what he called violence and discuss them one by one.

“Do the Masses Believe in Non-Violence?”

“He thinks that on the basis of his experience during his latest tour of the country he is right in believing that the large masses of Indian humanity are yet untouched by the spirit of violence and that non-violence has come to stay as a political weapon. Let him not delude himself on the experiences of his latest tour of the country. Though it is true that the average leader confines his tours to places where only the mail train can conveniently lend him the practice of staying only with the richest people in the places visited, of spending most of his time in being complimented by his devotees in private and public and of granting *darshan* now and then to the illiterate masses whom he claims to understand so well, disqualifies him for knowing the mind of the masses. No man can claim to know a people’s mind by seeing them from the public platform and giving them *darshan* and *updes*. He can at the most claim to have told the masses what he thinks about things. Has Gandhiji, during recent years, mixed in the social life of the masses? Has he sat with the peasant round the evening fire and tried to know what he thinks? Has he passed a single evening in the company of a factory worker and shared with him his vows? We have. And therefore we claim to know what the masses think. We assure Gandhi that an average Indian, like an average human being, understands little of the fine theological necessities about ‘*Ahimsa*’ and ‘loving one’s enemy.’ The way of the world is like this. You have a friend. You love him, sometimes so much that you even die for him. You have an enemy. You shun him. You fight against him and if possible, kill him. The gospel of revolutionaries is simple and straight. It is what it has been since the days of Adam and Eve and no man has any difficulty about misunderstanding it. We affirm that the masses of India are solidly with us because we know

it from personal experience. The day is not far off when they will flock in the thousands to work the will of the revolution.

"The Gospel of Love

"Gandhi declares that his faith in the efficacy of non-violence has increased. That is to say, he believes more and more that through his gospel of love and self-imposed suffering, he hopes, some day to convert the foreign rulers to his way of thinking. Now, he has devoted his whole life to the preaching of his wonderful gospel and has practised it with unwavering constancy as few others have done. Will he let the world know how many enemies of India he has turned into friends? How many O' Dwyers, Dyers, Readings and Irwins has he been able to convert into friends of India? If none, how can India be expected to share his 'growing faith' that he will be able to persuade or compel England to agree to Indian independence through the practice of non-violence?

"What Would Have Happened?

"If the bomb that burst under the Viceroy's special had exploded properly, one of the two things suggested by Gandhi would surely have happened. The Viceroy would have either been badly injured or killed. Under such circumstances there certainly would have been no meeting between the leaders of political parties and the Viceroy. The uncalled for and undignified attempt on the part of these individuals to lower the national prestige by knocking at the gate of the Government House with their beggar's bowls in their hands and dominion status on their lips in spite of the clear terms of the Calcutta Ultimatum, would have been checkmated and the nation would have been the better off for that. If, fortunately, the explosion had been powerful enough to kill the Viceroy, one more enemy of India would have met a well deserved doom. The author of the Meerut prosecutions and the Lahore and Bhusawal persecutions can appear a friend of India only to the enemies of her freedom. In spite of the Gandhis and the Nehrus and their claims to political sagacity and statesmanship, Irwin has succeeded in shattering the unity between different political parties in

the country that had resulted by the boycott of the Simon Commission. Even the Congress today is a house divided against itself. Who else, except the Viceroy and his olive tongue, have we to thank for our grave misfortunes? And yet there exist people in our country who proclaim him a friend of India.

"The Failure of the Congress"

"There might be those who have no regard for the Congress and hope nothing from it. If Gandhi thinks that the revolutionaries belong to that category, he wrongs them grievously. They fully realise the part played by the Congress in awakening in the ignorant masses a keen desire for freedom. They expect great things of it in the future. Though they hold firmly to their opinion that so long as persons like Sen Gupta whose wonderful intelligence compels him to discern the hand of the CID in the late attempt to blow up the Viceroy's special and persons like Ansari, who think abuse the better part of argument and know so little of politics as to make a ridiculous and fallacious assertion that no nation has achieved freedom by the bomb, having a determining value in the Congress, the country can hope little from it. They are hopefully looking forward to the day when the mania of non-violence would have passed away from the Congress and it would march arm in arm with the revolutionaries to their common goal of complete independence. This year it has accepted the ideal which the revolutionaries have preached and lived up to for more than a quarter of a century. Let us hope the next year will see it endorse their methods also.

"Violence and Military Expenditure"

"Gandhi is of the opinion that as often as violence has been practised in the country, it has resulted in an increase of military expenditure. If his reference is to revolutionary activities during the last twenty years, we dispute the accuracy of his statement and challenge him to prove his statement with facts and figures. If, on the other hand, he had in mind the wars that have taken place in India since the British came here, our reply is that even his modest experiment in *Ahimsa*

and *Satyagrah* which had little to compare in it with the wars for independence, produced its effect on the finances of the bureaucracy. Mass action, whether violent or non-violent, whether successful or unsuccessful, is bound to produce the same kind of repercussions on the finances of a state.

"The Reforms

"Why should Gandhi mix up revolutionaries with the various constitutional reforms granted by the government? They never cared or worked for the Morley-Minto reforms, Montagu reforms and the like. These the British Government threw before the constitutionalist agitators to lure them away from the right path. This was the bribe paid to them for their support to the Government in its policy of crushing and uprooting the revolutionaries. These toys—as Gandhi calls them, were sent to India for the benefit of those who from time to time raised the cry of home rule, self-government, responsible government, full responsible government, dominion status, and such other constitutional names for slavery. The revolutionaries never claim the reforms as their achievements. They raised the standard of independence long ago. They lived for it. They have ungrudgingly laid down their lives for the sake of this ordeal. They claim that their sacrifices have produced a tremendous change in the mentality of people. That their efforts have advanced the country a long way on the road to independence is granted by even those who do not see eye to eye with them in politics.

"The Way of Progress

"As to Gandhi's contention that violence impedes the march of progress and thus directly postpones the day of freedom, we can refer him to so many contemporary instances where violence has led to the social progress and political freedom of the people who practised it. Take the case of Russia and Turkey for example. In both countries the party for progress took over the state organization through an armed revolution. Yet social progress and political freedom has not been impeded. Legislation, backed by force, has made the masses go

double march on the road of progress. The solitary example of Afghanistan cannot establish a political formula. It is rather an exception that proves the rule.

“Failure of Non-cooperation

“Gandhi is of the opinion that the great awakening in the people, during the days of non-cooperation, was the result of preaching of non-violence. It is wrong to assign to non-violence the widespread awakening of the masses which, in fact, is manifested wherever a programme of direct action is adopted. In Russia, for instance, there came about widespread awakening among the peasants and workers when the communists launched forth their great programme of militant mass action, though nobody preached non-violence to them. We will even go further and state that it was mainly because of non-violence and Gandhi’s compromising mentality that brought about the disruption of the forces that had come together at the call of mass action. It is claimed that non-violence can be used as a weapon for righting political wrongs. To say the least it is a novel idea yet untried. It failed to achieve what were considered to be the just rights of Indians in South Africa. It failed to bring swaraj within a year to the Indian masses inspite of the untiring labours of an army of national workers and one and a quarter crore of rupees. More recently, it failed to win the Bardoli peasants what the leaders of the *Satyagrah* movement had promised them—the famous irreducible minimum of Gandhi and Patel. We know of no other trials non-violence has had on a countrywide scale. Up to this time non-violence has been blessed with one result—failure. Little wonder, then, that the country refuses to give it another trial. In fact, *Satyagrah* as preached by Gandhi is a form of agitation—a protest, leading up invariably, as has already been seen, to compromise. It can hardly be of any use to a nation striving for national independence which can never come as the result of a compromise. The sooner we recognise that there can be no compromise between independence and slavery the better.

"Is it a New Era?"

"'We are entering upon a new era' thinks Gandhi. The mere act of defining swaraj as complete independence, this technical change in the Congress constitution, can hardly constitute a new era. It will be a great day indeed when the Congress will decide upon a countrywide programme of mass action, based on well organised revolutionary principles. Till then the furling of the flag of independence is a mockery and we concur with the following remarks of Sarala Devi Chaudharani, which she recently made in a press interview :—

"'The unfurling of the flag of Independence' she says, 'at just one minute after midnight on the 31st December 1929, was too stagy for words—just as the GOC and others in gaudy uniforms were cardboard grand officers commanding.

"'The fact that the furling of the flag of independence lay hanging in balance till midnight of that date, and that the scales might have been turned at even the eleventh hour fifteenth minute had a message from the Viceroy or the Secretary of State come to the Congress granting dominion status, proves that independence is not a heart hunger of the leaders but that the declaration of it is only like a petulant child's retort. It would have been a worthy action of the Indian National Congress if independence was achieved first and declared afterwards.'

"It is true that the Congress orators will henceforth harangue the masses on complete independence instead of dominion status. They will call upon the people to prepare for a struggle in which one party is to deliver blows and the other is to receive them till beaten and demoralised beyond hope of recovery! Can such a thing be named a struggle and can it ever lead the country to complete independence? It is all very well to hold fast to the highest ideal worthy of a nation, but it is nonetheless necessary to adopt the best, the most efficacious and tried means to achieve it ere you become the laughing stock of the whole world.

"No Bullying Please"

"Gandhi has called upon all those who are not past reason

to withdraw their support of the revolutionaries and condemn their action so that 'our deluded patriots may, for want of nourishment to their violent spirit, realise the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activities have every time done.' How easy and convenient it is to call the people deluded, to declare them to be past reason, to call upon the public to withdraw its support and condemn them so that they may get isolated and be forced to suspend their activities especially when a man holds the confidence of an influential section of the public! It is a pity that Gandhi does not and will not understand revolutionary psychology in spite of his life-long experience of public life. Life is a precious thing. It is dear to everyone. If a man becomes a revolutionary, if he goes about with his life in a hollow of his hand ready to sacrifice it at any moment, he does not do so merely for the fun of it. He does not risk his life merely because sometimes, when the crowd is in a sympathetic mood, it cries 'bravo' in appreciation. He does it because his reason forces him to take that course, because his conscience dictates it. A revolutionary believes in reason more than anything. It is to reason and to reason alone that he bows. No amount of abuse and condemnation, even if it emanates from the highest of the high, can turn him from his set purpose. To think that a revolutionary will give up his ideals if public support and appreciation are withdrawn from him, is the highest folly. Many a revolutionary has, ere now, stepped on to the scaffold and laid his life down for the cause, regardless of the curses that the constitutionalist agitators rained plentifully upon him. If you will have the revolutionaries suspend their activities reason with them squarely. That is the one and the only way. For the rest, let there be no doubt in anybody's mind. A revolutionary is the last person on earth to submit to bullying.

"An Appeal"

"We take this opportunity to appeal to our countrymen—to the youth, to the workers and peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia—to come forward and join us in carrying aloft the banner of freedom. Let us establish a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an im-

possibility. In the name of those gallant men and women, who willingly accepted death so that we, their descendants, may lead to a happier life, by making psychological experiments in non-violence and such other novelties. Our slavery is our shame. When shall we have courage and wisdom enough to be able to shake ourselves free of it? What is our great heritage of civilisation and culture worth if we have not enough self-respect left in us to prevent us from bowing servilely to the commands of foreigners and paying homage to their flag and king?

"Victory or Death

"There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has bled us white. As a race and as a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. Do people still expect us to forget and to forgive? We shall have our revenge—a people's righteous revenge on a tyrant. Let cowards fall back and cringe for compromise and peace. We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end—to victory or death.

"Long live revolution!

"KARTAR SINGH, President

"Hindustan Socialist Republican Association"¹

These handbills were distributed by sunrise on the morning of 26 January 1930 in a number of different cities in India simultaneously. No one was caught, and this very fact, Yashpal felt, made a great impression on the public. The government was concerned that the attitude of the people appeared to be one of increasing sympathy towards the revolutionaries.²

* ¹Kartar Singh was one of the fictitious names Azad used. The above document was Exhibit P/N in the Delhi Conspiracy Case file (1930-33).

²*India in 1929-30*, Government of India, General Publication Branch, Calcutta, 1931, p. 12, in summarizing events in 1929 points out that the Lahore Conspiracy Case aroused public sympathy because of the hunger strike of the prisoners and subsequent death of one of them (Jatin Das) as a result. The people observed "Days" to commemorate and honour them; they were praised in the Press.

As a result, a very strong impetus was given to the terrorist move-

At that time the news came of an armed attack and robbery on the Chittagong Armoury by the Bengali revolutionaries. Lahore was ecstatic! On the Mall Road in Lahore there stood a huge imposing statue of Lawrence. In one hand he held a sword and in the other a pen. The base of the statue bore the inscription, "Will you be governed by pen or sword?" This statue was erected in memory of the Mutiny of 1857 and was a source of humiliation in the Punjab. Whenever I passed by it at college, it made me furious. In the movement against the Rowlatt Bills in 1919, before Gandhi bridled the Congress with his compromising policy of nonviolence, the people attacked the statue and broke both the sword and the pen. The statue itself would have been demolished, but just then the police arrived shooting, and saved the symbol of the country's degradation.

The people's passionate opposition led to the government's "change of heart." Below that symbol of the country's humiliation, the government changed the inscription to read, "I served you with sword and pen." The Naujawan Bharat Sabha began a movement to oppose this statue and now people were again trying to get rid of it by means of *satyagrah*. The leadership of this movement were not the graybeard leaders of Congress; they were young men. But the Sherdil Police were constantly patrolling the Mall Road, and when they saw a group of *satyagrahis* coming to the Mall Road, they beat them unmercifully. The beatings by police resulted in suppressing the nonviolent movement. (II : 167)

ment, especially among the student and ex-student classes, and the number of those actually engaged in terrorist plots much increased, probably being greater at the end of the year than at the previous time, while the number of potential recruits was almost unlimited. Moreover a large and growing section of the public is ceasing to regard assassination for political objects with horror, and although the outward results of the many influences operating to encourage revolutionary crime were not fully apparent until after the close of the year, a number of outrages and attempted outrages occurred, especially in Bengal and Punjab. Of these the most daring was the attempt made on the 23rd December to wreck the train on which H. E. the Viceroy was returning to Delhi.

9 Planned Jail Escape for Bhagat Singh and Dutt

In the third week of January 1930, Chandrashekhar Azad called a meeting in Kanpur of leading Party members for the purpose of reorganizing the Central Committee and assigning responsibilities and areas of authority. Yashpal, Azad, Bhagvati, Kailashpati, Virbhadra Tiwari and Seth Damodar Swarup attended the meeting. Seth Damodar Swarup had taken part in the Kakori train robbery and was captured, tried and sentenced. However, he fell ill in prison, and as he was expected to die at any moment, the government released him unconditionally. Now four years later, he was ready to take up revolutionary work again. Azad, too, had taken part in the Kakori incident, but had not been caught.

The major results of the meeting were the reorganization of the HSRA, the proposal to build an organization which would assume the functions of education on the theory and practice of revolution and recruitment of young men for the dangerous work of the HSRA; the decision that, unless the public became more generous in its contributions, they would still have to resort to dacoity to finance their work; and finally, to try to free Bhagat Singh and Dutt from jail.

Seth Damodar Swarup was to organize study groups on the aims of revolution and recruit students, workers, soldiers and other government servants. This activity was to be more open than the HSRA, but more secret than the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Seth would not take any part in the secret work of the HSRA except to recruit young men through the study circle work.

Azad would run the Army; Bhagvati would coordinate the two organizations; Virbhadra was the organizer of the HSRA for United Provinces, Kailashpati for Delhi, and Yashpal for Punjab. These men constituted the Central Committee. Yashpal's work now centred in Lahore. In connection with his work as organizer of the Punjab, he met Prakashvati, the girl he fell in love with and later married.

Their story provides fascinating insights into the social conservatism of many of the revolutionaries. The difficulties Yashpal and Prakashvati encountered as a result of their love affair

were made, not by traditional society, but by the revolutionaries.

Prakashvati came to the Party through Premvati, a young widow related to Yashpal. Prakashvati did not participate in Party work, but she contributed money which she took from her mother's "box". Her parents were now arranging for her marriage, but Prakashvati did not want to be married. She wrote to Yashpal, whom she had never met, asking if she might come to join the Party. Yashpal replied that some arrangement could be made for her. His letter to her was intercepted by her brother who gave it to her father. Furious, her father ordered her to take off her jewellery and get out of the house. She ran immediately to Durga Bhabhi's house (Bhagvati's wife), but Durga sent her to the rented house where Yashpal and other Party members were living at the time.

Bhagvati and I were alone in the house one morning when Prem came at about 10:30 bringing Prakashvati. Prem said, "Bhabhiji [Durga] told me to bring her here. She's left home. Bhabhiji said that her own house would be the first to be suspected and that until some other arrangement can be made, you are to keep her here."

No girl or woman had ever been in that house before that day. Durga Bhabhi came occasionally, but that was different. She was so poised that there was no question of concern. This was a concern of a different kind. I had written to Prakashvati myself that if she were to leave her home to take part in revolutionary work, some arrangement would be made for her. It never entered my head that she would come so soon and without even a day's notice. Her sudden appearance embarrassed us.

No one in the Party had met Prakashvati except Prem and me. Bhagvati Bhai said it was my job to let her know what the situation was. I took Prakashvati aside and asked her, "How could you have come without giving us any notice? We haven't made any arrangements for you."

Prakashvati answered that the letter I had written to her had fallen into her brother's hands that very morning. That was the letter concerning her leaving her house. Her father learned about it too. He went mad with anger and thundered, "Take off your jewellery and get out of this house!" Then he stormed out of the room and went downstairs.

Prakashvati took off all her jewellery, went up to the roof of

her house, crossed over to the roof next door and jumped down. The walls of neighbouring houses are often joined in Lahore, and the roofs are quite low. From there she went directly to Durga Bhabhi's house.

"Why is it difficult for you to stay at home?" I asked.

"Father wants me to get married and I don't want to get married. He read your letter and it made him furious."

"Do you mean you had to leave your house because you didn't want to get married?"

She nodded her head in assent.

I thought to myself awhile, then asked, "How much education do you have?"

"I passed Middle School and also my Hindi diploma. They didn't allow me to have any more education."

"Did you learn any geography or history?"

"Yes."

"Geography of where?"

"The whole world."

Her naive answer made me laugh, and I said, "What do you mean by 'the whole world?' If you know your own country pretty well, that's good enough."

My laughter hurt her feelings. "What else have you learned?" I asked.

"I learned everything I was given to learn," she replied.

I tried to test her to see how valuable she could be to the Party. There was no doubt about her eagerness and devotion, but together with eagerness, a little knowledge was necessary too. "Look," I said sharply in order to make myself perfectly clear, "if you are resisting a marriage you don't want, you have my sympathy. But that is something we cannot help with. We are concerned only with political struggle."

"What do you mean?" Prakashvati asked, all upset.

"What I mean is that since you left your home and came here because you didn't want to get married, we cannot make any arrangements for you. That's not our function."

Prakashvati looked down, all hope gone. "All right, I'll go."

"Where will you go? Go home and fight this unjust thing your father is doing," I advised her.

"No, I will not go home. Now that I have left, I will not go back no matter what happens."

"Then where will you go?"

"Anywhere, the river maybe."

My heart stood still. I was going to tell her that wasn't very sensible.

"Premvati herself told me that I don't have to get married if I don't want to. She also said that if my family did not let me work for the Party, I should leave home. And even you wrote that to me." And I remember Prakashvati held back the tears in her eyes.

I said, "But you said you left home because you didn't want to get married. You didn't leave in order to work in the Party."

"If I get married, how can I work in the Party?"

"Then say that you left home to work in the Party. In that case, we welcome you with pleasure. Please don't mind the ugly things I said. I wanted to get at the truth. Please forgive my rudeness."

While I had been saying all those harsh things, Prakashvati had kept herself under control. But when I asked her forgiveness, she hid her face in her *anchal* and the tears began to pour. Suddenly I thought, what if someone from the Party came and saw her weeping? What will he think? So in order to get her quiet, I tried to say something soothing, but nothing I said worked.

I felt ashamed of myself because of my presumptuousness and rudeness in the beginning, and in a few days I was in love with her.

I told Prakashvati to write a letter to her father that very evening. My intention was to let her father know that his daughter had not left home for any shameful reason. The reason she left was that she did not want to get married and she did want to work for the Party. That he was not to speak against her or to raise a hue and cry. That would do more harm than good.

We felt that Prakashvati could spend her time most profitably studying for a while. She was becoming accustomed to feeling comfortable in the presence of our companions and learning to conduct herself in a self-assured way. She took "Kamala" as her Party name. The day after she came, she cleaned up Indrapal's house and she started English lessons.

Bacchan stayed in that house too when he came from Delhi. Sampurn Singh also stayed there occasionally. It was getting crowded. The Party rented another smaller house in Kila Gujjarsingh where Sukhdevraj, Visheshvar and Bhagvati Bhai stayed when they came to Lahore. Sukhdevraj proposed, "There's constant noise in that house and Kamala cannot study. Why don't you let her come to our house? We have plenty of room and I will teach her regularly." Durga Bhabhi countered that it would be better if Kamala were to stay with Mahashay Krishan in Delhi instead of with us.

I wasn't pleased with Sukhdevraj's proposal, but I flatly opposed Bhabhi's suggestion. "Let's stop quibbling," I said, "let her go to Kila Gujjarsingh." In this matter, my wishes were at odds with traditional customs.

I don't know what Bhabhi was thinking when she said, "Let's stop all this bickering. Why don't you two get married?" I was furious because she was calling attention to my own desire which I was trying to suppress. I shot out angrily, "You have a big mouth!"

Bhabhi swallowed the insult and was silent.

After that I went to Rawalpindi and Lyallpur to establish new contacts for the Party. Bhagvati Bhai went to Delhi. About a week later when I returned, I saw Prakashvati in the Kila Gujjarsingh house. She asked, "Isn't there any room in the other house?"

And I asked, "Why? Is something wrong here?"

"No."

"Then why?"

And she said shyly, "Please let me stay there."

"It's very crowded. Won't you be bothered by that?"

"Isn't it for you? If you don't mind, I don't."

"Tell me why. What's the matter?"

"If I'm there with you, I'll learn more quickly."

"But that's why you're staying here, so that you can study and not be bothered."

"Would my being there be a bother to you?"

"Oh no. I'd like you to be there."

"Then I'd like to be there too."

We talked back and forth and I said, "Is it right to have you with me? You'll have all kinds of trouble because of this."

And she said, "There won't be a bit of trouble."

Not many words were spoken, but when feelings are so strong, words aren't needed. To remind her of our situation, I said, "What right have I to feel this way? How long have I to live?" And she said, "Nonsense. Whatever happens to you will happen to me too." And then she complained that since Bhagvati had moved out of that house, the other two had spoken to her in an offensive way.

When I saw Bhabhi a couple of days later, I burst out with, "You were right in what you said."

"What?" she asked.

"About marrying Kamala . . . I agree with you."

"Really? . . . But how . . .? Anyway that's great!" And she clapped me on the back. Saying that to Bhabhi gave me the comfort of knowing that I wasn't doing anything sneaky or dishonourable.

Bhaiya sent for me to come to Delhi. He wanted me to figure out a good plan for attacking the jail¹— one that would work. And he wanted me to have some rifle practice too so that I could be more useful in the attack. And he bought a rifle.

I took Prakashvati to Delhi with me. All of us were involved in the attack on the jail. I thought it would be desirable for her to stay in Delhi at such a time. I would introduce her to some people who were sympathetic towards the Party so that if she were without us, she would not be completely helpless. That was why I introduced her to Khayaliram Gupta, Mahashay Krishan and Dhruvdev in Delhi. But even though it was not a question of not being able to trust her completely, I did not tell her anything about our plan to attack the jail.

When I arrived in Delhi to practice marksmanship, Bhaiya told me we were going to Nalgara in Meerut Distt. Kailashpati, Lekhram and I think Bhavani Singh came along too. I never had any great enthusiasm for marksmanship, but Bhaiya emphasized it a great deal. My viewpoint was different from his, but I felt that we had to engage in terrorism now to prepare the people for guerrilla warfare later, in keeping with our over-all plan. On our way to Nalgara, we put our arms in two suitcases, and the clothes and bedding for five men in a large

¹To free Bhagat Singh and Dutt.

holdall. When we left, Bhaiya handed me one of the suitcases, saying, "Sohan, look after this."

I was wearing shorts, a coat and hat. Bhaiya was wearing knickers, a coat and a round topi like Babu. Lekhram, Kailashpati and Bhavani Singh were dressed in dhoti pyjama and a coat. The driver gave me the front seat because of my manner and my dress. Bhaiya and the others sat behind. When we sat down, I told Kailashpati to look after the bedding. We got off the lorry to change for Nalgara on the road between Delhi and Meerut right in front of a police station.

Pasted on both gateposts of the police station were posters offering rewards for the arrest of all of us! One poster offered a reward for the fugitives in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, naming Bhaiya and me; and the other offered a reward for the capture of the perpetrators of the bombing of the Viceroy's train.

I got off the lorry with the suitcase in my hand. But the bedding travelled on with the lorry. Bhaiya scolded me for not taking the bedding. I told him, "I was sitting in front. Why didn't you tell Kailashpati? He was in the back."

Azad protested, "It was your responsibility. There are things in it I borrowed from people. If it is stolen and someone sees the markings on the clothing, it will get those people into trouble. Do you remember what happened in Lahore when clothing was found?"

"What's the point of getting angry now?" I said, "Just follow me." I walked into the police station and Azad followed me. The officer in charge of the station and the man who was probably Head Constable were sitting on a chair and stool respectively, working away. I strode in and said in an overbearing way, "Who is the In-Charge here?" The policemen jumped up all flustered and saluted me. I grabbed the chair, sat down and said to Azad in half-English half broken-Hindustani, "*Munshi*, tell them about the lost bedding." And myself, I lit a cigarette and said to the In-Charge, "Now what you are to do is to call the next station and tell them to get the bedding from the lorry. We will return from shikar tomorrow." Then to Azad, I said, "Understand, *munshi*? You come back here tomorrow." He said, "Yes, sir" and he told the police how the lorry had gone away with the bedding. I turned to the In-

Charge again saying, "If the bedding doesn't come right away, send it to Delhi Station. Here's the address." And I wrote on a piece of paper, "R.K. Mudalyar, Engineer, Central PWD, c/o Stationmaster, Delhi."

By the time we left the police station, Azad's anger had completely melted away. "Sonofabitch, you've had your fun! But if we don't get the bedding, I'll break your head." I assured him, "We'll get it. And if we don't, it doesn't have the stamp of the revolutionaries on it. Since no one is suspicious, why are you upset?"

And when we returned to Delhi, there was the bedding. [II : 176-83]

In the meantime, escape plans were being made for Bhagat Singh and Dutt. While the plans were at the discussion stage, Yashpal declared himself opposed to risking men in a quixotic venture. Bhagvati and Azad disagreed with him. To settle the matter they sent a message to Bhagat Singh in prison asking him for his opinion. He indicated that he wanted help to escape, and that Yashpal's functions should be limited to writing for the Party and to let others do things which involved action.

Yashpal then entered wholeheartedly into the plans. He offered one plan, Bhagat Singh another. In either case the only feasible way to rescue Bhagat Singh and Dutt seemed to be to attack their escort as they were being transported from Borstal Jail to Lahore Central Jail or on their return. The Lahore Conspiracy Case was being tried in Lahore Central Jail. The date set was 1 June 1930.

There was also the matter of choosing four men in addition to the three Azad brought from Lahore. Bhagat Bhai was especially concerned about that, insisting that he wanted to take part. I insisted that he stay behind since Azad and I were both involved in it.

Then there was the question of Sukhdevraj. Bhagvati Bhai considered him very brave and clever and wanted him in on the attack. I had many misgivings about that. I urged strongly that only those should be sent who would not show their backs under any circumstances. Sukhdevraj had lied to me earlier about attempting to kill Neal. Indrapal felt that if Sukhdevraj could find a way out of danger through his cunning, he would be brave enough, but if he saw no way out, he would show his

back. He had the courage of a thief, not of a soldier. Also he said things to people which promoted dissension in the Party and especially he tried to create ill feeling towards me.

What I said made Bhagvati Bhai very sad. He thought for a while and then said, "It's unworthy for us to be suspicious of one another." Hesitatingly, he added, "Do you know what he thinks of you?" Then Bhagvati told me that Sukhdevraj complained that when he had proposed to kill Neal, I refused to help him but wanted to stay home with Prakashvati, instead; that I encouraged Prakashvati to leave her home only for my own pleasure, and that although Prakashvati had been sent to stay at the Kila Gujjarsingh house, I had taken her away to Delhi without consulting anyone.

I was furious! I said, "Do you mean to say that you encouraged him by listening to all that without saying a word? I'm in charge here! If anyone has a complaint against me, I should be the first to hear about it. Did you ask him what I had to say about his complaints?" That was about the 28th of May.

Bhagvati Bhai said, "We're in a critical situation now; it's not the time to make a case of it. I didn't say anything to him; I only listened. It's only one more week. After that we'll have it out."

Now I wanted to show him how Sukhdevraj had lied when he said he was going out to kill Neal—he came back without doing anything. I had not told Prakashvati where Sukhdevraj said he was going, but when he left, I told her and I followed him. I told her not to worry if I came back late and that when Indrapal returned to tell him not to leave until evening. "Here I am. You can get the truth asking the others in Delhi. I don't give a moment's thought to what Sukhdevraj says about me to Indrapal and others because I completely trust you and Bhaiya. You can ask Bhabhi and Prem about this: before Prakashvati left her home, I saw her once for half an hour and that was in Prem's company. On the day she came to us, I told you everything she said, and I did everything you advised. After she came it was a different matter. I told Bhabhi that I was going to marry her—or rather it was Bhabhi's suggestion first. As the man in charge of the Punjab I sent her to Delhi. And the reason I did that was that she complained about Sukhdevraj's conduct."

"OK. But there is no place for these things in our unstable lives and with our responsibilities. Will you be thinking about love or the work of the Party?"

"What is this thinking? Even without thinking, even though I tried to suppress it, it happened anyway. And I love her. Anyway, try to remember what you said to Indrapal in Lucknow in that connection. He told you plainly that the 20 rupee a month soldier in the army marries and has children and still considers it his duty to face the cannon's mouth without flinching. Are we any the less than they? For us the feeling should be stronger because we do it out of conviction."

Bhagvati Bhai seized my hand and smiling said, "Why didn't you say all this before?"

I started insisting that all these matters had to be brought before Bhaiya immediately. I might well die in the attack and I would not tolerate a smear on my reputation.

Bhagvati said gravely, "Trust me. Sukhdevraj is not that kind of man. Take care. Don't say anything about it to Azad. Raj gets irritable when he is idle, and then he talks foolishness. But he's not badhearted. Once he takes part in an action, he'll be steadier."

Azad, Bhagvati Bhai and I sat down together much later to discuss the plan of attack—should we adopt Bhagat Singh's or mine? My plan was an attack on the Central Jail gate when Bhagat Singh and Dutt were being taken to court, or on Sunday when they were taken to Borstal Jail for legal consultation. Bhagat Singh proposed that the attack be made at Borstal Jail gate when he was being taken out and led into the lorry. The fault Bhaiya found with my plan was that Central Jail gate was more heavily guarded in general, and in addition was guarded by a platoon of the Sherdil police. Only six armed soldiers guarded the Borstal Jail gate. I objected to a Borstal Jail attack because the gate was almost 100 yards from the street. Any approaching automobile would alert the guard. When Bhagat Singh and Dutt entered the lorry, they used to be accompanied by six armed guards. Since we had to shoot from a distance, we might not hit them. Furthermore, at any sound of shots or explosions at Borstal Jail, the Sherdil police would speed towards us from Central Jail. However, if we were to attack at Central Jail when Bhagat Singh and Dutt were being

led out, we would throw one bomb at the jail guard and one at the Sherdil platoon. During the commotion as the bombs were exploding, Bhagat Singh and Dutt would run towards our car. Even if one or more policemen were to follow them, we five men could stop them with our guns. We might even carry it off successfully. Central Jail is on the road and hundreds of vehicles and people pass by all day long. We wouldn't be noticed approaching the gate nor would the guard be alerted.

Bhagvati felt that while my plans were formulated from a distance, Bhagat Singh's knowledge could be relied on since he was on the inside and went out every day. We started preparing Bhagat's plan. Again the question arose concerning Bhagvati Bhai's participation. He pleaded to be allowed to take part in the action. "If I am killed, Dhanvantri, Sukhdevraj and the other worthy companions can carry on the work in the Punjab. Sohan (Yashpal) can stay with Bhaiya here after the incident. The men in the Centre know him. I don't want Sohan to take part this time."

I urged that the decision should be held off until the next day. We decided on the date for the jail attack—Sunday, 1 June. I explained to Bhagvati Bhai when we were alone, "If I don't take part in the attack this time, it will have a very bad effect. What Sukhdevraj told you about Kamala (Prakashvati), he told others too. Everyone will infer that I want to save myself. Or another interpretation will be that I refused to cooperate because my plan wasn't chosen." "What nonsense!" Bhagvati burst out in English, "Why should anyone bother to answer that kind of talk? Is there anything that hasn't been said about me? I always do what you say. This time you do what I say."

I couldn't say anything more.

• On 28 May Bhagvati Bhai said to me, "Let's get the bombs filled so that we can test one of them." We had some of the chemical mixture left over from the bomb chemicals we had prepared in Rohtak. Bhaiya had brought it in a bomb case from Kanpur, and on this occasion had brought three bomb cases. I examined the cases and said, "A trigger is loose on one of these. I'll have to fix it with a screwdriver."

The bomb case had to be washed clean and swabbed with

heavy grease before it was filled so that the picric acid would not come in contact with the iron case and enter into a chemical reaction. If a reaction were to begin, enough heat could be generated in five to ten days that the bomb could explode by itself. I filled the hole at the top with Japan black and set it aside to dry. I estimated that it would take eight to ten hours to dry, by which time I'd locate a screwdriver. At about nine in the morning I left the house on Bahawalpur Road on my cycle. Everything had to be done in the next few days—testing, finding secure places to hide the companions afterward; trying out motorcars, etc.

I was running one errand after another in the May heat and sun, and did not return until three in the afternoon. Bhabni, Sushila, Chailbihari and Madan Gopal were there. Bhaiya had taken Dhanvantri with him to look at a motor car. Bhagvati Bhai, Bacchan and Sukhdevraj had gone to the bank of the Ravi to test a bomb.

"But who filled the case? Was the bomb dry already?" I asked, concerned. I learned that the bomb had been put out in the sunshine to dry. Bhagvati Bhai and Sukhdevraj had filled the bomb and fixed the trigger. Just as we were discussing this, Sukhdevraj arrived at the bungalow in a tonga. "Get me off this tonga," he called out in a voice sharp with pain.

Chailbihari, Madan Gopal and I helped him off the tonga. Though his foot was wrapped in a piece of cloth, blood was seeping out in several places. We were very anxious about his wound, and when we asked about it, he said, biting his lips, "We were testing the bomb and it blew up in Hari's [Bhagvati's] hands. He's hurt terribly. My foot was injured too. Bacchan was standing behind me and he wasn't hurt. He's with him now."

Chailbihari and I immediately ran on to the Mall Road towards Charing Cross. We ran like mad and then grabbed a taxi to the bushes on the Ravi's bank. There, crossing the sandy maidan, we entered the thick woods. We ran from place to place calling "Bacchan! Bacchan!" Finally he answered and we rushed towards the sound of his voice and saw... Bhagvati Bhai lying on the flat of his back, his knees up. Both of his arms were up propped by his elbows. One hand was missing and the fingers of the other were gone. Blood was flowing from deep wounds on his face. Blood was seeping out from a deep tear on the left side

of his abdomen and his intestines were coming out of a large opening on the right side. Bacchan had soaked a piece of cloth in the river and was squeezing the water drop by drop into Bhagvati's mouth.

The first thing he said when he saw me was, "Oh, I'm glad you came. I would have liked to see Azad too." "Azad wasn't at home. Otherwise he certainly would have come," I said. "Doesn't matter," Bhagvati replied, indicating that I shouldn't worry about it.

We had all learned some first aid in scouting. We made a kind of seat with our arms to lift him and take him out of the woods. He trembled and cried out in pain. So we put him down again. I realized that we could not move him without a cot or a stretcher. In a choked voice, I told him, "We're going to get a cot now. Don't worry." He said, "Do you think I'm afraid? I'm only sad that I won't be able to help free Bhagat Singh. I wish I could have lived for two more days." Responding to my desire to get the equipment to move him, he said, "It's useless. Don't bother with it. The bomb explosion was very loud. If anyone suspects anything, the police will start searching, so what's the use? If I still had the use of my hands I would ask you for a revolver and you could tell the police I was wounded and send them here. This must not stop you from freeing Bhagat Singh." Bhagvati had been speaking in English, stopping from time to time. It was completely clear in his mind that saving his life was impossible. He wanted to urinate and could not because a sliver of bomb had lodged in his kidney. Not acknowledging fear and facing his death this way—this was the kind of revolutionary whom Gandhi called "coward" and "detestable" while at the same time moving an expression of sympathy for Viceroy Irwin.

Chailbihari stayed with Bhagvati. Bacchan and I left for the Boarding House of Christian College to gather the things we needed. I knew Devraj Sathi and Sacchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan (who is famous under the pen name of Agyeya). They were both large, strong men who could help to lift Bhagvati. We took two sheets and a cot from there and on the road we bought ice for him to suck and to put on his wounds. Indrapal joined us as we started back to Bhagvati.

It was very dark by that time and we lit torches to search in

the thick woods. We called, "Chailbihari, Chailbihari!" but there was no answer. The light from our torches and our shouts frightened the birds off the trees, and still we received no answer. Then we saw strips of white cloth hanging from branches and hurried toward where they led. Our torch lighted the way to the lifeless body of Bhagvati Bhai. We surmised that Bhagvati's death frightened Chailbihari and he ran away.

Our hearts shook. We bit our lips trying to control ourselves. Then Bacchan broke out sobbing. What could we do now? We thought that if we moved him, it would be a problem to get him out of the bungalow again. And we would be putting all our companions in peril. We covered Bhagvati with the sheet we had brought with us. My voice was choked as I spoke, "We must honour our brave leader with a last salute." And I saluted. We stood on either side of his body and saluted him for one entire minute in silence.

Then we started back. My body and knees shook so badly I could not take another step. Once I walked sixty-four miles from one morning until 1 a.m. the next morning, and I did not feel as exhausted as I did then.

Bacchan and I returned to the bungalow. There everyone had gathered together in a corner of the room waiting—like times of peril when men and animals huddle together. When they saw the two of us alone, they all gasped. Their eyes, wide with anxiety, asked, "What happened?"

I could not utter a word, but raised both my hands instead to indicate that he had died. Then Bacchan burst into tears again. Bhabhi simply sat and shut her eyes. Sushila held her forehead with both her hands. Bhaiya, motionless, kept staring at the floor. Madan Gopal stood still as a stone image. Just then Chailbihari arrived. He had walked and therefore returned later. The sight of him sparked all my fury. I kept my voice low, but it trembled as I asked, "How could you have left him alone?" And he answered helplessly, "I did not leave until after he died."

"You were told to stay there. We kept calling to you."

"But I hung strips of cloth from the branches so you would find it from the road."

"Who told you to leave?" Bhaiya's voice quivered in anger,

but then realizing how pointless it was, he fell silent.

Nothing more was said for a long time. Bhaiya was the first to speak. "We cannot do anything now. You people should leave." Addressing Bhabhi in words which he uttered with great difficulty, he said, "You are the mother and sister of all of us. You have sacrificed your all for the Party. We will never forget our duty towards you."

Bhaiya on one side and Bacchan on the other lifted Bhabhi and laid her down on the bed. She did not appear conscious. Not a tear in her eye; not a sound from her lips. Although her heart was torn apart by the blow, she could not scream; she could not weep. She had to suffer silently to protect the leader of the Party and the fugitives in the bungalow who depended on her. Just as she was put down on the bed, so she lay.

Afterwards Bhaiya made Didi [Sushila] lie down on the other bed and comforted her—until 11 o'clock at night. I, unmindful of everyone else's sorrow, lay on the sofa with my eyes closed, motionless, steeped in my own misery. Azad turned out all the lights in the bungalow, took me aside and asked, "How was the body left?" I told him how dark it had been and that we only covered it with a sheet because there did not appear to be any good place nearby to bring it. Bhaiya said, "The jackals, hyenas and foxes will mutilate his body. I'll go there and take a look. In the morning while it's still dark, we'll go together and make some better arrangements." Then he asked me about Bhagvati Bhai's wounds and I told him what I could.

"Well, what shall we do now?" he asked. "Can we do the 'action'? We're two men short."

"We can certainly do it. That was his last wish. We must do it," I answered.

While it was still dark in the early morning, Bhaiya called, "Get up. We have to go."

I got out the cycles while Bhaiya told Bhabhi and Sushila that we were leaving to make arrangements for Bhagvati's body. Sushila started insisting that she wanted to come along to take a last look at him. Bhaiya asked me, and I said no. When Sushila kept pleading, Bhaiya turned to me and asked,

“Why not?”

I explained, “The roads are lighted now. Police are stationed all over. Any girl riding on the back of a cycle in the dark will arouse suspicion.” In those days in Lahore, a girl on the back of a bicycle attracted a great deal of attention. Bhabhi often rode on the back of Dhanvantri’s bicycle at night when she came to see us. The neighbours noticed. And that was why she was considered loose.

Bhabhi still hadn’t moved. Day was breaking as Bhaiya, Bacchan and I reached the bank of the Ravi and entered the woods. Crows were cawing all around us. All the crows of Lahore congregated in those woods and the noise we made wakened them. We saw Bhagvati Bhai’s body still wrapped in the white sheet, undisturbed by any animal. The stones we had used to fasten down the corners and edges of the sheet held just as we had placed them. But great colonies of huge black ants, probably attracted by the smell of blood, were crawling on top of the sheet.

We started searching for some place near at hand. If we had brought shovels, we could have dug a grave. One branch of the Ravi flowed about fifty yards away. The water was quite deep. We had nothing with us, so we bound the body up in the sheet which had covered it during the night. By that time, *rigor mortis* had set in. Bacchan cut off a lock of Bhagvati’s hair for a keepsake for us. And we three companions lifted his body and laid it down on the river. We weighted it with heavy stones so that it would not float. And the water was his grave.

In the bungalow we were all overwhelmed with grief. No one spoke. No one ate. We were barely conscious. Occasionally Azad would refer to an “action” on 1 June but I didn’t feel like talking about it. I would answer, “Oh we’ll certainly have an action. Somehow or other, we’ll do it.”

Sushila was weeping and trying to comfort Bhabhi at the same time. Bhabhi sat transfixed, unblinking, rigid as a stick of wood. Bhaiya sat by her, trying to comfort her, speaking to her of the Party’s duty and debt to her, but she continued to sit motionless, not uttering a word in response. However, when Bacchan came to sit with her to console her, bursting into tears himself, she put her hand on his head to comfort him.

Bacchan's affection for Bhagvati and Bhaiya Azad was boundless. He would say, "Bhaiya kindled the spark of revolution in my heart, but Bhagvati fanned it into an eternal flame."

We then questioned Bacchan about exactly how it happened. We already knew that after I had greased the inside of the bomb cases and left them to dry, Sukhdevraj had put them out into the sunshine to dry in order to hurry the process. According to his way of thinking, they would be dry in three hours. After that he insisted on having the bomb case filled. Bhagvati Bhai filled it.

I reminded him that I had earlier told him that the trigger was loose. Bacchan replied, "It didn't seem loose then."

The three had then bicycled to the Ravi to test the bomb. They left their cycles at the landing, rented a boat from the boatman at the Sanathan Dharm College and landed the boat near an isolated part of the woods. They chose a place for Bhagvati Bhai to test the bomb. Before he threw it, he said, "The bomb trigger is loose. We really should let it alone."

Sukhdevraj walked over to him and said, "If you're afraid, let me have it." And Bhagvati Bhai laughed and said, "What's the point of that? It's the same for you as for me. Get behind me out of the way." Saying that he lifted his arm to throw the bomb. The bomb blew up in his hand.

Bhagvati Bhai was felled by the force of the explosion and the wounds inflicted by the bomb fragments. If the trigger had not been defective, the bomb would not have exploded until after it had hit the ground. I felt that I was responsible for Bhagvati Bhai's dying in agony. When I saw the loose trigger, I should have fixed it then and there. Why did he go to test the bomb? But it was all over before I returned.

I was not brave enough to console Bhabhi. In fact, it never even entered my mind that in her distress, this was at least one thing I could do. Of all the people in the Party I was the friend of longest standing. I felt that I suffered a deeper loss than Bhabhi, that I was in greater need of comforting than she. Not once did I go to her to say one word of consolation. A long time later when I realized my error, I felt contempt for myself. To become absorbed in one's own feelings and oblivious of the suffering of others is the height of selfishness.

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On 30 or 31 May, I wanted to inform Prakashvati of Bhagvati's death. No one was in the dining room and I sat there and started a letter. Before I began, I wondered where to address it. I hesitated to send it to Krishnaji's house where Prakashvati was staying. Krishnaji's irrepressible curiosity was well-known and I feared he would not give her the letter before reading it himself. So I decided to send it to Dhruvdev, who was Mrs Krishnaji's brother. Before I started the letter, I wrote the address on the envelope.

This is roughly what I wrote her—"Bhagvati has been martyred in a bomb accident. The man I told you to depend on when I am gone, has gone before me. Losing Bhagvati, the Party has lost its good right arm. You can imagine the state Bhabhi is in. She had given her all to the Party. Then he who was dearest to her was snatched away in this unaccountable accident. I don't have the courage to look her in the eye or even to say one word of consolation After me, whatever you do for Bhabhi is not enough. It is your duty to help her in every possible way. . . ." Before I could finish the letter, Bhaiya called to me to take a walk in front of the jail.

I didn't think it was a good idea to carry the envelope with the address and the half-finished letter in my pocket. It [wasn't unlikely that I might some time be captured or killed on the street. Any address I might have in my pocket would not be very helpful to that person. Therefore I tore up the letter and the envelope. I don't remember whom I gave it to, Chailbihari or Madan Gopal, but I do recall that I said, "Burn."

The scraps were not burned; instead they were thrown carelessly somewhere in the kitchen of the bungalow. When we fled the bungalow and under the circumstances that we left it, the police searched every corner with a fine tooth comb. That was how the letter fell into their hands. They arrested Dhruvdev immediately and hounded him to learn his secrets. I will always feel a blot on my conscience for that mistake of mine. I will always regret it. Dhruvdev with his tiny body had such a great heart! After he was released, when I was fleeing, he helped me again. He had so much faith in my good intentions that we are friends to this day.

And what did Dhruvdev know? He didn't know that we were

in Lahore or on Bahawalpur Road. He could only be asked why the letter was written to Kamala through him. The police searched his and Krishnaji's houses thoroughly, but Prakashvati was not caught because some time earlier, noticing that the secret police had Krishnaji's house under surveillance, she felt fearful. And without saying a word to Krishnaji, she moved to Khayaliram Gupt's house.

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We had to retrieve our cycles that we left with the boatman on the Ravi. We had to treat Sukhdevraj's foot and we had to suppress our feelings and get busy with our concerns. Both Azad and I repeatedly passed by and examined the entrances to Borstal Jail and to Central Jail. And time after time Bhaiya would ask, "Sohan, which would be better—Borstal or General?"

I always gave the same answer, "It has been decided. On the Borstal."

On the first of June in the morning, Bhaiya said, "This evening at five o'clock we'll have the 'action'. The two men in Bhagvati and Raj's place are Chailbihari and Madan Gopal. Choose one of them, whichever you want." Both of them knew that some big "action" was being planned—but where and how and who would take part they didn't know. Bhaiya said, "You choose the one you think is best. Speak to him alone and take him over to the place on the cycle." Bhabhi overheard Bhaiya and insisted, "Give me the chance to take his place. That is my right."

Bhaiya looked at me and we said in unison, "No, not this time."

"Why?" Bhabhi insisted.

"You have to think seriously before you take a step like that. And then there is your child too."

"My child belongs to all of you. He is your responsibility."

"Bhabhi, listen to me this time," Bhaiya said.

Sushila also wanted to take part and we refused her too.

I chose Chailbihari. I took him aside and told him, "We are going to try to get Bhagat Singh and Dutt out of jail today by attacking at the jail gate. It's pretty safe to say that we'll prob-

ably be killed there. Once the shooting starts, there's no question of running away. In those circumstances, either Bhaiya or I will kill the first man who tries to run. If you think you don't have courage, then turn it down now."

Chailbihari wanted time to think it over. Half an hour later he came back and said, "I can't do it."

Now I had to call on Madan Gopal. I explained the situation to him and asked whether he was prepared to come along with us or not.

Madan Gopal thought awhile and said, "O.K."

I told him to get ready. Some minutes later, Bhaiya showed me that Madan had spread out a rug in a corner of a room and was reading passages from the Gita. Bhaiya, referring to that, expressed his irritation saying, "Anyone who has to find his courage in the Gita can't be relied on at the moment of truth."

Madan Gopal, the Gita-reader, became an informer when he was caught. In his deposition, he told a million lies in order to please the police. Once a man is afraid, the police can make him say anything and do anything. Madan Gopal, who wanted to demonstrate his own heroism, said in his deposition that when Chailbihari said he was afraid, Azad threatened him by saying that if it weren't for the fact that the "action" had to be done right then, he would kill Chailbihari on the spot. That was a lie! We would not do anything to any man who says, "This is the limit of my courage." But when Madan Gopal turned informer, then both Bhaiya and I wanted to kill him.

Madan Gopal did not know how to use a pistol or a revolver. Azad handed him an empty revolver and showed him how to aim and shoot and load it. Azad then gave each person his assignment for the attack. When the arms were distributed, Azad and I gave Sushila all the money in our pockets, but then, after thinking it over, Azad gave each man 15 rupees so that if anyone was wounded and separated from the others, he would not be completely penniless.

The road was too narrow for the police lorry to turn around at the gate and for that reason it had to stop about fifteen steps away. Bhagat Singh's plan was that we would drive up exactly at the time they were being taken out of the lorry. At our signal they would start running towards us, while we would be firing at their guards and the lorry.

Azad assigned our tasks: Jagdish and Bacchan were to wait on the road for Bhagat Singh and Dutt to be brought to Borstal Jail. By 2:30 Bacchan reported to us at the bungalow that the police lorry had delivered Bhagat Singh and Dutt to the Jail at 2:15 and that the lorry had left. Bhagat Singh and Dutt would probably be starting back at about 5 o'clock.

We got into our car at 4 o'clock. Just as we were sitting down in our assigned seats, Sushila called to us to wait a minute. As she approached, we could see blood dripping from her arm. She dipped her finger in her blood and touched each of our foreheads with it. Bhabhisat watching silently on the veranda, still as a stone image.

We drove off, passing Central and Borstal on the road a bit beyond them toward the canal. Bacchan was now sitting next to me. We turned the car around to face the main jail. At Jagdish's signal that the police lorry was arriving at Borstal Gate, we started off and stopped at the intersection of the main road and the Borstal Gate road.

The police lorry was approaching the gate at a very leisurely pace. A bit later it stopped and waited at the gate as it always did, but—I don't know why—perhaps because the gate was not opened immediately, it turned around. The door by which the prisoners entered was in the back. The significance of the lorry's turning around was that now Bhagat Singh and Dutt walked straight into it from the gate. The lorry door was so close to the gate it was like the transfer of birds from one cage to another when you place the open doors of the two cages together. So Bhagat Singh and Dutt did not have a chance to walk the 15 steps and break away.

We were still in our car at the intersection with the motor running. Bhaiya, seeing what had happened at the gate, said, "Let's go now, Sohan."

* I said, "Let's go ahead with it."

Bhaiya looked at me in astonishment, "How"?

And I said, "Whatever the consequences. . . ."

And he said, "Let's see what happens."

We could see Bhagat Singh and Dutt behind the barred gate. We were in the car according to plan: I was on the left, Bacchan in the middle and Madan Gopal on the right—all in the back. Bhaiya said softly, "Signal." Bacchan started playing on his

flute to attract Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's attention. We had arranged that earlier. The window of the jail gate opened. Our car started approaching slowly.

At a sign from Bhagat Singh we would attack the jail gate. My assignment was to throw a bomb at the armed soldiers on the bench at the left side of the gate; then to start shooting to keep them at a distance. Bacchan's orders were to bomb the police on the lorry to hold them back. Madan Gopal was to run to Bhagat Singh and Dutt and hand them each a revolver. At Azad's feet was a large Mauser pistol which he shot from the shoulder like a rifle. He would shoot when he saw anyone approaching.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt were brought outside. But Bhagat Singh did not scratch his forehead, which was the prearranged signal. Bhaiya asked, "Well, what do you say?" I, [watching Bhagat Singh, answered, "Let's go ahead with it." The driver had the motor running and ready to go when Bhaiya raised his hand and said, "Wait!"

Bhagat Singh had not taken one step in our direction but walked to the door of the lorry.

Azad said softly, "Let the lorry pass." He felt that since we were here, we had to decide one way or the other. If we wanted to get away without [arousing suspicion, we had to call an end to it and go. Bhagat Singh and Dutt passed us by in the lorry. They saw us. Our eyes met. They went by without a sign. And we sat petrified.

Bhaiya told the driver to get going instantly. He drove away quickly, in and out of several streets [to make sure that we weren't being followed. We drove to an isolated place, changed the license plate on the car, and returned to the bungalow. Bhabhi and Sushila came to the veranda when they heard the car pull up. When I saw them, I looked away. How the others felt, I don't know. We had left there with a *tika* of blood on our foreheads.

Bhaiya said, "Tell me, what could we do? All you could say was, 'Let's go ahead with it! Let's go ahead with it!' How could we have done it today? But if not today, then certainly tomorrow."

I agreed with him, "You're absolutely right. I was rash. But you had the job of thinking things out." [II: 190-207]

Yashpal said that this was the secret of Azad's greatness as a military commander. He was completely fearless and equally totally self-controlled. They all returned to the bungalow on Bahawalpur Road.

That night they put the bombs they had planned to use earlier in the bedroom wardrobe. Yashpal and Durga went to sleep in that room. Early the next morning Yashpal heard Durga get up and leave. A few minutes later he got up and walked into the courtyard. Less than five minutes later, the house was rocked by an explosion—then another. The bombs in the wardrobe shattered the room where only minutes before Yashpal and Durga had been sleeping. The wardrobe was blasted apart and pieces of bombs were embedded in the plaster walls.

Immediately they gathered their firearms, ammunition and papers and drove to Indrapal's house. But they had to return because Indrapal had left some of his wedding gifts there, bearing his name and wedding date, an easy trail for the police. Indrapal, Yashpal and Azad took the trip back to Bahawalpur Road and tried to remove everything that could identify the occupants. However, one thing they left behind in their haste was Yashpal's translation into Hindi of the Oscar Wilde play *Vera: Or the Nihilist*. When the police came they knew from that that Yashpal had been there.

Durga Bhabhi gave 5,000 rupees and Sushila gave 2,000 rupees that she earned in Calcutta to finance the elaborate preparations to free Bhagat Singh and Dutt. The financial strain became so acute afterwards that Bhैया Azad felt driven to rob the Gadodiya Store in Chandni Chowk in the first week of July, 1930.¹

¹*India in 1930-31*, Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta, 1932, pp. 557-8, describes the event:

On the 6th July, at about 10:15 p.m. the daily accounts of the business of Seth Lachmi Narain, proprietor of the Gadodiya Stores, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, were being closed as usual. The treasurer and three other office hands were sitting inside the treasury room. Suddenly four young men entered, three of whom are said to have been armed with pistols; the fourth was fully known to those sitting in the room as he was also an employee of Seth Lachmi Narain. After threatening those in the room with pistols, and obtaining the keys of the safe from them, the raiders took away currency notes and cash to the amount of Rs. 14,200, and while leaving the office, closed its doors from outside and also disconnected the telephone. They had a car waiting for them in the Queen's Gardens nearby in which they made good their escape;

Bhaiya, Vidyabhushan and Kashiram, armed with pistols, walked upstairs to the upper story to the Gadodiya office. A companion of ours who worked in the store, Bishambar Dayal, was already there. Bishambar had told them when to come. Dhanvantri and Bhagvati Singh stood guard on the street at the foot of the stairs so that if there were any outcry, no one could come upstairs and our companions would not be surrounded. At the office they only had to show their guns and the job was done. They took 17,200 rupees² and were downstairs in three minutes.

As our men were leaving, some of the people upstairs let out a yell. Bhaiya and Vidyabhushan each shot once. A few steps away near the Town Hall, Lekhrum waited in a motor car. As soon as they all got in, he drove off. They brought the money to Professor Nigam in the New Hindu Hostel. And little by little it was distributed in different places. All this occurred before I came to Delhi.

Kailashpati in Delhi and Virbhadra Tiwari in Kanpur were given a large part of the money for the purpose of manufacturing the bomb components in Delhi and buying a lathe to manufacture the bomb cases in Kanpur.

We aimed to have the capacity to manufacture bombs in sufficient quantity not to have to be limited to occasional terrorist acts, but to be able to launch a guerilla movement. We ordered a cyclostyle machine for each of the provinces so that a large number of people could be reached. Two thousand rupees were set aside in the Punjab for the express purpose of establishing a relationship with the anti-British Badshah Gul and also to publicize our political viewpoint.

I met Bhaiya in Delhi, but when I wanted to return to

while departing they fired some shots to discourage pursuers, but injured no one.

Enquiries subsequently suggested that 7 persons believed to be members of a terrorist or revolutionary organization, namely Azad, Bishambar Dayal, Kailashpati, Kanshi Ram, Lekh Ram, Vidya Bhusan alias Ramesh and Dhanvantri had been concerned in the commission of this dacoity. There had been for some time reason to suppose that Delhi was the headquarters of an interprovincial group of revolutionaries under the command of Azad. . .

²This amount is at variance with the police report.

Lahore, he told me that I would first have to help to set up a bomb factory in Delhi. At that time no one in the Party knew how to do it but me. Azad said to me, "This is a necessity for all the provinces. Dhanvantri can do your work in the Punjab while you're away."

Vimal Prasad Jain showed me a very large house he had chosen in Jhandevala for this purpose. It was a fine house surrounded by a great deal of land and no concern that the neighbours could look in or smell anything. Airy rooms and an open roof. The Party planned that this time the factory should be established and run with such secrecy that it could go on permanently. In order to protect the bomb manufacture inside, we had to have some sort of cover on the outside. Since we needed a continuous supply of running water to wash the picric acid, we decided that our cover should be a soap factory.

All the outside arrangements Vimal took care of. He had a signboard made with the words "Himalayan Toilets". Someone who knew chemistry could be very helpful in our preparation of picric acid. Sacchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan was sent for from Lahore for this purpose. Vatsyayan had left college in April or May to come to work for the Party. I gave Kailashpati a list of what we needed and everything came.

When you reached the head of the stairs, there, right in front of you, was the factory's office or showroom. Vatsyayan made some jars of face cream and scented oils from books on cosmetics. We pasted labels with the factory's name on all the jars. We were men with aesthetic sensibilities—Vatsyayan and I. And we gave very artistic names to our products—Vasantparag Hair Oil; Vasantparag Cream; Vasantparag Soap. We could not manufacture soap, but we had to have it for the showroom. Vimal brought a mold and we bought some bars of soap from the market, and we made Vasantparag Soap out of it.

Vatsyayan helped make all of it—oil, soap, cream, but he could not assume the burden of manufacturing the picric acid with its pungent gases because of his weak constitution. My idea was that if he would simply help, I could get back to Lahore sooner.

In addition to myself preparing the picric acid, there were Vatsyayan, Vimal Prasad Jain, Prakashvati and Girwar Singh. In the beginning Kailashpati displayed some interest in learn-

ing the work, but when he had a taste of the penetrating vapours which made everyone choke, he lost interest. Not to arouse the neighbours' suspicions of the yellow water which constantly flowed because of our washing of the picric acid, we mixed soda into the water and colouring agents as well.

Kailashpati's habits and mode of dress changed markedly over the last half year. His head and face always shone with oil now. He combed his hair in the latest fashion and patted perfumed cream on his face. Crisply ironed shirt, fine-spun *dhoti* and new chappals. He walked as though all eyes followed him, and like a Bengali babu, he carried the end of his *dhoti* in his hand. The sympathy I felt for him at first underwent a change. Several times I pointed to Bhaiya this change in his conduct. "Thandi's youth is blooming." Kailashpati's name in the organization was Thandi Prasad. Bhaiya noticed this change in him too, but it didn't irritate him the way it did me. Kailashpati's transformation roused the thought in my mind that thousands of rupees went through his hands and that he spent hundreds in expenses. While spending fifty or a hundred rupees of the Party's money for picric acid, he surely did not shrink from buying an 8-anna a pound jar of face cream for himself at the same time. Only after he was arrested did we find out the reason for Kailashpati's absorption with his appearance and his desire to make himself attractive.

The bomb factory in Delhi bore no resemblance to the shabby hut in Rohtak. In addition to the beautiful airy house, we made a special protective uniform of very thick cotton for those of us who had to work with the acid. Either Vatsyayan or I thought it up. Bush shirts were not in vogue then. The Americans brought those when they came to India in the Second World War. But with a view to protecting ourselves, we made that kind of bush shirt and pants. Vimal, Vatsyayan, Prakashvati and I wore such an outfit when we worked all day.

In Delhi we started making double the quantity that we made in Rohtak—that is, we had two stoves going at once. Although it was a good house, nonetheless double the quantity of gas was produced. By evening we would feel pretty sick. After making guncotton and picric acid, we produced dynamite and nitroglycerine. They were dreadfully volatile substances. One day Vatsyayan poured a half ounce of nitroglycerine into

a bottle where a drop or two of acid still remained. Fortunately the cork was loose. It flew up and hit the ceiling. If the cork had been tightly fitted into the bottle, the explosion would have shattered the bottle and we all would have been hurt.

Kailashpati kept bringing the acid by tonga or truck and we kept manufacturing. Often by evening we felt so sick we could not even eat *khichri*. So much picric acid was absorbed in the skin of our hands that whatever we touched tasted bitter. When that happened, we were forced to eat at the Mansrover or some other hotel. Sometimes our headaches were so bad we felt we had to get out into the open air. Vimal knew an excellent tonga wallah who would take us for a four or five mile ride. Just as Kailashpati's new ways annoyed me, so mine annoyed him too. Our eating in a hotel—our tonga rides—seemed to him an unpardonable luxury. He complained to Bhaiya that I was squandering the Party's money. Any factory expenditures that were made were not for my benefit alone, but I had the main responsibility for the factory. And it was presented as a fact that I was frittering the money away on my own amusements.

10 Yashpal Sentenced to Death

We prepared thirty to forty pounds of picric acid and large quantities of guncotton, nitroglycerine, etc., from which five to six hundred bombs could be made. But our health was suffering so badly that we stopped working for several days.

One day at noon Kailashpati told me, "There's to be a meeting of the Central Committee in Kanpur tomorrow. Take the night train tonight. One of the comrades will meet you at the station in Kanpur and take you there."

"Why?" I said, "Aren't you going? I'll go with you."

"I'm going too," Kailashpati admitted, "but there's a job I must do first. If I don't make the first train, I can catch the second. But you have to take the first train because a man will be waiting for you at the station."

In those days, I went against everything Kailashpati said. So in order to tease him, I said, "If you take the second train, won't there be any room for me too?"

"Bhaiya is anxious to see you. I was there just a little while ago. Bhaiya has something he wants to discuss with you before the meeting. I may be able to catch the same train, but don't wait for me."

I would usually arrive at the railway station just as the train was about to leave because I did not want to be noticed by the secret police. I didn't look for Kailashpati at Delhi Station, but when I arrived at Kanpur, though I stayed with the crowd, my eyes searched all over the platform for him. I remained part of the crowd deliberately but I felt sure that the Party comrade who was supposed to meet me would recognize me. I did not recognize him, probably because I was occupied looking for Kailashpati—or perhaps it was by chance—but in any case the person who was to meet me at the station did not find me.

I didn't know where the Central Committee was meeting or

where to find Azad. My irritation at Kailashpati was mounting—that jackass was probably combing his hair or straightening the pleats in his *dhoti*—that's why he missed the train. I started out for Virbhadra Tiwari's house to find out where Bhaiya was.

Virbhadra Tiwari stayed near the Congress office in Shradhanand Park when he was in Kanpur. I climbed the flight of stairs and, as I entered, there he was sitting cross-legged on the floor. When he saw me, his eyes grew wide in astonishment. I realized that he was startled because he would never expect me to just drop in. It was natural that he would be amazed to see a fugitive from the law just walk in, especially since Inspector Shambunath of the Secret Police who was always on the lookout for revolutionary fugitives lived in the next apartment. In order to make clear to him why I had to drop in without notice, I said, "I was summoned to the Central Committee meeting. Kailashpati was supposed to come with me but he missed the train, and when I arrived at the station I didn't see any of our comrades. I didn't know where else to go and that's why I had to come here."

Tiwari invited me to sit down by pointing to his bed. I sat down. I had in my hand the novel *Arakshaniya* by Sarat Babu.¹ Virbhadra took the book from my hand and covered the initial letter "A" of the title with his finger. I had no idea what he meant by that and I said, "I was reading to pass the time."

"Yes, it should say 'protected', not 'unprotected'," Virbhadra said gravely.

I no longer remember the subject or the plot of the novel. In any case at that time I hadn't finished reading it. I realized that he was pointing out something significant in the title of the book and I said, "I haven't finished it yet. We can discuss it when I do."

Virbhadra replied even more gravely, "I am saying this because I understand everything."

"Probably so," I said and smiled, "I'll have to finish the book." But this literary allusion was beginning to intrigue me.

¹*Arakshaniya* means "unprotected." It was written by Saratchandra Chatterjee.

Virbhadra then said, "It was fortunate that the man who was to meet you at the station didn't see you and that you came here."

I inferred from that that Tiwari wanted to tell me something before the Central Committee meeting. Perhaps he had a disagreement with Bhaiya. "Well, yes. It was a happy accident. What is it all about?" I asked.

"It certainly was a happy accident," he said, and he looked at me and heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction.

I was waiting eagerly for him to say something. He said, "Stay here the rest of the day. You mustn't go outside. At night, take the train back." And our eyes met.

"But I came here for the Central Committee meeting," I said.

Virbhadra replied, "The Central Committee meeting is over."

I was astonished. "What do you mean?" I asked.

Then Virbhadra said, "Where is the safest place you can stay?" And I answered, "It's the same everywhere. Wherever I have work to do. My job in Delhi is finished. I am going back to Punjab."

Then Virbhadra told me that Punjab would not be very safe for me. I was even more astonished. I thought, maybe some arrests had been made in Punjab that I didn't know about, but that Virbhadra had some special sources of information. Virbhadra realized that I didn't have the faintest idea what he was talking about. He took both my hands in his, looked right into my eyes and said, "Promise me that you won't tell anyone what I am about to tell you."

"How can there be any question about my telling a Party secret? How can you have any doubt about me?" I asked, becoming very uneasy.

"This is bigger than a Party secret. If I tell you, you must promise not to tell another soul. Not even Azad."

And I replied firmly, "I will never do anything against the Party's interests."

"I, too, am speaking of the Party's interests. There's no special friendship between you and me. I've seen you only a few times, but on the basis of what I have heard about you and what I hear now, for the good of the Party, I want your promise."

I said, "If it is for the good of the Party that I keep this secret, I give my word I will never repeat it to anyone." And to reassure him, I shook his hand on it.

Then Virbhadra said, "The meeting of the Central Committee is over. The decision was made that you were to be sent for in order to have you shot."

"Why? For what reason?" I said. I felt as though a thunderbolt had fallen from the sky.

"It was felt that you had become cowardly and pleasure-loving. That you wanted to be spared from work and danger. And that you would some day betray the Party."

I was deeply indignant. "What is the reason for this suspicion and where is the proof? Who has ever seen me act like that? Who said those things?"

"Never mind who said them!" Virbhadra took my hands and declared, "I don't feel that killing you would benefit the Party. That is why I covered the A in *Arakshaniya* that you were holding. I meant by that that you should be *Rakshiniy*. I'm glad you came here and that you've been told. But if anyone finds out the reason why the Central Committee's decision was not carried out, I will be killed."

In my agitation I repeated my insistence that I should have been told the reason for the decision to kill me. If it could be proved that I had committed a crime, I would not even object to being killed.

Virbhadra declared, "It can't be done. Any man who finds out a thing like that can go right to the police, save himself and trap all his companions."

"Then they suspect that I would go to the police and trap others? Is that what I am suspected of?"

"I don't harbour such suspicions," Virbhadra said, smiling, "but others do. If I suspected you, would I be telling you all this? I believe completely that you couldn't possibly do such a thing. That is why I told you this—and by doing so, I've put myself in peril from both sides. Anytime you let out the secret, my life will be in the greatest danger. But I believe the Party made a mistake. Therefore I am putting my life in peril for the Party's own benefit."

My blood was boiling at the thought of that insulting suspicion. I sat silent for a long time. Then to try to find out what

my crime was, I kept insisting to Virbhadra that I must see Azad; that I must talk to the others. If Azad could tell me my crime and show me proof . . . What kind of justice is it to sentence a person without telling him his crime or proving it?

Virbhadra explained, "The Central Committee decided that you should be shot to death without saying a word to you. If you go to Azad and talk about this, the first question he will want answered is how you found it out. And that means that I'll be killed."

That shut me up. I thought for a time and again asked, "Then what can I do?"

Virbhadra declared, "At least you can protect Prakashvati and yourself. She would have been killed after you. If you could protect yourself and at the same time do something which would show the Party that not only are you not wallowing in luxury and not trying to protect your life, then by proving your accusers to be liars, I believe the Party would change its decision. I'm relying on your ability to do both those things and that is why I'm risking my neck for the good of the Party."

I wanted to know which members of the Central Committee were at the meeting. Who represented Punjab? Earlier it had been decided that I was the Punjab representative. Virbhadra refused to say anything more.

My heart and brain pounding in turmoil, I sat silent the whole day long, wondering what I could do. Until then I had only the police to fear. In those days, all stations, post offices and public halls were plastered with huge posters all over offering money for the revolutionary fugitives in the Lahore Conspiracy and the Viceroy's train bombing incident. They were very large sums of money. My picture was usually the topmost one on the poster, and the greatest rewards were offered for Azad and me. Over this anxiety there was now an even greater one: that any time my revolutionary comrades saw me, they would shoot me dead.

The police did not know my new base of operations or my new identity, but my revolutionary comrades knew everything. Until now my concern was with the foreign government and its police which were my enemies. I took pride in that. To be degraded in the eyes of my companions, to have to run from

them and prove my innocence to them—that was unbearably humiliating. Now it was not a question of saving my life, but rather of saving my honour.

The simplest way to gain honour and trust in the eyes of my companions would be to go directly to the office of the Deputy Commissioner or the Police Superintendent. If I were to kill the Deputy Commissioner or Police Superintendent or some other high official, and before I was killed myself to cry out that I had done this because my companions considered me a coward and a traitor, and that I was sacrificing my life in order to restore their faith in me, then that would remove all doubts about me. I am not a coward. I am not unworthy of trust. My wild imagination conjured up every kind of reckless act I could perform to win back my honour.

I might well have carried out such a suicidal plan had I not considered my responsibility towards Prakashvati. To throw my life away in that fashion would have been the height of irresponsibility. I began to think along different lines. Perhaps I could organize a small independent organization to carry out the kind of action which would change the Party's point of view about me. I decided I would go to the Punjab and approach some close friends and lead them in an action to disarm at least three Sherdil police. That would make the Party think twice about my trustworthiness! I had only two pistols or revolvers in my possession at that time. Instead of holding two revolvers on each Sherdil, we should have to do with one on one. Then we would see what other action we could take in Lahore. The only friends I could trust were my friends in Lahore.

I returned to Delhi by the night train. Now when I arrived at the station I had to be wary not only of the police but of my "comrades". I went directly to the bomb factory where I had left Prakashvati. It was not yet daybreak. I didn't know whether the people in the factory knew the decision of the Central Committee. I had to get Prakashvati away from there. I was prepared for either kind of situation. If my companions would let me take Prakashvati away without any opposition or if they wanted to discuss my "sins" then I would get her out of there without any commotion, but if they used weapons, I would use weapons too. Kailashpati was usually in the factory

at that time.

Girwar Singh answered my knock at the door. Judging by his smile as he spoke I inferred that I had nothing to fear in the factory. Vimal and Vatsyayan were in the factory. I recall that Vatsyayan fell silent when he saw me. I didn't know whether that had any special significance since he was a silent man by nature. I went inside and told Prakashvati to pack all her things immediately and to take whatever picric acid, etc. had been prepared.

Prakashvati did not appear surprised because in those days in our lives it was customary to move quickly from one place to another. Nor did my manner suggest any anxiety or distress.

Vimal came in and asked, "Say, where are you going? What's up?" And I answered, "Apparently the police suspect this factory. You people have been very careless. I'm taking Kamala elsewhere immediately. You had better make some other arrangements too."

Kailashpati appeared at that very moment. Astonishment was written all over his face. I berated him with, "Is this how you kept your promise to come to Kanpur?" He was so upset to see me alive, he didn't know what to say. Nor did I wait for his answer.

I found out afterwards that Vimal had gone to Kailashpati immediately to express his concern that the police were suspicious of the factory and Kailashpati had told him, "That's what he says. The Central Committee decided to shoot him—that's why they sent for him to come to Kanpur. Somehow or other he got away to Delhi. Now he's running away with Kamala."

Vimal told Kailashpati, "If the Central Committee made that decision, you're in charge here. Give me the order and a revolver and I'll shoot him." But Kailashpati either lacked courage or didn't deem it the proper moment, and he told Vimal to follow me instead and find out where I was going. Vimal followed me, but I wasn't aware of it. I took Prakashvati to the home of an old classmate of mine whom only I knew, Vedraj Bhalla. He lived near Jama Masjid.

Even then I did not tell Prakashvati why I had taken her away from the factory, nor of the Party's decision against me. I wanted to spare her worry and distress while I figured a way out. She could not participate in the plan of action I thought

up at the time. I left for Lahore that very evening.

I asked Vatsyayan to help me take a quantity of picric acid, nitroglycerine, and other things of that sort to Lahore. I didn't realize then that even before I returned to Delhi from Kanpur, Kailashpati had told Vatsyayan of the Committee's decision to kill me. Even with that knowledge, Vatsyayan sided with me rather than Kailashpati. To protect Vatsyayan from suspicion, I told him to dress like a sahib and I bought him a second-class ticket. I dressed like a chaprassi and sat in the servants' compartment in the train. The suitcase was filled with highly explosive substances. I myself lifted it up and put it very carefully in the second-class compartment in a spot protected from the shaking and jerking of the train. When we arrived in Lahore, Vatsyayan gave everything to me. With these, I could at least hope to accomplish something.

When we arrived in Lahore I sought out my friends immediately and started preparing a plan of action. I discovered that my friends in Lahore had split up into two groups. The division was not on the basis of different political principles, programmes or organizations. It was a natural division on the basis of education, economic circumstances and social status. For example, I met Gulab Singh and Jahangirilal through Indrapal and Bhagram. They were men of the lower-middle class, simply educated, who had to make their own living. They knew only Hindi and Urdu. The other group were Vatsyayan, Devraj Sethi, Keval Krishna, Sukhdevraj, Durgadass, Ranvir and Dhanvantri who were students at the university and were supported by their families. I met most of them through Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj. While I was out of Lahore, this group looked upon Sukhdevraj and Dhanvantri as the established and responsible leaders of the Party.

I gleaned this much in Kanpur, that Sukhdevraj and Dhanvantri, as the Punjab representatives, attended the meeting which decided against me. Even before I left Lahore, until the time of the explosion on Bahawalpur Road, I relied heavily on Dhanvantri for Party work. Dhanvantri was widely known and influential. He had organized the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and he had great organizing ability. I had no faith in Sukhdevraj whatsoever, but based on my experience with Dhanvantri, I felt that if some action I took enhanced the Party's standing,

his sense of duty would compel him to cooperate with me.

Among the students, Vatsyayan was held in the highest esteem. Even at that time he was writing poems and stories in Hindi and English and was considered a person of extensive knowledge and an artist. Companions and money were needed to accomplish anything. The Party was no longer in financial straits but I could not get money from them to work independently. I could only get the money I needed from those of our companions who came from well-to-do families. Further I was attracted to them because they, like myself, were better educated and more ideologically knowledgeable.

I tried to contact and secure the cooperation of companions of this sort through Vatsyayan. He listened to my plan but said nothing. He didn't oppose me, but he showed no enthusiasm to help. And I encountered the same attitude on the part of the other companions too. Even then I did not realize that they knew of the decision to kill me. I simply assumed that they hesitated because, since my absence from the Punjab, they considered Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj to be in charge. I tried to talk to Dhanvantri in their presence, but nothing came of it.

Since I felt hopeless where the students were concerned, I switched my efforts to the other groups: i.e. Indrapal, Bhagram, Jahangirilal, etc. I gave Indrapal the picric acid I had brought from Delhi and told him I was no longer the leader of the Punjab, but that Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj were. I told Indrapal my plan to enhance the Party's influence by seizing the Sherdil's arms and asked him to urge Dhanvantri to cooperate. I did not tell him of the decision against me, but said that I had lost my contacts because I had been out of Lahore for almost three months. Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj had succeeded me in the Party and that was why their cooperation was essential. I didn't tell him of the decision against me because I didn't want him to lose respect for the Party or to discuss the Party's disunity.

I sent messages to the others through Indrapal, and in response was told to meet them alone in some isolated spot. I refused, insisting that some others whom I knew be present. I further insisted that the meeting place be either at Indrapal's house or the house of some other companions we both knew. They would not comply with such conditions. It wasn't difficult

for me to realize that they wanted to meet me in some lonely place in order to kill me.

Indrapal was amazed at my refusal to meet in a lonely spot. When he asked me, I told him that Sukhdevraj and Dhanvantri wanted to kill me on the spot. And I also told him that they hadn't told me what my crime was and they wouldn't give me an opportunity to explain myself. Indrapal was so stunned and furious, he couldn't move. He urged me to place my case before Azad. I explained that they would not let me know where Azad was. And further, who knew what they had said against me? They're telling their friends that Azad and the Central Committee decided to kill me. If the majority does not believe me, they certainly can shoot me, but Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj are fearful that their lies will show them up, and that is why they won't give me the chance to speak. That made Indrapal even angrier. He grabbed a pistol and wanted to go with me and take Bhagram along with us.

Dhanvantri sent me a message by Indrapal to meet him in the DAV College Boarding House before dawn. Summer vacation starts later in the Punjab than in the U.P. and the schools and colleges start later too. The only people who stay there during vacations are those who want to live cheaply or are preparing for exams. The house was large and hidden away, with rooms on all sides which were let out for rent. Because it was vacation time, not only the house, but the entire neighbourhood was empty. When we arrived, Dhanvantri was sitting in the middle of the courtyard on a *charpoy*. The rooms in the house were all vacant, but I suspected that two or three persons were hiding behind the doors. When Dhanvantri saw that I had brought along two friends, his customary pleasant smile vanished and his expression grew stern with anger. I understood why he was angry, and I smiled sweetly and said, "Ah brother, I've been anxious to meet with you for so long!"

"You were told to come by yourself," he said stiffly, "Why did you bring these people with you?"

"We came from the city together. What difference does it make? You and I can talk privately."

Dhanvantri could not bear that. But how could I bear what he wanted? Until then I had faith that, aside from Sukhdevraj,

I could explain my position to anyone else and ask that person to give my message to Azad. Most of all I relied on Dhanvantri, but he was not interested in hearing what I had to say. That incident made it all seem hopeless to me. Until then I had told no one in Lahore and Delhi, except Indrapal, of the Party's decision against me. The others in the Party thought that the man who was to have met me at Kanpur station missed me because of his carelessness, and I went back to Delhi out of annoyance. And that now I was loafing around amusing myself, without any regard for the rules.

Dhanvantri had asked me to come alone, but when I brought two men along, he either thought I had breached discipline or that I had a premonition of danger. Which it was I don't know because I never afterward discussed the matter with him. He was outraged at his inability to carry out the decision of the Party to kill me. In his view it was his duty to murder me quickly before I had the chance to harm the Party.

Realizing it was impossible to receive cooperation or help from Dhanvantri or the Party, even without enough revolvers, pistols or bomb cases, I started planning a big "action" with Indrapal and Bhagram. The picric acid and nitroglycerine I had brought from Delhi meant I had enough explosive materials. We began thinking of some way of blowing up the barracks on the Police Lines near Mall Road. I suggested that Indrapal and Bhagram go about the area dressed as sellers of chicks and reeds to get the lay of the land. Because we lacked means we thought of making the kind of bomb we could put in a specific place and which would explode automatically after a specified length of time. The basic reason we fashioned this hasty plan was to prove that Sukhdevraj and Dhanvantri were less efficient and unable to get things done as quickly as we. [II : 216-32]

A month earlier, on 19 June, Indrapal's group which called itself *Atshi-Chakkar* had organized an anti-government protest. Bombs were exploded simultaneously in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Lyallpur and Rawalpindi, and proclamations in Urdu denouncing British

imperialism were distributed.¹

A few days later Durgadass Khanna sent me a message asking me to meet him. He was the cleverest and most thoughtful of all the companions in Lahore. Perhaps because they hadn't been able to lay their hands on me, they enlisted his help. Warily, I went directly to his house without giving him any notice. I had hardly known Khanna before this. Before I went to Lahore, I met him once at night in Gol Bagh. At that time he asked me briefly about Prakashvati. His curiosity led me to believe he was related to her and a member of the high Khatri caste of Lahore. Then Khanna spoke out plainly asking, "Could Prakashvati actually work for the Party, or did you just want her for yourself?"

I was just as direct in my response to him. "I did not know Prakashvati at all before, but I know her well now. I honour and love her. She can do everything. She has both courage and wisdom."

Durgadass said that Prakashvati's family was outraged and wanted revenge. He went on to say that, "They can do whatever they want. She had better leave Lahore."

When I saw him this time, he mentioned Prakashvati again,

¹Gulab Singh, one of the members of Indrapal's *Atshi-Chakkar*, wrote his life story in *Under the Shadow of Gallows*.

As a result of the 19 June bombing, two policemen died and others were injured. This was one of the incidents which led to the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, where Gulab Singh, Indrapal and others were defendants. Gulab Singh was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted and he served fifteen years in prison.

Under the Shadow of Gallows has interest in terms of comparison with *Sinhavalokan*. Yashpal's role is occasionally referred to and Indrapal's attitudes towards Yashpal as well. We have no firsthand account of Indrapal's reasons for his actions, particularly why he set up *Atshi-Chakkar* when the HSRA already had a Punjab organization. Yashpal has given the reason for the division on the basis of education and class. However, Gulab Singh writes on page 70:

It must be recalled here that it was due to his differences with Yashpal that the Pandit [Indrapal] decided to form an independent group of his own. We had been helping in the activities organised by Yashpal, the provincial organiser of the main party, because our cause and creed were one, and because we felt it our duty to serve the interests of the revolutionary movement. But we had always kept the entity of our group separate.

"You said that you honour her. I have heard some bad things about her."

Infuriated I replied, "I am responsible for her honour. If anyone has anything to say, let him say it to me."

We were talking in English. He asked, "Have you got married?"

I said yes.

Khanna then told me that Dhanvantri wanted to meet me.

"Fine! I want to meet him too. You come with me."

Khanna said, "I want to tell you something 'if you won't tell anyone. Promise you won't say anything." I promised, and he said, "Don't be upset." I said, "I'm not getting upset."

"The Central Committee has decided to kill you. That's why they're sending for you."

"I know that. You're not responsible for telling me. I knew that before I came to Lahore and was told it in Lahore too," I lied in order to hide the source of my information, "that's why I'm very wary and why I asked you to come with me. Tell Dhanvantri I've known about their plots for a number of days. He ought to know how unimportant he is and who the people in the Party side with. Then I want to speak to Azad and the Central Committee. I am prepared to obey *their* decision. That was not their decision—he is lying. Where's his proof? If he wants to fight, I'm ready to fight with him."

"I'm very sorry about that. How and why was such a decision made?" Durgadass showed plainly how badly he felt.

"No one said anything to me about any wrongdoing on my part. No opportunity was given to me to explain anything. Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj want to run things and all this is a result of their malice and personal ambition. It wasn't a decision of the Central Committee. If there is any charge against me, it has to be presented before me at the Central Committee or a meeting with some of the members. Let anyone who says that I have sinned come forward—I will answer him. Whatever the decision, I will abide by it. But I will not be led to my death like a goat to the sacrifice. I have six armed men on my side. If a bullet comes my way, I shall empty my pistol on whoever it is—Dhanvantri or Azad. If I should be killed without a chance to clear myself, there will be a blemish on my name in the annals of the revolution. As long as there is

breath in my body, I will not let that happen. If they secretly, senselessly, kill me, their action will ruin the Party. My friends will not endure such injustice without revenge. My loyal friends told me of this to save me. If they thought it was the Party's decision, why didn't they obey it? Either this bit of mischief is being done in Azad's name or someone is making a fool of him. What faith can anyone have in the wisdom of such men?"

I said what I said because I was angry and frustrated, but even more than that I wanted to threaten and frighten Dhanvantri through Khanna, and I wasn't going to leave out one single word in the interest of diplomacy. It wasn't out of hatred, but in order to gain the right to a just decision that I was opposing their wanton lack of discipline.

Durgadass reassured me, "If you haven't had a chance to clear yourself, that is an intolerable injustice. The charges which I heard about seemed completely baseless and vague." Until that moment I hadn't found out what I was being accused of. I asked Khanna, "At least, tell me, what was my crime? No one has told me anything."

"They say that you made Prakashvati leave home so that you could play around with her and by doing that you have damaged the Party's reputation. You wanted to bolster everyone's respect for Prakashvati so you falsely accused Prem of having lost 2,000 rupees she gave him. You bore malice toward Bhagvati Charan and purposely manufactured a bomb to explode in the hands of the person holding it. That was why Sukhdevraj's foot was injured and Bhagvati was killed. Bhagvati's life could have been saved, but you deliberately did not bring help. You were against getting Bhagat Singh out of jail because at that time you wanted to protect yourself so you could sneak away with Prakashvati. The explosion on Bahawalpur Road was your bit of mischief so that no action could be taken. No bomb went off while you were in the room. It was only after you left the room that the bomb exploded. On account of your conduct everyone is under suspicion. Your comfort is so important to you that you would go to the police at any minute and tell secrets that would get everyone arrested, but you would go free."

I told him too that this was all the result of Sukhdevraj's

lying machinations. He told tales like that to Bhagvati Charan too, but at that time it was not appropriate to confront him with it.

"I am suspicious of people who accuse me of self-indulgence or say that I would give secrets to the police at any time and totally destroy everything. I have known for fifteen days that those people, without any regard for justice, want to murder me. I consider that treachery by some in the Party. If that had made me wild with anger or fear, I would have gone to the police already for protection. Even now I want to present my case before the Party and am willing to accept its decision. Which one of them has shown this kind of steadfastness, courage and faithfulness?" And my voice reflected my anger and frustration.

Khanna spoke very gently as he said, "This is the best proof of your trustworthiness. Come with me to Dhanvantri. I will insist on an inquiry into the charges."

It was eight o'clock at night.

"Where are we going?" I asked Khanna.

"To Minto Park," he replied.

At that time of night Minto Park was completely empty.

"I'm willing to go," I said, "but it is on your responsibility. If I see any suspicious behaviour, I'll shoot first and if anyone shoots in the dark, I'll shoot you."

"Trust me," Khanna said reassuringly, "even aside from the fact that this was an unjust decision, what you don't know is that Prakashvati is a relative of mine. I was sent for for that reason. But if you come with me, nothing will be done against you. I want the matter cleared up. This dispute is ruining the Party."

We rode to Minto Park on our cycles. When we reached the edge of the Park I steadied my cycle with one hand and with the other held the handle of my pistol in my pocket. I still did not completely trust Khanna. The road was lighted, but a few steps inside the park it was pitch black. We were both walking with one hand on our cycles. Khanna was leading with a lighted flashlight. After a few steps we saw someone seated on a bench. Khanna waved with his flashlight. I recognized Dhanvantri. I grew warier, edging closer to Khanna and drawing my pistol from my pocket. Dhanvantri sat absolutely still.

Khanna spoke to him and Dhanvantri raised his hand and pointed his flashlight towards the sky. They were about six paces from me, speaking to each other in low voices. Then Khanna came back to me.

Dhanvantri pointed again with his flashlight. Khanna told me to start walking back to the road. I said warily, "You and Dhanvantri walk to the road together." We all walked together. Dhanvantri didn't say a word to me. Khanna, who was the man in the middle of all this, decided that Dhanvantri and I should go to Delhi and put the entire matter before Bhaiya.

In those days in Lahore, I slept in a different house every night—Indrapal's or Jahangirilal's, etc. Out of concern for me, Indrapal came with me to the station when I was leaving for Delhi. I usually wore tattered Punjabi style clothes when I was in Lahore, but I went to the station in a suit. Second Class then was like First Class now. I was still concerned about being tricked. In the Second Class the windows and doors could be locked from the inside and no one could enter the compartment while you were sleeping.

Because I was so anxious about being careful, I blundered into a careless act. In my anxious edginess, I carried a loaded pistol and plenty of cartridges. At the ticket window, I took a note from my inside pocket and change from the outer pocket of my jacket and placed them on the window. By accident, along with the change, I had placed two cartridges on the window.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a turbaned secret policeman standing near the window looking at me. If I were to try to conceal the cartridges or look flustered, I would seal my doom. Instead of trying to hide the bullets, I started to bounce them and in a strident voice indicating my irritation, I ordered a First Class ticket instead of a Second.

"Sir, there is no room left in First Class. It's all been reserved," the clerk answered in English. With mounting irritation I said, "What kind of nonsense is that? You said on the telephone three times that my place was reserved. And now you tell me there is no place for me." And I turned to Indrapal angrily and asked, "Munshi, did not you call three times?"

"Yes, huzoor," Indrapal shook in fear and trembling.

"Now what do you say?" I turned to the clerk in anger.

"I just came on duty at six o'clock. I don't know anything about this," the clerk explained.

I told him that I was going to report this and then said, "Oh, well, then give me a Second Class ticket," and started rattling the cartridges in my hand again. While the clerk was making out my ticket, I turned to Indrapal again in annoyance, "Now what are you looking at? I'm going Second Class. Move and get my luggage."

As Indrapal was following me to the platform carrying my simple bedding and suitcase, a man of the secret police was following him. And I was watching out of the corner of my eye.

At the platform, I burst out at Indrapal again, "What are you looking at? Go ask the guard where I sit." Indrapal asked the guard where the Joint Sahib's place was. He pointed it out and brought my bedding inside. I kept one hand on the handle of the pistol in my pocket and with the other was playing with the cartridges in full view. I wanted the policeman to think that I was not the least concerned about the cartridges, and after a while, he relaxed his gaze. He still had his eye on me, but it was casual, not fixed.

The train's departure time passed and still it did not leave. I called out again, knowing the policeman was within earshot. "Guard!" I called.

"Yes sir," the guard came. I handed him a ten rupee note and spoke in English, "Bring me a tin of Black and White cigarettes." He hurried off to a stall some distance away and returned with the cigarettes. I took the tin and, ignoring the change, turned away. He left the change on the seat and went away.

My heart was pounding all the while I engaged in this play-acting. That man of the secret police, what was he doing? When the train left the station, I sighed with relief, but I wasn't completely at ease. He might phone ahead to the next station for a troop of police. Thank goodness, we passed Miyanmir Station, but I still could not relax. This was the "Frontier Mail" which usually stops at Kusur Station after about an hour. I was anxious about that, but happily we passed Kusur Station without stopping. I was still holding my breath as we went by

Ferozepur Station.

When we reached Delhi Station, I was still very uneasy. There I had both the police and my own companions to fear. Whenever I get into critical situations, it takes its toll of my body and my stomach. I don't know how other people react to that, but the bile rose to my mouth and the taste was bitter.

I had left Prakashvati at Vedraj Bhalla's house near the Jama Masjid, and that is where I went directly. When she wasn't there, I was disturbed. Vedraj Bhalla told me that she had left a week before to meet some friends and had not returned. When I went to Lahore, I did not tell her not to meet with her friends because I did not want her to be concerned. But if she had intended to stay with her friends for a few days she would have taken her belongings. She had certainly fallen into a trap! I was terribly agitated. I turned on my heel and left immediately for the factory.

It was still not long past sunrise. Dhanvantri had come to Delhi by an earlier train than mine to see Azad and set a time for a meeting. He and Sukhdevraj might well be in the factory. As I started up the stairs, I saw the factory door opening. I drew the pistol out of my pocket and held it in readiness. I would not have acted so hastily before, but the anxiety I felt at the danger to Prakashvati blew my mind.

I didn't see anyone in the office or the room beyond. At the open roof on the right, I saw Dhanvantri lying on a cot, covered only with a sheet. The noise I made woke him. I said nothing to him, but simply walked out. When he woke and sat up, his eyes grew wide as he saw that I was holding a pistol. He did nothing. He betrayed no concern, no haste, but it was perfectly clear that he was furious at my conduct. It was natural that he should be angry with me but my blood was so boiling with anxiety for Prakashvati and the knowledge that I was vulnerable to a bullet from any direction, that I was ready to burst. I went back into the room and saw Girwar Singh who had just bathed, getting into his *dhoti*.

I asked Girwar Singh where Prakashvati was. And she, hearing my voice, appeared from the next room. The instant I saw her I realized that she was upset and had been weeping. I said nothing, only, "Come with me." She preceded me down the stairs, while I kept looking over my shoulder. Then Sushila in

a perfectly normal voice called out, "When did you get here? Where are you going? What's the matter?"

"In a hurry now. Wi'll be back later," I answered.

After several days at Vedraj Bhalla's house, Prakashvati came to visit her friends at the factory. Once there, Vimal Prasad kept her from leaving. Bhaiya and Dhanvantri came and Bhaiya kept asking her repeatedly where I was. Since I hadn't told Prakashvati my plans or whereabouts, she didn't know.

Azad thought she was trying to deceive him and he threatened, "If you don't tell me, it won't go well with you," and then he asked, "Just what is your relationship with Yashpal?"

Prakashvati had never seen Azad behave in that way. At first his threats made her very angry. She didn't know where I was or what my plans were. She was annoyed, and to assert her self respect, said, "It is just as it should be. And what business is it of yours?"

We all addressed Azad respectfully. One could not point to any failing in his conduct as an individual. He never used the pronoun *tu* unless he was feeling very affectionate. Even when he was angry, he always addressed us as *tum* or *ap*. In those days Sukhdevraj, Dhanvantri and Kailashpati flattered him constantly. The times of frank and honest mutual criticism were past. Prakashvati's remark made him angry, but how angry it's difficult to guess. He felt as though Prakashvati had slapped him and that he had to suffer the slap.

I told Prakashvati about the decision against me and why Azad was upset. Naturally that upset her. Knowing that I was going to meet Azad and the others, she insisted on coming with me armed. I tried to persuade her that there was no necessity for that. The situation did not call for me to carry a pistol. I planned to explain my viewpoint clearly. I would have to rely on the truth and good sense. If I could not clarify my situation and if I were killed, there would be time enough to settle the score. It served no purpose to be anxious and distraught.

Before I saw Bhaiya, I saw Khayaliram Gupta and told him the entire story. He was astonished. When I first heard of the decision against me, my immediate reaction was to keep the shameful matter quiet and try to solve the problem by myself.

Now I was going to tell all and rely for justice on the verdict of my comrades.

I explained my situation to Guptji and asked him to come with me to Azad. He insisted on it. After that I told Sushila of the decision against me. She was speechless. When I saw how amazed she was, I realized that she too had not been told of the problem. All efforts had been made to restrict the knowledge to as few of the companions as possible and to finish me off. She asked what the charge against me was, and when I told her, she was too astonished to speak. [II: 237-46]

Yashpal returned to the factory and spoke to Azad alone. He wanted to discuss each of the charges made against him, but Azad refused to listen to his explanation. Azad was convinced of Yashpal's integrity and innocence. However, he wanted the answers to two questions. What was the relationship between Yashpal and Prakashvati? Who told Yashpal the Central Committee's decision against him? To the first, Yashpal answered they were husband and wife. He refused to answer the second, pointing out that just as he did not betray the Party to the police, he would not betray the person who saved his life.

Azad considered it intolerable that a member of the Central Committee had told Yashpal a secret decision. He did not know which member, and therefore, felt he could not trust anyone. However, to resolve the immediate problem of Yashpal's status, he decided that Dhanvantri would henceforth be the permanent organizer of the Punjab. Yashpal would work with Dhanvantri on one project—the plan for the killing of Abdul Aziz.¹ After that project, however, he would work with Azad. Yashpal was to announce to everyone in the Punjab that Dhanvantri was the head of the Punjab group, not himself. Dhanvantri was to tell all the Punjab party members that the Central

¹Khan Bahadur Abdul Aziz was the Superintendent of Police who directed the raid of the bomb factory in Lahore on 15 April 1929, which led to the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial. His killing was intended as an act of revenge by the HSRA. On 4 October 1930 an attempt was made on his life while he was travelling in a car in Lahore. His chauffeur and a constable were injured. The constable later died of septic poisoning. Abdul Aziz was unhurt. Yashpal took no part in this incident. It was concerning the plans for this attack that he and Dhanvantri had an argument which led to Dhanvantri's appeal to Azad that he could not work with Yashpal. As a result of this, Azad disbanded the Party in early September.

Committee had changed its decision about Yashpal. This resolution satisfied Yashpal, but not Dhanvantri. Dhanvantri was now in the humiliating position of having to retract his claim to all the members in the Punjab that Yashpal was a traitor.

Yashpal returned to Lahore in August to help Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj plan for the murder of Abdul Aziz. However, Dhanvantri felt that his own position in the Punjab had been compromised by Yashpal's reinstatement, and he told the Party members that the reason Yashpal had been reinstated was that he had begged Azad for forgiveness. Yashpal countered this by saying that Dhanvantri was a complete liar. The situation became impossible and Dhanvantri appealed to Azad. Azad as a result disbanded the Party organization, distributed all the arms and ammunition equally to the provincial organizers, but also gave Yashpal an equal share, and told each man to try to work in his own province—there was no longer a central organization.

Although Yashpal realized that basically the Party structure was very weak, nonetheless he was saddened to realize that he was the immediate cause of the breakup.

The Party was disbanded. It depressed me very much to feel that I was the cause of this misfortune, but there was no other way. Even aside from Dhanvantri and Sukhdevraj there were other people in the Party like Vimal, Bacchan and others who frowned on my conduct. Although they did not believe at all in the other charges against me, in their eyes I had committed one sin: I had taken Prakashvati as my wife. And that was enough. In their minds those who work for revolution should be wedded to the ideals of sacrifice and celibacy. Therefore my behaviour was shameful.¹

Yashpal went on to say that, in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, members had strong feelings concerning the virtue of asceticism, and they felt that falling in love and marrying were a kind of self-indulgence which betrayed a lack of self-control inconsistent with the conduct of a revolutionary.

Yashpal viewed the Communist Party as the natural successor to the HSRA and he pointed out that it takes a more realistic view of normal emotions. In part, he thought, the reason was that in the early history of the revolutionary movement in India, an organization lasted a very short time, only a

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume II, p. 256.

matter of months. The HSRA was an intermediate phase, having gone on for several years. The Communist Party of India had taken an active role for several decades. Therefore, ideas on the proper behaviour of members have had to change.¹

In considering further weaknesses of the HSRA, Yashpal pointed to the authoritarian nature of the organization. The fact that secrecy was necessary led to this. The HSRA was run by one-man rule. The members carried out Azad's orders. Even though a Central Committee existed, it was appointed, not elected. The Central Committee which made the decision to shoot Yashpal did not consist of the same members as the Central Committee to which Yashpal belonged.² Because of the secret nature of the organization, elections and democratic discussion were not possible, and great injustices could be done as a result.

However, the greatest weakness of HSRA Yashpal said, was that at a time of peril, each man could depend only upon his own strength and feeling of individual responsibility. The Party structure was so weak, it could not be depended upon. That was why so many turned informer under duress.³

According to Yashpal, the ideological weakness of HSRA was that although the word "socialist" was part of its title, most of the Party members knew very little about the principles of socialism. They were opposed to British rule and tried to destroy it, but their notions of building a socialist state were

¹*Sinhavalokan*, pp. 256-8. There is the further factor that revolutionary parties in India were deeply steeped in Hindu tradition, especially at the beginning in Bengal. The Communist Party had secular roots and a Western orientation which placed a lesser value on asceticism.

²When the Party was reorganized after the Lahore bomb factory raid, the Central Committee which was appointed consisted of Bhagvati Charan, Yashpal, Seth Damodar Swarup, Virbhadra Tiwari, Kailashpati and Azad. The Central Committee which condemned Yashpal consisted of Vidyabhushan, Dhanvantri, Seth Gurudayal Avasthi, Kailashpati, Virbhadra Tiwari and Azad.

³See Leonard A. Gordon, *Portrait of a Bengal Revolutionary*, p. 215. The author here is concerned with the Bengal revolutionary groups which preceded the HSRA. However, similar weaknesses are mentioned.

The *dada* system of organization which was widespread in Bengal held its own deficiencies within itself. Although devotion and loyalty to the leader of the *dal* was valuable in sustaining the group, the death of the *dada* would bring disintegration to his immediate faction.

vague. For most of them it was not at all a motivating factor in their actions and membership.

Although Yashpal was saddened by the breakup of the Party, he was consoled by Azad's parting words to him:

"Nothing else could be done at this time. . . If ever you think of doing something, you can count on me."¹

And he told Yashpal where he could be reached in Delhi and in Kanpur.

²*Sinhavalokan*, Volume II, p. 264.

11 Azad's Death

On 4 September, 1930 when Azad disbanded the Central Committee of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, and distributed the arms and ammunition equally to each provincial organizer (including Yashpal) he told each man to consider himself independent and offered his help to any of them who wanted it.¹

¹The latter part of 1930 was a time of decline of the organization. Indrapal, Gulab Singh, Hansraj "Wireless" and some others had formed a separate group which they called the *Atshi-Chakkar* (Wheel of Fire). They were hampered by even less access to financing than the regular group (Dhanvantri, Sukhdevraj, etc.). On 28 August 1930, Indrapal, Gulab Singh and others of the *Atshi-Chakkar* were arrested.

In *Under the Shadow of Gallows*, Gulab Singh wrote of the last days of August when he and Indrapal were being followed and watched by the police. On pages 70-71 he wrote:

Yashpal dropped in and was informed of the whole situation. His response was quick and spontaneous. "I can give you some money," he said, "and also leave with you the addresses of a few persons who can provide you with shelter until the situation improves. It is most dangerous for you to stay here anymore." Pandit Indrapal turned down his offer of help saying his suggestions were not practicable . . . Pandit was definitely of the opinion that our merging into the main Party was sure to slow down the process of our work. He was an energetic type who would carry out his own programme rather than wait for another's orders tardily given and half-heartedly obeyed. He was particularly dissatisfied with the way Yashpal worked. The fear of losing our identity as well as our usefulness for the cause was the real reason for this refusal.

Yashpal did not insist. He only warned us of the danger that awaited us if we did move out of the house at once. He then left.

It may be added here that Gulab Singh wrote that he regretted not having accepted Yashpal's offer of help. He went to Rawalpindi to elude capture but could not find a safe place to stay. He returned to Lahore, was arrested and prosecuted in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, and sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and he was released after serving fifteen years in prison.

Other factors besides internal disunity served to dampen the revolutionary movement at this time. The efficiency of the police, especially the Criminal Investigation Department, and that many persons turned informer when captured led to large numbers of arrests.¹ On the national scene, the Round Table Conference which was initiated in November 1930 and culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in January 1931 appeared at the outset at least to offer the promise of greater self-government to India. If Gandhi could win sufficient concessions from Britain, it would strengthen the hand of Congress and the people's belief in nonviolence, and the position of the revolutionaries would be correspondingly weakened.

Yashpal joined Azad in Kanpur after the disbanding of the Central Committee because he no longer had a power base in Punjab. They both moved to Allahabad shortly thereafter. He and Azad began to think seriously about their future.

To Yashpal and Azad, independence for India seemed imminent at the end of 1930. If the Congress and the British government came to an understanding, what would be the status of the revolutionaries? Would they still be prosecuted as outlaws or would they be included in a general amnesty for political opponents?

Azad called on Jawaharlal Nehru in February, 1931, hoping to receive some assurances from him in the event of a government-Congress accord. Nehru reported this meeting in his autobiography² indicating that he had no answer to Azad's

¹Kailashpati was arrested on 28 October 1930. He cooperated with the police and gave them information which led to the raid on 4 November on the bomb factory in Delhi. There the police found arms and ammunition and enough explosives for the manufacture of 6,000 bombs. As stated in *India in 1930-31*, pp. 558-9:

Much light was also thrown by this raid, and by that on Kailashpati's house a week previously, on the activities of the Punjab revolutionary party in the Bahawalpur Road bomb case, on the six bomb explosions that occurred in different places in the Punjab on the 19th of June, and on the attempt made to mine H.E. the Viceroy's train in December 1929. These enquiries . . . resulted in the framing of the New Delhi Conspiracy Case. . .

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 261-2

basic question concerning the possibility of a political amnesty for his group. Azad said that they no longer believed in terrorism and that any violent acts that had occurred recently were acts of self defence by hunted men. Nehru was pleased that they did not think in terms of terrorism any longer, but also wrote that "many of them. . . have definitely the fascist mentality." Although he could give Azad no comfort regarding the fate of his comrades, he urged him to use his influence to prevent terrorist acts in the future.

When Azad returned from Nehru's house, he was very angry because during their meeting Nehru told him that he considered Azad's organization fascistic. Both Azad and Yashpal were deeply hurt by Nehru's judgment, which seemed to them ill-considered. Yashpal observed:

I cannot understand how Panditji smelled the stench of fascism in what Azad said. Fascism is based on repression by rulers. We never even dreamed of ruling. But we were opposing the fascism or repression of British rule.

The HSRA had specifically declared in its January 1930 proclamation "The Philosophy of the Bomb" its political aims relating to government: the revolutionaries believed that the people could achieve freedom only through revolution. By revolution we did not mean only violent conflict between the people and the alien government. The objective of our revolution was a new and just social order. The aim of that revolution was the end of foreign capitalism and the establishment of a classless society, to free the people from indigenous and foreign exploitation and to give them an opportunity to make their own choices in life. The only way this could be done was to take the power of government from the hands of the exploiters and to establish the rule of the working class.

These were the ideas which Pandit [Nehru interpreted as fascistic. Azad could not speak English. Therefore, perhaps Nehruji could not really understand him.¹

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p.69.

A further comment on Nehru's viewpoint appears in the memoirs of the famous Bengali revolutionary, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, who spent twenty-five years in prison for anti-British activities:

Nehru in his autobiography has remarked about the revolutionaries that they were fascists in ideas. He had very scanty knowledge of the revolutionaries. . . . Nehru was in Lucknow District Jail once with the revolutionary prisoners. They questioned him on this. His reply was that he had very little personal knowledge about the revolutionaries, but he had been in Naini Jail once with Sachin Sanyal and from his talks with Sanyal, he had the impression that he was fascistic in ideas. This showed his natural apathy for the revolutionaries and also gives the clue why he subtly condemned the revolutionaries in his autobiography.¹

Azad felt that he had been misunderstood by Nehru. He urged Yashpal, therefore, to meet Nehru to clarify the matters that had been discussed. For his own part, Yashpal was eager to seek Nehru's help and advice concerning Russia. During this time, when his status was one of a fugitive, his freedom precarious, and his future uncertain, he wanted to visit Russia to learn more about socialism and to see for himself the results of the Russian Revolution.

Through Shivmurti Singh an appointment was made for me, and one evening in the second or third week of February I went to Anand Bhawan. When I was announced to Panditji, he came out and we talked as we walked together under the lemon trees planted along the wall. Pandit Nehru said that terrorism was absolutely futile. I told him: We are not terrorists. We are trying to spark a broadly-based armed revolution. We too are part of the struggle for national liberation. By challenging the government's repression, we want to show them that we do not fear their armed might. Our aim is socialism, not terrorism. In this context I expressed my desire

¹Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 500.

to go to Russia to get some experience and I asked him for financial help.¹

Nehru said that he could not contribute out of his own pocket because since his father's death he was concerned about his own financial situation. Yashpal told him that he did not expect his personal help, but rather his influence in obtaining the money since this was a national cause. Nehru thought awhile and said:

"I will not give you any help to further terrorist activities. But let me give some thought to the matter of your going to Russia." He personally advised me to go to Russia or some foreign country (because the Viceroy train bombing case was pending against me). He asked how much money I would need. I estimated that about five or six thousand rupees would do it. He said, "That's a lot of money. But I'll do what I can and get in touch with you through Shivmurti Singh."²

When Yashpal told Azad, he was delighted. Together they made plans for the journey to Russia. It was decided that first Yashpal and then Surendra Pande would go to Russia through contacts made by one of their companions in Afghanistan.³

Three days later, Shivmurti Singh brought me 1,500 rupees and said that Nehruji was arranging for the rest. I wanted Azad to take charge of the money, but he said, "No, you hold on to it." I thought that in case of an accident all the money might be lost. So I put 500 rupees in his pocket.⁴

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p. 70.

²*Ibid.*, p. 71

³Surendra Pande was another companion who had been a defendant in the Lahore Conspiracy Case in which Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to death. Pande was found innocent and freed. He went to Allahabad to work with Yashpal and Azad in the revolutionary movement.

⁴*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p. 71.

They realized that the journey through Afghanistan would be rigorous. They would need warm clothing, and medical supplies. Yashpal and Pande decided that the next morning, 27 February 1931, they would go to the market and buy sweaters and medicine. Azad said he had to meet someone in Alfred Park in the morning. The park was on the route to the market, and all three went together.

The three of us were on our cycles as we reached Alfred Park. I saw Sukhdevraj enter the park on his cycle. I concluded that Azad was going to meet Raj. . . . Azad went into the Park, and Pande and I went directly to the market area.¹

Yashpal and Pande had already purchased their medicines and were selecting sweaters when suddenly everyone around them was shouting that the police were shooting in Alfred Park. Pande stopped bystanders in the street, asking, "What happened? What is the shooting about?" Both Pande and Yashpal were sure they knew. They also knew that it was too late to help and they would only endanger their own lives and invite arrest by going to the Park. They told each other that they must stay away, and then they both went to the Park and discovered that what they feared most had indeed happened.

The police were preventing people from entering the Park. A huge crowd had collected on the road around it. From what people were saying we knew that the revolutionaries and the police had been shooting it out. There were two revolutionaries and between sixty and seventy policemen. The revolutionaries had been sitting under a tree, talking. The police surrounded them and ordered them to surrender. Both sides started shooting.²

Accounts of the killing of Azad vary. There is disagreement over whether Azad saved his last bullet for himself or whether a policeman's bullet killed him. That he was an excellent marksman all agree. Before he was killed he seriously wounded two

¹Ibid., pp. 71-2.

²Ibid., p. 72

of the policemen. He fought alone, and while he stood his ground, Sukhdevraj was able to escape. With his death, Azad became a national hero.

Azad's death ended, at least temporarily, Yashpal's plans to visit Russia. To leave now would be to abandon the other revolutionaries dispersed throughout northern India who wanted the Party unified under a new leader. Yashpal and Pande were both obvious choices on account of their experience. They both agreed that the organization would have to take a new direction and become broader-based. It was on the question of financing that Yashpal and Pande disagreed. Yashpal abhorred dacoity, and he proposed that the new organization acquire a printing press run by the Party members which would print Party bulletins and propaganda as well as earn income.

Yashpal moved to Delhi after Azad's death; Pande went to Kanpur. One day in May, Pande sent a message to Yashpal to come to Kanpur to discuss reorganization. The meeting was to be held on a specified day in May at 11 a.m. at Sarsaiya Ghat in Kanpur. Yashpal was staying at a friend's house and, at a few minutes before eleven, bicycled to the Ghat. Rajendra Nigam, Bhavani Sahay and Kashiram were already there, playing cards under a pipal tree. Yashpal noticed four men standing a short distance away watching the card game. They had an *ekka* and two bicycles. Immediately, Yashpal grew tense. Who are they, he asked Kashiram. Kashiram said he didn't know—they had followed him here. Yashpal walked over to the men and invited them to join the card game, but they refused. Now he was certain they were from the CID. Yashpal realized that they would have to leave quickly, especially since more friends were expected to arrive at the Ghat.

We four men got up, climbed on to our cycles and rode in the direction of Lal Imli Mill. And they followed close behind us—two on cycles and two in the *ekka*. At that time there was no warrant out for Rajendra Nigam. I said to him, "When we reach the fork in the road, you take Halsey Road. If they follow you, they will be separated. They can't do anything to you, and we will handle the rest." . . . At the Lal Imli crossing, Nigam turned onto Halsey Road. But they did

not follow him.¹

Yashpal, Kashiram and Bhavani Sahay picked up speed, but the four men were right on their heels, and it was clear that, in the *ekka*, could overtake them. Since they had to be rid of their pursuers before they reached the city with its crowds and shops which would make escape more difficult, Yashpal called suddenly to Kashiram and Bhavani Sahay to stop. The men behind them stopped too. Yashpal confronted them.

"What are you after?"

One of them pointed to Kashiram, "We want to take him to the police station."

"Why?" I asked.

"There's a warrant out in his name."

"How can there be a warrant out for him?" I asked.

"What's the name on the warrant?"

"Kashiram."

"But my name is Jagdish," Kashiram said. And I backed him up.²

Then Yashpal urged Kashiram to go to the police station with the men to prove that their identification was incorrect. Kashiram felt that he had been abandoned, but at that moment there was nothing he could do. One of the policemen ordered him into the *ekka*, and heartsick, he obeyed. While two of the policemen were tying his cycle to the *ekka*, the other two were watching him. Yashpal decided this was the moment to act.

I crouched down behind my cycle, drew my pistol and shot at two of the policemen. It was an army pistol of large caliber. Both policemen fell down and started screaming. One of the remaining two got on his cycle and flew off, and the other ran into the compound of a bungalow nearby at the side of the road.

Kashiram jumped down from the *ekka* and shot one of the fallen policemen. I told him and Bhavani Sahay to get going

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p. 92.

²*Ibid.*, p. 93.

immediately, while I held off the policeman who was shooting from inside the bungalow compound. It was difficult for him to get a good shot at that distance, especially since I was moving on my cycle. And I was firing back at him too. . . . After this incident, how could we hold any meeting in Kanpur? Next day I returned to Delhi.¹

Yashpal read in the newspaper that two of the policemen had been seriously wounded. One had been shot in the abdomen, the other near the lung. Ironically, Rajendra Nigam was arrested a few days later, tried and sentenced to seven years in prison for his part in the shooting.

By chance, a short time later, when Yashpal was walking in Chauri Bazaar in Delhi, he saw coming towards him on the path, the policeman who had shot at him from the compound of the bungalow in Kanpur. They recognized each other immediately. Then a curious thing happened.

I took a deep breath and looked straight into his eyes. He trembled from head to foot. I moved my hand towards my waist, stood aside and warned him with a look—move on and be quiet. He walked on very quickly. After about thirty steps, he turned around. When he saw me standing there just as before, he ran.²

Shortly after the Kanpur fiasco, Yashpal and Surendra Pande called another reorganization meeting. This time they were able to express their ideas to the members. Their aim of a socialist state was the same, but their means were different. Yashpal proposed that they should become self-supporting, maintain a secret press and educate people by propagandizing their ideas. The press would provide employment and training to the members. Pande, on the other hand, felt they should commit dacoities to raise money. Yashpal's ideas did not appear to find favour with the men, and he overheard one of the men saying to another, in effect, that Yashpal was conceited and arrogant. He said nothing to indicate that he had heard the

¹Ibid., p. 94.

²Ibid., p. 97.

remark, but later in the day he left the meeting telling the group to come to a decision without him, and if the decision suited him, he would join their forces.

Again his thoughts turned to visiting Russia. He had not abandoned his companions—they had rejected him. However, he also realized it would be very hazardous to go to Russia without any credentials or contacts. He might be mistaken for a spy. He thought that if he were to carry a document from a respected member of the Communist Party in India indicating that he was a trustworthy person, it would help him a great deal. The name he associated with the Communist Party was M.N. Roy.

Up to that time I did not know the difference between the programme of the Indian Communist Party and M.N. Roy. The Meerut Conspiracy Case was still being tried.¹ I went to Meerut and spoke to Hutchinson, a defendant in the case, who was out on bail, and told him I would like to have a document from the Communist Party to the effect that I was a revolutionary who had fought and was fleeing the British government, and that I was a trustworthy person. Hutchinson assured me that this would not be difficult, but I would have to go to Bombay. . . . There I spoke to Comrade Ranadive. They were wary of giving me any credentials for if I were arrested, the document would prove that there was contact between their Party and the terrorists. However, he was willing to introduce me to some people with whose help I could go abroad via the sea route. . . . I talked to Ranadive about meeting M.N. Roy. He said, "That's a decision you must make, but if you want to maintain contact with M.N. Roy, you cannot expect any assistance from our Party." It was only later that I learned that M.N. Roy had fought with

¹In March 1929, the government arrested 31 Communists and trade unionists and took them to Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, to be tried on the charge of conspiring to deprive the King-Emperor of his sovereignty over India. The trial lasted for 3½ years. At the beginning of 1933, sentences were handed down ranging from life imprisonment to three years in prison. After appeal, most of the sentences were reduced. By the end of 1933 most of those on trial had been released.

the Communist International before returning to India, and that he had been accused in China of disloyalty.¹

Yashpal clung to his desire to visit Russia, but he required time to decide how to go about it. The 1,500 rupees Nehru had given him were gone. 500 had been recovered by the police on Azad's body. The remaining 1,000 Yashpal had spent on Party activity and his own expenses. However, he had often received financial help from Sumitra, the daughter of Narayan Dutt, a wealthy contractor in Delhi. On his way to Delhi, he had to change trains at Pratapgadh Station. He was in the waiting room when suddenly he noticed that the station outside was swarming with police. He knew he was far outnumbered but he was determined to die fighting.

There was a table in the middle of the room and I put my suitcase on it and opened it with the thought that I could fight a while behind the shelter of its lid. The waiting room door was screened. I could see clearly what was going on outside, but from out there no one could see inside the room very clearly. I kept looking out repeatedly to see when they were coming into the waiting room. Finally, I saw two turbaned Inspectors approaching. They both had revolvers in their shoulder holsters. Backing them up were a number of armed constables. I got behind my suitcase instantly, took the revolver off the safety catch—the minute they stepped inside I would shoot first.

A Constable opened the door. One of the Inspectors stuck his head in, but he was smiling, and saluting me with great courtesy, he said, "I'm very sorry to have to inconvenience you." In response to his manner, I put my revolver in the suitcase and said politely, "Do come in. What's the problem?" The Inspector explained, "The Governor's special train has to have its engine filled with water here. There is a rule that at such times no passengers are permitted in the station. If it is not too much trouble, would you please lock up your belongings and take a walk?"²

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, pp. 98-9.

²*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p. 99.

This trivial incident in the summer of 1931 offers some insight into the unremitting tension of his life. Constant alertness, constant awareness that he was a hunted man, led to instantaneous responses on his part, which at least on one occasion almost led to a fatal accident. In a friend's house one night when they were all sleeping on the roof, one of the women woke to tend her crying baby. She noticed an insect on Yashpal's pillow and tried to brush it off. She touched his face. Instantly, he drew his pistol from under the pillow and aimed it directly at her.¹

The fugitive life had its light side too. He went to see Sumitra in Mussoorie where she and her family were summering. Sumitra introduced him to her friends as a doctor. Yashpal decided to stay in the hills for a while since Sumitra was unable to get any large sum of money for him until her family returned to Delhi. Yashpal, having been introduced as a doctor and a bachelor, aroused interest in the parents of unmarried daughters. One of the young ladies was a teacher. He was invited to tea and met her mother. And then :

I received a message one day from the teacher's mother that she was not feeling well, and she would appreciate it if the doctor would take a look at her. Here was the first shaft into my tissue of lies. Well, I had to go. When I got there, I told her, "I'm a dentist. You have fever. You had better call another doctor."

Well, how long could it be before the old woman would have trouble with her teeth? And, of course, that day came. I, too, had suffered a great deal with toothaches and had been to the dentist many times. I had her open her mouth wide, looked inside very carefully with a flashlight, and finally said, "Your teeth are in very bad shape. I don't have my instruments here. Take aspirin for the pain and paint your gums with clove oil."

It worked out all right, but it's hard to keep up that sort of thing.²

¹Ibid., pp. 109-110.

²Ibid., p. 103.

This enforced vacation was a happy interlude in Yashpal's life. Prakashvati joined him. They rented a house with two young friends in Dehra Dun. He spent his days translating *Gandhi and Lenin* from English into Hindi. He earned a little money that way and they lived better. The bitterness of rejection he had felt at the last meeting of the revolutionaries had mellowed somewhat.

12 Yashpal Takes Command

A number of the revolutionaries, including Surendra Pande, contacted him and suggested a new meeting in January 1932 in Garmukteshwar, a city on the Ganga. The choice of the city was influenced by the fact that a great festival was to be held there, and in the crowd of people a meeting would go unnoticed.

The rivalry for leadership was again between Yashpal and Pande and again they expressed their divergent views. Yashpal was angry because Pande had brought a large entourage to the meeting, including his sister and a number of friends from the Punjab. Yashpal felt that Pande had made a fool of him for, by packing the meeting with his friends and relatives, he would have support for anything he wanted. Pande addressed the group and urged them to vote for two leaders—one for armed activity, for which he suggested Yashpal, and one for political propaganda, for which he suggested himself. He further recommended that the entire group present vote.

Pande presented the case in so reasonable and logical a way that it was impossible to oppose it. Nonetheless, I spoke up against it, saying, "There's no need for a double leadership. We all know our aims and principles. Furthermore, if these things are to be decided by majority vote, there are some people here I don't even know. Only members should be allowed to vote on these decisions." That was my way of pointing out that Pande's sister and others from Punjab as well as many people I did not know were present.

Rajendra Singh countered my remarks with, "What do you mean by a member? Anyone who is willing to risk his life is a member and has the right to vote." Everyone agreed with him. What could I say?

Thereupon Surendra's sister said, "I propose that we have

only one leader. Whoever is Commander-in-Chief should make all the decisions about programme and policy." And for Commander-in-Chief she proposed my name. Everyone, even Pande himself, supported it. I felt embarrassed.¹

At this meeting in early January (1932) they decided to wage guerrilla-type warfare against the government, with military cantonments and police stations as objectives. They would encourage and educate the people toward armed revolution. Yashpal returned to Dehra Dun afterwards, now as Commander-in-Chief of the HSRA. He wrote a new declaration of principles based on the agreements reached at the meeting. In essence, this is what he wrote:

The strength of the HSRA is not in the hands of scattered bands of armed young men, but in the hearts of our tens of millions of countrymen who seethe under the shame and outrage of British rule. That is the power they will fight with to free the country. All the toiling peasants and labourers who cannot enjoy the fruits of their labour because of their economic and political subjection, human beings deprived of the life of a human being to which they are entitled, are in the army of the war for the freedom of this country.

It is with these persons and groups that the HSRA expects to cooperate in the fight for freedom. The police station and the military cantonment in your area are the symbols and the fetters of your slavery and subjection.

It is your responsibility to destroy them to make British rule impossible. You don't have to wait for bombs and rifles to strike at the foreign government. All the armaments in their possession are yours. Anything that comes to your hands are your weapons. The path of revolution was pointed out at Sholapur and Chauri-Chaura. You don't have to wait for anyone's orders. Every injury inflicted on the British government is a blow for the freedom of the country. There is no power on earth that can suppress the wishes of the 250 million people of this country.

This is a warning to those who serve the British govern-

¹*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, p. 106.

ment and keep our people in slavery; they are traitors to their country. The heroic Garhwalis of Peshawar have shown the way of duty. To help and serve a government which is the enemy of the country is treason. Every patriot has the right to punish those traitors who serve such a government to make their livelihood.

We aim to end indigenous and foreign exploitation and to give all the working people the right of self-determination so that all men and women may have a full and equal opportunity to earn their livelihood, enjoy their full development and all the fruits of their labour.

(Signed) YASHPAL¹

When Azad was Commander-in-Chief he signed proclamations under the fictitious name of Balraj or Kartar Singh, but Yashpal used his own. In the past, all proclamations of this kind were printed in English, but now they were in Hindi and Urdu.

With new responsibilities Yashpal and Prakashvati left Dehra Dun for Delhi. They stayed temporarily with their friends, the Suris in Delhi, planning to set up a permanent home after the 22 January meeting in Allahabad. The night before he left for Allahabad, Yashpal had a dream. He was to be hanged. He felt the noose around his neck, the plank under his feet. The executioner pulled the plank from under him, but it did not move. He pulled again and again, but he could not budge it. When Yashpal awoke, he asked one of the elderly relatives of the household the significance of the dream. It means, he said, that you were in great peril, but now that is over.

Yashpal was greeted at the Allahabad railway station by Krishan Shankar Srivastav, the Bengali comrade who had arranged the meeting. This was an indiscretion, Yashpal felt. The two together in a public place simply increased the chance of detection. Krishan Shankar compounded the indiscretion by taking Yashpal to the home of an Irishwoman who was sympathetic

¹Ibid., pp. 107-8

to the Indian struggle for independence.¹ A European woman living in India and in Indian dress was conspicuous. Whoever visited her home drew attention to himself. Nonetheless he stayed because she welcomed him so warmly he felt it would be ungracious to leave. Krishan Shankar left, saying that he would notify the others of Yashpal's arrival and would return for him in the morning.

Yashpal woke up very early and saw Savitri preparing tea for him. Suddenly they both heard sounds of footsteps on the stairs. They thought at first that it was Krishan Shankar, but then realized it was the sound of many people. There was a peremptory knock at the door. It sounded like a warning. Savitri asked in English, "Who's there?" The answer came, "Open the door." Savitri asked, "Who is it?" The answer was, "Police! Open the door. Quickly!"²

Yashpal had to make an immediate decision. If he stood his ground there and shot at the police as they entered, Savitri might be caught in the crossfire. He ran out into a courtyard, jumped over a wall of tin sheeting, and as he reached the other side, a bullet whistled over his head. He turned and saw an Englishman shooting at him from inside the courtyard he had just fled. Each time the Englishman looked over the tin wall to shoot, Yashpal shot at him. However, Yashpal's six bullets soon were gone, and at that point neither man had wounded the other. When Yashpal stopped firing, the Englishman continued. Yashpal threw his empty gun over the wall. A moment later, the Englishman stopped shooting and Yashpal came back over the wall. The Englishman introduced himself as D. Pilditch, Superintendent of the Special Police. He treated Yashpal with great courtesy. He did not handcuff him and urged him to change into warm clothing for their trip to the police station.

When Yashpal left Savitri's house, he begged her forgiveness for having brought misfortune upon her. Savitri held her head high and said: "Don't be 'distressed. I'm proud of it," and

¹She was the estranged wife of Zafar Ali, an Indian barrister. She considered India her home now, adopted Indian dress, took the name Savitri, and supported herself teaching school.

²*Sinhavalokan*, Volume III, pp. 110-111.

pointing to Pilditch, she said, "I despise those English despots."¹

Then Yashpal left with Pilditch and half a dozen other policemen. He did not know then nor did he ever learn who betrayed him. Clearly not Savitri, Yashpal felt. She served four years in prison for having sheltered him.

Now his career as a revolutionary was over. He faced an uncertain and frightening future.

¹Ibid., p. 113.

13 Yashpal Arrested

He was taken to the Canning Road Police Station in Allahabad and locked up in a cell.

The fear and excitement brought on by the circumstances clearly influenced my behaviour. By circumstances I mean not only the physical environment, but also my mental state. I knew that some things were certain to happen and others were likely. My main certainty was that since Sukhdev was hanged in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, there was no reason why I would not be hanged in view of all the cases in which I was involved. This conclusion was supported by others as well. Everyone who knew me had made the same judgment.

Furthermore, I was anxious about being subjected to extremes of torture by the police in their attempt to learn about other people and events. The result was that I wanted to prepare myself to die and to bear extreme suffering It was my responsibility for the sake of my personal honour and the honour of my party that I endure torture with courage and composure and maintain my self respect. The strain of keeping myself constantly alert to my responsibilities, realizing that I dared not yield an inch, for if I did there would be no end to the yielding, made me unwarrantedly irritable.

About ten minutes after the cell door was locked behind me, a policeman called out, "Here's your tea." I was sitting with my back to the door. When I turned around, I saw that a filthy aluminium tumbler had been stuck through the bars. The policeman had not gone more than three or four steps when I picked up the tumbler and threw it out. [III : 116-7]

It might be added that fresh tea was brought, this time in a clean cup on a tray. His ordeal had not yet begun.

About an hour later, two Englishmen appeared, entered the cell and introduced themselves. They were S. T. Hollins, Inspector General of Police for the United Provinces, and Mr Shaw, Deputy Inspector General of the Secret Police. After initial pleasantries were exchanged, Hollins said :

"You are a very civilized man. Why did you choose this way?"

"Because there was no other way. You pay no attention to anything else," I answered. It was perfectly clear that he was referring to our attempts at armed revolution. "And anyway, what other way is there?"

Hollins blinked his eyes and asked, "What do you mean by that?"

"What I mean is perfectly plain," I answered. "Everyone knows that 99% of the people in this country are starving, naked and without hope. They live like animals. Under foreign domination they have been made dependent and helpless. It is only natural to try to free oneself from the alien yoke."

The sahib agreed that most of the people in this country were in wretched circumstances and he even agreed that to try to get freedom was a natural right, but then he counselled me that one should follow the Gandhian way as the proper way to freedom.

So I said to Hollins that if the government looked upon the Gandhian way as proper and justifiable, why are the people in the Congress movement clubbed and shot? Why has Congress been declared illegal? Of course, I could speak that way only to an English ruler, but from the point of view of a revolutionary, this statement by the enemy that the proper way to freedom was the Gandhian way, was adequate proof that that movement was completely ineffective. [III : pp. 118-9]

The interview was polite, unproductive, and brief. Immediately afterward, Yashpal was moved to another prison. His cell was relatively luxurious. His bed had a mattress, sheets and blankets. He was served a breakfast of bread, butter, eggs and tea, and given several popular novels to read to pass the time. Still only three or four hours had passed since he had been arrested. Now he was alone and could think.

It wasn't useful to think. Until you have some inkling of

what you will be faced with, how can you think about it? But the idea did come to me that I would be produced in the Lahore and Delhi cases, and for one or the other, I would be hanged. It was just a matter of a month, maybe two. Then I started to pace the room.

Others who had spent their days before me in that room had scratched their names in different places on the wall . . . Also carved into the walls were lines of poetry in English—grief-filled. It may have been the effect of those lines on me or my own mental state, but I started reciting out loud to myself,

“Oh friends of the gathering,
I am a guest only for a moment,
I am the lamp of the morning
And soon will be extinguished.”

And also

“What will be ended
When Ghalib is no more?
Why are you crying?
Everything will go on just as before.”¹ [III : 122]

As Yashpal was reciting Ghalib's sad poetry, the cell door opened, and J. Banerjee, Deputy Superintendent of Police, entered. He was followed by a policeman bearing a large tray which was covered with a cloth. Banerjee greeted Yashpal as warmly and affectionately as though he were the prodigal son. The policeman uncovered the tray, displaying an elaborate dinner which had been prepared in Banerjee's own home. Banerjee insisted that Yashpal eat his dinner first—they would talk later. As he was eating, Yashpal recalled that a revolutionary in Banaras had shot and wounded Banerjee a number of years earlier.² Yashpal recalls that the dinner was delicious.

¹Yashpal was reciting from the poetry of Mirza Ghalib, famous poet in Urdu and Persian (1797-1869). He was a court poet to the last Moghul emperor in Delhi, Bahadur Shah.

²Banerjee had been shot by his nephew, Manindra, who felt his uncle served the British government too well. Manindra was sentenced to seven years in prison. Some years after this interview with Banerjee, Yashpal and Manindra were cellmates in Fategarh Jail. They both participated in a hunger strike out of sympathy for a fellow inmate. As a result of complications he suffered from the fast, Manindra died. Yashpal was with him at the time of his death and describes the circumstances later in this volume.

When I finished dinner, we started to talk. In substance Banerjee said that at this time of my peril, he wanted to help me in every possible way. He urged me to consider the distress of my relatives when they learned the news of my arrest. And especially the "young lady" [Prakashvati]—what would become of her? Something really should be worked out to settle all this legal nonsense so that I could live in peace and joy with my family. The life of such a worthy young man ought not to be ruined. He realized that I was not a criminal. He knew that I had acted from unselfish motives and high ideals in all matters. The most important thing now was to save other young men who, like myself, motivated by patriotism, were imperilling their lives. [III : 123]

Banerjee said that he read the Gita every day and tried to live by its precepts; that is, that he saw his religion to be his duty and he followed it unswervingly. And he left the concerns of tomorrow to the Lord. He advised me to do likewise. He even recited several slokas of the Gita. He told me that he considered it his personal and patriotic duty to prevent the young men of the country from destroying their lives. In Banaras, his own nephew Manindra had shot him. When those who seized him started flogging him, he pulled them away, saying, "Don't hurt the foolish boy. He has no sense." Manindra's bullet had grazed his abdomen. Afterwards as well he performed his duty according to the teachings of the Gita. Of course, the fruit of his good deeds was that the British government decorated him with the title of Rai Bahadur.

I thanked Banerjee for his concern and assured him that I too wished to follow the precepts of the Gita as I understood them. I had tried to do what I considered to be my duty, whatever the fruits thereof. Why then should I try to be spared those fruits? The Lord has instructed that one must renounce attachments in the performance of one's duty. Relationships exist in an impermanent body and are terminated with the body. Therefore, the question of my causing sorrow to anyone does not arise. Everyone receives the fruit of his or her own action. [III : 124]

For several days Banerjee came with persuasive words and home cooking. He expressed regret that so brilliant a man as

Yashpal should destroy himself in this manner. On the fifth day, when the cell door opened, Yashpal was informed that he was being transferred to another prison. Now he knew his time of testing had begun.

He was accompanied by a dozen policemen to Allahabad District Jail. There he was measured for legshackles. He protested, saying that he was a political prisoner and did not have to wear shackles. When his protests were ignored, he said that he would neither eat nor work. He was shackled, put into a cell which had neither a bed nor a charpoy. Only a mattress, two black, stiff blankets, and an iron bowl for water, and in the corner a clay bowl to serve as a toilet. It was dark during the day, and there were no lights at night. The cell door was a sheet of iron with a peephole on the outside so that the guard could look in at any time. For breakfast, four ounces of half-rotted gram pushed through the cell door—at noon, half a dozen rotis and water-thin dal. Yashpal ate nothing. He lay on the mattress and tried to sleep away the time. Five days passed this way.

On the sixth day, the Civil Surgeon of Allahabad, who was also the Superintendent of the jail, came to see him to ask why he was on a hunger strike. Yashpal answered that he was not, but that the food was unfit for human consumption. Furthermore, he was a political prisoner and wanted to be treated as one. The next day his shackles were removed. An iron bed was brought into the cell and his food rations were improved. None of this had been hardship. He was expecting far worse in the days to come. His greatest hardship was his total isolation from the world.

Afterwards, when I talked about this with others and some of my friends, we agreed that the worst torment for a prisoner in jail was the feeling that no one knew about his situation, that he could die in that black hole and no one would hear about it. But if the prisoner asks to send a message to someone outside, then he tells the police where he is vulnerable. [III : 127]

In a few days Banerjee appeared again bearing food. He expressed shock that Yashpal had been taken to a place so unworthy of him and alluded again to the Gita and its message. If Yashpal would cooperate, the government could arrange to let him go abroad. Yashpal could enjoy the additional satisfaction of knowing that he had prevented other young people from destroying their lives.

Now I had to spell it out to Banerjee. His own manner had been so courteous and gentle that I had no cause to speak rudely. I said, "Mr. Banerjee, sir, let's leave the Gita out of this. No one knows what its message is. Arjun, who wanted to leave the battle, was inspired by the Gita to kill his own close relatives for the sake of gaining a kingdom. Many people renounce the world after reading the Gita. Gandhiji received the message of nonviolence from it. Your advice to me is that, based on the teachings of the Gita, I ought to save my own life and betray my comrades. My own simple intelligence tells me what I did was right. I knew I would have to reap the fruit of my actions. And I am ready. I am grateful for all your kindness. Furthermore, since the prison supplies food for me, please do not send me any from your house." [III : 128]

Banerjee protested that it was his pleasure to provide food, but Yashpal, wanting to end it for fear the other prisoners might misinterpret the special treatment he received, decided that bluntness was his only resort. He said to Banerjee: "Look at it this way. I'm in jail. Suppose something happens to me? You will be blamed for having poisoned me. I wouldn't want that." [III : 128-9]

No more food came, but Banerjee persisted. In a few days he came again and warned Yashpal that there was no time to lose—soon the case would have to come to court. Then it would be too late to make any arrangements. Yashpal replied that he was eager to have his case come to trial, and perhaps it would be better if Banerjee no longer visited him.

A few days later Yashpal was summoned to the jail office and introduced to Shyam Kumari Nehru, her uncle Bihari Lal Nehru, and a barrister. Shyam Kumari had volunteered to defend Yashpal. She told him that he was being prosecuted on three charges—one charge of carrying weapons and two of attempted murder. In connection with his arrest, he was charged with possession of firearms and attempting to kill Pilditch. The second charge of attempted murder was in the Kanpur shooting incident. For the moment it was not known if the government would press charges in connection with the bombing of the Viceregal train, the Lahore Conspiracy and the Delhi Conspiracy Cases.

Concerning the charge of attempted murder in the Kanpur incident, the policemen involved were being brought to Allahabad to identify Yashpal in a lineup. Yashpal considered his situation to be hopeless since he had been seen at close range. He could refuse to take part in the lineup, but if he did, that

fact would be recorded and would seem an admission of guilt. He requested of the magistrate in charge of the case that other political prisoners stand with him in the lineup and that he be permitted to wear clothing of his own choice. He also asked for the services of a barber. The magistrate complied with all his requests.

At that time, Gopinath Singh (who is now a member of the Lok Sabha from Kanpur) and Mohanlal Gautam (who is a Minister in the Uttar Pradesh government now) were incarcerated in Allahabad Jail too. We were old acquaintances. They wanted to do anything they could to help me. They wore *kurtapyjama* of khaddar and Gandhi caps. They got me an outfit too. Then the barber came. I remembered that at the time of the Kanpur incident I had a tiny moustache. Gautamji had an enormous moustache in jail. I asked him to have his trimmed and I had mine shaved off completely. Another B-Class Punjabi prisoner was called in to stand in the lineup with me. He was a Muslim who had been arrested for counterfeiting coins. Because I was a revolutionary, a Punjabi and a friend of Bhagat Singh, he threw his arms around me and said, "I would give my life to save you." He took meticulous care of his moustache, twisting the ends so that they were as sharp as a scorpion's sting. I asked him if he would trim it as tiny as a butterfly. He had it done immediately.

The magistrate had all the people removed who could point me out and then he asked me, "Now are all your objections taken care of?" I had no grounds on which to object, but that did not remove my fear. We all stood in the lineup. The first policeman was called. I recognized him as soon as he passed in front of me, but I stood impassively, betraying nothing. Gautamji and the Punjabi brother who knew all about me were a little agitated. The policeman went from one of us to the other a number of times, and he looked as though he were going mad. Finally he grabbed Gautam's hand.

The second policeman was called. He stared at all of us for some time, expressionless, and finally seized the Punjabi's hand, saying, "This is the man."

The third policeman, the one I had encountered in Chauri Bazaar in Delhi, looked us all over very carefully. Even now his body trembled with that old fear. After a thorough scrutiny he

said, "Sir, that man is not here." [III: 132-3]

Yashpal was found innocent of the Kanpur charge. He was then tried on the two charges involved in his arrest: carrying a pistol without a license and attempting to murder Pilditch. In the first charge, a jury was appointed. In the second charge, assessors as well as a jury were appointed.

The jury found that the charge of carrying a pistol without a license had not been proved. The judge, however, disagreed with the verdict and sent the case to the High Court for adjudication. In the Section 307 case (attempt to murder Pilditch), the assessors found a reasonable doubt that Yashpal had shot at Pilditch. There were no witnesses to the shooting, and, as was his right, Yashpal did not testify. The judge disagreed with the verdict. He sentenced Yashpal to seven years of rigorous imprisonment. The High Court then found Yashpal guilty of carrying a weapon without a license and also sentenced him to seven years in prison. Since both charges involved the same incident, the judge told Shyam Kumari that he would have the sentences run concurrently. However, the very next evening Shyam Kumari brought Yashpal different news.

She told me that the English judge had told her the day before that the two sentences would run concurrently, but he did not sign the decision because it couldn't be typed then. It seems that at night, after talking to other English officials at the Club, he changed his mind, and in the morning when he signed it, he crossed out *concurrent* and wrote *consecutive* instead. So it became a fourteen year sentence. A fourteen year sentence is not a sentence for only fourteen years, but is looked upon as a life sentence, for according to the rules, even after the fourteen years have been served, the government must grant its permission before the prisoner is set free. [III : 137]

And still there were the Lahore and Delhi Conspiracy trials to face.

One day I was brought to the office There was my old friend Banerjee again. He brought me some luscious mangoes this time too. I thought, I've already been sentenced. What can he hope to get out of me now? But there still remained the Lahore and Delhi cases.

Banerjee told me he could not rest easy because of his anxiety

for me. The Allahabad case is over, but there are Lahore and Delhi still. A good deal can be done if we try. Fourteen years in jail is no small matter. You should think of the young lady's future.

Then he showed me a sheet of red paper printed in Hindi. It was a small piece of paper with a message urging the people to begin the revolution against the foreign government. At the bottom it was signed: "Prakashvati, Commander-in-Chief." [III: 138]

Banerjee had probably hoped that the shock of seeing Prakashvati's signature would drive Yashpal into some concession. He mentioned to Yashpal that his years of service would be ending soon, and, since he wanted to perform one last good deed before he retired, perhaps Yashpal would be willing to speak to Pilditch on these matters. He knew that Yashpal had faith in Pilditch's integrity. Yashpal replied that if Pilditch wished to speak to him, he would be glad to reply, but he took no responsibility for the results. Pilditch came to Allahabad immediately from Nainital.

Pilditch asked me what it was I wanted to say. I said, "I'm sorry you had to come such a long way. All I want to say is that I don't want Mr. Banerjee to come to see me any more. People will get strange ideas about me if CID officials continue to visit me."

"Is that all?" Pilditch asked amazed.

"Yes, sir—that is all I have to say. But if there is anything you wish to ask me I will be glad to reply. Please let me know what I can do for you."

Pilditch thought and said, "I suggest you write the full and true story of the events of your past life. . . ."

"Only great men write the story of their lives," I answered, "I'm not worthy of that, and there's no point to it."

"No, no, that's not the idea," Pilditch insisted, "you have played a very prominent part in this movement. The story of your life and of your organization can be very helpful in saving others in the future who might otherwise ruin their lives. . . ."

I said, "If I agree to that, I would be delivering into your hands the lives of the people with whom I worked. . . . You re-

commend that I write for you a true and complete story of what happened and of my comrades. But suppose I were English, suppose for instance that you were in my position, would you do such a thing?"

Pilditch flushed red. "No, never! Not under any circumstances!" he replied. [III : 140-1]

The relationship between Yashpal and Pilditch was one of mutual respect. Pilditch, who himself had experienced jail life as a prisoner of war, suggested that Yashpal teach himself foreign languages while in prison. Yashpal taught himself to read French and Italian and always felt grateful for the suggestion.

In May, 1932, he was taken to Delhi to face charges in the Delhi Conspiracy Case. After many months in jail, going out for any reason was a great adventure. Yashpal recalls that all prisoners reacted in the same way.

... it is an opportunity to see men and women out of prison uniform, and to see children and animals. A bazaar, the railway station, a glimpse of the forest and the *maidan*—they all look lovely. In prison jargon we call this: Seeing the World. It is something very sought after by prisoners. Perhaps by chance we will see some place or someone we know. The average person, seeing us chained in handcuffs and leg irons, surrounded and guarded by armed police, looks upon us as thieves, murderers or extremely dangerous characters. That in itself is a strange experience. Some turn their heads away contemptuously, and others, for no reason at all, shake their fists in anger and hatred. [III : 143]

When he arrived in Delhi, the government dropped charges against him in view of the expense involved in reopening the case as well as the fact that Yashpal had already been sentenced to a long term in prison. Without taking him to Lahore, the government made the same decision for the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Yashpal was then returned to Allahabad from Delhi to begin serving his fourteen year sentence.

Epilogue

When Yashpal was returned to Naini Jail in mid-1932 to begin serving his 14-year sentence, he observed that for him conditions in jail had improved. The government no longer had any hope that he would disclose information about his comrades, and treated as any other prisoner, he found jail life not too rigorous. At first he was housed with European petty criminals whom he detested, but after six months was transferred to the "Doghouse"; the pleasant but solitary quarters Jawaharlal Nehru occupied when he was in Naini Jail. He spent the next year there alone, reading all day long, teaching himself to read French and writing short stories in Hindi. After that he was moved into a barrack with other Indian political prisoners.

Pursuant to government policy, he was transferred to Fategarh Jail after two years at Naini. Since political prisoners attempted more often than others to escape, the government felt it would be more difficult for them to break out if they were transferred frequently. At Fategarh he shared the same quarters as the celebrated revolutionary (and later author) Manmathnath Gupta and Manindra Banerjee, a young political prisoner who later died as a result of an 18-day fast all three undertook to protest prison conditions. The hunger strike weakened Yashpal to such a degree, he was thought to have contracted tuberculosis. He was sent to Sultanpur, a prison-sanatorium, to recuperate. His health improved, but he viewed his future prospects as so bleak that he wrote to Prakashvati to free her from the vows that they had taken to each other before, for he felt that her loyalty and faithfulness to him prevented her from marrying and experiencing fulfillment in her own life. Prakashvati responded by requesting permission of the authorities to marry Yashpal. Not only was permission

granted, but the Deputy Commissioner himself performed the ceremony in jail. The newspapers seized on the novel event which roused a storm of criticism, provoking the government to add a section to the Jail Manual forbidding any Indian prisoner to be married in prison in the future. Yashpal enjoyed the distinction of being the first and the last Indian prisoner to be married in jail—at least when India was under British rule. That was August 1936.

When elections were held shortly afterwards under the new Constitution, the Congress Party won overwhelmingly. As part of its election campaign, Congress promised to release all political prisoners. Satyagrahis were freed immediately, but assurances were sought of the revolutionaries that they no longer believed in violence. Yashpal, as spokesman for the political prisoners all together in Naini Jail again, protested that it would appear that they had bargained with the government for their release. Thereafter no assurances were sought, and gradually the prisoners were freed. Yashpal was among the last to be released—on 3 March 1938.

That is where *Sinhavalokan* ended—and that is where Yashpal's life as a political activist ended too. He did not join any political party; he did not run for office. Instead he wrote stories, essays, novels—over fifty in all—in an attempt to achieve what he had tried in earlier years by different means—a better life for the poor, the downtrodden, the have-nots of India.

A Postscript

Yashpal's long and brilliant writing career was launched with the collection of short stories he wrote in prison, *Pinjre ki Uran* (Flight from the Cage.) He dedicated his writing to awakening the people to the need for social and economic justice, and in his earlier work regarded the Communist Party as the vehicle by which to achieve it.

The ambivalence he felt toward Russia and the Communist Party troubled him all his days. He did not deny the loss of liberty under the Russian system, but earlier felt it was the trade-off necessary for the Indian people to achieve economic progress and a more equitable distribution of income. However, he personally could not sacrifice his free will and independent judgment to the Party's dictates. Therefore he never joined the Communist Party.

Several years before he died, in March 1972 he wrote to me indicating how far his views had changed:

... I am in favour of maximum individual liberty for all, not in favour of privileges for few on the basis of inheritance or possession of means. I do not consider Soviet economic order a model for our country. I want much more scope for individual initiative. In short, I do not consider nationalisation and socialism to be one and the same thing. I do not consider Marxism an absolute truth. Instead, I think it to be a great step which helped in breaking the obstacles created by the decaying feudalism and capitalism to further growth.

The capitalist countries too have learned a great deal from Marxism. With the help of Marxism they have tried to solve many contradictions which had made the working of capitalism in their societies impossible. This change made capitalism in these countries more tolerable and progressive for the present. I think Scandinavian countries are a good example.

Appendix

Bhagat Singh's and B. K. Dutl's Statement to the High Court¹

We humbly claim to be no more than serious students of history and the conditions of our country and human aspirations and we despise hypocrisy. Our practical protest was against an institution which since its birth has eminently helped to display not only its worthlessness but its far-reaching power for mischief. The more we have pondered, the more deeply we have been convinced that it exists only to demonstrate to the world India's humiliation and helplessness and it symbolises the overriding domination of irresponsible and autocratic rule. Time and again the national demand has been pressed by the people's representatives, only to find the wastepaper basket as its final destination. Solemn resolutions passed by the House have been contemptuously trampled underfoot on the floor of the so-called Indian Parliament. Resolutions regarding the repeal of repressive and arbitrary measures have been treated with sublime contempt and government's measures and proposals rejected as unacceptable by elected members have been restored by a stroke of the pen.

In brief, in spite of earnest endeavour we have utterly failed to find any justification for the existence of the institution which, despite all pomp and splendour organised with the hard-earned money of the sweating millions of India, is only a hollow show and a mischievous make-believe. And alike have we failed to comprehend the mentality of public leaders who help to squander public time and money on so manifestly stage

¹*The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1929, Volume 1, January-June, pp. 78-80.

managed an exhibition of India's helpless subjection. We have been ruminating upon all this, as also upon the wholesale arrests of leaders of the labour movement. When the introduction of the Trades Disputes Bill brought us into the Assembly to watch its progress and the course of the debate, it only served to confirm our conviction that the labouring millions of India had nothing to expect from the institution that stood as a menacing monument to the strangling power of the exploiters and the serfdom of helpless labourers.

Finally the insult of what we considered an inhuman and barbarous measure was hurled on the devoted heads of the representatives of the entire country and the starving and struggling millions were deprived of their primary right and sole means of improving their economic welfare. None who has felt like us for the dumb driven drudges of labourers could possibly witness this spectacle with equanimity. None whose heart bleeds for those who have given their life blood in silence to the building up of the economic structure of the exploiter, of whom the government happens to be the biggest in this country, could repress the cry of the soul in agonising anguish, which so ruthless a blow wrung out of our hearts. Consequently, bearing in mind the words of the late Mr. S. R. Das, once Law Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council, which appeared in the famous letter he had addressed to his son, to the effect that the bomb was necessary to awaken England from her dreams, we dropped the bombs on the floor of the Assembly Chamber to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart-rending agony. Our sole purpose was "to make the deaf hear" and to give the heedless a timely warning.

Others have as keenly felt as we have done and from under the seeming sereneness of the sea of Indian humanity a veritable storm is about to break out. We have only hoisted the danger signal to warn those who are speeding along without heeding the grave dangers. We have only marked the end of the era of utopian non-violence of whose futility the rising generation has been convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt. Out of our sincerest goodwill to and love of humanity have we adopted this method of warning to prevent untold sufferings which we, like millions of others, clearly foresee.

We have used the expression "utopian non-violence" in the foregoing paragraph which requires some explanation. Force, when aggressively applied, is "violence" and is therefore morally unjustifiable. But when it is used in furtherance of a legitimate case, it has its moral justification. Elimination of force at all costs is utopian and the new movement which has arisen in the country and of which we have given a warning is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Govind Singh and Shivaji, Kemal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin. As both the alien government and the Indian public leaders appeared to have shut their eyes and closed their ears against the existence and voice of this movement we felt our duty to sound a warning where it could not go unheard.

We have so far dealt with the motive behind the incident in question and now we must define the extent of our intention. It cannot be gainsaid that we bore no personal grudge or malice against any of those who received slight injuries or against any other person in the Assembly. On the contrary we repeat that we hold human lives sacred beyond words and would sooner lay down our own lives in the service of humanity than injure anyone else. Unlike mercenary soldiers of imperialist armies, who are disciplined to kill without compunction, we respect and insofar as it lies in us, attempt to save human life. And still we admit having deliberately thrown bombs into the Assembly Chamber.

Facts, however, speak for themselves and the intention should be judged from the result of the action without drawing upon hypothetical circumstances and presumptions. Despite the evidence of the government expert, the bombs that we have thrown in the Assembly Chamber resulted in slight damage to an empty bench and a few abrasions in less than half a dozen cases. While the government scientist ascribed this result to a miracle, we see nothing but precisely scientific process in it all. The first two bombs exploded in vacant spaces within wooden barriers of desks and benches. Secondly, even those who were within even two feet of the explosion, for instance, Mr. P.R. Rau, Mr. Sanker Rao and Sir George Schuster, were either not hurt or only slightly scratched. Bombs of the capacity deposed to by the government expert (though his estimate being imagi-

nary is exaggerated) loaded with effective charge of potassium chlorate and sensitive picrate would have smashed the barrier and lain many low within some yards of the explosion. Again, had they been loaded with some other high explosive with the charge of destructive pellets or darts they would have sufficed to wipe out a majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly. Still again, we could have flung them into the official box chokeful with people of note. And finally, we could have ambushed Sir John Simon whose luckless Commission was loathed by all responsible people and who was sitting in the President's gallery at the time. All this, however, was beyond our intention and the bombs did more than they were designed to do and the miracle consisted of no more than deliberate aim which landed them in safe places.

We then deliberately offered ourselves to bear the penalty for what we had done and to let the imperialist exploiters know that by crushing individuals they cannot kill ideas. By crushing two insignificant units, a nation cannot be crushed. We wanted to emphasise the historical lesson that *lettres de cachet* and Bastilles could not crush the revolutionary movement in France. Gallows and Siberian mines could not extinguish the Russian Revolution. Blood Sundays and Black and Tans failed to strangle the movement of Irish freedom. Can Ordinance and Safety Bills snuff out the flame of freedom in India? Conspiracy cases trumped up or discovered and incarceration of all young men who cherish the vision of a greater ideal cannot check the march of the revolution. But a timely warning, if not unheeded, can help to prevent loss of life and general suffering. We took it upon ourselves to provide this warning and our duty is done.

Bhagat Singh was asked in the lower court as to what we meant by the word "revolution". In answer to that question we would say that "revolution" does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife, nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and pistol. By revolution we mean that the present order of things which is based on manifest injustice must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of the fruits of their labour and deprived of their elementary right. On the one hand, the peasant

who grows corn for all starves with his family. The weaver who supplies the world market with textile fabrics cannot find enough to cover his own and his children's bodies. Masons, smiths and carpenters, who rear magnificent places, live and perish in slums, and on the other hand, capitalist exploiters, parasites of society, squander millions on their whims. The terrible inequalities and forced disparity of chances are heading towards chaos. This state of affairs cannot last and it is obvious that the present order of society is merry-making on the brink of a volcano and innocent children of exploiters no less than millions of exploited are walking on the edge of a dangerous precipice. The whole edifice of this civilization, if not saved in time, shall crumble.

Radical change, therefore, is necessary, and it is the duty of those who realize this to reorganize society on a socialistic basis. Unless this is done and exploitation of man and of nations by nations, which goes masquerading as imperialism, is brought to an end, the suffering and carnage with which humanity is threatened today cannot be prevented and all talk of ending wars and ushering in an era of universal peace is undisguised hypocrisy.

By revolution we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognised and as a result of which a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and the misery of imperial wars.

This is our ideal and with this ideology for our inspiration we have given a fair and loud enough warning. If however it goes unheeded and the present system of government continues to be an impediment in the way of the natural forces that are welling up a grim struggle must ensue, involving the overthrow of all obstacles and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat to pave the way for the consummation of the ideal revolution.

Revolution is the inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is the imprescriptible birthright of all. The labourer is the real sustainer of society. The sovereignty of the people is the ultimate destiny of workers. For these ideals and for this faith we shall welcome any suffering to which we may be condemned.

To the altar of the revolution we have brought our youth as incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause. We are content. We await the advent of revolution. Long live revolution.

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Following the Assembly Bomb incident, Bhagat Singh and Dutt were sentenced to transportation for life. However, as a result of Jai Gopal turning informer in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, the police learned of the roles played by Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru in the killing of Lieutenant Saunders, and all three were sentenced to death.

Bhagat Singh's eloquence and sincerity and his personal sacrifice inspired the nation to view him as a hero and martyr. The official historian of the Congress Party asserted that at that time Bhagat Singh's name and popularity were as celebrated as Gandhi's.¹ Public agitation at the death sentence was so great that Mahatma Gandhi was persuaded to seek commutation from the Viceroy. While the date of the executions had been set for March 24th, government concern over possible demonstrations resulted in their advancing the executions by one day.

A number of Yashpal's comrades were in the prison and reported to him on the events preceding the execution. They said that Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were led out of their cells to be handcuffed. Sukhdev protested. An old Indian jailer appealed to Bhagat Singh to comply with the jail rule. Bhagat Singh persuaded Sukhdev and Rajguru—and all three were handcuffed. As they walked out of their cells into the prison yard, they heard the resounding cry from every prison cell of INQILAB ZINDABAD! ! They made a last request—to have two minutes to say what they wished. The Superintendent of the jail, by his silence, assented. All three shouted, "Long live revolution! Down with imperialism!" They mounted the scaffold and were hanged. [III: 83]

Concerning public reaction to the execution, Yashpal wrote:

¹B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Volume 1 (1885-1935) Bombay: Padma Publications, 1946, p. 456

The peoples' hearts filled with fierce, helpless hatred toward the foreign government. Consequently they spread stories about the cruelties inflicted on Bhagat Singh and his companions and of their courage as they faced the gallows. To demonstrate their hatred and anger towards the government and their reverence for the martyrs, the people exaggerated these stories. Whoever heard them added something, and that is how those tales gained currency. [III: 83]

Many rumours were current concerning the disposition of the bodies. Yashpal wrote:

There was no hope that the government would give the bodies of the martyrs to their relatives so that they might honour them. However, the people intended to make sure that the government did not take the bodies far away and treat them disrespectfully or neglect them. So people sat on every road which left Lahore. Bhagat Singh's sister, Amarkaur, was on the Ferozepur Road with some friends. They saw police lorries going towards Ferozepur at about midnight and realized that the bodies of the heroes were being taken to the Sutlej River about sixty-five miles from Lahore. Before daybreak, many people were already on the railway bridge on the Sutlej. Three funeral pyres were still burning, but the police had returned. A large crowd gathered there during the day. Reverently, people took whatever they could from there—a little ash from the funeral pyres or some burnt bones. Every year in March until 1947, a fair was held there. It is part of Pakistan now.

There were some rumours that the police had desecrated the bodies, that is to say that, before cremating them, they had hacked them to pieces, and that Hindu rites had not been performed. To remove that impression from the public mind, the government issued a notice that very evening saying that the last rites of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been performed by a Sikh priest and a Brahmin priest, and that their funeral pyres had been built in proper places on the bank of the river. People did not have much faith in what the government said, but those who knew the ways of the British government did not believe that they would

mutilate a body. For what would be the point of doing that? The English rulers were always concerned that they not be regarded as barbarians and not give the people any reason to become aroused unnecessarily; and that there be a kind of show of justice and legal morality and procedure and all that. They felt that such conduct was necessary in order to maintain control over the Indian police and army. [III: 83-4]

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